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Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention

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Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention

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Dr. Rhonda Bishop, Dissertation Chair	7-10-17 Date
Dr. Sherry DeVore, Committee Member	7-10-17 Date
Dr. Doug Hayter, Committee Member	7-15-17 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 at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to examine student and academic advisors' perceptions of advisement techniques to determine the connection between academic advising strategies and student retention. If student retention rates are not addressed, higher education institutions are at risk of losing students, which is costly to the institution and the student (Himes, 2014). Most college students are in a state of change and need academic advice to achieve success during a college transition (Tinto, 2012). Academic advisors can assist students in finding the right career for students' specific strengths. This qualitative study utilized Tinto's (2012) theories of student departure and retention to provide an understanding of how student retention rates can be based on a lack of positive institutional relationships between students and academic advisors. A higher education institution must establish conditions within its own system to promote positive student experiences and outcomes (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Four research questions guided this study. Focus groups and interviews were used to collect data from students and academic advisors. Students and academic advisors discussed academic advising experiences, student satisfaction, and information needed to achieve successful advising sessions. Themes emerged relating to developing relationships, personalized advising sessions, and a consistent campus. Tinto (2012) stated students need individualized academic and social support to properly transition into college. Findings of the study indicated progressive academic advisement strategies have a positive impact on student retention.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Advising systems within a four-year university plays an important role in the student development process and retention (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). College and university leaders are concentrating their efforts on high-impact practices and the use of data to define institutional retention and success initiatives (Darling, 2015). On average, 58% of undergraduate students in the United States complete college within a six-year period (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Today's economic uncertainty and the increased pressure of finances within higher education have administration concerned about the sustainability of universities (Himes, 2014).

Higher education institutions and the states where they are located are investigating better ways to support student success in the academic setting with scarce resources and limited staff (Dadgar, Nodine, Reeves-Bracco, & Venezia, 2014). Campus leadership and academic advisors consider academic advisement as a strategic role in retention efforts and are being encouraged to find approaches to advisement creating a fit between the student and academic institution (Darling, 2015). Social and academic integration both play a key role in influencing a student's desire to stay at an institution (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The very effort to improve students' college experiences on campus and academic outcomes begin with the voices of the students, as well as positive engagement with faculty, staff and academic advisors (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015).

Higher education institutions where collaboration efforts from all members of the institution are emphasized will not only help existing students succeed but will attract other students to a collaborative learning environment (Tinto, 2012). Strong support for

student learning includes academic advisors encouraging positive student attitudes toward overall learning while providing needed assistance along the academic plan (Williamson, Goosen, & Gonzalez, 2014). Ideally, an academic advisor serves as a guide in an interactive relationship intended to enhance a student's self-awareness and fulfillment (National Academic Advising Association, 2017).

Characteristics of positive attributes from faculty, staff, and academic advisors include support for students in the areas of teaching, development and career counseling (Himes, 2014). Beyond the faculty and students in the classroom, academic advisors have the increased responsibility to assist students in adapting to the resources and cultures of an academic institution (Williamson et al., 2014). There are many individuals within an institution who can contribute to the overall connection and success of the student. However, the key component appears to be the repetitive interaction by faculty, staff and academic advisors who have a stake in some aspect of a student's academic experience (Tinto, 2012).

Academic advisement is an area of high impact for student success and is integral to the achievement of the teaching and learning mission of higher education (Harrill et al., 2015). Like traditional instruction in the classroom, effective academic advisors mentor students by creating an educational environment learning is encouraged along with student loyalty and retention (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Universities are encouraged to create intervention programs such as tutoring, counseling and academic advising degree plans to provide students with the knowledge to overcome academic barriers (Harrill et al., 2015). It has been established in the literature, academic advisors can increase a student's chance of overcoming institutional barriers by providing them

with the additional help to succeed in courses and navigate their way through college procedures and policies (Dadgar et al., 2014).

Higher education institutions across the nation are plagued by legislative scrutiny of faculty and administrators and decreased federal and state support (Kot, 2014; Olbrecht, Romano, & Teigen, 2016). Administration on these campuses must examine ways academic advising can improve long-lasting relationships between the student, faculty, and institution (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). An area being emphasized at the pinnacle of higher education strategic planning is a dialogue regarding student persistence and retention (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016).

Tinto (2012) emphasized effective retention strategies encompass the totality of the student to include support of educational goals, personal needs and overall experiences within higher education. Himes (2014) also indicated three strategies regarding student retention. These strategies engage students in reflective educational goals, clarifying expectations regarding higher education, and encouraging high levels of self-awareness and responsibility (Himes, 2014). According to Turner & Thompson (2014), the academic advising structure emerged as a key component of a modern education system, creating a greater understanding of how to support students in college. The idea of student intervention has been introduced as a collaborative effort between the faculty, staff and academic advisors as a way to retain students (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014).

Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) identified how academic advisors' competence and caring behaviors are underlying characteristics to help build trust, influencing students' satisfaction and creating a successful academic experience. It has been established in the

literature trust, exemplified by the academic advisor, increases student self-efficacy and emotional commitment to an institution, as well as loyalty and persistence (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Additional studies have also validated a plan of study for students to engage in persistence, enabling students to successfully complete coursework and continue in a plan of study toward degree completion (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Turner & Thompson, 2014).

In this chapter, the background of the study will be presented. Research findings relating Tinto's theories of departure and retention revealed a clear link between academic advisement and retention rates (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016; Himes, 2014; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The statement of the problem and the purpose of conducting this particular study will be communicated. The research questions are presented to guide the research process. Finally, the definition of key terms and limitations, as well as assumptions of the study are offered.

Background of the Study

Academic advising goes beyond clerical functions and scheduling classes (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The process of academic advising has consistently been described as a positive influence on student retention, as the advisors are among the few individuals with whom students make a connection within higher education (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013; Walters & Seyedian, 2016). The collaboration between an academic advisor and a student involves setting goals, so the advisee becomes successful both professionally and personally (Filson & Whittington, 2013; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). These collaborative methods between an academic advisor and a student are considered successful when desired goals and academic accomplishments are met, and

the student goes on to complete their degree (Swecker et al., 2013). Social interaction between an academic advisor and student allows a connection to the university from the first orientation throughout their lifetimes as alumni of the institution (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Traditionally, a faculty advisor engages in a relationship with a student, which includes discipline-specific advising, versus true educational advising or planning regarding career paths, support systems and financial aid (Williamson et al., 2014). Faculty advisors' knowledge of the educational process, including degree requirements, are key elements in effective advising (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). In addition, being a faculty or staff member who is approachable and makes themselves available to students creates an environment where satisfaction both inside and outside of the classroom is obtained (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

According to Williamson et al., (2014) faculty and staff in popular degree areas often have far more students than can be accommodated effectively regarding student advising needs. Therefore, an intentional advising model provides an educational plan where faculty interacts with students in the classroom and then provide a guide for students to connect with an academic advisor for further continued advising needs (Williamson et al., 2014). Transparency and open communication are characteristics faculty and academic advisors can exhibit when developing ways to connect with students, as well as promoting successful outcomes (Rodicio, Mayer, & Jenkins, 2014).

However, Walters and Seyedian (2016) noted the idea of a team-approach between the faculty advisors and academic advisors is encouraged within an institution as an initiative for providing expert advising to students. A college can continuously and

effectively advise students in areas of learning styles and socialization characteristics by implementing an established student intervention advising plan (Rodicio et al., 2014). This open line of communication allows collaboration among all faculty and staff to obtain one overall goal of persistence in the area of structured academic advisement to promote student retention (Tinto, 2012).

Academic advisors need to possess a toolbox of advisement techniques to provide exemplary overall development of the student (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). The purpose of the academic advisor is to support the student as a whole, addressing academic barriers, which can hinder student success (Harrill et al., 2015). Together, a faculty advisor and academic advisor are focused on strategies of advisement processes ultimately guiding a student to a successful relationship between the student and the institution (Darling, 2015). Student advisement consists of more depth in educational planning from the academic advisor reaching beyond the classroom (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Effective advisement is a continuous process throughout a student's educational experience and is needed to adapt to the resources and academic culture of an institution (Williamson et al., 2014).

