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Retention Relationships: Connecting Higher Education Employees to
Students Through Student Organizations

by

Michelle Sanford

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education


School of Education

Retention Relationships: Connecting Higher Education Employees to
Students Through Student Organizations

by

Michelle Sanford

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education


Dr. Roger "Mitch" Nasser Jr., Dissertation Chair

11/8/19
Date


Dr. Shane Williamson, Committee Member

11/8/19
Date


Dr. Kevin Winslow, Committee Member

11/8/19
Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Michelle Anne Sanford

Signature: MA Date: 11/0/19

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During my entrance interview for the EdD program, I met Dr. Roger ‘Mitch’ Nasser. He did not know me then, but he expressed his excitement about our mutual passion for student development, and his positivity made the interview process comfortable. After acceptance into the program, I learned he would serve as my academic advisor. I knew I would also one day most likely ask him to serve as my dissertation chair. Dr. Nasser, in his various roles as advisor, mentor, professor, and chair, has continuously encouraged and supported me. His encouragement and support helped me through the difficult parts of the doctoral program, and it is because of him that I made it to program completion. Dr. Nasser, I cannot thank you enough for all that you do.

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missed a couple barbeques and get-togethers because I instead had homework, but now we can celebrate.

Abstract

This mixed methods study investigated higher education employee involvement with student organizations to determine if a connection existed between an employee's engagement with a student organization and the employee's retention at the university. Research shows that student involvement in campus life and with student organizations increases student retention (Astin, 1984); however, few research studies have focused on the impact this type of involvement has on employee retention. In this study, the researcher explored the following research questions: How does employee engagement with student organizations impact employee retention? Why do employees choose to support student organizations? The researcher examined these questions by gathering quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data through interviews. Two hypotheses were investigated. The researcher used a correlation test to determine if a relationship existed between the number of hours an employee was involved with a student organization and the number of months the employee was retained at the institution. Additionally, the researcher conducted a comparative study to determine if there was a difference between an employee's hours spent with a student organization at a small, private university in comparison to an employee's hours spent with a student organization at a midsize, private university. The researcher determined there was no relationship between an employee's time spent with a student organization and their length of employment at their institution. The researcher also determined that there was no difference between an employee's hours spent with a student organization at a small university compared to an employee's hours spent with a student organization at a midsize university. However, interview data suggested that employees felt motivated by

intrinsic factors, and employees found motivation in the workplace through engagement with student organizations. Employees indicated they chose to support student organizations because the experience was rewarding and enriching. Employees felt working with students and student organizations was directly related to their retention.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Retention at higher education institutions is a concept that has become increasingly important in the last 50 years; students did not always go to college to obtain a degree, and colleges did not always aim to retain students. However, the college boom that occurred after World War II, which came with different grants and programs, opened up education to a larger pool of students who had not considered going to college (Mason & Learned, 2006; Thelin, 2017). After that point, attending college became part of American culture, and with more students seeking degrees, colleges became more competitive with their offerings and strategized ways to increase their enrollment, all of which contributed to the commercialization of higher education (Mason & Learned, 2006; Thelin, 2017). Today, if someone asked a student why they were obtaining a college degree, they would most likely say to get a job. The role of the higher education employee has transitioned to supporting students in the task of graduating, and while many employees would frown at the student response of obtaining an education to get a job, that in many ways is the goal, and higher education institutions advertise their internship and job placement rates as a strategy to lure students to enroll.

This situation, however, is ironic in nature. While the higher education employee supports the student in securing an education and a job post-graduation, the higher education employee's own job is at risk. Higher education employees, now more than ever, feel burned out and unmotivated and leave their positions, leading to high rates of employee turnover (Figueroa, 2015; Jo, 2008). So, while they support students in obtaining knowledge and skills to secure employment and job satisfaction, they

themselves find that they are not growing and are not satisfied. This situation could be mitigated if higher education leaders worked toward reorganizing the institution and “gain[ed] more control of their environment” (Figueroa, 2015, p. 86).

Most higher education research that focuses on retention focuses on student retention. However, the retention of higher education employees is equally as important, as it often affects student retention. Students develop relationships with employees, such as faculty and staff members, and those relationships can assist with students feeling connected to campus culture. If students feel connected and have those strong relationships, they are more likely to be retained (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005).

In order to retain higher education employees, institutions should implement measures to better connect and engage employees. One way to retain employees is through intrinsic means. Research shows that intrinsic value is created when employees build relationships with students (Berger & Milem, 2000; Jo, 2008; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). While there are many ways employees can build relationships with students, one way to do so is by serving as an advisor for a student organization. Therefore, connecting higher education employees with student organizations could assist with employee retention, as employees would feel engaged and connected.

Background of the Study

Higher education research has focused on the topic of student retention, and on how involvement and engagement with student life on campus leads to increased student persistence since it helps them to build a community and helps with connectedness (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005). Students develop connectedness by building relationships with one another and with higher education employees (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005).

However, increased employee turnover rates at higher education institutions resulted in students not connecting with faculty and staff, which prevented students from building relationships and affected retention (Jo, 2008).

Retention of higher education employees is an area that needs to be further explored, specifically how employee involvement and engagement with student activities could impact employee retention. If student involvement and engagement with student organizations and activities leads to increased connectedness and increased retention, the reverse could be true as well, which is that it also increases employee retention. Faculty and staff members build relationships with students, and those relationships may be a reason employees chose to stay at their institution. If employees felt a sense of belonging to an organization, they were less likely to leave that organization (Berger & Milem, 2000; Jo, 2008; Seidman, 2005).

This sense of belonging has led to research on retaining employees through engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. The key to this engagement and organizational citizenship behavior was if employees had a sense of hope or a sense of hopelessness, as those who did not have hope were typically not retained as they felt less satisfaction (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). However, if employees were hopeful, it led to increased satisfaction and a sense of connectedness, which led to increased employee retention. If higher education leaders understood this idea of hope and hopelessness and employee motivation and how it impacted employee retention, they could incorporate it into strategic planning efforts (Berger & Milem, 2000; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). Hopefulness and satisfaction were intrinsic motivators, and intrinsic motivators often led to retained employees (Berger & Milem, 2000; Jo, 2008; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

Higher education leaders need to focus on retaining employees, and should align institutional goals of employee retention with goals of student retention (Patton, 2017). Through the alignment of those two goals, and through the relationships students and employees developed, both groups were more likely to be retained (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015; Patton, 2017). Higher education leaders could incorporate these goals into the institution's strategic plan (Cloutier et al., 2015). If those goals were part of the strategic plan, then campus leaders would have processes in place to work toward those goals to increase retention.

Purpose of Study

Higher education employee retention is an increasing issue, especially with increased budget cuts and with fewer employee incentives (Kretovics, 2010; Romano, Hanish, Phillips, & Waggoner, 2010). Higher education leaders needed to implement strategies to retain employees as the direct and indirect costs of employee turnover negatively impacted the institution (Kretovics, 2010; Romano et al., 2010). While there was some research on the importance of and need to strategically retain higher education employees, there was little research that directly examined viable strategies to retain employees or the impact engagement with students had on employee retention.

Current higher education retention research mainly focused on student retention (Seidman, 2005). One of the student retention strategies studied was student engagement outside the classroom and the impact that engagement had on retention (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1975). Students were engaged outside of the classroom by participating in events and activities and through involvement opportunities (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005). When students were involved with student organizations, they were

typically engaged with university employees, who served as organization advisors (Floerchinger, 1992; Seidman, 2005). The gap in research was in what ways this type of engagement also impacted the advisors of student organizations. If engagement with student organizations positively impacted student retention, the possibility existed that this engagement may also have positively impacted employee retention.

This researcher examined the impact of higher education employee engagement on employee retention as a result of involvement with student organizations. If there was a relationship between employee engagement and retention, higher education leadership could implement ways to engage employees to increase employee retention, and these engagement goals could be incorporated into the institution's strategic plan. Potential implications included lower employee turnover and increased student retention, which could both positively impact the organization's financial state and campus climate.

Significance of the Study

Most research pointed to the importance of engagement and connection in order to build retention (Astin, 1984; Berger & Milem, 2000; Jo, 2008). If institutional leaders had strategies to connect higher education employees to the institution, especially through relationships with students, there was the potential to decrease turnover rates, allow for relationships to be built, and retention to increase. Those aspects would ultimately generate revenue as students persist and would decrease expenses of hiring and training new employees as employees continue in their positions (Jo, 2008; Seidman, 2005). If employees were retained, the knowledge they could provide and the ways that they could contribute to strategic planning would benefit the students, employees, and the institution.

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no relationship between the number of hours an employee spends with a student organization and the number of months the employee is retained at the institution.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university.

Research Questions

Research question 1. How does employee engagement with student organizations impact employee retention?

Research question 2. Why do higher education employees choose to support student organizations?

Study Limitations

The researcher addressed the following study limitations. The researcher did not have access to data on employees not retained by the universities, and therefore, information on why those employees left their positions could not be utilized in the study or analyzed. The researcher only had access to information on employees who the universities retained and worked full-time in the Student Affairs department. Since the study hypotheses focused on why employees were retained, the study results were not impacted by this limitation. Additionally, since the research questions focused on employee retention and employee support of student organizations, this limitation did not impact the data collected.

The participants' length of employment was also a study limitation. Some employees reported they had been employees for only a few months, whereas other employees had been employed for over 10 years. The researcher recruited from two universities in order to expand the participant pool and the data collected in anticipation of these results. Additionally, since these two groups were far from the regression line in the correlation test, they were considered outliers, and did not impact the results of the correlation test.

The researcher recruited from Student Affairs departments at small and midsize private universities. The study results may have differed if the researcher recruited from other campus departments. Student Affairs participants felt that employees' experiences with engagement, intrinsic motivation, and retention in other departments may differ, such as with those who worked in Admissions or Financial Services. However, the researcher did not have access to these other employee populations. These groups could be utilized as participants for future studies.

During the course of this study, it was announced that one of the campuses of the midsize university would be closing in a year, which may have impacted participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about their institution of employment. Additionally, a few months before the study was conducted, the president of that same university system was terminated, and the institution had not yet appointed a new president. Interview participants noted the changes and transitions happening on campus, which they felt contributed to increased turnover and decreased employee retention. These aspects did not impact the results of the survey questions as the questions focused on employee relationships with student organizations. Additionally, in the interviews, while

participants noted these aspects, they also stated they felt these types of changes were a normal part of any higher education institution and organization, so these factors were what they considered to be normal.

Definition of Terms

Employee burnout. Employee burnout is when an employee experiences a loss of energy and motivation, which makes it difficult for them to complete their assigned job duties (Plooy & Roodt, 2010).

Employee engagement. Employee engagement is the act of involving employees in activities that connect them to the organization, typically outside of their regular job duties (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

Employee retention. Employee retention is the number of full-time employees who continue employment with an organization (Jo, 2008).

Employee turnover. Employee turnover is when an employee's relationship with an organization is terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Erasmus, Grobler, & van Niekerk, 2015).

Midsized university. A midsized university is a university with 5,000-15,000 students (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2019).

Organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational Citizenship Behavior is the service a member of an organization gives to the organization outside of regular job duties (Berger & Milem, 2000).

Retention. Retention is the institution's capability to keep a student enrolled from the point of admitting the student to the institution to the time of the student's graduation from the institution (Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1975).

Small university. A small university is a university with under 5,000 students (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2019).

Strategic planning. Strategic planning is a process that focuses on goals, identifies resources needed to reach those goals, and assesses whether or not goals were reached and to what degree (Ellis, 2010).

Student organization. A student organization is an organization made up of students (and typically an advisor) that could have a social, academic, cultural, Greek, recreational, or religious focus; student organizations traditionally give students a platform to advocate for change and/or connect to others with similar interests (Meyer & Kroth, 2010; Russo, 2010; Revilla, 2010).

Student organization advisor. A student organization advisor is an employee (faculty or staff member) who “go beyond traditional academic advising...to supervise students in a variety of campus experiences” (Tribbensee, 2004, para. 2).

Summary

High employee turnover at higher education institutions is an issue that affects many colleges and universities. High employee turnover impacts the entire campus community. If employees are not retained, it is difficult to build campus culture and community. If campus culture and community do not exist, students will find it difficult to connect and will also most likely not be retained. Employee turnover is costly, and not retaining students means lost revenue. Campus leaders need to implement strategies to engage and retain employees. Retaining higher education employees allows for relationships to be built with students, lessens the financial burden that comes with employee replacement, and means employees can assist with contributing to institutional

development. These aspects can allow for institutional growth and developed relationships within the community. However, while current researchers have stated that higher education employee retention is an issue, more research needs to be conducted on specific strategies that can be used to retain employees.

The purpose of this study was to examine one of those strategies. This study examined higher education employee involvement with student organizations to investigate if an employee's involvement led to increased employee engagement and retention. Additionally, this study explored employee involvement and engagement with students and student organizations, and if those aspects led to increased employee motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment, all of which could lead to increased employee retention. Those concepts were further discussed in Chapter Two, which reviewed relevant literature.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review begins with a discussion of retention and employee turnover to define those terms and reviews why retention and employee turnover are issues at higher education institutions. The next section reviews the impact increasing turnover rates and low employee retention have on higher education institutions, including direct and indirect costs. The discussion then moves to strategic planning in higher education and how strategic planning can assist with turnover and retention. The focus then moves to employee engagement as a solution to turnover and retention. Employee engagement with student organizations as a solution is reviewed, along with the risks that come with asking employees to take on more work and responsibility with overseeing a student organization. Organizational citizenship behavior is defined and is discussed as a result of engaging employees. The last section of the literature review focuses on engagement and planning in student affairs departments, as that is the department in which engagement opportunities originate and is the department from which study participants were recruited.

Retention and its History

To understand the importance of retention at higher education institutions, a review of retention from a historical perspective follows. Seidman (2005) examined the historical trends of retention:

1. Retention Prehistory (1600s-mid-1800s)
2. Evolving toward Retention (mid-1800s-1900)
3. Early Developments (1900-1950)

4. Dealing with Expansion (1950s)
5. Preventing Dropouts (1960s)
6. Building Theory (1970s)
7. Managing Enrollments (1980s)
8. Broadening Horizons (1990s)
9. Current and Future Trends (early twenty-first century) (p. 8)

In the early stages of retention history, students who attended college typically had no intention of obtaining a degree (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005). Students attended college more for social function and did not see the need to graduate as degrees were not valued and utilized in society as they are today (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005; Thelin, 2017). Additionally, in that time period, the goal was to produce ministers for the churches, so much of education focused on that aspect moving toward the 1800s (Seidman, 2005; Thelin, 2017).

As colleges developed and enrollment increased, retention was still not a concern as students still did not attend college to seek degrees or graduate, so there was no need to implement measures to keep students enrolled (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005). However, during this time, colleges started implementing student life programs as a way to recruit and interest students, and colleges started to look at a balance between the academic and social life (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005). Even though these programs were implemented, retention of students was not tracked nor was the effectiveness of these programs tracked (Seidman, 2005). During this time period, many colleges opened and closed, especially with the introduction of the Morrill Land Grant Act that provided

land for institutions and focused on equal access, but many students still were not interested in obtaining degrees (Seidman, 2005; Thelin, 2017).

It was not until the early 1900s that college enrollment began to increase, as industry increased, which “increased the need for college education as a means of producing managers and professionals to run the increasingly organized and complex work of the nation” (Seidman, 2005, p. 13). With growing enrollment numbers, colleges started becoming more selective and created admission processes (Delbanco, 2012; Thelin, 2017). As these changes occurred, colleges started to care more about the students they enrolled and they wanted to keep students enrolled, which was the beginning of retention efforts (Seidman, 2005). With selective admission processes and with efforts to keep students enrolled, along with the idea of obtaining a college degree rising in importance, the first study on “student mortality” was conducted in the 1930s, with support from the Office of Education (Seidman, 2005, p. 14). Post-World War II was the next shift in higher education, and more students started to attend college as access to education increased, and this shift solidified the need for retention data and efforts to retain students (Seidman, 2005; Thelin, 2017).

After World War II, students started attending college to obtain a degree; therefore, higher education institutions focused more on selective enrollment and retention (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005). This trend continued up until present day, with many institutions still focused on increasing retention and not experiencing much success. During the 1970s up to the 1990s, theorists such as Tinto, Bean, and Astin researched retention, persistence, and dropout, and their research became the foundation for the field (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1975). Much of their research also focused

on the importance of involvement with faculty and staff and the development of those relationships and how they impacted retention (Astin, 1984; Seidman, 2005). Today, retention efforts have continued to evolve, and studies have focused on retention in consideration of online education and globalization (Delbanco, 2012; Doerschuk, Liu, & Mann, 2008; Seidman, 2005). In these situations, the importance of engagement with higher education employees remained, as students still sought out connection points and relationships.

Employee Turnover

At the basic level, turnover can be defined as an employee vacating their position with an organization (Erasmus et al., 2015; Jo, 2008). Turnover falls into two categories, voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary turnover is defined as an employee making a choice to leave their position with an organization, whereas involuntary turnover is when the employer terminates the employment relationship (Erasmus et al., 2015). Employees leaving an organization has been associated with lower motivation and decreased employee morale (Jo, 2008; O'Connell & Kung, 2007).

Voluntary employee turnover resulted from three variables. The three variables were environmental variables, individual variables, and structural variables (Erasmus et al., 2015). Environmental variables were those in the employee's environment such as familial factors, such as in cases where employees have to leave their position to care for family with an illness; individual variables were those that caused the employee to leave a position for personal reasons, such as a better job opportunity with a different organization; structural variables were defined as "autonomy, justice, stress, pay, promotional chances, routinisation, and social support" (Erasmus et al., 2015, p. 36).

Structural variables, also called organizational climate variables, impact higher education institutions the most (Berger & Milem, 2000; Erasmus et al., 2015; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). These aspects that impacted voluntary turnover in higher education were relationships with leadership, managerial styles, organizational citizenship, compensation, interpersonal relationships, and employee value (Erasmus et al., 2015; Jo, 2008). Campus leadership directly impacted employees' desire to stay or leave, and the managerial styles of leaders influenced employee turnover (Erasmus et al., 2015; Jo, 2008). If employees felt a sense of organizational citizenship, they were more likely to stay (Berger & Milem, 2000; Erasmus et al., 2015; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). Additionally, if they felt they were adequately compensated and felt their knowledge was valued, they were retained (Erasmus et al., 2015; Jo, 2008).

Employee Retention

Erasmus et al. (2015) defined employee retention as it relates to higher education, and said employee retention is "the effort by employers to retain talented and high-performing employees in order to achieve organizational objectives" (p. 33). Retaining employees was important as it prevents extra costs of recruiting and training employees, which organizations incur with turnover (Jo, 2008; O'Connell & Kung, 2007; Tziner & Birati, 1996). Employee turnover has been an issue for higher education institutions for years, but strategies to reduce turnover have not been implemented (Erasmus et al., 2015; Jo, 2008).

A recent study examined the issue of employee retention and gathered statistics related to employee turnover and retention. The findings were the following:

- 61 percent of institutions have difficulty sourcing top faculty, and 59 percent struggle to retain top faculty;
- 62 percent have difficulty sourcing top staff, and 69 percent struggle to retain top staff;
- 27 percent report above average turnover rates for faculty;
- 41 percent report above average turnover rates for staff;
- 71 percent see a correlation between faculty engagement and retention; and
- 80 percent see a correlation between staff engagement and retention. (Meyer, 2016, para. 4)

Even though 80% of those surveyed thought there was a correlation between employee engagement and retention, only 39% of higher education institutions focus on engagement and/or offer situations focused on engaging employees (Meyer, 2016). If employees felt that they were engaged, they were more likely to be retained (Ellis, 2010; Meyer, 2016; Paul, 2012; Soliday & Mann, 2013).

Direct and Indirect Costs of Employee Turnover

High employee turnover is an increasing issue at many universities, as faculty and staff are not retained. Colleges and universities across the United States face decreased funding, which leads to budget cuts, program cuts, and personnel cuts (Jo, 2008; Kretovics, 2010; Romano et al., 2010). Those aspects also mean that faculty and staff have to take on additional roles and responsibilities and do more with less (Jo, 2008; Plooy & Roodt, 2010). Since employees are expected to do more, and do not receive title or pay increases, and their departments are affected, they are not satisfied and often not retained, which contributes to the issue of increased employee turnover (Jo, 2008;

Romano et al., 2010). High employee turnover is an issue because it has direct and indirect costs that greatly impact the institution (Jo, 2008; O'Connell & Kung, 2007; Ramlall, 2004).

Not retaining employees results in direct costs to the institution. Overall, the process to replace employees is substantial. Direct costs to replace an employee include the costs associated with recruiting of an employee, the hiring process to obtain an employee, and the onboarding and training of an employee (Attia & Edge, 2016; Jo, 2008; O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Ramlall (2004) emphasized employee replacement typically costs an organization somewhere between six to 12 months of the employee's salary. That direct cost impacts the organization greatly because while the position is unfilled, other employees have to complete additional tasks. Cloutier et al. (2015) estimated the cost is even higher than what Ramlall (2004) suggested, estimating that the direct cost to replace an employee is around 200% of the employee's salary, which would be equivalent to 24 months of pay. Universities who face high employee turnover rates spend hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars replacing employees (Cloutier et al., 2015; Ramlall, 2004).

Most research showed high employee turnover resulted in high direct costs to an organization. The direct costs to organizations included the cost it took to fill a vacancy when looking at the recruiting and hiring process, to staff the open vacancy until a new employee was hired, and to train a new employee until they reach they needed level of productivity (Attia & Edge, 2016; Cloutier et al., 2015; O'Connell & Kung, 2007). O'Connell and Kung (2007) provided a formula and calculations to determine turnover costs: turnover rate = (number of terminations + average active employees for year) *

100. They suggested utilizing this formula will give organizations an accurate understanding of employee turnover cost, and this formula could be used to look at how turnover compared to other organizations in the field.

Kelchen (2016) discussed how decreasing student enrollment impacted direct costs to the institution because of the lost revenue from student tuition. Soliday and Mann (2013) provided a chart to demonstrate the amount of revenue generated from students who persist, and *Figure 1* provides an adaptation of that chart.

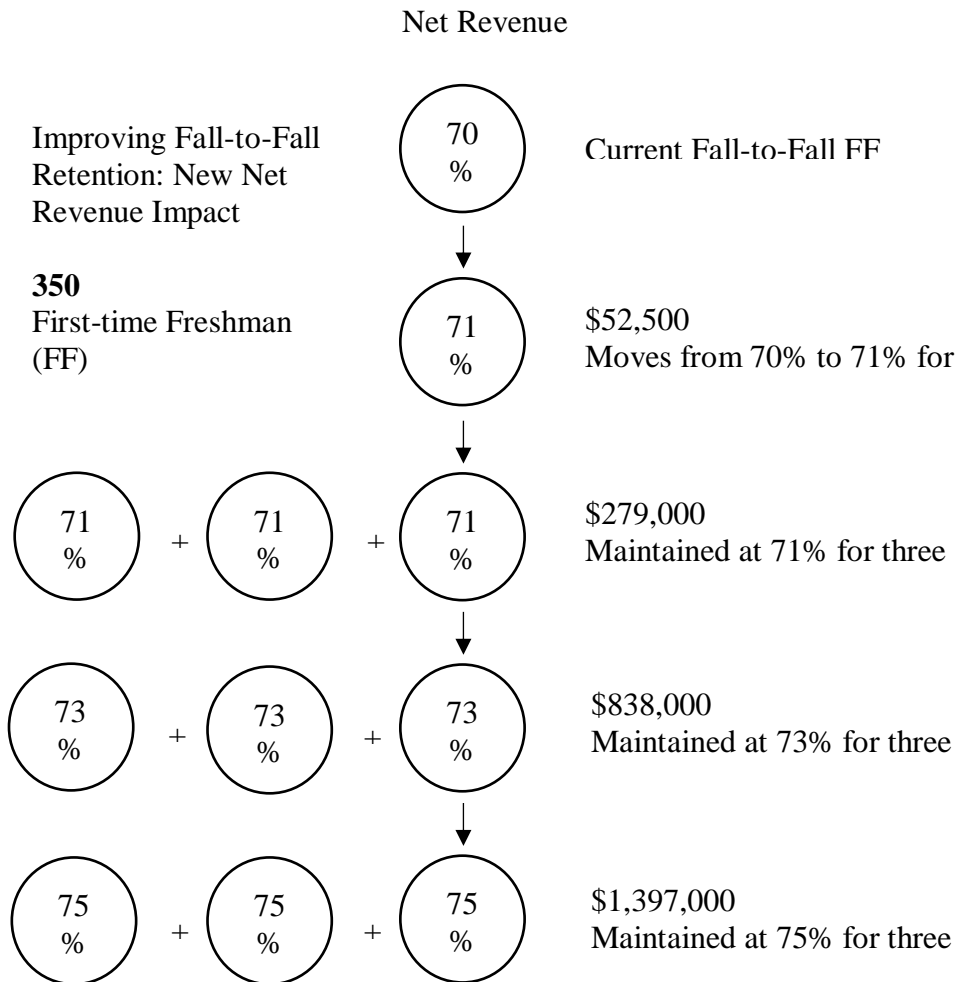


Figure 1. Low student retention impact on direct revenue, adapted from Soliday and Mann (2003).

Another direct cost to the institution was decreased student retention as a result of increased employee turnover. Student retention was impacted by employee retention because relationships between employees and students created connectedness. If employees were not retained, they could not build those relationships with students, which meant that students were not retained because they did not feel connected and supported.

When students left the university, the university lost that revenue from their tuition. If the university lost money, they would have to make up for the lost revenue by cutting programs or personnel, which further impacted student retention as students were affected by those additional cuts (Kelchen, 2016; Soliday & Mann, 2013). The university lost direct revenue when student retention decreases, which can be a result of employee turnover.

Seidman (2005) also studied the direct costs of not retaining students, which could be impacted by high employee turnover and decreased relationships between employees and students. At public higher education institutions, between 21.0% and 26.7% of their revenue came from student tuition and fees, which increased by around 20% from 20 years prior (Seidman, 2005, p. 278). At private higher education institutions, between 32.5% and 53.1% of their revenue came from student tuition and fees, which increased by around 10% from 20 years prior (Seidman, 2005, p. 278). In their case, if students were not retained, the institution lost out on this revenue, which directly impacted the institutional funding.

An additional direct turnover cost that impacted the institution was the loss of outside institutional funding when outside stakeholders felt employee turnover was

related to ineffective institutional leadership. Outside stakeholders and donors invested in an institution to see growth and development (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005; Soliday & Mann, 2013). When employees did not stay, it made it difficult to implement strategic plans because the focus was on training employees, not implementing planning measures (McLendon, Hearn, & Mokher, 2009; Seidman, 2005). Donors want to see the institution grow, and if they do not see that growth for any reason, they may decide to invest in a different organization (McLendon et al., 2009; Seidman, 2005). Private institutions may rely heavily on these types of donors, but public institutions may also be affected because state funders may choose to fund other organizations such as prisons or elementary schools if they see those organizations as using their funds more effectively. How the university is viewed by the community impacts the funding they receive from outside stakeholders.

Employee turnover also had indirect costs that impacted the university. One indirect cost was the lost productivity that occurred overall with other employees completing that role and responsibility, since assisting with that role takes time away from their own role (O'Connell & Kung, 2007; Seidman, 2005). Additionally, assisting with other roles meant that employees had less time to focus on strategic plan goals and other initiatives. Not only did they have less time to focus on strategic plan goals, but they did not have the employee knowledge needed to implement strategically planning (Cloutier et al., 2015; Ramlall, 2004). Employees who knew the university and believed in the mission and values and had the knowledge of their roles and their impact on the university were most effective at assisting with strategic plans (Ramlall, 2004; Seidman,

2005). With turnover and lost employees, the university also loses those who were most capable at assisting with the plan.

Employees lost to turnover not only impact the university's ability to strategically plan, but also impact the human capital of the university. Employees with knowledge that benefits the university have human capital, and their human capital could provide the university with a competitive edge (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Those employees were experts in their field, and on the university, and could assist with recruiting students, employees, and outside stakeholder support (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Lepak & Snell, 1999). However, if employees with human capital were not retained, the organization may have a more difficult time with recruitment and with setting themselves apart from other institutions (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015).

Employees who stay at the university when other employees leave often have to take on the roles and responsibilities of those employees who left, which could lead to burnout and stress (Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Romano et al., 2010). Those situations could result in decreased morale, which impacts the campus culture and may make employees feel like they no longer have motivation or satisfaction to support the organization (Romano et al., 2010). Most universities want a campus culture of connectedness as that leads to increased retention, and if employees leave and employee morale is impacted, those feelings will transfer over to relationships within the organization (Berger & Milem, 2000; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). If employees did not have a sense of connectedness and morale was impacted, they were less likely to complete their regular job duties or go beyond their regular job duties, resulting in indirect costs to the organization.

Soliday and Mann (2013) agreed and emphasized the importance of morale, not only on employees, but on other stakeholders. They stated,

Self-esteem increases when institutions have engaged additional constituencies at the highest level. This means that parents are clearly informed and excited about what they see and hear through a strategic communications plan. It means donors are being cared for at the best levels of stewardship, and their numbers are increasing. It also means that city leaders and residents are proud of their institutions, and show it by attending events, supporting partnerships, and offering internships at increasing levels. (p. 77)

Low morale impacted the institution indirectly by affecting those types of relationships, which impacted climate culture, preventing involvement and growth. Increased self-esteem could positively impact the institution, and when “institutional self-esteem is low, planning is often immobilized” (Soliday & Mann, 2013, p. 77).

Low employee morale led to decreased retention, which impacted students, their families, employees, the institution, the community, the workforce, and the overall economy. Retention rates served as an indicator for internal and external stakeholders as to the success of the institution (Delbanco, 2012; Seidman, 2005). If students do not persist and do not graduate, they do not enter the workforce and obtain jobs, which can negatively impact the economy (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008; Seidman, 2005). The impact of low morale at an institution resulted in indirect costs to the economy, whereas “higher education attainment leads to decreases in long-term poverty, higher personal per-capita income, a higher state tax base, and a stronger economy” (Seidman, 2005, p.

103). Higher education stakeholder satisfaction resulted in increased retention and a more productive economy.

Strategic Planning

Research on increased employee turnover and decreased employee retention in higher education emphasized the impact on the institution and suggested higher education leaders should implement measures to counter these situations. Measures included strategic planning, and while many organizations have utilized strategic planning, strategic planning was only recently implemented in higher education (Choban, Choban, & Choban, 2008; Cloutier et al., 2015; Stephens, 2017). Stephens (2017) reviewed the history of strategic planning and pointed out the concept of strategic planning resulted from the growth of the military and government. Initially, strategic planning's purpose was to "guide an organization toward clearly articulated statements of missions, goals, and objectives" (Stephens, 2017, p. 118). As the concept of strategic planning developed, organizations adopted the planning process and added in assessment as part of the process (Kretovics, 2010; Soliday & Mann, 2013; Stephens, 2017). The emphasis of strategic planning also developed to include the idea of innovation, and in recent years, strategic planning has most often been adapted by organizations as a way to managed transitions and growth (Kretovics, 2010; Soliday & Mann, 2013; Stephens, 2017).

Higher education institutions adopted strategic planning around the 1970s (Dooris, Kelley, & Trainer, 2002; Soliday & Mann, 2013). Dooris et al. (2002) said that higher education institutions adopted strategic planning because the "environment for higher education began to experience notable unsteadiness in the 1970s with demographic, economic, and technological swerves" (p. 7). In 1983, Keller wrote

Academic Strategy, and the publication of that book impacted the ways institutions viewed strategic planning and why they saw a need for the adaptation of strategic planning, and this adaptation was encouraged by the 1998 Council for Higher Education Accreditation (Dooris et al., 2002). During this time, the focus of strategic planning in higher education was to develop campus culture, develop the teaching of critical thought in academic studies, and develop programs of study that were practicality-based (Dooris et al., 2002; Soliday & Mann, 2013).

Kotler and Murphy (1981) studied strategic plans and how they function on the organizational level. They stated that strategic plans could have three different focuses, which include a budgetary focus, a short-term planning focus, and a long-term planning focus. Since higher education institutions often undergo changes and transitions, Kotler and Murphy (1981) stated that higher education institutions rarely use long-term focuses for strategic planning as their goals change with changing culture and market. Instead, higher education institutions focus on short-term strategic planning and adapt those plans throughout the years as needed. Choban et al. (2008) argued that higher education institutions may not find purpose in using strategic plans, as strategic plans were previously used by organizations whose goal was to make a profit. Most businesses implement goals to obtain profits, goals used to indicate the financial health of the organization. These companies “have a clear, well-understood, and well-documented outcome that bears on company and employee well-being: financial gain” (Choban et al., 2008, p. 13).

Kotler and Murphy (1981) also stated that even if the strategic plan does not have a primary budgetary focus, most strategic plans incorporate a budgetary focus into the

plan in some areas if not all. They did argue that higher education institutions should look more at incorporating long-term plans for sustainability purposes, by including areas within the plan that can adapt to changing needs or to the changing market. Since higher education institutions did not emphasize financial gain as a goal, strategic plans were not effectively implemented by campus leaders (Choban et al., 2008). Instead of profit, institutions usually focused on functioning, and numbers of student enrollment and retention to indicate their organizational health (Choban et al., 2008).

Since the adaptation of strategic plans by higher education institutions, campus leaders have disagreed on what the focused outcome should be (Sallis, 2002; Taylor & De Lourdes Machado, 2006). Taylor and De Lourdes Machado (2006) argued that the focus of strategic plans should be on strategic management, and they defined strategic management as overseeing areas of campus culture, strategic plans, development of leadership, institutional research, resource management, budgetary management, human resources, student and academic affairs, and internal and external affairs. If campus leaders focused on strategic management, all of these areas will be managed strategically, which would allow for the campus community to focus on the university holistically, and not just on certain areas of a strategic plan (Sallis, 2002; Soliday & Mann, 2013; Taylor & De Lourdes Machado, 2006).

Focusing on employees and employee development was the key factor to achieving success with strategic plans because if employees do not buy-in to the university mission, values, and goals, they will not support or implement the strategic plan initiatives (Soliday & Mann, 2013; Watson, 1995). Watson (1995) stated that employees do not have formal appraisal or merits processes and therefore do not have

incentives or motivation. Incentivizing and motivating employees to create buy-in would assist with employees supporting strategic plan goals (Jo, 2008; Soliday & Mann, 2013; Watson, 1995).

Employee Engagement and Relationships

Researchers have studied the idea that employee engagement creates organizational buy-in. Paul (2012) defined employee engagement as an “employees’ emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success” (p. 138). Paul (2012) argued, “Engaged employees typically experience a compelling purpose and meaning in their work and apply their distinct abilities and efforts to advance the organization’s objectives” (p. 138). If employees felt a sense of engagement, they went beyond their regular work duties because they felt a sense of purpose, and they were more committed (Berger & Milem, 2000; Ellis, 2010; Paul, 2012; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016), which meant they were more likely to support the university mission and strategic plan and be retained.

Soliday and Mann (2013) discussed engagement at institutions and the impact on the campus community; they stated that “when students engage at higher levels, learning and morale increases” and that “we should also look closely at the engagement of our faculty and staff, and their relationship to our students” (p. 76). These engagement experiences for students and employees impact campus connectedness and campus morale (Astin, 1984; Paul, 2012; Soliday & Mann, 2013). When specifically discussing employees, employees often feel they operate in silos and feel disconnected from one another and the campus community, and to engage employees, with one another and with

students, “programs and services must be more integrated” (Soliday & Mann, 2013, p. 77).

Zeller (1994) examined one type of engagement situation between students and employees. This situation was residential learning communities, and the relationships developed when employees and students shared living spaces. These types of shared living spaces typically have positive outcomes, and lead to students and employees feeling more connected and students having a stronger support system (Pike, 1999; Stassen, 2003; Zeller, 1994). Students interact more with one another and with faculty and staff, leading to increased engagement (Pike, 1999; Stassen, 2003; Zeller, 1994).

Fonseca, Velloso, Wofchuck, and Meis (1998) discussed how the relationship between advisor and advisee, or mentor and mentee, dates back to the medieval ages when the one party taught the other knowledge or trade. This relationship changed over the years to a more parental type of relationship. It was found that advisors and advisees usage of phrases such as mother, father, child, etc. to be a normal occurrence (Fonseca et al., 1998). Overall, advisors impacted their advisees in ways that changed their lives.