There are many individuals at an institution who can contribute to the success of a student; however, the best practice for advisement is repetitive interaction by someone who is vested in an area of a student's academic life (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). An example of an academic advisor's role complements teaching and learning in the classroom environment, focusing on building strong relationships to promote student self-efficacy and commitment to an institution (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Colleges offer advisement from an academic advisor to inform students about educational resources and

acquaint them with college cultures (Suvedi, Ghimire, Millenbah, & Shrestha, 2015). The recommended areas of student satisfaction academic advisors focus on were components structured to illustrate practices to achieve academic success throughout the stages of an advising process (Darling, 2015). Higher education institutions who want to increase student success and outcomes must design policies and organizational cultures to promote positive, interactive engagement of faculty, academic advisors and students (Harrill et al., 2015).

At the institutional level, leadership and academic advisors consider the strategic roles of advisement presented by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) as a foundation for implementing advising practice (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). Advisement strategies suggested by NACADA include standards and best practices for advising in the areas of vision, mission, goals, values and outcomes. (Darling, 2015). Three components directly relate to the overall mission, and goals of a higher education institution are emphasized by NACADA (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). These three components consist of an advisement curriculum to include strategies of advising, the process of advising, and the outcome of advising (Darling, 2015). Therefore, advising strategies for advisors is based on student learning practices to provide positive student outcomes (Dadgar et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This study engaged a Tinto's theories of student departure and retention (Tinto, 2012). These theories were utilized to emphasize steps colleges need to take to implement a successful plan of student retention thus impacting a student's educational life (Tinto, 2012). Tinto's theoretical model of student departure emphasized a student's

decision to stay or depart from an institution resulted from interactions between the student and other members of the institution (Tinto, 1975). In the case of this study, students and academic advisors' perceptions of effective advising strategies and barriers to advising were collected to assess the theory of why students depart or choose to stay at an institution.

According to Tinto (1975), the problem of student departure from higher education can be understood by isolating specific variables students possess. When these variables are studied, understanding is gained to why students withdraw from college (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016). Tinto (1975) explained how student integration could predict whether a student will stay and pursue a degree in higher education or voluntarily depart. Tinto's 1975 article entitled *Dropout in Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research* is considered the most widely accepted theorem within higher education on student retention and withdrawal (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016). Furthermore, Tinto's theory of retention framework was also used to validate how successful advisement and student integration into academic and social domains within a university can positively affect student retention (Tinto, 1987)

Tinto identified variables such as economic, societal, psychological and organizational characteristics of students in higher education as causes for student departure (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). In Tinto's departure theory, dropout behavior can be defined by sociological, economic and educational theories (Tinto, 1987). Higher education administrators must be aware of circumstances causing a student to depart from an institution, and provide resources for students to overcome barriers to establish career paths and achieve their academic goals (Braxton et al., 2000).

Interactions between students and the institutional setting are widely discussed and tracked by higher education systems even decades later (Tinto, 2012).

A model of student departure created by Tinto (2012) recognized students enter college with differences in background, skills, abilities and commitment intentions. A student's decision to pursue or drop out of college is initially influenced by their pre-entry attributes, socio-economic status and grade performance (Natoli, Jackling, & Siddique, 2015). Most students lack the decision-making skills and knowledge to make important career decisions required for career exploration (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). Therefore, poor career decisions made can create adverse consequences for institutions (Darling, 2015).

Researchers have confirmed the connection between enrollment and student integration within an institution enables a student to feel he or she fits in a college, leading to student satisfaction (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014; Darling, 2015; Tinto, 2012). In addition, a student's departure can create financial burdens for an institution relying heavily on tuition revenue to support academic programs and deliver student services (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Tinto (2012) stated institutions have yet to establish a framework to guide thinking about what actions can be implemented to minimize or prevent student departure.

College student retention and attrition are perhaps the greatest problems within a higher education institution (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). Institutional approaches to improve student retention must include the academic factors of student success and happiness (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). For example, if institutions neglect the classroom, they are missing one opportunity where a student can establish a relationship

with an instructor (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The instructor can also serve as the

educational mentor if they are faculty (Tinto, 2012). In addition, an instructor can link

classroom instruction with career planning to promote a culture of collaboration between

the instructor, student and ultimately to the academic advisor for continued advisement

strategies (Dadgar et al., 2014). Most of all, strategies provided by scholars to improve

college completion rates revolve around the idea of persistent student engagement at the

beginning of a student's academic experience, until successful completion (Tinto, 2012).

Tinto (1975) purported persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates

within an institution socially and academically. According to Stuart, Rios-Aguilar, and

Deil-Amen (2014), a students' persistence in college aligns with Tinto's theory of

retention when students who are well integrated into the academic and social structures of

college are most likely to participate and pursue success than students who are not

integrated. Academic and social integration are defined as academic experiences

occurring within an institution, and outside the classroom between students and other

campus individuals (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Overall, the level of student integration

can be indicative of whether the student will persist on a path to graduation, or

voluntarily depart college before obtaining a degree (Natoli et al., 2015).

Universities are requesting faculty utilize advising strategies to connect

academically and socially with students in an effort to increase educational practices

(Braxton et al., 2000). Student integration into the academic and social purview of a

college atmosphere was identified as a critical piece of the retention puzzle (Tinto, 2012).

Therefore, Tinto's departure theory is unique in its longitudinal approach, encouraging

ongoing social integration to positively influence a student's goals and long-term

institutional commitments (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). Finally, Tinto's student

departure and retention theories have provided a framework for higher education

institutions indicating it is the university's responsibility to provide efforts to guide the

students to a successful completion (Tinto, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

It is possible a decrease in student retention rates at a four-year university can be

contributed to a lack of strong institutional relationships with academic advising and

students (Lukosius, Pennington, & Olorunniwo, 2013). Tinto (2012) explained a lack of

student engagement could negatively affect students and their desire to stay in school.

Retention is strongly related to the issues of student departure, attrition, and persistence

(Swecker et al., 2013). More information is needed regarding student's behaviors,

values, attitudes, and intentions to understand factors contributing to student departure or

student retention (Tinto, 2012). Tinto (2012) also stated positive factors would align with

actions of success for students to be retained until graduation. Furthermore, experts agree

no one-size-fits-all retention plan accommodates an individual's specific success plan in

college (Swecker et al., 2013).

Advising includes a system-wide, team effort with faculty members providing a

positive perception of academic advising can propel students toward graduation (Walters

& Seyedian, 2016). Academic advising is described in the literature as a process

involving a student and academic advisor establishing a relationship to coordinate

decision-making, problem-solving and resource identification in a student's personal and

academic endeavors (Swecker et al., 2013). According to the Council for Advancement

of Standards in Higher Education, as cited in Swecker et al., (2013) academic advisors

are among the few individuals within a university with whom students can make a connection and offer academic services needed by a student in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather student and academic advisors' perceptions of effective advising strategies at private faith-based universities allied health branch campus in the Midwest. The data collected were presented within a narrative inquiry framework (Colvin, 2013). In this study, perceptions in regards to academic advising from a sample population of student and academic advisors will be gathered and analyzed (Williamson et al., 2014). The intent of this study will be to determine students' and academic advisors' perceptions with advisement based on effective strategies to assist in student retention efforts within a higher education institution (Williamson et al., 2014).

The factors, which influence retention rates in higher education, have long been the focus of research, but the issue has increasingly become more important for universities from a financial perspective (Olbrecht et al., 2016). Examination of successful students is a useful tool to establish the development of retention strategies at a university (Bergman, Gross, Berry, & Shuck, 2014). Universities are beginning to see retention as a discovery of stability within the institution (Olbrecht et al., 2016).

Designing effective student retention plans in higher education is critical from a monetary and completion standpoint (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). When a student departs university costs for the student and university are significant (Natoli et al., 2015). This may lead to a loss of career mobility and a loss of tuition income (Natoli et al., 2015). Furthermore, academic advisors dedicated to academic advisement can provide a

structured process for student growth and development through a full range of university resources, to include financial assistance, leading to a successful retention plan (Hester, 2008).

Research questions. The research questions were designed to gain insight on what a student considers effective advising, barriers for advising and the academic advisors' perception on effective advising strategies and obstacles. The following research questions will guide this study.

1. What are students' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies that impact undergraduate, pre-allied health student success?