Tinto (1975) also discussed the impact these relationships and connectedness had on retention efforts. Tinto (1975) created illustrated that impact on the relationships influencing retention (see Figure 2) (p. 95).

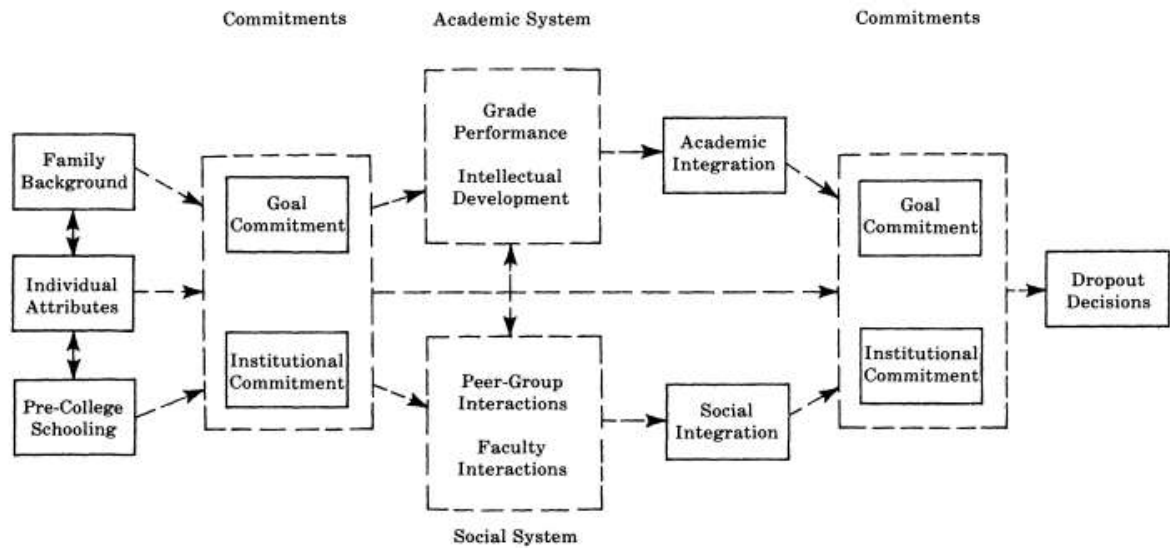


Figure 2. Tinto's perspective on retention influences. (Tinto, 1975, p. 95)

Tinto's (1975) model suggested that the social system of the institution and a student's integration with peers, employees, and groups directly related to the student's social integration and the student's commitment to the institution. If students were committed to the institution, which occurred through those influences, then they were more likely to be retained by the institution. Tinto's interactionist theory and research on dropout, retention, and persistence influences has been widely used as a foundation for discussion in the higher education world.

Astin's (1984) research on student involvement also has been widely used as a foundation for research in this field. He defined student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience," which would include activities in and out of the classroom and interactions with peers, faculty, and staff members (p. 518). The amount of time spent interacting with these

components impacted the student's motivation and commitment. Astin (1984) found that "frequent interaction with faculty [was] more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic" (p. 525). Students who interacted with higher education employees were more satisfied overall with their entire experience than with any other component impacting satisfaction. Astin (1984) emphasized that due to those findings, "finding ways to encourage greater student involvement with faculty (and vice versa) could be a highly productive activity on most college campuses" (p. 525). Developing the relationships between employees and students could impact satisfaction for both groups.

Bean (1980) also examined student retention and persistence. Bean's (1980) model focused on student dropout rates and reasons students decided to drop out, which he developed based on Price and Mueller's research of employee intent to leave and on turnover in the organizational workplace. Bean determined that Price and Mueller's model could be utilized and applied to students using the same concepts (Bean, 1980; Seidman, 2005). This usage of a similar model for both employees and students suggested that they were impacted by the same influences, and that those same influences impacted both groups' intent to stay at the organization (Seidman, 2005). If these two groups were satisfied and committed, the intent to leave decreased, and they were more likely to be retained (Bean, 1980; Seidman, 2005).

Student Organizations and Employee Engagement

Employees can engage with students by serving as student organization advisors, by attending student organization events, or by leading workshops for student organizations (Floerchinger, 1992; Kane, 2017; Meyer & Kroth, 2010). Student

organizations may be classified as having an academic focus, a cultural focus, a recreational focus, a religious focus, a social focus, or may be a fraternal or sororal organization (Meyer & Kroth, 2010). Student organizations have provided spaces for students to feel connected to others, to groups, and to the campus community as they have grown in importance since their creation (Floerchinger, 1992; Kane, 2017; Meyer & Kroth, 2010).

Student organization beginnings. The Attic Society at the University of Oxford, established in the 1800s, was said to be the first student organization (Camputaro, 2017). That organization was followed by Harvard University's student organization named the University Club (Camputaro, 2017). These organizations were established because students wanted to connect with other students who shared similar ideas and advocate for change (Camputaro, 2017). Student organizations continued to develop to where students not only discussed academics and issues in society, but to include literary societies and debate clubs (Delbanco, 2012; Meyer & Kroth, 2010). These initial clubs were organized by students, and campus leaders had no involvement with them, and in many cases, did not approve of students gathering in these ways (Delbanco, 2012; Meyer & Kroth, 2010).

Campus leaders recognized that student organizations were becoming an essential part of campus culture, so they sought out ways to monitor organizations (Meyer & Kroth, 2010). As universities tried to manage these types of clubs, many followed the concept of *in loco parentis*. This Latin phrase translates to mean "in the place of a parent" (Lee, 2011, p. 66). This legal concept meant that universities were viewed as serving in the role of parent when students enrolled in school (Lee, 2011; Mintz, 2019). This legal relationship meant that universities could be held liable if students inflicted self-harm or

harmed others, but it also meant universities could limit student speech and freedoms (Lee, 2011; Mintz, 2019). The concept of *in loco parentis* was used to describe the relationship between the university and the student for much of the 1700s through the mid-1900s (Lee, 2011).

After the 1960s, however, student rights were more protected and they were given more freedom; students having more rights and less restrictions meant universities were less responsible for the student and the parental role was less emphasized (Lee, 2011). Even with some university support, however, student organizations did not have a sense of voice on campus until 1972 with *Healy v. James*, which provided student organizations with free speech rights (Russo, 2010). After this case, campus leaders recognized that there were legal issues associated with student groups, and made student organizations have structured guidelines, all of which were overseen by a required student organization advisor (Meyer & Kroth, 2010; Russo, 2010).

Today, while courts typically do not hold universities to the legal relationship of *in loco parentis*, they could still be deemed to have a duty of care for the student (Lee, 2011; Mintz, 2019). However, with issues of mental well-being and privacy matters becoming more prevalent, many universities are expected to protect students, even if they are not directly held liable for the student. Many universities have opted to take preventative measures to protect students, such as with situations of sexual assault or hazing, and implement educational programs (Lee, 2011; Meyer & Kroth, 2010; Mintz, 2019). Universities are now expected to serve “not as a parent, but as a guide” (Lee, 2011, p. 81). This guidance came in many forms, including through the ways the university supported student organizations.

Student organization advisor roles today and engagement. Universities implemented policies that required student organizations to have an approved advisor, so that the groups had structure and were following policies (Delbanco, 2012; Meyer & Kroth, 2010; Russo, 2010). Requiring student organizations have advisors meant that the responsibility of the group was put on the advisor; however, many advisors were aware of the responsibilities they took on when agreeing to advise a student group. Advisors think they will oversee the group in literal terms, and ask themselves questions such as, am I interested in this group's focus (Tribbensee, 2004). Tribbensee (2004) stated what advisors were unaware of when becoming an organization advisor was "they will also be expected to understand a broad range of other issues, including risk management, even planning, transportation, sexual harassment, emergency medical care, and alcohol liability, to name just a few" (para. 3). The responsibilities for an advisor go far beyond their personal interest in the group (Tribbensee, 2004).

Furthermore, many students may see their student organization advisor as a mentor or a role model and may come to their advisor for questions on personal relationships, their academic work, or for advice on other subjects (Floerchinger, 1992; Meyer & Kroth, 2010). Students go to their advisors because they developed a relationship of trust and feel supported (Floerchinger, 1992; Meyer & Kroth, 2010). However, a role in which the advisor supports students with matters outside of the organization may be a role the advisor was not aware they would have to take on (Meyer & Kroth, 2010; Tribbensee, 2004).

Legal Challenges

Advising student organizations does have risks, and research shows employees may choose to not advise student organizations because of these risks. Kaplin and Lee (2007) discussed the responsibility of student organization advisors and the situations in which liability exists. If an advisor's role was to oversee an event, and a student was injured at the event, the advisor may be liable along with the institution (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Rosenberg & Mosca, 2016; Tribbensee, 2004). Additionally, situations in which students in the organization trusted the advisor with information could make the advisor liable, especially if they are related to Title IX or other legal issues (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Rosenberg & Mosca, 2016), which may deter employees from advising student organizations due to the additional risks.

Rosenberg and Mosca (2016) studied college fraternities and the risks that come with having fraternities on college campuses. The risks the authors addressed include alcoholism, hazing, and sexual assaults, as well as other Title IX issues (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2016). These types of problems arise from what fraternities have traditionally done, such as hazing, and from the lack of policy to deal with these situations, and that leaders of these organizations and/or university leaders have typically managed fraternity issues in a reactive way instead of incorporating proactive measures issues (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Rosenberg & Mosca, 2016). Rosenberg and Mosca (2016) cited several examples demonstrating the risks involved with fraternities, including situations that have created legal issues and that have been popularized in the news; however, these risks could be applied to situations with all variations of student organizations (Tribbensee, 2004).

Avoiding legal issues. Camputaro (2017) stated potential situations of liability and risk should not deter employees from advising student groups because most of those situations can be avoided by following policies and procedures. One suggested way to avoid situations of risk was through proper trainings on what to do to prevent situations of liability and what policies to follow in student situations (Camputaro, 2017). Kaplin and Lee (2007) stated that most universities implemented preventive law measures to avoid situations of liability. Rosenberg and Mosca (2016) agreed, stating that preventive measures, especially with fraternity and sorority life, should be implemented. Strategies they suggested included educating student leaders of the student groups on risks and how to prevent them, mandating advisor supervision at student organization events, and having visibility within the organizations. They additionally recommended student organization events focus on academics instead of social activities to minimize risk and liability (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2016). With policy, procedures, and preventive measures, employees can advise student groups with minimal risk.

Employee Burnout

As research indicated, employees have been burdened with additional roles and responsibilities with employee turnover and budget cuts, which suggested that if employees were already burdened, they want not want to take on an additional role such as advising a student group. Plooy and Roodt (2010) studied employee engagement and employee burnout, and emphasized the two were opposites. They defined both engagement and burnout, with engagement connected to high energy levels and burnout connected to low energy levels (Plooy & Roodt, 2010). They argued that engagement typically leads to positive interactions and experiences and that employee satisfaction and

burnout typically leads to employees mentally withdrawing and eventually leaving their position, so if employees feel burned out, they will not engage with a student organization, and will leave the university instead.

Seppala and Moeller (2018) studied employee engagement and burnout from a different angle. They stated that many feel engagement was a concern, and “year after year, concerned managers and researchers discuss[ed] Gallup’s shocking statistic that seven out of 10 U.S. employees report[ed] feeling unengaged” (Seppala & Moeller, 2018, para. 3). They also noted studies typically point out that engagement leads to employee satisfaction and retention. However, the differing perspective they provided was that engagement may be a factor leading to employee burnout, not a factor that assisted with countering burnout. In their study, “one out of five employee reported both high engagement and high burnout” (Seppala & Moeller, 2018, para. 7). The key to balancing this conflict between engagement and burnout was supervisor support; employees who had supervisors who assisted with the engagement process and provided a lessened work burden were the ones who were retained through engagement (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005; Mullen, Malone, Denney, & Santa Dietz, 2018; Seppala & Moeller, 2018).

Preventing burnout. One strategy to preventing burnout is to teach strategies to assist with preventing burnout and to help employees cope. Burke, Dye, and Hughey (2016) emphasized that “the responsibilities of student affairs professionals create a high personal demand in terms of time, talent, and energy” and that they “are at times subject to conflicting demands, work long hours, are objects of public criticism, and are often not thanked for what they do, they are physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of

any semester or academic year” (p. 94). Burnout and loss of motivation could be countered and needed to be countered because employees needed to care for themselves before they were able to best care for students. A solution to preventing burnout was to practice mindfulness to encourage self-care, to teach these types of strategies when professionals are still in school, and to have supervisors encourage their employees to continuously implement these strategies while employed in the profession (Burke et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2005; Mullen et al., 2018).

Employee Motivation

Researchers have indicated that employee retention increased when employees feel motivated. Jo (2008) stated employees can be motivated through extrinsic means, or external factors, such as by increased job titles or increased pay. If campus leaders motivate their employees through advancement opportunities, they will feel they are respected and appreciated, increasing their likelihood to be retained (Cloutier et al., 2015; Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Jo, 2008). Other extrinsic motivators impacting employee retention included quality benefit packages and flexible schedules (Cloutier et al., 2015; Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Jo, 2008).

Researchers have also indicated that employee retention increased when employees felt motivated through intrinsic means. When extrinsic motivators were unavailable, higher education employees reported feeling motivated through intrinsic means, such as through their relationships with students (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Haynes & Janosik, 2012). These relationships created a campus culture of belonging and connectedness, and they provided a rewarding experience for employees, which made employees want to stay in their positions (Erasmus et al., 2015; Haynes & Janosik, 2012).

Ellis (2010) discussed incorporating employee engagement into the strategic plan in order to increase retention. She stated those strategic plans should include the goals, plans to obtain goals, and ways to assess goal outcomes (Ellis, 2010). Kane (2017) agreed and emphasized the importance of advisor and mentor relationships with students. Those relationships helped engage both employees and students and provided opportunities for connectedness (Kane, 2017). Research showed employee engagement with students, especially in advisor or mentor roles, was important and that it led to employee retention (Ellis, 2010; Kane, 2017).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Research showed employee engagement with students and student organizations impacted the institution. Thakre and Mayekar (2016) discussed employee motivation and emphasized that employees at higher education institutions were motivated when engaged with students. Employees who are motivated also had increased commitment to the organization and were willing to complete responsibilities outside their regular responsibilities or had increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Berger & Milem, 2000; Erasmus et al., 2015; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). OCB gave employees an increased sense of hope and satisfaction, and if employees felt hopeful and satisfied, they were more likely to be retained (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

Plooy and Roodt (2010) also discussed OCB and how employee engagement led to increased OCB and increased employee retention. They stated that OCB resulted in five aspects, which included an employee's increased sense of altruism, a sense of conscientiousness, increased courtesy from the employee, sportsmanship between employees, and increased civic engagement. These aspects assisted with developing

employee satisfaction which led to higher employee retention rates (Plooy & Roodt, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The concepts of engagement and OCB relate to the theoretical frameworks utilized in the study. The two theoretical frameworks used were Kahn's (1990) employee engagement theory and Meyer and Allen's (1991) organizational commitment theory. Kahn's (1990) theory on employee engagement stated that employees who were personally engaged were more likely to be motivated and committed to the organization. Meyer and Allen's (1991) theory on organizational commitment stated that employees were motivated by internal factors, such as because they needed or wanted employment or felt obligated to the institution. These two theories framed the study and literature discussion on how and why engagement impacts employee commitment and satisfaction and leads to retention. The researcher used the frameworks of employee engagement theory and organizational commitment theory to inform the study design and implementation.

Employee engagement theory. Employee engagement theory, conceptualized by Kahn (1990), informed this study and provided a framework for research. Kahn (1990) discussed how employees function in the workplace and what motivates them. Kahn (1990) discussed the self-in-role concept, in which employees insert themselves into workplace situations based on emotion or cognitive state, and said that the way in which employees responded to situations was dependent on their state. The two self-in-role options were personal engagement and personal disengagement; personal engagement was defined as employees inserting themselves into workplace situations and into

relationships “physically, cognitively, and emotionally,” and personal disengagement was defined as employees withdrawing in those ways (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

These roles were important to distinguish as they dictated the involvement of the employee with the organization (Kahn, 1990). Employees who demonstrated personal engagement were involved with the organization and supported its interests; employees who were personally disengaged were uncommitted and unmotivated (Kahn, 1990). This understanding of employee engagement, and the idea that engagement encourages commitment and supplies motivation, provided the framework for the development of the survey and interview questions, which examined employees’ involvement, engagement, and motivation in the higher education workplace.

Organizational commitment theory. Organizational commitment theory, conceptualized by Meyer and Allen (1991), additionally provided framework for this study and research. Meyer and Allen (1991) stated that in order for employees to commit to an organization and be retained, three components must exist. These components included an employee having a desire for employment, a need for employment, and feelings of obligation to the organization. Meyer and Allen’s (1991) theory focused on the idea that commitment to an organization did not have to result from external factors such as goal obtainment, but commitment to the organization could also occur because of those three components of desire, need, and/or obligation.

This theory was utilized in the study, as survey and interview questions examined employees’ perceptions on engagement and motivation. Survey questions asked employees if they felt involvement with students impacted engagement, which investigated the desire and obligation factors of organizational commitment. Interview

questions examined the relationship further, as they investigated employee motivators and whether employees were more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors, which was based on desire and need. Questions additionally connected these responses to employee retention, which related to the employee's obligation to the institution. If employees did not feel commitment, they typically were not retained.

Engagement and Strategic Planning in Student Affairs

Strayhorn and Johnson (2019) reviewed the most promising places to work, for those working in student affairs. They emphasized the importance of organizational mindset and the impact it has on employee commitment. If the organization was dedicated to employee growth and satisfaction, and they showed that commitment to their employees, their employees were impacted (Paul, 2012; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2019). In their research and conversations with employees, Strayhorn and Johnson (2019) found that employees all felt a sense of belonging, not only within their department, but with the campus culture and community as whole; they additionally felt they were part of their professional field, outside of the campus community, and this sense of belonging on multiple levels led to employees feeling engaged.