2. What academic advising barriers do students report most adversely affecting effective advising?

3. What are academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies for undergraduate, pre-allied health student success and retention?

4. What are academic advisors' perceptions of barriers that prohibit effective academic advising strategies?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are defined for this study:

Academic advising. A learning-centered, student-focused relationship that engages the advisor and student to formulate completion of goals to initiate future success in education (Darling, 2015).

Academic advisor. Can be a faculty member, or a separate employee labeled an academic advisor (Smith & Allen, 2014). The academic advisor is to know the student's

specific risk and success indicators and how those indicators might impact success and persistence (Darling, 2015).

College. A part of a university offering a specialized group of courses (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Faculty advisor. A faculty advisor collaborates with a student on how to develop an educational goal and provides guidance toward an established goal (Williamson et al., 2014).

Higher education. Education beyond secondary level, provided by a college or university (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Persistence. Students who continue to return to higher education (Tinto, 2012).

Retention. Upon returning to higher education, students return to the same institution (Tinto, 2012).

University. An institution of higher learning providing facilitates for teaching and research, authorized to grant academic degrees (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations in this study are identified and may impact the generalization of the results. The data to be utilized in this study were gathered from a sample population of allied health undergraduate students on a private faith-based university allied health branch campus. Despite the advising structure on this campus, it is assumed other universities utilize different advising systems, which may be different on other allied health campuses (Olbrecht et al., 2016). Although measures were taken to minimize the impact of bias in the study, it is unlikely the qualitative study is completely bias free (Creswell, 2014; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). The findings will be offered in

a manner where strengths, as well as challenges, are holistically presented (Yin, 2016).

The following assumptions were accepted:

    1. The assumptions were made that student focus group participants and

academic advisors in the study answered the questions honestly and without bias.

    2. The assumption was made that the focus group questions and interview

questions were understood by students and academic advisors.

Summary

In this chapter, an introduction to the study was provided to define the role of a

faculty advisor, academic advisor, and other specific higher education terms. Academic

advisement strategies and advisement barriers can influence success and retention for a

student in higher education (Tinto, 2012). Studying the various advising strategies and

barriers existing in advising from a students' perspective and academic advisors

perspective will enable an institution to provide adequate resources and efforts to guide

and facilitate a positive academic experience for the student (Dadgar et al., 2014).

Tinto's theoretical frameworks were identified, as well as the significance and

purpose of the study. In addition, the research questions and definitions of terms were

explained. The limitations and assumptions were presented by the researcher to solidify

the need for further research in the areas of advising and retention.

In Chapter Two, a synthesis of current literature includes connections between

students and academic advisors within higher education. A theoretically driven analysis

between the students and academic advisors' perceptions of effective advising strategies

are explained to demonstrate the importance of student success and retention within

higher education. Finally, an overview of strategic methods to promote student success

and retention between students and academic advisors are presented. Areas discussed

include best practices to promote visions, missions, and goals to influence the design of a

successful advising program (Al-Asmi & Thumiki, 2014).

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The benefits of having a college degree include income, community engagement, health and employment (Tinto, 1987). Higher education institutions realize student satisfaction in areas of amenities, teaching methodologies, and academic advisement strategies result in academic progress and success (Al-Asmi & Thumiki, 2014). Student departure and retention theories are based on key literature associated with student persistence among faculty, staff and academic advisors within a higher education institution (Tinto, 2012). In addition, student retention affects a university's school reputation and financial well-being (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). Tinto (2012) stated, "To improve student's retention and graduation, the institution must begin by focusing on its own behavior and establishing conditions within its own walls that promote those outcomes" (p. 6).

According to McGill (2016), the process of creating a strong relationship between an academic advisor and student success will increase retention. However, universities are slow to respond in efforts to enhance advising strategies for the academic advisor (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Suvedi et al., 2015). Tinto (2012) explained there is support needed by administration in higher education toward retention efforts. Tinto (2012) communicated a powerful message "Lest we forget, the goal of retention is not only that students stay in college and graduate, but that they learn while doing so" (p. 125).

Academic advising can engage students beyond their own views by acknowledging individual characteristics and motivations as students enter and exit a college (Tinto, 2012). Advisement perspectives between academic advisors and advisees are defined regarding how effective advising strategies can promote student success

(Smith & Allen, 2014). Academic advisors utilize terms such as career counseling, teaching, and development to describe attributes of academic advising (Himes, 2014).

According to Darling (2015), advising strategies are designed with the purpose of enabling students to be successful and to address any barriers early on which influence success. Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education in promoting Tinto's (2012) theory of student retention. Although academic advising is recognized as a pertinent piece in college retention, the complex process and pedagogical potential continue to be overlooked by institutional leadership, faculty and academic advisors themselves (McGill, 2016).

In addition, faculty and staff not familiar with the process of advising may not see the potential and importance of the academic advisor relationship to student success (McGill, 2016). The focus on student advisement should be a process in which faculty interacts with students in the classroom, then persuade the students to achieve their educational and career goals by seeking additional advising information from dedicated academic advisors within the academic institution (Darling, 2015). Students have high expectations about the level of academic guidance provided by the institution and require levels of advising consistency (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

According to Swecker et al. (2013), academic advisors perceive an institution's social and academic integration as a major influence on students continuing their education at a specific college or university. Important facets of academic advisement include practicing communication and enhancement of students' critical thinking skills (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Consistent advising strategies enforced by academic advisors create a relationship with a student to encourage social integration as a positive model of

allowing a student to experience being a part of a university setting (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Furthermore, empirical research in academic advising has not focused on the student to university relationship despite scholars' indicators emphasizing academic advisors play a role in connecting a student to an institution (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Student perceptions of college can lead to uncurtaining and instability as they move through transitions to and through a higher education institution (Peila-Shuster, 2016). Successfully facilitating a student's transition begins with the development of relationships to include college faculty and staff (Tinto, 2012). Also, fulfillment of the relationship between faculty and students begins in the classroom and then transitions into effective relationships (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). It is only after social integration occurs for a student in the classroom the academic advisor can be used for further university instruction (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Within this review of literature, a theoretically driven analysis between student and faculty perceptions of effective advising strategies and retention are examined. A synthesis of current literature will be discussed including how academic advising can provide opportunities for students to engage in their own learning experience within higher education (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Darling, 2015; McGill, 2016; Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). Tinto (2012) emphasized quality academic advising reflects an institutions commitment to a student. A positive learning experience between a student and academic advisor enables student satisfaction and persistence toward graduation (Tinto, 2012).

An overview of how academic advisors can provide best practices for advisement pertaining to vision, mission, goals, values, and outcomes influencing the design of

advising programs will also be discussed (Colvin, 2013). Campus leadership and academic advisors need to understand the importance of incorporating the advising strategies within a university to promote student success (Darling, 2015). Specific rules are explored to include the National Advising Standards and best practice for advisement (Darling, 2015).

Also included in Chapter Two are the barriers which make academic advising difficult and ineffective. Some barriers include advisors not having enough time to visit and a lack of effective communication and advisement strategies for students (Anderson, Motto, & Bourdeaux, 2014). Finally, in the last section retention strategies are discussed which support students in higher education. These retention strategies include the academic advisor's approachability and availability to produce positive student relationships in an effort to promote retention (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Theories of departure and retention are based on the most recent research focused on models of student growth, satisfaction, and persistence (Tinto, 2012). Tinto's theoretical model of student departure is descriptive and addresses the conditions of why a student chooses to withdraw from an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto has applied the stages of departure to transitions students will make when they enter college and establish membership within a new community (Tinto, 2012). Student interaction with staff, faculty and academic advisors enhances a student's integration within a university by contributing to Tinto's theory of retention (King, 1993).

Student commitment and intentions are subject to change over time. A student's prior attributes and dispositions may influence a college career and lead directly to

student departure (Tinto, 1987). Therefore, a student may depart a university knowing the difficulty of negotiating their way through different stages of becoming integrated within a university and with other members of an institution (King, 1993). Tinto (1987) emphasized the importance of what students endure after college entry is more important to student departure than what occurs prior to admission. Academic collaboration between the students and academic advisors can prevent student departure and promote student retention (Tinto, 2012).