Strategic planning and assessment are considered to be centered in student affairs. Fallucca (2018) stated that "student affairs is positioned to advocate and provide data-driven evidence to support accreditation processes by collaborating with other units within the campus community" as the burden of these processes falls on student affairs offices (p. 89). She added that student affairs also typically has to "track and verify" participation from students "in significant beyond the classroom activities" (p. 95). As a

result of these responsibilities, student affairs offices have important roles when it comes to accreditation, assessment, and retention (Fallucca, 2018; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016).

Student engagement research and how student engagement research results can assist in student affairs and planning has also been researched. Kinzie and Hurtado (2017) stated, “Student affairs divisions are also under pressure to improve student success and to demonstrate the effectiveness of programs and contributions to valued student outcomes” (p. 35). The engagement of the campus community and the effectiveness of the campus community falls on student affairs departments. They defined student engagement as “the time and effort students devote to activities linked to desired outcomes” (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017, p. 36). In cases where students were engaged, the students experienced greater success and were more likely to be retained as a result of that success (Fallucca, 2018; Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016). The burden of this success falls on student affairs departments; however, the entire campus community should be involved in order to achieve engagement goals (Fallucca, 2018; Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016).

Higher Education Predictions Related to Engagement and Planning

Porterfield and Whitt (2016) discussed future challenges and opportunities for leaders in student affairs. They stated that the future of higher education includes, “rethinking of student affairs work in light of major challenges confronting American higher education, including globalization, new demands for education, gaps in degree attainment and academic achievement, expanding technologies, and economic fluctuations” (p. 35). They added that this rethinking would need “to redefine roles and structures, focus on success for all students, build partnerships without borders, make

decisions based on evidence for accountability, and broaden definitions of the campus itself” (p. 35). Challenges for students and retaining students in the future will fall to student affairs employees who directly support students and their development (Fallucca, 2018; Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016).

Once a strategic plan is in place, higher education institutions should focus on developing mission statements that encompassed the plan goals. With strategic planning and the mission statement to support the plan, “every member of the campus community should be able to read the mission statement and know that they are in the right place at the right time to do something special” (Soliday & Mann, 2013, p. 39). The entire campus community should buy in to the plan, and employees should feel they have support and involvement in the plan and mission (Choban et al., 2008; Cloutier et al., 2015; Stephens, 2017). Soliday and Mann (2013) felt “there is no more appropriate time in the history of higher education than now to make an effort to clarify what we do and the difference it will make in students’ lives” (p. 39).

With clarification, students may respond differently to the question of why they are obtaining a degree. They may not respond that they are obtaining a degree to get a job, but they may come to understand that transformational experience that higher education can provide, and higher education employees may find more of a sense of purpose and satisfaction through that understanding. Soliday and Mann (2013) emphasized that “creating foundational statements without clear knowledge of current realities can prohibit us from the innovation necessary to thrive” (p. 40). They felt the key to thriving and retaining employees was to ensure the employees were a good fit for their roles and that employees were supported (Soliday & Mann, 2013). The current realities

included a history of declining employee retention and increased turnover rates and costs, and those were the areas the study aimed to offer strategies for change.

Summary

The literature reviewed the importance of retention and its history as related to the higher education institution. The discussion then reviewed the retention of higher education employees, and the impact high turnover rates have on institutions. The impact included direct and indirect costs. Current strategies for retaining employees were reviewed, including motivating employees through intrinsic means and retaining employees through engagement. One strategy was to connect employees and students through student organizations. The impact of this strategy was discussed, as well as what the literature says on the importance of strategic planning and institutional goals.

Much of the literature on retention in higher education has focused on student retention; however, employee retention is also an important issue that needs to be reviewed, as the direct and indirect costs of high employee turnover greatly impact the institution. The goal of this study was to add to the literature by examining a specific strategy that could engage employees and connect them to students to create intrinsic value and motivation, to create organizational buy-in and to encourage them to stay at the institution. The methodology for this study is reviewed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Research Method and Design

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine higher education employee involvement with student organizations to investigate if an employee's involvement led to increased employee engagement and retention. Employee turnover rates remain an issue at higher education institutions, and institutional leadership must find ways to retain employees, as retaining employees may lead to retained students and employee retention benefits the institution as a whole. To examine this situation, the researcher conducted a mixed methods study, utilizing both quantitative data and qualitative data. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated the benefits of mixed methods research were that qualitative data builds on the quantitative data, which allowed for the researcher to analyze the data on a larger scale and receive additional insight into the quantitative results.

Existing research did not focus on higher education employee retention strategies, especially ones through involvement and engagement with students. This study allowed for an initial exploration into whether involvement with students leads to increased engagement and increased retention for employees. Higher education senior leadership could use this information to incorporate employee retention into the strategic plan and to use these strategies to retain employees.

Null Hypotheses

Quantitative data was collected through a survey sent out to all full-time student affairs employees at both a small and midsize university. The participant pool was limited to a maximum of 130 participants. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that for

quantitative data, the sample size should be appropriate for the type of statistical tool used to analyze the data. This study used both a *t*-test of correlation and a two-sample *t*-test of independent means.

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no relationship between the number of hours an employee spends with a student organization and the number of months the employee is retained at the institution.

Null Hypothesis 1 was tested using a *t*-test of correlation, using the variables of the number of hours an employee spent with a student organization and the number of months the employee was employed with the institution.

Bluman (2015) stated when conducting a *t*-test of correlation, the following assumptions are typically made:

1. The sample is a random sample.
2. The data pairs fall approximately on a straight line and are measured at the interval or ratio level.
3. The variables have a bivariate normal distribution. (This means that given any specific value of *x*, the *y* values are normally distributed; and given any specific value of *y*, the *x* values are normally distributed.) (p. 545)

The researcher recruited participants from student affairs departments through the department supervisors. Participants could opt to complete the recruitment survey sent to them by their supervisors, and who completed the survey was anonymous, creating a random sample. The data pairs were measured at a ratio level as the variables indicated duration, and the variables were normally distributed.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university.

Null Hypothesis 2 was tested using a t-test of two independent means, to compare the employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university.

Bluman (2015) stated that when conducting a t-test of two independent means, the following assumptions are typically made:

1. The samples are random samples.
2. The sample data are independent of one another.
3. When the sample sizes are less than 30, the populations must be normally or approximately normally distributed. (p. 490)

The researcher recruited participants from student affairs departments through the student affairs department supervisors. Participants could opt to complete the recruitment survey sent to them by their supervisors, and who completed the survey was anonymous, creating a random sample. The sample data were independent of each other, as the data sets were from two different institutions, and the population was normally distributed.

Research Questions

Qualitative data was collected through interviews. Survey participants had the option to participate in an interview by selecting to participate when they completed the survey. The interview sample was limited to a maximum of 10 participants. In qualitative research, such as with case studies or interviews, sample sizes of 4-10 participants were often used, as the intention was to get an in-depth look at a few participants (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2011, p. 174). The focus was on a few in-depth samples, not on a large, general collection of data, as the in-depth samples gave more insight into the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, the researcher limited the interviews to a maximum of 10 participants.

Research question 1. How does employee engagement with student organizations impact employee retention?

This research question, which was directly asked in the interviews, expanded on the survey questions regarding employee engagement to gather further insight into survey responses.

Research question 2. Why do higher education employees choose to support student organizations?

This research question, which was also directly asked in the interviews, expanded on the survey questions examining employee involvement with student organizations.

Research Site

The researcher conducted the study at two universities, a small, private university and a midsize, private university, both located in the Midwest. The study locations were selected due to the variety of student organizations and engagement opportunities available to students and employees at these universities. According to the small university's website, this university had 32 student organizations and had over 500 activities each academic year. The small university enrolled approximately 2,500 students each year and had under 250 full-time employees. According to the midsize university's website, this university offered over 90 student organizations and had over 2,000 events each academic year. The midsize university enrolled just over 9,000 students each year

and had under 1,000 full-time employees. Both universities required that student organizations had an advisor, who was a faculty or staff member. Employees were recruited to advise student organizations through student organization officers and members, word of mouth, or university newsletters.

The purpose of conducting the study at both universities was two-fold. Extending the study allowed for a larger sample size when testing for a relationship between employees' length of employment and the time spent involved with student organizations. Additionally, recruiting from the small university allowed the researcher to conduct a comparative study between the two universities. The comparison allowed for an examination between a small and midsize university to determine if different measures should be taken when implementing recommendations and strategic plans.

The two universities were comparable in many aspects. The university mission statements, programs, services, and athlete populations were similar. The two universities often recruited similar student profiles and had a similar retention and persistence rate. Therefore, the employees working at both universities were used to working with similar student populations. This comparative examination was used to determine if similar recommendations should be made at schools of different sizes.

Participants

The participants selected were classified as full-time, student affairs employees. The small university defined full-time employees as those who worked 40 hours per week, with the work week running from Saturday to Friday, as stated in their employee guidebook. The midsize university defined full-time employees as those who worked more than 30 hours per week, with the work week running from Saturday to Friday, as

stated in their employee guidebook. At both universities, part-time employees were those that did not meet those requirements and worked under 30 hours, and they were typically not included in employee retention and/or turnover data. Jo (2008) stated that only full-time employees were included in organizational retention data. Therefore, even though part-time employees can and do serve as student organization advisors, since they were not included in retention data, they were not recruited for this study.

The participants selected were employed in the student affairs departments at the two universities. Porterfield and Whitt (2016) stated that student affairs employees were consistent in their work and purpose when it came to engaging students. They described student affairs' "core values":

1. Student affairs work is about students, and their growth, learning, and development.
2. Student affairs professionals facilitate student learning and development by: grounding their work in the mission and goals of their institutions; building campus and community partnerships to create seamless learning and living environments; advocating for students and their needs; contributing to scholarship and research about students; creating and assessing learning outcomes to inform and improve practices, programs, and policies; promoting diversity, social justice, and inclusive communities through programs, practices, and policies; increasing access to higher education and success for all students. (Porterfield & Whitt, 2016, p. 14)

Most research has focused on engagement and strategic planning and assessment with student affairs departments. Therefore, the researcher selected those employees who are

closest to engagement, involvement, and assessment for study recruitment. Student affairs missions were to support and engage students to retain them. The expectations of student affairs employees were that they will engage and retain students, and engagement originated in these departments.

The participants for the survey were recruited from both a small and midsize university. The survey was sent to all full-time employees in the student affairs departments on these campuses through email by the supervisors of these departments. Participants were also recruited through the posting of printed flyers in the student affairs departments on these campuses.

The survey asked participants if they have advised a student organization; if the participant selected no, they were taken to a final question at the end of the survey and were not given the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview, as the interview questions were directed to those who have advised a student organization. The participant pool was limited to a maximum of 130 participants, which is approximately 10% of the total full-time employee pool between the two universities. If over 130 participants completed the survey, the researcher planned to randomly select the participants using Microsoft Excel as a randomizing tool.

At the end of the survey, participants selected if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview. Only those who selected and provided contact information were contacted for an interview. The researcher selected to conduct a maximum of 10 interviews. Interviews with participants at the midsize university had the option to participate in an interview in-person, on campus or over the phone, and interviews with participants at the small university had the option to complete interviews over the phone.

Data Collection

The data collection included two parts, surveys and follow-up interviews. The study participants were full-time higher education employees recruited from student affairs departments at a small university and a midsize university. The researcher designed the study survey and interview questions. The study materials were sent to the supervisors of the full-time student affairs personnel for recruitment approval. The supervisors agreed to distribute the survey link by sending a recruitment email and by posting a printed recruitment flyer in their departments. The email and flyer also included a QR code that participants could scan to access the survey.

Once receiving approval from the site supervisors, the researcher completed the Institutional Research Board (IRB) process for study approval at the midsize, private campus. After receiving IRB approval, the email script, which included the instructions, link, and QR code, and the recruitment flyer, were sent to site supervisors for distribution. Site supervisors confirmed that they distributed the study materials.

Participants completed the study survey, and they selected if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview. The researcher then contacted participants for interviews and conducted the interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Any identifying information was removed before the interviews were transcribed and the data stored.

Surveys. An effective instrument to gather quantitative data is a survey. To gather data on higher education employee involvement, the researcher created a survey in Qualtrics (see Appendix C). The survey participants had the possibility of answering 12 questions; however, the survey had three overall pathways, and participants did not

complete all 12 questions. Before the participants were presented with the first survey question, they had to agree to an informed consent form (see Appendix A).

Survey question content. The first four survey questions asked participants to provide basic information. The questions asked participants at which university they were employed, how long they had been employed at that university, which department they worked for, and if they were aware that there were student organizations at their university. These questions were asked to gather demographic data to assist with organization results and to gather quantitative data for the hypotheses.

The following questions, questions five through seven, were used to gather data on the level of involvement with student organizations and to assist with sorting the data to test the hypothesis. The fifth question asked participants if they currently advised a student organization, have previously advised a student organization, or if they have never advised a student organization. If participants answered that they currently advised a student organization, they went to Question Six. Question Six then asked them how many hours they spent advising their student organization during an academic year (August through May). If participants answered that they previously advised a student organization but currently did not, they went to question seven. Since they no longer advised a student organization, and the data gathered on the number of hours the advisor spent per academic year was collected in order to determine if a relationship existed between that involvement and how long the employee was retained, there was only a need to gather information from those participants who currently advised. If participants selected that they had never advised a student organization, they were taken to Question Twelve. Question Twelve asked participants why they had never advised a student

organization. Participants who had not advised a student organization did not need to complete the additional questions as they were specific to those who had advised student organizations.

For participants who selected that they currently advised or previously advised a student organization, and moved to Question Seven, they were asked about the activities they were involvement with when advising the student organization. This question assisted with gathering data on the participants' level of involvement with student organizations to see if any themes emerged regarding involvement. Question Eight asked participants to what degree they felt an employee's involvement with a student organization impacted employee engagement, and Question Nine furthered that response by asking an open-ended question to explain in their own words if they felt an employee's involvement with a student organization impacted employee engagement. These three questions allowed for the researcher to gather data on the type of involvement participants had with student organizations, as well as their perceptions on involvement.

Survey question design. The researcher used a variety of survey question techniques when developing the survey to collect certain types of data. The three question types used to collect data were multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, and a Likert-type scale question. Multiple-choice questions were used when the response choices were limited, such as in the case of which university the participant worked for and if they were aware there were student organizations at their university. Since employees could only select one of the universities, and their knowing if their university had student organizations was limited to "yes" or "no." Therefore, since the responses

were limited, structuring the question as multiple-choice where the options were limited to the possible responses was used.

Open-ended questions were used when asking for the number of months the participant had been employed at their institution and for the total number of hours the participant spent with a student organization over an academic year. By leaving these questions open ended, the participant could type in the exact numerical values that corresponded with the number of months and number of hours. Since this data was used to test the hypotheses, specific numerical values were needed.

The question of to what degree the participant felt an employee's involvement with a student organization impacted employee engagement was answered using a Likert-type scale. The purpose of using this type of response technique was the question asked "to what degree," in which a Likert-type scale response was appropriate. This response type allowed for a consistent response type to better gauge those feelings, instead of allowing participants to provide a variety of responses. Participants were able to elaborate on their response in the following question by explaining their response in their own words. The data collected from these questions was utilized when examining the research questions.

Interviews. An effective instrument to gather qualitative data is an interview. The researcher used interviews for two purposes. One purpose was to validate the survey data and provide more insight into the quantitative data. Another purpose was to further answer the study's research questions.

Interview question content. The interview questions (see Appendix E) focused on further exploring employee perceptions of student organizations, employee involvement

and engagement, and employee retention. The goal of these questions, in addition to answering the research questions, was to provide further insight into the survey questions. The interview questions elaborated on the survey questions since they were open-ended, and interviewees provided in-depth responses to questions of involvement, engagement, and retention.

Interview question design. The researcher developed an interview script, which was used for each interview. Utilizing a script contributed to the reliability of the data as each interviewee experienced the same interview format and protocol. The researcher used open-ended questions for the interview so that participants would provide in-depth responses and not “yes or no” responses. This technique allowed for further explanation into higher education employee involvement, engagement, and retention and allowed for in-depth data to be collected.

Data Analysis

After data collection, the researcher analyzed the survey data and interview data. Once the surveys were completed, the researcher downloaded the data from Qualtrics. The researcher contacted the participants who selected to participate in a follow-up interview, and then removed any identifying information from the survey data. The survey data was then saved in an Excel spreadsheet in Office 365. The survey data was organized into different categories within the spreadsheet. One spreadsheet tab was reserved for the raw data. The survey data was sorted by participant information, with one tab on the spreadsheet containing the data on those who had never advised a student organization, with one containing data on those who previously and currently advised a

student organization, and with one containing information comparing participants by university of employment.

The researcher reviewed the data from participants who had never advised a student organization to look for themes on why they had never advised a student organization. The data on those who previously and currently advised a student organization were further sorted, as the data on both groups were used to explore the research questions, and the data specifically on those who currently advised were used to calculate the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and run a *t*-test to determine significance. The data regarding which university the participants were employed at were used to conduct the comparative study, which was run using a *t*-test of two independent means.

After the survey data was analyzed, the researcher conducted interviews with participants who selected to participate in a follow-up interview. The researcher transcribed the interview data, reviewed each question to look for themes, and compiled the responses into a table. Each interview transcription was reviewed a minimum of five times as the researcher compiled the responses into the table. The interview data was further examined when the researcher reviewed the transcriptions for individual interviewee quotations, which were cited as thematic evidence for analysis and implication discussion purposes in Chapters Four and Five.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity can impact the researcher when completing a study, which could potentially create bias, because the researcher may have constructed the study through their mindset or may gather results through their bias or construct (Attia & Edge, 2016;

Malterud, 2001). However, many recent studies suggested reflexivity could benefit the study and be used as a research study strategy, instead of resulting in research bias.

Berger (2015) stated that reflexivity occurred in three ways, which included when the researcher had experience in the field or had an experience similar to the study participants, when the researcher became integrated into the study, moving from an outward perspective to an inward one, and when the researcher had no experience with what was being studied.

In the case of this research study, the first situation of reflexivity applied, in which the researcher shared a similar experience with the study participants. The researcher worked in student affairs and had advised student organizations. Berger (2015) stated, however, that having a similar experience may not create bias but may result in the researcher being “better equipped with insights and the ability to understand implied content, and was more sensitized to certain dimensions of the data” (p. 223). Having that understanding and familiarity can result in the researcher understanding nuances and the common language, which provides further introspection (Attia & Edge, 2016; Berger, 2015). This concept was true for this study, as the researcher was able to further analyze and understand the responses provided on the surveys and the statements made in the interviews, because of the familiarity with the student affairs departments, different employment roles, and various engagement strategies.