Institutional actions should be coordinated in a collaborative manner to ensure a campus-wide approach to student retention (Tinto, 2012). Darling (2015) emphasized how social connections between the student and advisor are imperative for student success. Furthermore, Tinto (2012) stated a university must behave in an intentional, systemic and structured manner to enhance student success and retention. Purporting to know about student retention and doing something about it are not the same (Tinto, 2012). Academic advising may not be the most commonly used tool of student services, therefore improving advisement sessions could significantly increase retention (Kot, 2014). Therefore, the key to effective retention is the commitment of an inclusive educational and social community within a university promoting a collaborative relationship between a student and the institution (Darling, 2015).

In addition to the importance of the first student contact, there are two main areas, which increases student loyalty to a university. These areas include the quality of the service rendered along with the development of interpersonal relationships (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Service quality can include orientation as a mandatory event for all beginning college students, emphasizing the importance of sustained student services

throughout and beyond the first year (Dadgar et al., 2014). A relationship between

faculty, staff, and a college student should then transpire into a developmental process in

the form of academic advising (Niranjan, Wu, & Jenner, 2015). Students need support

during their entire college career (Niranjan et al., 2015; Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Therefore, support is crucial to building a student's capacity to learn and navigate

through academic and non-academic challenges of college in order to follow a path to

successful completion (Dadgar et al., 2014).

Academic advising strategies utilized in higher education play an important role

in the student retention process, as well as the student and academic advisor relationship

(Braxton et al., 2000). Advising styles can include coaching, supporting, delegating,

counselor, teacher, or the parenting approach (Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Darling, 2015).

The appropriate style depends upon the student and the relationship they have built with

the advisor (Braxton et al., 2000). Advising strategies play an important role not only in

student development and support systems but also in Tinto's theory of student retention

(Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Tinto 2012).

University faculty and academic advisors need to understand the tenants of

college student departure, and how these processes impact university retention rates

(Braxton et al., 2000; Gaines, 2014). The student-advisor relationship primarily depends

on the quality of emotional bonds with campus personnel, student performance and

overall satisfaction of the academic experience (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). According to

students, a divide exists when there is a lack of personal feedback from university faculty

and staff (Tinto, 2012). A student's decision to depart from a university can be caused by

the student perceiving a lack of connection with faculty members, staff, peers and academic advisors (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Tinto (2012) emphasized how social integration between a student and a university must occur for a relationship to be established. This connection must be established at the first contact between a student and a university, which occurs at recruitment and admission (Tinto, 2012). O'Keeffe (2013) stated students' interactions are sometimes difficult and awkward with faculty and staff due to students perceiving them to be inaccessible and unfriendly. Students who feel rejected, coupled with not being able to find a sense of belonging in higher education, is a key cause of student attrition (Tinto, 2012). Faculty and academic advisors should not assume a student knows when to seek career advice, but should require students to make advising appointments throughout their college career (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee & Pino, 2016). Therefore, personnel at universities must seek to create a welcoming and structured environment where students feel a part of a successful academic plan (O'Keeffe, 2013).

While professional college relationships between students and faculty can grow by having good experiences, the same can be said for students who have less than positive occurrences in and out of the classroom (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Student withdrawal and departure from universities are directly influenced by relationships with faculty and staff (Braxton et al., 2000). Negative classroom-based academic experiences and lack of social integration can give students a good reason to consider departure from the university experience (Braxton et al., 2000). The role academic advisors play in the students' social integration within a university should not be underestimated and can be measured (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

According to Colvin (2013), institutions are encouraged to acknowledge increasing retention as a vital process to produce a greater number of graduates identified through government predictions to meet industry needs. Student advising strategies can promote a developmental practice to inform and guide students to success by instilling ways to navigate and control educational experiences needed for the working industry (McGill, 2016). The obligation to fulfill educational needs to the student includes effective academic advising toward a career plan (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). When the academic plan is established, students become effective individuals in society and can more likely persist to graduation (Tinto, 2012).

Another theorist, Bourdieu, established how college pre-entry factors could influence a student's college experience (Pather & Chetty, 2016). Bourdieu's concepts are based on the premise the environment where students are raised help shape their attitudes and abilities to engage in higher education practices (Fabiansson, 2015). A recent study by Pather and Chetty (2016) indicated student retention has been impacted within the past two decades by the extent of how a student's religion, race, economics, and cultural diversity has been accepted.

Pather and Chetty (2016) also noted students' socio-economic status, academic experiences, and demographics are often overlooked in advisement sessions rather than placing emphasis on the importance of a student's background characteristics. Many times, academic advisors assess the personal characteristics of students in depth by referring students to counselors trained in assessments measuring aptitude, intelligence and decision-making abilities (Gordon & Steele, 2015). In addition, Fabiansson (2015) stated an individual's social, economic and cultural background gained during the

formative years shape peoples' identity and perception in various social networks. The understanding of the pre-entry factors relate to social and cultural backgrounds of students is essential to accommodate the diversity of the higher education student population (Pather & Chetty, 2016). Therefore, an emphasis on Tinto's student integration and retention concepts together with Bourdieu's theoretical tools integrate all theories to provide and understand university experiences and academic performance (Pather & Chetty, 2016).

Academic Advising in Higher Education

Educational institutions continue to try to increase student performance which can lead to a successful avenue to graduation (Niranjan et al., 2015). The retention of students is challenging to institutions regardless of their location (Wray, Aspland, & Barrett, 2014). For decades, higher education has recognized student attrition as an area to monitor, and the impact can be seen in student growth, persistence to graduation and student satisfaction (King, 1993). Unfortunately, not all students will graduate at the same rate (Darling, 2015).

Universities must realize once a student is enrolled, it is their obligation to help the students remain (Darling, 2015). As noted by King (1993), academic advising is the only structured service on a college campus to guarantee personal interaction with student representatives of the institution. Maintaining effective undergraduate academic advising programs to meet the needs of all students is an ongoing challenge for universities throughout the country (Anderson et al., 2014).

According to Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015), academic advisors' knowledge of degree requirements, as well as their approachability, produce strong relationships associated with advising and student satisfaction. In order to obtain high levels of positive interactions, there must be clear expectations of the advising process between academic advisors and students (Anderson et al., 2014). Academic advisors need to have an understanding of the advising process including knowledge of personal characteristics, which can cause student failure and success (Donaldson et al., 2016). By knowing this information, advisors can work with students based on individual needs (Alvarez & Towne, 2016). Understanding the differences in students allows the advisor to build a more supportive and success-oriented environment for the advisee (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Despite years of persistence, universities have yet to develop a clear framework to guide their thinking about the best strategies to keep students engaged in academics (Himes, 2014; Tinto, 2012). In a national survey of United States universities and colleges, 225,000 undergraduate students reported academic advising was second only to quality instruction as the most important aspect of the college experience (Anderson et al., 2014). Although an accepted uniform theory of academic advising has yet to emerge, several approaches to academic advising are used across higher education (Donaldson et al., 2016).

The role of an academic advisor. Academic advisement influences student retention by affecting outcomes such as social integration, university commitment and student satisfaction (Smith & Allen, 2014). Many students begin their journey into higher education not knowing what to expect (Tinto, 2012). The rising cost of tuition and

the financial crisis facing the United States have placed universities under pressure to ensure a student's college experience will lead to a viable career (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014).

Most students' first experience with an advisor will begin in the classroom with faculty (Darling, 2015; Suvedi et al., 2015; Tinto, 2012). Two areas of advisement described in higher education fall under the titles of a faculty advisor and the professional or academic advisor (Suvedi et al., 2015). The academic advisor relationship with the student is seen as a continuous teaching and learning endeavor (McGill, 2016). Darling (2015) explained academic advisement is a practice developed to help students learn specific skills, develop abilities, and hone strategies necessary to navigate effective decisions regarding educational goals.

According to McGill (2016), the role of academic advising and its educational potential continues to be overlooked by institutional leadership. Therefore, successful students need access to an advisor's roadmap to help guide them through the many areas of the higher education requirements needed to earn a degree in their chosen field of study (Tinto, 2012). In addition, academic advisors can assist, educate and support students in the development of critical thinking skills to assimilate information provided for college (Himes, 2014). These areas of advisement encourage a path for the student to follow, and should be an ongoing process throughout a student's college experience (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Another area of quality academic advisement includes building a connection of trust and acceptance between the advisor and student (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). A transition from high school to college can be a challenging process for a college student

facing personal, family, academic and social transition issues (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Therefore, advisors are the first contact to personally provide a student with accurate information related to programs, and connecting students with community and campus resources; establishing themselves as a trustworthy source (Sapp & Williams, 2015).