Summary

The focus of this study was the impact employee involvement with student organizations has on employee engagement and retention. The study was conducted at a small, private university and a midsize, private university. Both universities have

comparable mission statements, student profiles, and employee demographics. The participants utilized in this study were all employed full-time, and all worked in student affairs departments.

The researcher used a mixed methods study to look at higher education employees and their involvement with student organizations and if that involvement impacted employee engagement and retention. Quantitative data were gathered through a survey, and qualitative data were gathered through interviews, which expanded on the survey data. The researcher also did a comparative study between the two universities to see if there was a difference between employee involvement with student organizations at a small university and a midsize university. The data was analyzed through the use of a *t*-test of correlation coefficients, a *t*-test of two independent means, and by **looking at** the survey and interview data to determine if themes existed and how those themes could inform the research questions. The results of this study were discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Overview

This study was focused on higher education employee involvement with student organizations and the impact involvement had on employee engagement and retention. This mixed-method study utilized a survey to gather quantitative data and post-survey interviews to gather qualitative data. The participants included full-time student affairs employees at a small and a midsize university. The researcher collected data to determine if a relationship existed between the number of hours an employee spent with a student organization and the number of months the employee was retained at the institution. The researcher analyzed this data using a *t*-test of correlation coefficients. The researcher also collected data to conduct a comparative study to determine if there was a difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university. These data were analyzed utilizing a *t*-test of two independent means. The post-survey interviews allowed for the collection of qualitative data to examine if employee engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention and why higher education employees chose to support student organizations. The researcher conducted the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the transcriptions for themes. The results of those studies and the analysis were reviewed in this chapter.

Participant Demographics

There were 65 participants who accessed the survey instrument. The researcher removed 17 of the 65 results because, in error, one of the site supervisors distributed the recruitment information to additional people outside of those in the supervisor's

department. The researcher removed participants who indicated they were from a department outside student affairs, since the study participants approved by IRB only included those who worked in student affairs, leaving the researcher with 48 survey results.

Of the remaining 48 survey results, the researcher removed 13 results as they were incomplete. Seven of those 13 participants clicked the survey to view the consent form but did not complete the survey. Five of the 13 participants completed just under half of the survey before exiting, ending at Question Five, which asked participants if they currently or previously advised a student organization. An additional participant completed 85% of the survey before exiting, without answering the last survey question on why they have never advised a student organization. With those 13 participant results removed from the data set, the remaining, usable data included 35 completed surveys, or 35 participants, which the researcher used as the main data set for analysis purposes.

In order to understand the participants' general knowledge of student organizations, one of the questions asked survey participants if they were aware that there were student organizations at the university at which they were employed. Only one participant of the 35 reported that they were not aware that there were student organizations at the university at which they were employed. As a result, over 97% of participants were aware that there were student organizations at the university at which they were employed. These results were important when considering the following: Of those 34 participants who were aware that there were student organizations, 16 participants had never advised a student organization, and of the 16, nine participants said they did not know how to become a student organization advisor or had not been

provided the opportunity. Therefore, the issue with engagement with student organizations was not that employees did not know they existed, but was because employees did not know how to become involved.

To gather quantitative data to test the hypotheses, one of the questions asked participants how many months they were employed at the university at which they worked. To analyze this data, the researcher grouped the participants' month of experience so that a range could be viewed (see Table 1). The exact months of employment reported for each individual were used when running a *t*-test of correlation coefficients, which the researcher reported on further under the Hypothesis 1 section of Chapter Four. The individual participant data collected for this question is also available in Appendix F.

Table 1

<i>Number of Employees and Their Months of Employment at Current Institution</i>	
<u>Months of Employment</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
0-12 months	11 participants
13-24 months	6 participants
25-36 months	6 participants
37-48 months	3 participants
49-60 months	2 participants
5-10 years	0 participants
10+ years	7 participants

As displayed in Table 1, for the recruited participants who completed the study survey, 80% of the participants were employed at their institution for under five years. None of the participants were employed in the 5 to 10-year range. The remaining 20% of participants were employed at their institution for over 10 years. Over half of the study participants had been employed for under two years, which aligns with the interview

responses stating the institution had experienced change and transition, which respondents felt resulted in higher employee turnover.

To further gather quantitative data to test the hypothesis, participants who currently advised a student organization were asked how many hours total per academic year (August-May) they directly worked with the student organization. Only 15 participants who selected they currently advised a student organization answered this question. The exact number of hours reported for each individual was used when analyzing the data using a *t*-test of correlation coefficients, which is reported on further under the Hypothesis 1 section of Chapter Four. The exact number of hours reported for each individual were also used when analyzing the data using the *t*-test of two independent means, which is reported on further under the Hypothesis 2 section of Chapter Four. The individual participant data collected for this question is also available in Appendix G. For analysis purposes, the participants' number of hours were grouped so that a range could be viewed (see Table 2).

Table 2

Number of Employees and Their Number of Hours Advising Student Organization for One Academic Year

<u>Number of Hours</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
0-30 hours	7 participants
31-60 hours	2 participants
61-90 hours	3 participants
91-120 hours	1 participant
121-150 hours	0 participants
151-180 hours	0 participants
180+ hours	2 participants

As displayed in Table 2, 13 of the 15 participants, or 86.7% of participants who reported on the length of time spent with student organizations, spent 100 hours or less per

academic year with the student organizations they advised. Since the academic year was from August to May, those hours were over the course of 10 months.

These data were important when considering the average commitment an employee could make if they decided to advise a student organization. On average, employees spent three to nine hours per month involved with their student organization. If campus leaders expect and support employee engagement with students and student organizations, the amount of time committed to the organization should be an important factor. If employees spend too much time with an organization, they could be overwhelmed or feel burned out.

Additional survey questions focused on to what degree employees felt involvement with a student organization impacted employee engagement to explore the study research questions. All participants felt an employee's involvement with a student organization somewhat or greatly impacted employee engagement. Of the 19 participants who currently advised or previously advised a student organization, 16 participants said employee involvement with student organizations impacted employee engagement that extended beyond the employee's regular job duties. For detailed participant responses, see Appendix I. These responses supported the study research questions, which examined if employee involvement with student organizations impacted employee engagement and retention. This information could assist campus leaders with determining ways to engage employees and to what degree. Study participants reported that they felt involvement with students and student organizations impacted employee engagement and employee roles outside of regular job duties.

Null Hypothesis 1

The survey asked participants to provide the length of their employment in months. The survey also asked participants who currently advised a student organization how many hours the participants spent advising a student organization in an academic year.

To analyze the relationship between an employee's number of hours spent with a student organization and the number of months the employee was retained at the university, the researcher calculated the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and conducted a *t*-Test to determine if it was statistically significant. Out of the 35 participants who completed the survey, 15 participants currently advised a student organization. Since the researcher investigated the relationship between an employee's involvement with an organization and length of employment, if the employee had never advised a student organization or no longer advised a student organization, those data were not used. The data used, for the 15 participants who currently advised a student organization, can be found in Table 3.

Null hypothesis 1. There is no relationship between the number of hours an employee spends with a student organization and the number of months the employee is retained at the institution.

Table 3

Employee Number of Hours Spent with Student Organization Over Academic Year and Months of Employment at Current Institution

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Hours - x</u>	<u>Months - y</u>
1	23	10
2	36	200
3	11	30
4	24	50
5	36	100
6	8	80
7	12	80
8	46	30
9	192	40
10	5	80
11	48	3
12	4	0
13	240	10
14	11	3
15	23	360

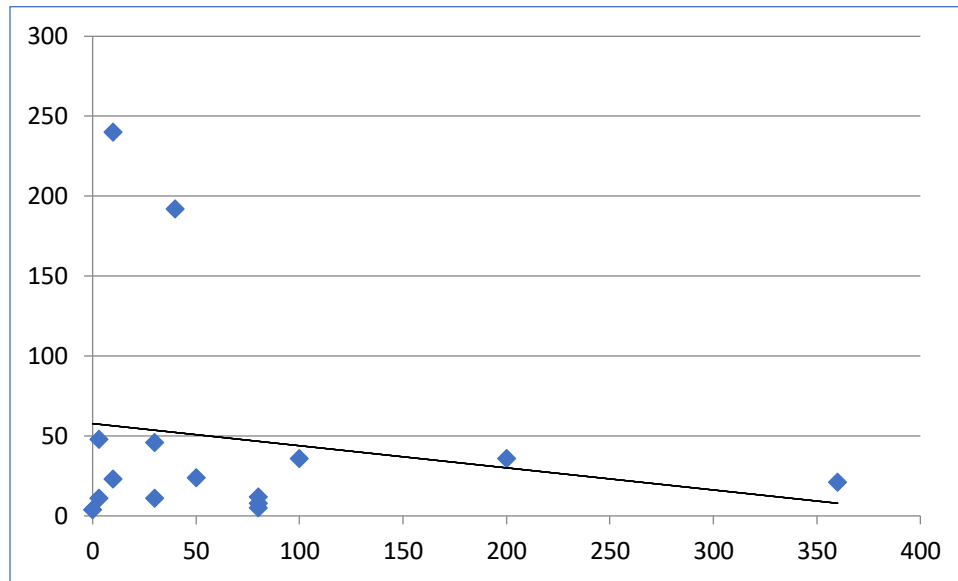


Figure 3. Employee hours with student organizations and months of employment. Correlation coefficient for relationship between number of hours spent with a student organization and months of employment at the institution. $N=15$; $r=-.188$; $p=0.5022$

The scatter plot, see Figure 3, showed the relationship between the number of hours an employee spent advising a student organization and the number of months they were employed at their current university. If there was a relationship between the number of hours an employee spent advising a student organization and the number of months they have been employed at their current university, the data points on the scatter plot would fall on the regression line. However, several data points do not fall on the line. The correlation coefficient ($r = -.188$) proved not to be significant; $t(13) = -0.69$, $p = 0.502$. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, and concluded that there is no relationship between the two variables.

Null Hypothesis 2

The survey asked participants to provide their number of hours spent advising a student organization over the course of an academic year (August - May). The survey also asked participants to provide their location of employment. The purpose was to gather data to compare involvement at a small university and midsize university.

To analyze the relationship between an employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and an employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university, the researcher used a t -test of two independent means. Out of the 35 participants who completed the survey, 15 participants currently advised a student organization. Since the researcher was investigating the relationship between employees who advised a student organization, if the participant had never advised a student organization or no longer advised a student organization, those data were not used. The data used from the 15 participants who currently advised a student organization can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Number of Hours Employee Advised Student Organization Over One Academic Year

<u>Small University</u>	<u>Midsize University</u>
3	10
0	200
10	30
3	50
360	100
-	80
-	80
-	30
-	40
-	80

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university.

A *t*-test of two independent means was run to compare the small and midsize university to examine if there was a difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university. The test was run using an alpha of .05. The *t*-test statistic was 0.10 (*df* = 13) with a *p*-value of .463. The null hypothesis was not rejected as there was not a significant difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university ($M = 75.2, SD = 159.25$) and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university ($M = 70, SD = 53.95$).

Table 5

Results of t-test of Two Independent Means

<u>t-test statistic</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>Mean</u>		<u>Standard Deviation</u>	
		Small University	Midsize University	Small University	Midsize University
.10	.463	75.2	70	159.25	53.95

Since there was not enough evidence to support that there was difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university, the number of hours each group spends advising was comparable.

Research Questions

The interview questions asked participants about their perceptions of and their experience with employee retention and engagement, and their involvement with students and student organizations. The interviews gathered additional information to provide further insight into the engagement and retention relationship initially explored in the survey.

There were 11 participants who selected that they would participate in an interview. Out of the 11 that were contacted, five participants scheduled and completed interviews. After completing the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews and analyzed the interview data. The results of that analysis can be viewed in Table 7 (see Appendix H).

Research question 1. How does employee engagement with student organizations impact employee retention?

After analyzing the interview transcriptions, the researcher noted five emerging themes that answered the research question of how employee engagement with student organizations impacts employee retention. These themes included that employee engagement with student organizations provided outlets, created intrinsic value, fostered positive environments, built relationships, and increased retention.

Theme one: Provided outlets. Engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention because it provided employees with outlets. For this study, engagement was defined as the level of involvement and investment on behalf of the employee, and employee retention was defined as the length of employment with the institution or organization. An outlet was defined as a task or activity outside of one's regular job duties, such as when providing a workshop to a student organization on leadership, that provided the employee with a break from their regular job duties. Interview participants stated engagement with student organizations contributed to their retention because engagement provided them with those types of outlets, giving them a break. One interviewee stated the following:

My face is in the computer a lot, and that is not why I work in higher education. I work in higher education to be involved with the students. That positively impacts my experiences, and helps me to keep my head in the game. I am reminded of why I am here.

Another interviewee stated, "It breaks up the day, the daily task list." These employees felt engaging with student organizations provided them with a break from regular job duties. This break allowed them to return to regular job duties refreshed and motivated.

Providing employees with outlets, especially when those outlets related to students, was essential to employee workplace satisfaction and retention.

Theme two: Created intrinsic value. Engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention because it created intrinsic value. Intrinsic value was defined as the internal motivators and associated value that comes from internal means. Employees who had intrinsic value felt they were appreciated and felt their work was rewarding. As noted by one interviewee, “I am motivated by intrinsic factors, and I am like my employees. I enjoy being engaged on campus. It keeps me pumped up.” Others noted that this engagement was rewarding and enriching, and those opportunities were ones they looked forward to and that motivated them. Interview participants felt engagement with students and student organizations impacted them in a way that provided intrinsic value, which they felt was directly related to their retention at the institution. Connecting employees to students, student organizations, or other means that create intrinsic value was key to employee retention.

Theme three: Fostered positive environments. Engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention because it fostered a positive environment. A positive environment was defined as a workplace in which employees felt they were engaged with students, connected with the campus community, encountered rewarding and enriching experiences, and felt valued. In one case, the interviewee felt that working with student organizations “influenced [her] workplace in a positive way” and that it “helps [employees] feel more comfortable in their jobs.” Another stated, “If all of us are trying to connect with students in a positive way, there’s that velcro, that connection.” Employees felt connecting with student organizations made the environment more

positive and enjoyable. The connection they felt, and engagement in the campus community, was an important factor when considering retention. Connecting employees and creating a positive environment through such connections motivates employees to stay at the institution.

Theme four: Built relationships. Engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention because it built relationships. Those relationships were between employees and students, between employees and student organizations, and between employees. Additionally, relationships created a positive environment. One interviewee stated,

I think it's all about the relationship you're able to build, especially in student affairs. If you're not able to make a connection with a student and you're not able to work together in a beneficial way, it would not work well. It would make me feel it wasn't a good institutional fit. I have never had an issue connecting with students, and it has been an amazing opportunity.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of connections between students and employees, and how those relationships impacted retention for both groups. Participants also emphasized the importance of building relationships to create a positive environment and an overall positive campus culture. Employees who built relationships with others felt intrinsic value, and strong relationships were a reason they were retained.

Theme five: Increased retention. In all cases, participants felt engagement with student organizations increased employee retention. Engagement with student organizations provided employees with an outlet, which provided them with motivation. As one stated, "The students are the reason I like my job." Without interactions with

students and the campus community, participants stated they would feel less engaged and therefore less satisfied. Engagement and motivation created intrinsic value, and connections created positive environments and allowed employees to build relationships. The components worked together to create an experience for employees that made them enjoy the workplace environment, and therefore want to stay in their roles, or in other words, be retained.

Research question 2. Why do higher education employees choose to support student organizations?

After analyzing the interview transcriptions, the researcher noted five emerging themes that answered the research question of why higher education employees choose to support student organizations. Employees chose to support student organizations to foster an overall community, to support first generation students, to recreate the employee's own undergraduate experience, to support students outside the classroom, and to maintain an employee's motivation.

Theme one: Fostered an overall community. Higher education employees chose to support student organizations because it fostered an overall community. Fostering an overall community meant that employees felt connected to one another and to students, and these relationships provided a means of connectedness and belonging. One interviewee stated, "I feel it is important for the students to have support from people in their community. I am a part of their community, and I have something I can help them with." Most participants noted that the relationships they build by advising student organizations helped to create a sense of family and connection. The word "family" was referenced by the interview participants, who indicated that this component was

important to them. Employees felt a sense of community or family gave them purpose and motivation.

Theme two: Supported first generation students. Higher education employees chose to support student organizations because doing so supported first generation students. First generation students were defined as any student who was the first person in their family to attend a four-year university, or whose parents did not attend an institution and graduate with a four-year degree. Interviewees emphasized the importance of supporting first generation students. One participant oversaw a first-generation student group because “students need to hear how similar it is for them as it was for us.” Another interviewee noted, “I was a first-generation college student. So, by being involved like I was, in fraternity and sorority life and in community service clubs, those were the parts I remember the most.” Interview participants reported student organizations could assist with first generation student support and development. Student organizations impacted participants’ lives in ways that were transformational, and they wanted to support students in the same way, to provide that opportunity. Employees felt that providing these opportunities made their roles rewarding and enriching and provided motivation in the workplace.

Theme three: Recreated employee’s own undergraduate experience. Higher education employees chose to support student organizations because doing so recreated the employee’s undergraduate experience. In addition to the statements regarding first generation students as a reason for supporting student organizations, participants also referenced that supporting student organizations was important because their involvement as an undergraduate student was impacted by such involvement. One interviewee stated,

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without student organizations at my own undergraduate institution. I would not be in the field I am with them.” Another stated she supported student organizations because they were an important part of her undergraduate experience and “they helped [her] become the person [she is] today.” These employees wanted to provide the same experience for students, stating like experiences assisted with their development and felt their involvement transformed them and allowed them to experience growth. As with the employees who focused on supporting first generation students, these employees felt supporting students’ growth and development provided them with a rewarding and enriching experience.

Theme four: Supported students outside the classroom. Higher education employees chose to support student organizations because the organizations supported students outside the classroom. These employees noted that in-class experiences and instruction were important to the growth and development of students, but outside-the-classroom experiences were just as important. When participating in activities outside the classroom, students had opportunities to grow in other ways, such as through building relationships and developing leadership skills. One interviewee said involvement with student organizations “caters to the development of students in a way they do not get in the classroom.” The interviewee added,

It gives us the ability to make sure the students we’re putting out in the post-grad world are a lot more well-rounded. They have their academic background, but they also have their social identity background and everything that goes with leadership development and professional development, which they do not get in the classroom.