Effective advising strategies. In a time when higher education institutions are facing limited resources and staff, a common thought regarding advising is to include staff and faculty (Himes, 2104). Vianden and Barlow (2015) noted students' intentions to stay or leave from a university depend on the strength of the student-institution relationship. Service quality in an educational relationship is created by people within the institution (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Therefore, when students reflect on their college experiences, they remember friends, people, and faculty who have had positive interactions in an educational relationship (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Universities offer academic advising to inform students about available resources, academic requirements and to familiarize the student with university cultures (Suvedi et al., 2015). The degree to which students can successfully integrate into a university's social and academic systems will define their commitment to the institution and determine if the student will continue their education or eventually exit an institution (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). One way to keep students committed to an institution is to keep them stimulated, challenged and progressing toward a meaningful goal (Sapp & Williams, 2015).

Connections are built from the first interaction in orientation through becoming alumni of the university (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Academic advisement can be

described as a form of teaching and learning to address key issues toward student success (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014; Darling, 2015; Turner & Thompson, 2014; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Academic advisors must apply critical thinking skills to mentor and guide students through challenges and define plans to lead students to successful completion of college (Al-Asmi & Thumi, 2014; Darling, 2015; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Advisors are in a strategic position to engage students in thinking about the larger purpose of education (Alvarez & Towne, 2016).

Inconsistencies in advising literature cause confusion regarding the most effective approaches to promote effective academic advising strategies (Himes, 2014; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Different advising approaches vary within higher education institutions, (Himes, 2014). Therefore, mandatory orientation sessions are encouraged to help students acclimate to the fast-paced university environment and to connect quickly to campus resources which promote academic success (Alvarez & Towne, 2016).

Prescriptive advising. Some institutions will promote a prescriptive style of advisement through which student inquiries are discussed in an authoritative manner (Donaldson et al., 2016). Prescriptive advising includes one-way communication in which the advisor assists the students with logistical details of course selection (Anderson et al., 2014). A prescriptive style of advising in which the student is addressed in an assertive way might work for some students, but others might benefit from a different approach of advising (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016). Students who are involved in prescriptive advising may expect to utilize their academic advisor as a resource only for scheduling and feel satisfied with the advisor because it meets the student's expectations (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Developmental advising. Developmental advisement provides a basis for shared responsibility between the student and the academic advisor working together toward student achievement of academic goals (Donaldson et al., 2016). Developmental advising stimulates and supports students in the quest for achieving educational and personal goals through the utilization of college resources (Grites, 2013). A strong developmental academic advising plan can promote student interaction with faculty and staff to enhance student integration into the academic and social systems within a university (King, 1993). Although developmental advising has received consistent praise from students, some institutions do not employ this method of advising due to time-sensitive academic advisor training (Anderson et al., 2014).

Intrusive advising. Through intrusive advising, the academic advisor encourages student involvement in the advising process and may require academic advising as a condition of continued student enrollment (Donaldson et al., 2016). Academic advisors could utilize training of university policy and counseling skills to adapt each individual student advising appointment (Aiken-Wisniewski, Johnson, Larson, & Barkmeyer, 2015). Intrusive advising allows a student to transition from a focusing only on course selection to engaging in dialogue about future academic planning and the resources needed to finish a students' academic program (Donaldson et al., 2016). By adapting each advising appointment to be specific to a student's needs, advisors can address key variables of student attrition before they transpire, rather than as a reactive process (Anderson et al., 2016).

Students' expectations require the advisor to connect with the student no matter what strategy of advisement, and contribute to student satisfaction (Anderson et al.,

2014). As stated by Rodgers, Blunt, & Trible (2014), intrusive academic advising

provides students with a message if they have a problem; there are resources available for

support. These services are provided by the academic advisors, utilizing evidence-based

strategies to develop customized advising plans meeting a student's needs regardless of

their level of preparedness upon admission (Rodgers et al., 2014).

 Utilizing technology. Encouraging academic advising dialogue between an

advisor and advisee allows the student to gain self-confidence in making decisions about

their educational future (Gaines, 2014). Gaines (2014) also stated advising strategies

geared toward motivating students in college should increase the utilization of

technology. An academic advisor should have the skillset to balance online and face-to-

face interactions both of which can positively affect the academic advising relationship

(Gaines, 2014).

 In addition, various methods of technology can be utilized in advisement sessions

(Walters & Seyedian, 2016). Specific resources include communication tools such as

text messaging, email and announcements within a learning management system (Gaines,

2014). These tools provide students a variety of communication options, which best meet

their academic needs (Gaines, 2014). Therefore, when technology is aligned with

academic advising goals, the student will view this resource as a customized service

(Walters & Seyedian, 2016).

 Technology can be utilized in a way to create a distinct advising relationship with

a student instead of possibly creating barriers by only using a face-to-face relationship

(Gaines, 2014). Smith and Allen (2014) stated the goal of advisement sessions is for the

students to learn and adapt to new college experiences as they transition into higher

education. The use of technology can make advising responsive to the student and can

occur anywhere and anytime (Gaines, 2014). By utilizing communication and tools

adaptable for every students' learning experience, prevention of withdrawal is increased

(Smith & Allen, 2014).

      Policies and procedures to promote academic advising. Consistent and clear

expectations of students within an institution begin with policies and procedures to

support an academic advising curriculum (Himes, 2014). The academic and social

support provided by effective advising strategies must be combined with assessment

methods including feedback on student performance and active involvement with

university personnel (Fort, 2016). Darling (2015) stated, "Regardless of the diversity of

our institutions, our students, our advisors and our organizational structures, academic

advising has three components: curriculum, pedagogy and student learning outcomes" (p.

91). Institutions must look at investing in student assessment methods related to

instructional and academic support (Darling, 2015).

      Students attend higher education institutions for different personal and

professional reasons (Tinto, 2012). Therefore, a guided curriculum can provide a clear

avenue for academic advisors and students to follow while refining knowledge and skills

needed for a profession (Himes, 2014). First, curriculum focused on advising strategies

will address goals required for a student's academic success (Darling, 2015). In addition,

an advising curriculum can articulate a universities' mission, culture, expectations,

development of life and career goals, policies, procedures and decision making for

students (Niranjan et al., 2015).

Next, the academic advisement teaching and learning process requires pedagogy to incorporate preparation, facilitation, and documentation of advising interactions (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). Each relationship between an academic advisor and student may vary due to the different styles of advisement needed to adapt to a student's specific needs during an academic experience (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Darling (2015) stated the relationship between the advisor and student is fundamental and categorized by respect, trust, and fitting behaviors.

Student-learning outcomes are assessed by what students demonstrate, know, and value as a result of participating in academic advising (Al-Asmi & Thumki, 2014). The academic advisor can establish a positive relationship with a student to meet the expected student outcomes by offering student support (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Each university must establish a set of student learning outcomes and methods of how to measure the outcomes to be applicable to a university's missions, goals and curriculum (Darling, 2015; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). An academic advisor should be continuously updated on procedures of appropriate offices and resources available to students on and off campus (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

Counseling of students and the presence of strong support systems within a university has been directly related to improved student retention (O'Keefe, 2013). Counseling efforts provide students the opportunity to explore their goals through self-reflection (Walters & Seydeian, 2016). The value of a positive relationship between an academic advisor and student develops a trust created through mutual respect involving honesty about a student's academic situations, and the ability of the academic advisor to display guidance, competence and caring behaviors (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Barriers to Academic Advising

Students enter college with varying backgrounds experiences and attributes (King, 1993). Academic advisors in some cases are challenged to engage students in reflective conversations regarding academic goals (Niranjan et al., 2015). Educating and scaffolding students in areas where they need more support can be challenging especially when the ultimate goal is for students to accept greater levels of responsibility (Himes, 2014). It is essential academic advisors overcome student advisement barriers to create appropriate relationships based on individual characteristics, motivations and values so students' progress and graduate from college (Himes, 2014).