Most of the interviewees commented on the impact student organizations have on student development outside of the classroom. Seeing students grow and develop was a key factor when considering the employee's satisfaction. Employees looked forward to seeing these students graduate, which motivated the employees to continue in their roles and continue to support students.

Theme five: Maintained employee's motivation. Higher education employees chose to support student organizations because it helped them maintain motivation. One employee stated that "having the students around is that constant energizer bunny." Another stated that supporting student organizations was something she looked forward to, and said, "You go, you know what, I have to write this big report today, but next week I get to participate in this big event that involves students. That makes it balanced." Working with student organizations helped employees maintain that balance. It helped to foster a community in which they could support different student groups and assist students to grow and develop outside the classroom. This environment and these experiences helped employees to feel valued and rewarded, which caused them to find balance and provided them with motivation. Motivation allowed employees to find intrinsic value and satisfaction, which assisted with their retention at the institution.

Summary

This mixed method study examined the relationship between higher education employee involvement with student organizations and employee engagement and retention. Quantitative data was gathered through a survey, and qualitative data was gathered through interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed using a *t*-test of correlation coefficients to determine if a relationship existed between an employee's

number of hours spent with a student organization and an employee's length of employment. The null hypothesis was not rejected and there was no relationship.

Also, a comparative study was also conducted utilizing the data from the small university and the midsize university. A *t*-test of two independent means was run to determine if there was a difference in the number of hours an employee advised a student organization at a small university and the number of hours an employee advised a student organization at a midsize university. The null hypothesis was not rejected, and there was no difference between the number of hours an employee advised a student organization when comparing the two universities.

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews. The researcher conducted interviews with five participants. The interview respondents provided more insight into the survey responses and answered how employee engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention and why employees chose to support student organizations. The interview data indicated that employees were motivated by engagement with students. Relationships with students created intrinsic value for employees, which made them more satisfied. Employees stated interactions with students were directly related to their retention. The survey and interview responses were discussed further in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

To examine the relationship between higher education employee involvement with student organizations and employee engagement and retention, the researcher conducted a mixed method study. The researcher gathered quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data through interviews. The data gathered was also used to conduct a comparative study between a small university and a midsize university. The quantitative data gathered through the surveys was analyzed using a *t*-test of correlation coefficients and a *t*-test of two independent means. The qualitative data gathered through interviews was analyzed by looking for themes and by examining how the data provided further insight into the survey responses.

Through surveys and interviews, the researcher hoped to determine the following: if a relationship existed between the number of hours employees spent engaged with student organization and their length of employment, to see if their involvement and engagement with students had an impact; if there was a difference between the number of hours an employee at a small university spent with a student organization and the number of hours an employee at a midsize university spent with a student organization; in what ways employee involvement with student organizations impacted employee retention; and the reasons why employees chose to support student organizations.

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no relationship between the number of hours an employee spends with a student organization and the number of months the employee is retained at the institution.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference between employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees' number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university.

Research Questions

Research question 1. How does employee engagement with student organizations impact employee retention?

Research question 2. Why do higher education employees choose to support student organizations?

Discussion

Null hypothesis 1. The researcher conducted a *t*-test of correlation coefficients to determine if there was a relationship between the number of hours an employee spent with a student organization and the number of months the employee was retained at the institution. These data were gathered from a survey taken by full-time student affairs employees who worked at small and midsize, private universities in the Midwest. The survey gathered data on employees who currently advised student organizations, including the number of hours spent advising student organizations and the number of months participants were employed at their current institution. The hours and the months were utilized as the variables for the *t*-test of correlation coefficients, to determine if the

length of employment was dependent on the number of hours involved. The results of the correlation test revealed no relationship.

Even though these data suggested no relationship, there could be several factors that led to the results not showing a relationship. One of those factors was that some of the participants indicated involvement with student organizations for more than 200 hours per year. This number was higher than most of the other participants, which could have impacted the test results. The scatter plot showed those data points far from the regression line on the plot. These employees were most likely ones who worked with student organizations as part of their regular job duties and reported a higher number of hours. Some employees oversaw fraternity and sorority life or leadership programming, which meant most of their employment hours involved working with student organizations. These data provided from these employees could have impacted the correlation results as the numbers varied from other reported results.

Another factor that could have impacted the results was the number of months participants were employed at their institution also varied. These data ranged from employees stating that they had been employed for 4 months to being employed for 240 months. In interviews conducted following the surveys, employees stated that employee retention had decreased, and employee turnover had increased due to leadership changes and other institutional transitions. Changes and transitions and the hiring of new employees could have impacted how they responded. In one case, an employee reported being employed for eight months, and 80 hours in a year involved with organizations. Since that employee had not been employed for a year, the number of hours involved was most likely an estimate or projection. Also, employees who had been employed for five

or more years may have just started advising an organization a few months before completing the survey, so those data would not suggest involvement had an impact.

Bluman (2015) stated if the null hypothesis was rejected, there could be factors causing the hypothesis to be rejected. One of those factors was that “there may be a complexity of interrelationships among many variables” (Bluman, 2015, p. 551). In this case, the length of time employees worked at the institution could be a result of other factors. There were many engagement opportunities outside of advising student organizations. Also, an employee’s length of employment could depend on other institutional factors, such as what department the employee works for. In the interviews following the survey, many participants indicated that they felt employees in student affairs were retained at a higher rate due to the nature of the job, whereas employees working in departments such as admissions or business and financial offices were retained at a lower rate. Therefore, other factors could lead to an employees’ length of employment outside of involvement with student organizations, which may have resulted in the data not indicating a significant relationship between the number of hours an employee spends with a student organization and the number of months the employee was retained at the institution.

Null Hypothesis 2. The researcher conducted a *t*-test of two independent means to compare a small and midsize university to determine if there was a difference between employees’ number of hours spent with student organizations at a small university and employees’ number of hours spent with student organizations at a midsize university. These data were gathered from a survey taken by full-time student affairs employees who worked at small and midsize, private universities in the Midwest. The survey gathered

data on employees who currently advised student organizations, including the number of hours spent advising student organizations and the location of employment. A comparative study was conducted using a *t*-test of two independent means, to determine if there was a difference between employees' time spent with student organizations at a small university and a midsize university. The result of the comparison using the *t*-test of two independent means was there was no difference between the hours spent with student organizations between employees at the two universities.

One factor that may have influenced there not being a difference in the time spent with student organizations was that the schools had similar profiles. The universities had similar student populations and similar student organizations. The employees hired completed similar tasks and followed similar missions. Also, both universities offered a variety of engagement opportunities with students and student organizations. Therefore, because of those similarities, that may have resulted in the similar responses.

Additionally, this study was conducted at a small and a midsize university, where many engagement tasks fall within the same department, so they communicate concerning these concepts on a regular basis. Responses may be different when looking at large universities. At large universities, the tasks may be distributed across multiple departments. If those tasks were distributed across multiple departments, the communication between employees in the departments might not be as frequent or in depth as communication between employees who work in the same department. Therefore, employees at large universities may have same conversations, and may have provided different responses.

Research question 1. The researcher conducted interviews to examine the question of how employee engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention. The researcher interviewed five participants, transcribed the interviews, and examined the transcriptions to look for themes. All of the participants interviewed currently advised a student organization. The emerging themes of how employee engagement with student organizations impacted employee retention were that engagement provided outlets, created intrinsic value, fostered positive environments, built relationships, and increased retention.

All of the participants felt their engagement with student organizations directly impacted their retention. They indicated students were the reason they enjoyed their job, and they looked forward to working with students outside of their regular job duties. This engagement with students helped them to build relationships, which made them feel they had a sense of community on campus. Those relationships were what motivated them and made them enjoy their positions and made them want to continue in their roles.

Research question 2. The researcher conducted interviews to examine why higher education employees chose to support student organizations. The researcher interviewed five participants, transcribed the interviews, and examined the transcriptions to look for themes. All of the participants currently advised a student organization. The emerging themes of why employees supported student organizations were that supporting student organizations fostered an overall community, employees wanted to support first generation students, it recreated an employee's own undergraduate experience, it supported students outside the classroom, and it maintained an employee's motivation.

Employees wanted to support student organizations due to the benefits gained personally and by the students. They stated that they supported student organizations because it helped them to stay motivated and gave them balance, but also because they wanted to give back to the students and see them succeed. Supporting student organizations was supporting students, but supporting student organizations also meant that they were supporting their own well-being, since they felt it gave them balance and purpose.

Implications

These findings include several implications that higher education leaders should take into consideration. These implications are that employees need outlets to prevent burnout and stay motivated, intrinsic value is important to employees and is why they stay in their positions, employees want to be engaged, and engagement leads to their retention. These implications are discussed further in the following sections.

Employees needed outlets. Participants discussed how student organizations and engagement outside of their regular job duties motivated them and provided balance. Employees who do not have outlets often become dissatisfied or face burnout. Engaging with student organizations can help with preventing burnout, which can assist with employee retention.

Intrinsic value was important. Participants also stated they were motivated in the workplace because of intrinsic factors. These factors included the rewarding feelings employees felt when working with and supporting students. Participants described how happy students were when they saw employees at events and how positive and inspiring

it was to work with students. These factors provided them with intrinsic value and made caused participants to enjoy their positions.

Employees wanted to be engaged and supported. Since participants received intrinsic value from working with student organizations, they expressed a desire to be engaged and supported in that engagement. Participants felt more education on student organizations and engagement was needed. Additionally, respondents believed supervisors needed to support interest in engagement with student organizations, such as allowing employees to work with student organizations during their regular work hours.

Engagement led to retention. Participants discussed their institution was currently experiencing higher than usual employee turnover due to leadership changes and other transitions. However, participants expressed they still enjoyed their positions, and valued relationships with students. Respondents thought other employees felt the same way, and many employees stayed in their positions because all institutions experience change and transition. Employees remained at their institution because the value of positive relationships and experiences with students outweigh negative feelings about change and transition. Higher education leaders can use this information to keep employees motivated during times of change and transition when employees otherwise feel unsatisfied and uncertain.

Study Limitations

The researcher addressed the following study limitations. The researcher did not have access to data on employees not retained by the universities, and therefore, information on why those employees left positions could not be utilized in the study or analyzed. The researcher only had access to information on employees the universities

retained and worked full-time in the Student Affairs department. Since the study hypotheses were focused on why employees were retained, the study results were not impacted by this limitation. Additionally, since the research questions focused on employee retention and employee support of student organizations, this limitation did not impact the data collected.

The participants' length of employment was also a study limitation. Some employees reported they had been employees for only a few months, whereas other employees had been employed for over 10 years. Participants were recruited from two universities in order to expand the participant pool and the data collected in anticipation of these results. Additionally, since these two groups were far from the regression line in the correlation test, they were considered outliers, and they did not impact the results of the correlation test.

The researcher recruited from Student Affairs departments at small and midsize private universities. The study results may have differed if participants had been recruited from other campus departments. Student Affairs participants felt that employees' experiences with engagement, intrinsic motivation, and retention in other departments may differ, such as with those who worked in Admissions or Financial Services. However, the researcher did not have access to these other employee populations. These groups could be utilized as participants for future studies.

During the course of this study, it was announced that one of the campuses of the midsize university would be closing in a year, which may have impacted participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about their institution of employment. Additionally, a few months before the study was conducted, the president of that same university system

was terminated, and the institution had not yet appointed a new president. Interview participants noted the changes and transitions happening on campus, which they felt contributed to increased turnover and decreased employee retention. These aspects did not impact the results of the survey questions as the questions focused on employee relationships with student organizations. Additionally, in the interviews, while participants noted these aspects, they also stated they felt these types of changes were a normal part of any higher education institution and organization, so these factors were what they considered to be normal.

Recommendations for Study Replication

The researcher explored the hypotheses by gathering data through a survey, and the research questions by gathering data through the survey and follow-up interview. After reviewing the data, the researcher proposed the following changes be made to the study before replication.

Survey recommendations.

Question two. In Question Two of the study survey, participants were asked the following: Which department do you work for at the university at which you are employed?

Of the 35 participants, 12 reported they worked in residential life, six reported they worked in student support services, four reported they worked in student involvement. The remaining 13 reported they worked in student affairs without providing a specific department under student affairs.

The researcher recommended the question be changed to include the specific overall department so that participants could list their specific sub-department, such as by

stating the question as the following: Which department do you work for in student affairs at the university at which you are employed?

Rewording the question in that way would have allowed the researcher to examine the specific number of hours employees in different areas of student affairs spent with employees. Additionally, knowing the specific area of students affairs that the employee worked in would have allowed the researcher to investigate if that component impacted their length of employment. Furthermore, the information would have allowed the researcher to explore whether their area of employment affected their knowledge of and role with student organizations.

Question five. In Question Five of the study survey, participants were asked the following: Do you currently or have you previously advised a student organization at the university at which you are employed?

Participants reported that 15 currently advised a student organization, four have previously advised a student organization but currently do not, and 16 participants never advised a student organization.

For the 15 participants who currently advised a student organization, they answered Question Six, and data were collected on how many hours total per academic year the participant directly worked with the student organization. For the 16 participants who never advised a student organization, they were taken to Question 12 of the survey, which asked why they have never advised a student organization. For the four participants who previously advised a student organization but currently did not, they were directed to Question Seven.

Data were gathered on participants who currently advised a student organization, which included the number of hours spent with the student organization in an academic year. Data were gathered on participants who have never advised a student organization, which was reported in Question Twelve. However, there was no question to gather data from participants who previously advised a student organization but currently did not regarding why the participants no longer advised a student organization. That information might have been used for further investigation, such as the level of support needed from supervisors, or if additional opportunities to work with student organizations were needed. Therefore, the researcher recommended adding a question to examine why employees previously advised a student organization but currently did not.

Recruitment pool recommendations. Study participants were recruited from student affairs departments at a small, private university and a midsize, private university. As discussed in Chapter Three, participants were recruited from these departments because of their roles with students and student organizations, and involvement with engagement strategies, implementation, and assessment. Student affairs missions focused on support and engagement. These employees were expected to be involved and engaged with students. While the recruitment pool provided valuable insight into the research study hypotheses and research questions, expanding the recruitment pool is recommended.

Recruiting student organization advisors as additional participants would have assisted in two aspects. Recruiting student organization advisors as participants would have provided additional data for the hypotheses. The hypothesis tests were run utilizing data on participants who currently advise a student organization. The tests were used to

examined if there was a relationship between the number of hours an employee spent with a student organization and the employee's length of employment. Recruiting additional participants who would have fallen into this category would have allowed for a larger test sample. This data could have changed the results of tests.

Question Two asked participants how long they had been employed. The number of months varied from four months to over 360 months. When the researcher put the data together as discussed in Chapter Four, there was a gap in the number of months reported. All participants reported they had worked under five years or over 10 years, but there were no employees who fell into the five to 10 years of employment range. Expanding the participant pool could have allowed for further investigation into whether that gap could be explained by the participant pool size or by general employment trends.

Additionally, recruiting from the student organization advisor pool would have allowed for faculty participants to provide data. Since the study participants were recruited from student affairs departments, where all employees were classified as staff, faculty involvement and engagement were not studied. Studying faculty could have provided a different perspective on the engagement experience and the impact involvement with student organizations has on faculty outside the classroom. Study participants stated that involvement in student organizations positively impacted the student experience outside the classroom. If faculty were recruited, they could provide additional insight into that experience.

Survey distribution recommendations. Lastly, changing how the surveys were distributed is recommended. Since the researcher worked for the institution in which the study was conducted, to prevent bias and to avoid participants from feeling obligated or

coerced to complete the study, the survey was distributed by the student affairs department supervisors. The survey was provided to four supervisors who agreed to distribute the surveys, with instructions on who to distribute the survey to and in what ways. However, one site supervisor sent the survey to those outside of the student affairs department in error. Those results were filtered from the data before the survey results were analyzed.

To prevent similar errors, two recommendations are provided. First, retrieve the email addresses of the student affairs employees from the site/department supervisors, rather than the site supervisors sending out the survey. If the supervisors provided the employee emails, the accuracy of the participant recruitment distribution could be ensured. Also, if the researcher distributed the survey instead of the site supervisors, steps toward preventing bias would need to be implemented. The researcher suggested conducting the study at institutions outside of their institution of employment, or distributing the survey at the institution of employment, but to departments in which the employees did not have a workplace relationship with the researcher.

Recommendations to the Field of Study and Practitioners in the Field

Based on the data, analysis, and research, the researcher recommended the following to the field of study and to practitioners in the field: employees should find ways to be engaged, employees should find intrinsic value, campus leaders and supervisors should support employees who want to be engaged, campus leaders and supervisors should support employees during summer breaks and other seasonal times, and employee retention and engagement strategies should be incorporated into the strategic plan.

Employees should find ways to be engaged. Study data indicated employees found meaning through engagement. Engagement with students and student organizations motivated employees, helped them to find balance, and provided an outlet from their regular job duties. Employees also found experiences with students and student organizations rewarding and enriching. Employees stated those experiences directly related to their satisfaction and retention at the institution. The researcher recommended employees seek out engagement opportunities with students and student organizations to prevent burnout, increase satisfaction, and find intrinsic value.

Strayhorn and Johnson (2019) reported on the best places to work in student affairs. These institutions were the places to work for student affairs employees because of the level of engagement. Engagement on multiple levels for these employees was important for these employees, including engagement with students, colleagues, and the professional field. These levels of engagement led to employee satisfaction and engagement, which was directly related to their retention with the institution (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2019). Employees who were satisfied were committed and were therefore retained.

Employees should find intrinsic value. Study data indicated employees found motivation through intrinsic means. Engagement with student organizations was just one way in which employees were engaged. Employees engaged with students in other ways as well, which also provided intrinsic value. Intrinsic value was created through assisting students with housing issues, personal issues, and academic issues. The employees found assisting these students with those issues was rewarding. That feeling of reward motivated employees and provided them with intrinsic value. That intrinsic value made

employees want to stay in their positions because it brought them workplace satisfaction. The researcher recommended employees seek out opportunities with students that bring them intrinsic value, as they are more likely to feel rewarded and find satisfaction in the workplace, which assists with retention.