In order to design student interventions to position students for academic success, the academic advisor must address barriers early in a student's college career (Darling, 2015). Academic intervention and advisement styles are pertinent factors influencing academic success as well as building self-efficacy for beginning undergraduate university students (Niranjan et al., 2015). As noted before, advising styles can differ based on the type of relationship established between the academic advisor and student (Walters & Seyedian, 2016).

According to Turner and Thompson (2014), the academic advisor has the capability to identify best practices, concepts, and activities to promote a successful and collaborative advisor-student relationship. Colvin (2013) stated situational barriers such as scheduling conflicts, finances, and health could negatively affect the success plan an advisor creates for a student's academic plan. Lack of alignment between student expectations of advising and perceived behaviors is one reason for student dissatisfaction with academic advising (Anderson et al., 2014).

The ability of an academic advisor to navigate and find success strategies for a student can be a tedious, time-consuming process (Darling, 2015). Because advisors are at times unaware of students' expectations, they may be inadvertently violating expectations (Anderson et al., 2014). Academic advisors need to discover different ways to address situational barriers, which prohibit a student progressing toward graduation (Colvin, 2013).

Another common barrier for academic advisors is the lack of professional development and knowledge needed to support the student in an academic setting (Darling, 2015). In a study by Alvarez and Towne (2016), it was determined professional development for advisors in the areas of specialized education could have a positive effect on student success. Filson and Whittington (2013) suggested colleges include professional development for academic advisors to engage advisees in college experiences and to promote student development as a whole.

The need for academic advisor training and ongoing professional growth and development is becoming more evident and widespread within higher education (Alvarez & Towne, 2016). Academic advisors need to be trained in effective advertising practice to offer support services for students (Filson & Whittington, 2013). These would include career planning and tutoring as well of knowledge of services available on their respective campus (Filson & Whittington, 2013). In addition, academic advisors can support students through requiring an introductory course, or a new student orientation (Dadgar et al., 2014).

Large caseloads of advisees are another barrier for academic advisors (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). A large number of student advisees may hinder the academic advisor's

ability to take on additional duties outside of the daily advisement sessions (Vianden &

Barlow, 2015). Because of large caseloads for academic advisors, the lack of availability

and access to students can cause frustration (Donaldson et al., 2016). Therefore, the need

for a lower advisor to advisee ratios is pertinent with the student transition to college

generating more efficient and productive advisement sessions (Donaldson et al., 2016).

     Generational advising barriers. When an advisor's approach aligns with

student expectations, a connection is cultivated between students and a university

(Anderson et al., 2014). The ability to create a positive advising experience does not

depend on age, but on mutual respect based on student needs (Montag, Campo,

Weissman, Walmsey, & Snell, 2012). Academic advisement practices provide an avenue

by which colleges can improve student satisfaction and retention, as well as assist

students in selecting a major of study (Montag et al., 2012). Therefore, by adapting

advisement practices to match the needs of the current students, academic advisors can

assist in commitment to a major (Rickes, 2016).

     Students of different generations prefer distinct types of advising environments.

According to Montag et al. (2012), it is important academic advisors focus on the needs

of students while realizing generational differences can affect the advisor and student

relationship. Sapp and Williams (2015) noted universities are aware of the changing

nature of the term freshman, as the number of non-traditional, married and older working

students continue to increase. Furthermore, it is easy to paint an entire generation with

the same cultural brush; however, no single generation can be uniformly categorized

(Rickes, 2016).

In generational theory, groups of people generally born within durations of twenty years who experience similar life events are categorized together (Montag et al., 2012). For example, Baby Boomers born between 1943 and 1960 are characterized as enjoying the freedom of expression and being politically active. The Baby Boomers are optimistic, strong in faith and competitive (Gordon & Stelle, 2005). The massive numbers of the boomer generation retained its status as the largest generational cohort, until recently being taken overtaken by millennials (Rickes, 2016).

Generations Xers grew up in a time of changing family roles and expectations (Gordon & Stelle, 2005). Labeled as the non-traditional population, Generation Xers, born between 1960 and 1982, express a high concern for safety due to increase in incidents and diseases (Rickes, 2016). Gordon & Stelle (2005) described the non-traditional, Gen Xers as independent, impatient and often questioning the why of what is expected of them. Gen Xers also make up a large portion of the non-traditional student population in higher education (Rickets, 2016). Non-traditional students have factors such as full-time jobs, and various responsibilities to consider when enrolled in college (Montag et al., 2012). In addition to responsibilities, non-traditional students prefer activities to build new skills or refine the old skills (Rickets, 2016). Therefore, to address the various learning preferences, academic advisor training programs must offer different styles of learning formats for students (Gordon & Stelle, 2005).

Millennial students. The current college generation comprised of millennials includes individuals born after 1980 (Rickets, 2016). Millennials make up the largest generational cohort in history at 100 million strong (Anderson et al., 2016). The millennial generation is the first generation who have had access to technology their

entire lives (Rickets, 2016). Giving the millennials comfort and fluency with technology, they have more of a positive view of its use than other generations (Montag et al., 2012). One aspect unique to millennials is since birth, they have been surrounded by social media and technology gadgets such as email, twitter, and texting (Turner & Thompson, 2014). The millennial generational category of students is also influenced by the cultural, historical, economic, and social events of their time (Gordon & Steele, 2005).

Millennial characteristics described by authors Montag et al., (2012) are special, sheltered, confident, conventional, team-oriented, achieving, and pressured. The millennial generation of students consists of a larger and more diverse population including different learning styles, educational expectations and socialization characteristics (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Millennial students have ambition, but planning is either non-existent or unrealistic in regards to achieving goals (Keeling, 2003). Therefore, the demanding characteristics of millennial college students may prove to be a challenge for academic advisors adapting advisement practice to fulfill the student millennial need (Keeling, 2003).

Even though there has been little research on the impact of millennial characteristics on college selection and commitment, researchers have pointed out the importance of academic advisors who appreciate the different millennial characteristics to establish best advising practice for an academic institution (Anderson et al.; DeBard, 2004; Montag et al., 2012). Academic advisors who are aware of generational patterns and characteristics should be more effective when advising students than those advisors who do not consider the unique aspects of millennials and other generations as well (Keeling, 2003).

According to Turner and Thompson (2014), an over-exposure and reliance on communication devices have decreased the ability of a millennial student to think, resolve conflict, and develop face-to-face communication techniques critically. Therefore, academic advisors need to find a balance between face-to-face relationships and communication techniques to acquire a full understanding of a student's outlook and future plans to align their education goals (Keeling, 2003). Millennials have come to trust and count on authority to develop a path of success toward an overall career (DeBard, 2004).

 DeBard (2004) discussed the millennials have been told their entire lives they are special. The millennial student prefers constant feedback and an individualized relationship with their advisor (Montag et al., 2012). Authority figures have reported millennial students are sheltered from harm by being encouraged to follow the rules (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Therefore, when working with millennials, rules need to be clearly communicated and enforced with due process (DeBard, 2004). Educators, academic advisors, and service providers must articulate clear expectations in a syllabus or student handbook if situations are to be enforced to a millennial student (DeBard, 2004). Academic advisors can also prepare and be flexible for millennial academic advising by providing continuous feedback regarding course schedules (DeBard, 2004).

Effective academic advising strategies for millennial students require a collaborative advisor-student relationship, which cannot be fostered in one or two meetings (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Millennials expect hearing good news in advising appointments and have been encouraged to believe in themselves (DeBard, 2004). Thus,

advisors need to be aware having critical conversations can be challenging (Tuner & Thompson, 2014).

Academic advising is a teaching and learning process incorporating the assessment of student characteristics, and preparation for advising interactions to include all generations of students (National Academic Advising Association, 2017). When advisors know the students, they are charged to guide, they can successfully support all generations of students (National Academic Advising Association, 2017). In addition, having a toolkit of advising strategies including working with enrollment management, classroom faculty, and student affairs creates a positive first impression for the advisee (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Therefore, when a successful advising academic plan between the academic advisor and the student is created, barriers can be removed, and persistence toward degree completion is positively affected (Lukosius et al., 2013).

Student barriers. Situational and environmental barriers are always present for a student in college, and most often, these barriers are left to the student to handle in isolation (Colvin, 2013). According to Lukosius et al., (2013) lower levels of social support are linked to incidents of student loneliness in the college setting. In addition, students may perceive faculty as unconcerned with them as individuals (Lukosius et al., 2013). Students in these situations are more prone to leave college unless they get help with the career decision-making process (King, 1993).

Turner and Thompson (2014) stated many students who leave a university prematurely or do not return to the university, complained of poor academic advisement. An academic advisor should review a students' placement testing, and academic background to provide appropriate recommendations for college courses (King, 1993).

Advisors who help students set goals and build action plans based upon their talents

motivate students to acquire the skills necessary for college success (National Academic

Advising Association, 2017).

Students' perceptions of effective academic advising include required meeting

times throughout the college experience, rather than a one-time meeting for students at

the beginning of the academic experience in higher education (Darling, 2015; Turner &

Thompson, 2014; Vianden & Barlow, 2014). Unfortunately, advisors may not monitor a

student's progress toward meeting an educational plan throughout the year due to a large

number of advisees or extra work assignments not related to student advisement

(National Academic Advising Association, 2017). Advisement sessions must be

consistent for students regardless of attendance in college for the first time or returning to

complete a degree (Vianden & Barlow, 2014). Lastly, an academic advisor's consistency

in monitoring students' success, intellectual development, and career decisions are

impacted by positive interactions and shaping a student's academic future (Lukosius et

al., 2013).

Students who enter college without academic, social and financial support are

academically underprepared and struggle to succeed in higher education (Tinto, 2012).

Frequently, the higher cost of a four-year university becomes a barrier to transfer from

one college another (King, 1993). In addition, admission policies and deadlines related to

transfer can be barriers to student success (King, 1993). An academic advisor can

decrease barriers to success by ensuring students have access to funding, academic

support and career services are provided (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013).

King (1993) suggested the academic advisor help students explore options in meeting or reducing college costs by encouraging advisees to work directly with financial aid personnel. Students who seek out social and financial support were also reported to visit an academic advisor to help with course planning of their college experience (Donaldson et al., 2016). This additional support from the academic advisor provided an outlet for the student to request additional assistance from the advisor in the future (King, 1993).

In a study by Anderson et al., (2014) students indicated three negative advisement experiences could occur with their academic advisor. The three experiences included lack of time to visit, not receiving proper direction and ineffective communication (Anderson et al., 2014). As previously, noted, academic advising is a structured activity on a college campus in which students have a one-on-one interaction with a representative of an institution (National Academic Advising Association, 2017). Therefore, advisement activities should engage students in a positive way, and effectively communicate expectations of how a student can achieve success (Tinto, 2012).

As indicated in his study, O'Keeffe (2013) stated students who are underprepared for academia could feel disconnected and have a sense of not belonging in college. Donaldson et al., (2016) noted academic advisement accessible only by students who seek support would not reach the student population designated as being underprepared for college. For example, part-time students working long hours sometimes see themselves as less attached to the college (O'Keeffe, 2013). Some students feel obligated to work more while attending college; therefore, they do not see the benefit of support services (Lukosius et al., 2013). Although many students managing these challenges are

able to balance work and education, other students may withdraw even under minimal stress (Tinto, 1987). Academic advisors can assist students on the topic of stress management training to help improve student's skills and achievement while enrolled in college (Lukosius et al., 2013).

Students lacking experience in areas of critical thinking and decision-making skills can also be underprepared for academia (Tinto, 1987). A study previously mentioned by O'Keeffe (2013) examined how advisors need different advisement strategies to help students in making decisions regarding advisement meetings and extra-curricular activities. The development of new strategies and academic program initiatives are needed to foster a collaborative learning environment to include accessibility of academic resources on and off the college campus (Turner & Thompson, 2014). By offering various resources to students, the challenges of finances, personal problems, and family barriers can be resolved by students requesting assistance in transitional adjustment issues (Turner & Thompson, 2014). These resources enabled students to balance time spent on and off campus (Lukosius et al., 2013).

Students also noted concerns regarding the quality of advisement sessions due to lack of communication from academic advisors regarding the resources available (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Students in Donaldson et al.'s (2016) study revealed academic advisors did not offer any knowledge or availability of specific advisement tools. When entering college, students expect advisors to review the learning resources available, communicate the availability of websites and online software, tutoring resources and other tools to assist the college student (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Another student barrier academic advisors face is finding a way to include parents in an advising session without compromising confidence and trust with students (National Academic Advising Association, 2017). Today's parents can seem demanding, causing a change in the relationship between students and advisors (National Academic Advising Association, 2017). Often, college students look to parents for input on decisions regarding academics (Montag et al., 2012). Lukosius et al., (2013) stated a students' family is a critical force, more influential in a students' life than education. Parental influence can cause a student to experience dissonance between previously held truths and external information causing stress related to career choice (Lukosius et al., 2013). According to Himes (2014), advisors must develop strategies to advising creating an environment for students to realize their autonomy and establish goals consistent with an educational plan.

In contrast to the parents who want to be a part of the students' college experience, Tinto (1987) discussed a population of students entering college who have no family support. According to Lukosius et al. (2013), students who have weaker relationships with their parents can also have difficulty adjusting to college. Tinto (1987) also emphasized students entering college have to separate themselves from past forms of familial negative behavior to achieve an academic goal. The separation from these negative behaviors is physical, as well as intellectual and social (Tinto, 1987). In addition, lower levels of student social support have also been linked to higher ratings of loneliness in college students (Lukosius et al., 2013).

Tinto (2012) emphasized the importance of students receiving academic advising strategies to become acclimated to a college culture including positive experiences which

promote the idea of the student persistence and commitment to an institution (Claybrooks & Taylor, 2016). The lack of alignment between student expectations of advising and apparent behaviors of academic advisors is an explanation for student dissatisfaction with the advising process (Anderson et al., 2014). If students understand the importance of the academic advisor, they will appreciate exciting, and new challenges college can offer (National Academic Advising Association, 2017).

Retention Strategies

College student attrition and retention are perhaps the largest problems institutions in higher education are facing today (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). Despite years of research addressing college retention, graduation rates are still moderate in the United States (Bowman & Denson, 2014). The non-completion rates of degrees in higher education lead to extensive immediate and long-term financial costs for universities, and non-completion rates lead to substantial costs for students (Bowman & Denson, 2014). Academic advising in relation to persistence between the advisor and student work best as a personal, academic plan per student (Ellis, 2014; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Specifically, students' personal perception of advising can determine if the student would stay at a university depending on the personal, academic experience (Gaines, 2014).

While early research on retention identified student characteristics related to attrition, research has focused on models of student persistence to include measures of growth, satisfaction, and persistence within these models (King, 1993). Tinto's 1987 student model identified three stages of transition through which a youth moves to an adult within a given society (King, 1993). These stages of transition include separation from past associations, transition within a group and incorporation as the student

becomes an established member of the college group (Tinto, 1987). Tinto has applied these stages to college students, noting these stages are typical of the transitions students make when they enter college, therefore; a student may depart the institution if there is difficulty negotiating any of these stages (King, 1993; Tinto, 1987).

A study by Siekpe and Barksdale (2013) revealed 30% of first-year college students did not return to college for their sophomore year, and the federal government provided 1.5 billion dollars in grants to these students. The reasons given in regard to not returning to college include family problems, loneliness, academic struggles and a lack of money (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). According to Tinto (1987), other factors determining why college students do not return for their sophomore year include lack of preparedness, student commitment and the absence of social and academic integration to the campus. Students at risk for non-completion of college may experience feelings of rejection, and not being acclimated to the normal academic challenges associated with college life (O'Keefe, 2013). Tinto (2012) explained how expectations could have a powerful outcome on student performance.

Various methods of teaching and learning provide a link between advising and student retention (O'Keeffe, 2013). The academic advisor plays an important role in helping a student navigate the system and develop a realistic understanding of the demands of a college life (King, 1993). Academic advisors must remain current with student advising needs and continue to look for ways to improve relationships with the student to promote success and retention (O'Keeffe, 2013). Advisors continue to value student opinions and experiences in and out of the classroom in order to maintain effective communication and continued to improve advisement experiences and

environments (Gaines, 2014). Vianden and Barlow (2015) emphasized effective academic advising is crucial to student persistence and retention.