Employee engagement has been used to provide intrinsic motivation. Meunier and Bradley (2019) stated that employees were intrinsically motivated by five factors, which included the organization providing a safe environment, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, a sense of trust, and a sense of achievement. One key point they made was related to employees' sense of belonging; they said that if employees collaborated and had connectedness, when they faced situations where they were not motivated, they could use that community to stay connected and regain motivation (Meunier & Bradley, 2019). Employees should seek out these opportunities and relationships as they create intrinsic value and can assist in challenging situations.

Employees who want to be engaged should be supported. Study data indicated employees not only wanted to be engaged with students and were motivated through that engagement, but that they wanted additional engagement opportunities and sought out supervisor support for those opportunities. As discussed in Chapter Two in the review of literature, over-engaged employees developed burnout, and strategies needed to be implemented to counter this burnout. Mullen et al. (2018) studied the importance of supervisor support with employee burnout. They stated that supervisors had the ability to alleviate stress and decrease burnout for the employees if they implemented strategies to do so (Mullen et al., 2018). They also suggested providing trainings for employees that would assist them with managing feelings that come from stress and burnout (Mullen et

al., 2018). Guthrie et al. (2005) provided similar thoughts, and stated, “Issues with balance and job-related stress...affects student affairs practitioners across all levels. Multiple studies identified women, introverts, and young professionals as student affairs professionals that may be at high risk for burnout” (p. 112). Not only do student affairs employees experience burnout and need support, but so do employees across all departments.

Employees need support for these engagement opportunities because in order to be engaged, they sometimes need to attend meetings or events during their regular work hours. To attend these meetings or events during their regular work hours, they need supervisor approval. Also, in order for employees to attend after hour or weekend events, and not feel a sense of burnout, supervisors could allow employees to flex their time. Since these experiences assist with employee satisfaction and retention, they benefit the employee, supervisor, and institution. The researcher recommended that supervisors and campus leaders support employees so they are able to engage in involvement opportunities.

Employees should be supported during seasonal times. Study data indicated employee engagement with students was why they found motivation and satisfaction in the workplace. Employees stated, however, that not being engaged with students led to feelings of dissatisfaction. They mentioned how difficult the summer break was because they missed the students and the engagement opportunities with students. They stated that others in their department felt the same way, and they often felt that way during break periods. Even though they were planning for when students returned, they felt dissatisfaction. They felt they would not feel the same rewarding experiences they had

described when discussing their engagement with students until students returned in the fall. The researcher recommends that supervisors and campus leaders find alternatives to employee engagement so that they still feel satisfied, even when they are unable to directly engage with students and student organizations, to assist with motivation and satisfaction.

Employee engagement and retention strategies should be incorporated into the strategic plan. Study data indicated employee engagement with students led to employee motivation and satisfaction. If employees were more motivated and satisfied, they were more likely to be retained. Furthermore, employees stated that engagement kept them motivated and satisfied, even during times of change and transition when employees were dissatisfied and uncertain. Research has examined the impact engagement had on motivation and commitment to the organization (Berger & Milem, 2000; Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Jo, 2008; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). When employees were engaged, employees felt a sense of reward, satisfaction, and motivation, and when they experienced these feelings, they were more likely to feel organizational commitment (Berger & Milem, 2000; Guha & Chakrabarti, 2015; Jo, 2008; Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

Engagement and intrinsic value can impact employee retention when other factors do not. The researcher recommended that campus leaders take these findings into consideration and implement employee retention measures into the strategic plan. Strategic plans typically include goals for student retention, but should equally include goals for employee retention, as the relationships between the two could lead to retention for both groups.

Recommendations for Future Study

Based on the data and the analysis, the researcher recommended future studies be conducted on the following: perceptions on and knowledge of student affairs, perceptions on and knowledge of student organizations and engagement opportunities, whether intrinsic value depends on the department in which one works, how employee relationships with students and employee engagement will be impacted with the move toward online education.

Perceptions on and knowledge of student affairs. The researcher recommended that future studies look at institutional perceptions on and knowledge of student affairs. Student affairs employees who participated in this study stated that employees who worked in other departments at the institution, and institutional leaders, were unaware of the roles of student affairs employees. They felt those who worked outside student affairs were unaware of how many hours and how much planning go into engagement opportunities. They completed tasks such as managing budgets to minimize cost and overseeing student retention through engagement, or completing a wellness check on a student to ensure their safety, but those outside their department saw them as party planners or those who get to have fun with students.

Burke et al. (2016) discussed the complexity of this situation and perception. They stated that “the responsibilities of student affairs professionals create a high personal demand in terms of time, talent, and energy” and that they “are at times subject to conflicting demands, work long hours, are objects of public criticism, and after often not thanked for what they do, they are physically and emotionally exhausted by the end

of any semester or academic year” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 94). The study participants reported similar feeling to those described by Burke et al. (2016).

As a result of those feelings and perceptions, employees did not always sense they were valued outside their department. One participant said she felt she was always persuading people on why her role had value. Therefore, the researcher recommended that future studies look at these perceptions on and knowledge of student affairs, to lead to these types of employees feeling recognized and valued by the institution, to increase retention of these employees.

Perceptions on and knowledge of student organizations. The researcher recommended that future studies look at institutional perceptions on and knowledge of student organizations. In the survey, participants responded that they were aware that there were student organizations on campus. However, for those who did not currently advise a student organization, they stated it was because they did not know how to get involved with a student organization. Since the study participants worked in student affairs, they should have been directly involved with those who oversaw student organizations.

Also, student affairs employees typically are directly involved with overall student engagement, so these employees should have been aware of engagement opportunities, such as with student organizations. If those in the department were unaware, it may be that most employees on campus were unaware. The researcher recommended that future studies look at these perceptions on and knowledge of student organizations to determine if the campus community is aware of these types of engagement points since they may lead to employee satisfaction and retention.

Intrinsic value and department of employment. The researcher recommended that future studies look at whether employees in departments outside of student affairs also felt most motivated through intrinsic means. The interview participants stated that they were motivated through intrinsic means. They also stated that they felt others in their department were also motivated by intrinsic means. However, they noted that they were uncertain if all employees were motivated by intrinsic means, and motivation could vary by department. They felt that since they worked in student affairs and worked directly with students, it was easier to find intrinsic value due to the rewarding relationships with students and the engagement opportunities.

They stated that other employees, such as those who worked in admissions or in the financial office, may not experience the same interactions with students, so therefore may be motivated by extrinsic factors such as titles and/or pay. They were uncertain if those extrinsic factors retained employees because they felt those were the departments that typically experienced higher turnover rates. The researcher recommended that future studies look at whether employees in departments outside of student affairs also felt most motivated through intrinsic means as those aspects could affect employee retention.

Szymanowski (2013) studied one of these populations the study participants felt were impacted differently. He discussed the impact the higher education institution had on employee turnover in development departments. Szymanowski (2013) stated that recent research indicated “the average duration a fund raiser spends in a job [was] 16 months, and that the direct and indirect costs of hiring a replacement total \$127, 650” (para. 3). Other research has indicated that the number was closer to two or three years (Szymanowski, 2013). Even if the maximum time in the position was three years, a three-

year retention rate would make a considerable impact on the institution from a financial and cultural standpoint.

Future studies should look at these types of departments to investigate their retention rates and what engaged and motivated those employees. Most studies have focused on the impact of employee engagement and relationships with students. However, there were employees who worked in those types of departments, in positions that were not student-facing. Future research should focus on employee engagement when employees do not have direct interactions with students.

Engagement through online education. The researcher recommended that future studies look at how employee engagement and relationships with students will be impacted with institutions moving toward offering online options. Since these employees emphasized how important their engagement and relationships with students were to their motivation, satisfaction, and retention, and since they also felt unmotivated and dissatisfied when students were not on campus, studies should look at engagement with students in online programs. Online students may never physically come to campus, and if more students attend online programs, employees may start to experience the feelings they did when students were away for summer. The researcher recommended future studies look at the impact online programs will have on engagement, and ways that employees can continue to feel engaged with fewer students physically on campus.

Conclusion

Higher education employee retention is an increasing issue, an issue that higher education leaders are aware of. Those leaders are seeking out strategies to assist with retaining employees as employee turnover is very costly. One solution is to create

intrinsic value, as intrinsic value increases employee retention. Intrinsic value can be developed through employee relationships with students, such as by serving as a student organization advisor. Those who are involved with student organizations are more likely to have a sense of connectedness and belonging, and are therefore more likely to be retained.

Overall, the purpose of this study was to look at the relationships between employees, students, and student organizations, and if those relationships impacted employee engagement and retention. Most research indicated employee retention was an issue in higher education, but few specific solutions were offered or studied to retain employees. Most research also indicated that employees were retained if they felt engaged, had intrinsic motivation, and were committed to the organization. The gap in research was there were no specific solutions that had been studied to determine how to engage employees, how to motivate them intrinsically, and how to increase their commitment. This study examined higher education employee involvement with student organizations to investigate their relationships with students and if those relationships impacted their engagement, motivation, and commitment.

Employees indicated that they did feel their engagement, motivation, and commitment were impacted by their involvement with student organizations. Employees at both the small and midsize private universities expressed they felt impacted in these ways. This knowledge can be used by campus leaders to assist with retention efforts. If campus leaders know employees are impacted by involvement with students and student organizations, they can encourage involvement and engagement. They can also support it by providing employees with opportunities, or by supporting employees' engagement in

activities and tasks outside of regular job duties. Campus leaders can additionally incorporate initiatives and goals related to employee engagement and retention into strategic plans. Most strategic plan retention goals only focus on student retention efforts.

If employees were retained, the institution would benefit. The institution would benefit because if employees were retained, the institution would not be impacted by the direct and indirect costs of employee turnover. Additionally, if employees stayed and built long-lasting relationships with students, those students would also most likely stay due to the connectedness and sense of belonging. If students were retained as a result of those relationships, the institution would not lose out on the revenue generated from tuition, which means that the institutional budget would not be as impacted as it was when student retention was an issue. If the institutional budget was not impacted, fewer programs would have to be cut and fewer personnel would have to be cut. If both employees and students were retained, the campus culture would be positively impacted. Employees and students could create a campus culture of connectedness, and both groups could persist and grow. Persistence and growth could lead to a better quality of life, inside and outside of the institution.

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Appendix A

Survey Research Consent Form

Retention Relationships: Connecting Higher Education Employees to Students Through Student Organizations

You are asked to participate in a survey being conducted by Michelle Sanford under the guidance of Dr. Roger Nasser at Lindenwood University. We are doing this study to research the impact employee engagement with student organizations has on employee retention. The questions asked on the survey are intended to gather information on employee involvement with student organizations and employee retention. It will take about 5-7 minutes to complete this survey. Answering this survey is voluntary. We will be asking about 75-130 other people to answer these questions.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview by providing your name and email. If you select yes and opt to participate in a follow-up interview, the interviews will be conducted in person at Lindenwood University for Lindenwood participants, and over the phone for McKendree participants. We will ask additional questions regarding higher education employee engagement and retention. The interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes. You may choose to not participate in an interview at any time, even if you selected to participate on the survey. You may choose to not complete the interview at any time by telling the researcher that you chose to no longer complete the interview.

What are the risks of this study?

We do not anticipate any risks related to your participation other than those encountered in daily life. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or you can stop taking the survey at any time.

We are collecting data that could identify you, such as name and email. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure and confidential. Only members of the research team will be able to see your data. We do not intend to include any information that could identify you in any publication or presentation.

Will anyone know my identity?

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

What are the benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefits for completing this survey. We hope what we learn may benefit other people in the future.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board Director, Michael Leary, at (636) 949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. You can contact the researcher, Michelle Sanford, directly at 618-671-6143 or msanford@lindenwood.edu. You may also contact Dr. Roger Nasser at rnasser@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser or by notifying the researcher that I no longer want to participate in an interview. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time. Please feel free to print a copy of this consent form.

Appendix B

Email Script for Survey Recruitment

Dear Employees,

Please complete the following survey on student organizations and higher education employee engagement. The survey will take 5-7 minutes. You may complete this survey by clicking on the survey link or by scanning the QR code.

We do not anticipate any risks related to your participation other than those encountered in daily life. Completing this survey is voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you may stop taking the survey at any time by closing the browser window.

Thank you for your time. Your participation is appreciated.

Follow this link to the survey:

https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0BbLfmGgBdGEqdT

Or scan this QR code:



Appendix C

Flyer for Survey Recruitment



Invitation to Participate in Research Survey

Please take a moment to complete a survey on student organizations and higher education employee engagement.

The survey can be accessed by scanning the QR code and will take approximately 5-7 minutes.

We do not anticipate any risks related to your participation other than those encountered in daily life. Completing this survey is voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you may stop taking the survey at any time by closing the browser window.



Questions regarding this study can be directed to
Michelle Sanford at msanford@lindenwood.edu or at 618-671-6143

LINDENWOOD

Appendix D**Student Organization Advisor Survey**

Q1 At which university are you employed?

- Lindenwood University St. Charles
- Lindenwood University Belleville
- McKendree University

Q2 How many months have you been employed at the university at which you are employed? (Please provide a numerical value.)

Q3 Which department do you work for at the university at which you are employed?

Q4 Are you aware that there are student organizations at the university at which you are employed?

- Yes
- No

Q5 Do you currently or have you previously advised a student organization at the university at which you are employed?

- I currently advise a student organization
- I have previously advised a student organization but currently do not
- I have never advised a student organization

Q6 If you currently advise a student organization at the university at which you are employed, how many hours total per academic year (August-May) do you directly work with the student organization? (Please provide a numerical value.)

Q7 If you currently advise a student organization or have previously advised a student organization, what activities do you or did you complete in your role? (Please check all that apply.)

- Lead or supervise meetings
 - Meet with student organization officers outside of meetings
 - Meet with student organization members outside of meetings
 - Maintain student organization documents
 - Oversee student organization events
 - Other (please state any additional activities)
-

Q8 To what degree do you feel an employee's involvement with a student organization impacts employee engagement?

- _____ Greatly decreases employee engagement
- _____ Somewhat decreases employee engagement
- _____ Neutral
- _____ Somewhat increases employee engagement
- _____ Greatly increases employee engagement

Q9 In your own words, do you feel employee involvement with student organizations impacts employee engagement that extends beyond the employee's regular job duties?

Q10 Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview regarding student organizations and employee engagement?

- Yes
- No

Q11 Thank you for your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Please provide your name and email address.

- Name _____
- Email _____

Q12 Please select all of the reasons below as to why you have never advised a student organization.

- You did not realize there were student organizations
- You do not understand the role of a student organization advisor
- You do not know how to become a student organization advisor
- You do not have time to advise a student organization
- Other (please write in reason)

Appendix E

Student Organization Follow-Up Interview Questions

1. What is your role at the university?
2. Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.
3. How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?
4. Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?
5. Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?
6. Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?
7. Why do you choose to support student organizations?
8. In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?
9. Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?
10. Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

Appendix F

Data for Number of Months Employee Worked for Their Institution

Table 6

Number of Months of Employment at Current Institution

<u>Participant Number</u>	<u>Months of Employment</u>
1	180
2	156
3	36
4	36
5	240
6	52
7	48
8	12
9	24
10	11
11	12
12	24
13	36
14	12
15	286
16	120
17	46
18	36
19	24
20	24
21	21
22	4
23	1
24	192
25	60
26	48
27	36
28	36
29	23
30	4
31	9
32	8
33	5
34	11
35	264

Appendix G**Data for Number of Hours Employee Spent with Their Student Organization**

Table 7

Number of Hours Spent with Student Organization Over One Academic Year

<u>Participant Number</u>	<u>Number of Hours</u>
1	30
2	3
3	3
4	10
5	10
6	30
7	50
8	80
9	100
10	200
11	80
12	80
13	40
14	360
15	0

Appendix H

Table 8

Interview Transcription Data Summarized

Interview Participant	Response
Q1. What is your role at the university?	
Participant 1	Associate Vice President
Participant 2	Program Manager
Participant 3	Coordinator
Participant 4	Coordinator
Participant 5	Director
Q2. Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.	
Participant 1	Yes, but depends on department
Participant 2	No
Participant 3	No
Participant 4	Yes, recently
Participant 5	Yes, recently
Q3. How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?	
Participant 1	Equal
Participant 2	Equal
Participant 3	Equal
Participant 4	Unequal
Participant 5	Equal
Q4. Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?	
Participant 1	Intrinsic, but depends on department

Participant 2	Intrinsic, but depends on department
Participant 3	Intrinsic
Participant 4	Intrinsic, but depends on department
Participant 5	Intrinsic, but depends on department

Q5. Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

Participant 1	Intrinsic
Participant 2	Intrinsic
Participant 3	Intrinsic
Participant 4	Intrinsic
Participant 5	Intrinsic

Q6. Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

Participant 1	Employees: yes; Students: yes; Both: yes; Neither: n/a
Participant 2	Employees: yes; Students: yes; Both: yes; Neither: n/a
Participant 3	Employees: yes; Students: yes; Both: yes; Neither: n/a
Participant 4	Employees: yes; Students: yes; Both: yes; Neither: n/a
Participant 5	Employees: yes; Students: yes; Both: yes; Neither: n/a

Q7. Why do you choose to support student organizations?

Participant 1	Provide student support, community for students
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Participant 2	Provide student support, student organizations impacted own undergrad experience
Participant 3	Provide student support, community for students
Participant 4	Provide student support, student organizations impacted own undergrad experience
Participant 5	Provide student support, community for students

Q8. In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

Participant 1	Provides alternative role, a positive interaction
Participant 2	Provides motivation and energy
Participant 3	Provides enrichment and fulfillment
Participant 4	Provides motivation and enrichment and balance
Participant 5	Provides alternative role, provides balance

Q9. Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

Participant 1	Yes
Participant 2	Yes
Participant 3	Yes
Participant 4	Yes
Participant 5	Yes

Q10. Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

Participant 1	No
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Participant 2	No
Participant 3	No
Participant 4	Yes; need more education for other departments on student affair roles
Participant 5	Yes; need more education for campus community on student organizations and involvement

Appendix I

Question 9 Survey Responses

Table 9

Question 9 Survey Responses

Responses

Q9. In your own words, do you feel employee involvement with student organizations impacts employee engagement that extends beyond the employee's regular job duties?

Yes! The student interaction is the reason I like my job so much and it's interesting to watch how the students develop over the year and what initiatives they are trying to implement.

I do think building relationships with student groups beyond one's duty is very helpful for retention.

I feel that I am more engaged with the university as a whole as a result of being an advisor.

Yes.

I believe that it varies, based on the student organizations that the employee directly works with and what their professional responsibilities are. I work directly with students on a daily basis throughout the fall and spring. Because of this, I meet with my students, attend events, and support them outside of a normal 8am-5pm business day. The more I work with students, the more enjoyable my job becomes and that drives me to be more engaged.

Student organization advisement is 24 hour/7 days a week involvement (especially if you advise more than one student organization).

It is above and beyond typical duties but really allows the employee to understand the reason why we are employed at a university.

No. I believe all employees are/should be student centered and working towards a common goal of enhancing the student's college experience.

Connecting with students in this way can help employees remember why we do the work we do. Sometimes advising is a way to interact with students when some people may not have that opportunity.

Absolutely

Yes, my involvement is definitely increased because I advise a student organization

Yes.

No, working at a University is about supporting our students. This extends to every position. Engaging with students by advising an organization is an extension of our job duties that focus on student success.

Yes, because it gives you an outlet to invest into the university more than in your assigned duties.

Yes, I feel like employee's that work with student orgs tend to be more involved with those students outside of the organization.

Yes, to a certain extent. I enjoy getting to know students beyond who I would traditionally interact with in my regular job.

Not in my opinion.

Takes up more time, so can negatively impact the work load, but provides areas of growth, so that's positive.

Yes - more connection with students and the University.

Appendix J

Interview Transcripts

Transcript for Interview One

R: Researcher

I: Interviewee

R: What is your role at the university?

I: My title is Associate Vice President for Student and Academic Support Services. My role includes overseeing all of the university retention, academic support services, tutoring, proctoring, accessibility, and first-year programs.

R: Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.

I: In some areas, yes, and in other areas, no. There are a lot of employees who have been here for many years. There are some departments where higher turnover is more common. In the last few years, more employees have become frightened as there have been layoffs, which has affected employee retention rates due to the concern.

R: How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?

I: It is pretty equal. I have worked at other institutions. For employees who work in admissions or in the business office or who work in student accounts, turnover is higher because the positions can be harder.

R: Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?

I: It is a combination of both. In my department, my employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors, but that is the type of person I am going to hire. There are other departments where that is not the case. The employees in my department feel more engaged and therefore more satisfied.

R: Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

I: I am motivated by intrinsic factors, and I am like my employees. I enjoy being engaged on campus. It keeps me pumped up.

R: Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

I: Employees: yes

Students: yes

Both: yes

Neither: n/a

It does impact retention. Students who are involved with faculty and staff are more likely to stay here. Because of the relationship and mentorship. Literature tells us how important advising and involvement is for students. If they develop a support system, no matter where that support comes from, then they will stay. If they leave, they will lose the relationship. The relationship has a lot to do with students being retained.

R: Why do you choose to support student organizations?

I: I feel it is important for the students to have support from people in their community. I am a part of their community, and I have something I can help them with. I am a first generation student. We do first-generation collegians. I don't just call that a student group, but a first-generation group that includes faculty, staff, and students. We do activities together and share stories. The students need to hear how similar it is for them as it was for us.

R: In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

I: Sometimes when I meet with students in my work role, it is different from my work with student organizations. When I regularly meet with students, it might be because the student isn't doing well or is struggling academically. It is completely different from working with student organizations. Those students want to be there, they want to be engaged, they want to have an impact. It's not always negative. I get to participate in fun and positive engagement.

R: Do you feel that has impacted your engagement with the university?

I: Definitely. Especially when I feel out of touch. My face is in the computer a lot, and that is not why I work in higher education. I work in higher education to be involved with the students. That positively impacts my experiences, and helps me to keep my head in the game. I am reminded of why I am here.

R: Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

I: Yes.

R: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

I: No, I do not.

Transcript for Interview Two

R: Researcher

I: Interviewee

R: What is your role at the university?

I: I am the program manager for fraternity and sorority life.

R: Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.

I: I have not observed any issues with employee retention. Within my department and across other departments with employees have been here for multiple years. Employees were recently recognized for 5 and 10 years of service.

R: How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?

I: Pretty on par with other institutions I've worked for. I haven't worked for an institution who have not supported the development of faculty and staff.

R: Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?

I: I feel I can only speak for the student affairs side. Our passion and the reason why we enjoy our work is because of the growth and development of the students we work with. It's not necessarily because we get raises or want benefits, which is always nice, but it's more about seeing the students grow and seeing how their eyes light up that motivates us as well as not wanting to let each other down.

R: Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

I: It's a lot more internal. It's those relationships with students and seeing their growth.

R: Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

I: Employees: yes

Students: yes

Both: yes

Neither: n/a

I would say both. There have been numerous studies that show that students who do not interact on campus are usually not engaged because they cannot find a place that feels like home. Whereas especially in our office, our focus is to help students find an organization to be a part of and to really create that space where they have a support system on campus, which has shown to impact retention. I think it's all about the

relationship you're able to build, especially in student affairs. If you're not able to make a connection with a student and you're not able to work together in a beneficial way, it would not work well. It would make me feel it wasn't a good institutional fit. I have never had an issue connecting with students, and it has been an amazing opportunity.

R: Why do you choose to support student organizations?

I: I wouldn't be where I am today without student organizations at my own undergraduate institution. I would not be in the field I am with them. It caters to the development of students that they don't get in the classroom. It gives us the ability to make sure the students we're putting out in the post-grad world are a lot more well-rounded. They have their academic background, but they also have their social identity background and everything that goes with leadership development and professional development, which they do not get in the classroom.

R: In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

I: As an employee, I work really well in fast-paced and "loud" environments. Having the students around is that constant energizer bunny for me. I see them every single day, and if there is one thing not going right, it would negatively impact them, and that would be the worst thing to happen.

R: Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

I: Absolutely. The students that we have on this campus are very unique and special and they have this drive that I haven't see in students at other institutions I've worked for. That's probably because I work with a much smaller fraternal community than I have in the past. As I've mentioned, seeing that spark in their eye has made an incredible impact on me.

R: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

I: No, I don't think so.

Transcript for Interview Three

R: Researcher

I: Interviewee

R: What is your role at the university?

I: I'm an area coordinator. I oversee a residence hall for college age residents, and create a homey environment. They can grow as individuals and be themselves, within reason. There are some policies, which helps them to transition into adulthood. If someone violates a policy, we help them to correct it and grow in character. But the main part is to make them feel at home.

R: Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.

I: No, I don't. I've been in an employee in this position since 1996, and I was one of the first of three that was hired as a full-time residence life employee. We had other responsibilities in the student life office and different branches that came off the residence life. At that time, I would say some people were not fully compensated as they should have been and there was some inequality in pay because they had student employees in these positions, so those that stayed had a heart to do it. It's now been about two years since there have been full-time employees in these positions instead of student employees and now, they stay. For many of them, it's their first job out of college. There is a bit of a transition for students moving to employee positions. Their expectations isn't always what is expected and so people don't stay. But I haven't seen as high of turnover since the positions were changed from student employees to full-time employees. Some still choose to go to a different university, but I haven't seen high turnover.

R: How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?

I: In my area I would say it's equal. I have worked in the corporate world, and I would say it's equal to that as well. In some of the other areas across campus, I would say that turnover has been higher than at other institutions. I wouldn't say that's different from other universities where there have been changes in the higher command. We have had a new president recently. But we did have a new president before and the feelings were similar. There are just some people that don't adjust very well, so they don't choose to stay.

R: Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?

I: They're motivated by internal factors because people like to be recognized for doing a good job and like to be rewarded for it. It can kind of cross over a little bit. Obviously people will be more satisfied if they're making a higher wage. I think if they put their best effort forward and stay there for years, and they're not struggling just to make a

living, and they feel comfortable, I think it gives them some motivation to put forth good effort. I know that some people were upset when they lost employee lunches, but I get my meals here for free as a housing employee, but I know it was just a little thing, but it meant a lot to people as an appreciation thing. I don't know if they initially felt it was an appreciation thing, but when it was gone, they felt like they weren't appreciated.

R: Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

I: I feel more motivated by internal aspects. It is nice to hear I'm doing a good job and that I'm appreciated. Not only with the people I work with but with my students. If they're happy and feel at home, I feel important. When there's a change in management, like when my supervisor changed from being a woman to a man, I didn't feel as appreciated. Women manage differently and express more appreciation. And I know when I'm not doing something okay, that's when I'll hear it. So, if you don't hear it, you know you're doing okay.

R: Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

I: Employees: yes

Students: yes

Both: yes

Neither: n/a

It does impact student retention. It becomes a more personal experience for the students. They are recognized for being an individual, not just money to the university. I know this from working with the students in the dorms. They come in, and they're not used to people engaging them on a personal level. You say hi to them, and it may take a month or so, but eventually they start to say hi back. They become more friendly and more comfortable. Students have told me this for years that they appreciate when they feel like they've made a friend here. Someone they can talk to. If we're engaging them on a personal level and not just a business level, I feel that makes an impression on them. I think it could be an aspect that works with employees too. As long as it's in a positive setting and those relationships could influence our workplace in a positive way and help them feel more comfortable in their jobs.

R: Why do you choose to support student organizations?

I: Because it helps me to get out, and I do want to have a hand in helping students. I want them to have a good experience. I want them to leave with good memories. I want them to know they're important. I want to make a connection with them so that if they have a serious issue, and I have a bond and have trust with them, they're going to feel more comfortable coming to me, possibly seeking help. Even though I'm not a trained psychologist, I can mentor them and I can refer them. At their age, they always have little difficulties that they struggle with. At the college age, they're making transitions from adolescences to adulthood, they're separating from their parents, and it's hard. This

situation helps them to pull away a little bit and shows them they can be independent. Which is why they're here, to go full force into their careers.

R: In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

I: It's made my job enriching and fulfilling. I trained in high school to work in clerical work, and I did that for quite a few years, and then in my mid-30s, this came along. I thought this would be a nice change, but then I just really enjoyed the position. I've been telling people for years, this is just a really rewarding job to be able to help young people. I want to be able to help students find their way and develop as individuals. Develop as confident individuals, and to value their own importance. We all run into people who don't treat us as the way they should. I think that's the biggest reason why. I start my 24th year in August. It's amazing.

R: Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

I: Yes.

R: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

I: No, I am good.

Transcript for Interview Four

R: Researcher

I: Interviewee

R: What is your role at the university?

I: I am a coordinator in the Student Involvement office, working with leadership programs, commuter programs, and student government.

R: Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.

I: Yes. I would say that a lot of choices are made without consideration on how it's going to affect employees. So, I feel that deters people from staying. The institution is not as transparent as they should be. They say it's all about the students, but you don't really see that actually happening.

R: How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?

I: I think that things change so frequently, and they don't give us all of the details, just little bits. Then all of a sudden something big happens, and then that makes people not want to stay here. For instance, with the whole tuition being taxed now situation, they sent out an email saying we would be taxed, but they didn't say when it would start happening, when is it going to be coming out of your paycheck, so when all of a sudden \$500 is being taken out of your paycheck, I have an issue and it makes me no longer want to work for the institution because you didn't help to set me up for success. There was no one helping me, they just said, well we have to tax you on it. So, a lot of people are frustrated about that. But those things constantly happen every time I turn around. They're just doing things and not giving us all the information, so then other people react poorly because it affects them. Other universities ask for thoughts and opinions, such as "we know this will be happening, what is your insight, how can we make this seamless as possible." Here they don't ask us what our opinions are or how they can take a better approach.

R: Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?

I: It depends on the person to be honest. Internally, when you work with students, you feel good about that. But I also think it's hard because you also work these crazy hours. Even though I love the students and want to be there for the students, I also need work/life balance. You don't really get that in Student Involvement, so I feel like it's a combination of both. So probably it's more intrinsic because you're getting your motivation by feeling good working with the students.

R: Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

I: I do it for the intrinsic part.

R: Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

I: Employees: yes

Students: yes

Both: yes

Neither: n/a

I think working with students probably makes people stay at the university longer because they have more of that connection and more of that relationship that they're building. I feel it definitely impacts students. Students stay because of one or two connections within the university that have impacted them in a certain way.

R: Why do you choose to support student organizations?

I: I was a first-generation college student. So, by being involved like I was, in fraternity and sorority life and in community service clubs, those were the parts I remember the most. They helped me become the person I am today. While classes are important, outside of the class activities are just as important. That's why I promote it. I think it opens up your eyes to a lot more than what you get in the classroom.

R: In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

I: I like my job better when I'm more involved. Even though some of it is after hours, and in the back of my mind I'm thinking that I could be on my couch, when I go to an event, I think it surprises students that we're taking the extra step to go out and support them. You also get to learn more about what's happening on campus or what students are doing, and that helps me support the students, I learn a lot more information, and I appreciate the university more. I am always surprised at all of the amazing things the students are doing.

R: Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

I: Absolutely. With it being summertime, I don't like my job as much. But once the students come back, I'll be happy again. The students are the reason I like my job.

R: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

I: I would like more education for HR or other departments on what Student Involvement is or on what student organization participation is because I think people just think we're the fun office who plan fun events, but we spend considerable hours working with these organizations and figuring out how to do things like spend money wisely. There are a lot

of intentional things we're trying to accomplish outside the classroom. I don't think staff members put two and two together, and I don't think higher ups or HR or other offices understand what we do because we always have to sell them on the idea of what we do. I feel like if they knew the amount of work that's put into the work that we do, that would make my job more rewarding. I wouldn't feel like I'm persuading people that I have a realistic job.

Transcript for Interview Five

R: Researcher

I: Interviewee

R: What is your role at the university?

I: I work as the Director of First-Year Programs in the Student and Academic Support Services Office.

R: Do you feel employee retention is an issue at the university with which you're employed? Please explain.

I: Yes and no. Over the last little bit, because of some institutional situations, some people are feeling disconnected. When that happens, people have a tendency to search.

R: How do you feel this university's employee retention rate compares to employee retention at other institutions of higher learning?

I: It's about even. A lot of those kinds of things are happening all over the country, so it's not just here. All the things that are causing people to look and search and move. The current situation in higher education is that many institutions are having a drop in retention and admission. That means a drop in budget and the fiscal needs that they have, so when that happens, you have to cut programs and cut positions. That is not unique to my institution. That's happening all over the country.

R: Do you feel employees are more motivated by intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors?

I: It's different for every person. For me, I have a lot of intrinsic motivation. I love my position, and it is something that I'm motivated to do. That's how I am as an individual. For some people, they may have that need for accomplishment or reward or advancement. I see both sets of people at my institution.

R: Do you feel more motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors?

I: I find my work to be a vocational calling. I'm meant to do this work. I've never felt compelled to do any other kind of work. I'm personally truly satisfied. When gathering with friends where everyone is talking about their place of employment and saying they hate their job, I don't say those kinds of things. The work that I do I find very rewarding. It is part of my identity. It's not about the money or what position I'm in, it's about how I feel a calling to do this work.

R: Do you feel employee engagement with students impacts retention (for employees, for students, for both, or neither)?

I: Employees: yes

Students: yes

Both: yes

Neither: n/a

Interactions with students is why I do what I do. Sometimes the summer is very hard for me because it's limited student interaction. I know I'm using the summer to get ready for when the students come back, but I don't have the student meetings and interactions or even with staff members. So, I feel employee retention can be affected seasonally because when students are here and you can see the things you're doing and why you do them, it's easy, but then when summertime hits, you're like "ugh." Our job as an institution is to find who that student's velcro is. The purpose is to find somebody they can connect with. It's not the same person for everyone, so that's why we all have to be all in. It could be their residence hall director or their advisor or someone like myself in the support offices. If students find a touchpoint, they are more likely to be retained. If all of us are trying to connect with students in a positive way, there's that velcro, that connection that will keep them here. If a student doesn't find that, they're going to go.

R: Why do you choose to support student organizations?

I: I've been an advisor since I first started as a professional. I can't imagine myself not being an advisor of a group. Sometimes when you advance in your position and you have more of an administrative role, it is harder to advise a student group. Now, I miss that sometimes. But my student staff members are like advising a student organization. It might not be a student organization, but it is a certain student group, and that's currently where I find my connection in advising students. This is my first years in all of my years that I won't be advising a student organization. I've always advised something everywhere I've been. Now I have to find a way to interact with student organizations. It breaks up the day, the daily task list. I know I could go and offer my support and resources to those students. Even if I'm not an advisor, I love doing the student involvement leadership series. A lot of those sessions are with student leaders who go back and communicate the message to their organizations. I talk to them about how do you work through conflict or build up professional equity. So, I'm still giving them tools and tips to make them successful even though I'm not their advisor.

R: In what ways have you considered your own engagement impacted when supporting student organizations?

I: It's not the day to day spreadsheets. You have to have a balance. If you have too much of one and not enough of the other, you start to resent the one. If you have a balanced experience and a balanced outlet process, it keeps things on a level playing field. Even if it doesn't happen on a daily basis like your spreadsheets and those kind of things, it's something to look forward to. You go, you know what, I have to write this big report today, but next week I get to participate in this big event that involves students. That makes it balanced.

R: Do you feel your involvement with student organizations has contributed to your retention?

I: I think so. Every day I'm like, I want to see that student graduate, and they might be a sophomore. So, if I'm going to see that student graduate, I'm going to have to stay here. That's probably the biggest retention method, for me anyway. Could I give up printing nametags and folding shirts? Yes, I could. I'm sure they could find somebody else to do that. But I've felt enough of a connection with certain students that I want to see them walk across that stage. At an institution, sometimes you want to wait two, three, four years to do that.

R: Do you have any other comments or information you would like to add?

I: I would like more people to be encouraged to participate at that level. I don't know what that would look like. For example, we are transitioning one of the student organizations in our department to a new advisor. We put a call out to others at the institution and held information sessions to say, hey, this is what it means to be an advisor of this organization. We found an amazing advisor who is super excited. But sometimes it's the same people. That's the hard part. How do you educate people who are out there who might want to do something like this, and encourage them on all levels. Their supervisor should be encouraging them or their dean or associate dean or whomever that is. They should say, yeah, that would be a great opportunity. Sometimes people have ideas, but they're like, how do I start that or who do I go to.