Continual academic advisor training is linked to improvements in student satisfaction and retention (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Full-time academic advisors require professional training in areas of college-specific academic information (Gordon & Steele, 2005). The academic advisors identify problems students encounter in college, assisting students in resolving the problems which could have a negative impact on academic achievement (Tinto, 1987). Relevant topics of academic advisor training include a caring atmosphere, effective use of knowledge of institutional policies and procedures and campus resources (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). By addressing these areas of advisor training students will grow personally and academically (Tinto, 1987).

Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) noted the connection with student satisfaction and advising being positively linked to retention. A reoccurring issue of retention has the attention of private universities focusing on strategies for implementation in areas of academic advisement to promote student engagement and success (Tinto, 2012). The ability to provide academic advising support to a student can be effective with a structured advising program which is well integrated with other college campus support systems to provide a seamless path for a student entering higher education (King, 1993). What students expect of themselves and what is needed to achieve success in college determines what the student will actually do (Tinto, 2012).

Summary

In Chapter Two, retention is noted as an important factor to student success. In addition, quality academic advising should be considered for colleges and universities

(Tinto, 2012). Success in higher education provides most students greater opportunities for the rest of their lives (Wray et al., 2014). The literature also supported the idea of academic advising is a unique, interdisciplinary field which reinforces diverse goals within higher education (Himes, 2014). A somewhat conflicting implication emerged regarding student motivation to connect and interact with an academic advisor (Donaldson et al., 2016). Therefore, in order to engage with students, academic advising should include mandatory, ongoing academic guidance to create a seamless social and academic transition into a college environment (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

In this chapter, Tinto's theories of student departure and retention were discussed (Tinto, 1987; 2012). Tinto's theory of student departure examined how student's isolation from social and academic communities within a college have a negative impact on student achievement (Tinto, 1987). As indicated in research, variables affecting a student's decision to leave college are poor relationships, personal attributes, family background, prior college and academic experience (Walters & Seyedian, 2016; Tinto, 2012). Therefore, effective academic advisors must evaluate each students' goals, needs, and interests by adapting advising skills to meet the expectations of the student (Tinto, 2012).

Student retention is related closely to issues of student persistence, attrition, and student departure (Swecker et al., 2013). Barriers related to student retention identified in literature were a lack of consistency between campuses, specifics of generational advisement, advisor caseload, and lack of professional development (Donaldson et al., Tinto, 2012; Turner & Thompson, 2014). As Montag et al., (2012) explained barriers for

academic advisors could be improved by constructing a strong relationship with a student to enable a positive impact on the process of academic advisement.

Academic advising strategies to support student retention promotes clear and meaningful university experiences enhancing a student's educational path and successful future (Darling, 2015; Niranjan et al., 2015; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Academic advisors understand personal characteristics underlying student failure and success (Alvarez & Towne, 2016). In addition, higher education institutions have constructed policies, programs, and campus activities to provide a balance for students in areas of academic and social experience (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

The dynamics between students and academic advisors have been discussed in the literature (Darling, 2015; Niranjan et al., 2015; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). The perceived positive interactions between a student and academic advisor described the potential connection to retention (King 1993; Tinto 2012; Turner & Thompson, 2014). These interactions were described by King (1993) as a cornerstone of student retention. Therefore, academic advisors who are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and enjoy working with students can often make a difference between a persisting student and a potential dropout (Tinto, 2012).

The methodology used to study perceptions of academic advisement and retention is discussed in Chapter Three, along with ethical considerations for the study. An analysis of the findings and implications reported in this study is discussed in Chapter Five. The recommendations for further research are given in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three: Methodology

As described in the prior literature review, academic advising can provide an opportunity for a member of a higher education system to counsel students in specific academic areas, as well as personal areas not necessarily school related (Crocker, Kahla, & Allen, 2014). Personal areas of challenge can include a students' indecisiveness about an area of study and anxiety issues, which could hinder the ability of the student to make clear and conscious decisions (Ellis, 2014). Four-year institutions are more likely to focus on the student experience as the main pattern for considering student characteristics, advisement, support services, student life activities and access to specific degree programs (Darling, 2015).

In this chapter, a review of the problem and purpose of the study is restated. The questions guiding the research are reaffirmed, and a discussion of the research design are included. The instruments used to garner data were reviewed. After the procedures used to collect data are presented, the manner in which data were analyzed will be provided.

Problem and Purpose

A decrease in student retention rates can often be contributed to a lack of strong institutional relationships between students and academic advisors (Lukosius et al., 2013). If connections with students are not obtained, higher education institutions are at risk of losing their clientele; which is costly not only to the institution but to the student (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013). As previously outlined in Chapters One and Two, the intent of this study was to gather perceptions from students and academic advisors in higher education to understand strengths and barriers of an advising program at a private faith-based university branch campus. The advisement experiences of students can determine

what constitutes effective academic advisement toward an overall goal of success and retention (Williamson et al., 2014).

Higher education institutions utilize different strategies to determine rates of student retention, emphasizing how academic advising can support retention (Darling, 2015). Regardless of what strategies are used to determine student retention, institutions are slow in improving their advising programs (Darling, 2015). Tinto (2012) stated in order to improve retention and graduation; an institution must establish conditions within its system, which promotes positive outcomes of advising and retention. According to Ellis (2014), an investigation into levels of advisement can help support which aspects of quality advising impact student persistence and success in higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are students' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies that impact undergraduate, pre-allied health student success?

2. What academic advising barriers do students report most adversely affecting effective advising?

3. What are the academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies for undergraduate, pre-allied health student success and retention?

4. What are the academic advisors' perceptions of barriers that prohibit effective academic advising strategies?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this study (Creswell, 2014). By gathering views and perspectives of the study's participants,

research methodology can be combined with disciplinary expertise (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research is a commonly used method for understanding the meaning people have constructed, and how a person can make sense of experiences they have in the world (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research is reliant on the understanding of reasons and opinions of research participants, knowing these preferences can change with time (Lub, 2015). Creswell (2014) explained qualitative research as an approach to discovering and understanding the participants meaning while interpreting the difficulty of a situation.

Within the challenge of conducting original research, Yin (2016) emphasized three important objectives for qualitative research to include transparency, adhering to the evidence and giving special attention to detail. Qualitative research involves evolving questions and procedures, data analysis to include themes and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). The process of validation in qualitative inquiry may take time due to member checks and procedures to assure confidentiality (Lub, 2015).

There are other methods of research which were considered and rejected as being appropriate for this study. Qualitative and quantitative researches are different research terms often referred to as being the opposite of one another (Webb, 2015). The difference in qualitative and quantitative research is based on the distinction of how qualitative utilizes words and meanings, whereas, quantitative methodology focuses on specific numbers to examine data (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2016). Creswell (2014) stated a complete way to examine the differences between qualitative and quantitative research is to view the researcher's philosophical assumptions brought to the study and

the types of research instruments utilized such as quantitative experiments or qualitative

case studies.

Quantitative research was not chosen for this study due to the emphasis of reality

being permanent, and this concrete approach does not take into consideration life

experiences (Hendricks, 2013). Quantitative research is about collecting numerical data

to discuss a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2016). Therefore, a quantitative approach is not

recommended for this study as quantitative research is designed to provide values and

facts within data being distinct from one another (Fraenkel et al., 2016). In contrast, the

purpose of qualitative research is to find value in the research process, and how facts and

values can be inseparably brought together to investigate the visions of what the world is

really like (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

Quantitative research typically involves individuals who are a representative of a

larger population in which certain results can be generalized to a specific population

(Fraenkel et al., 2016). Quantitative research may assess whether an intervention is

effective within a population in a particular study, where qualitative research will assess

the nature of a needed intervention and its implementation (Yin, 2016). Although,

quantitative researchers view the researcher as being hopelessly entangled in

preconceived notions and untrustworthy research findings (Yin, 2016). The contrasting

practices of qualitative versus quantitative methods have led to sharp and ongoing

dialogues (Yin, 2016).

In qualitative research, the interview process included the interviewer phrasing his

or her requests in a conversational tone to engage the participants in a narrow range of

topics allowing the opportunity for the interviewer to explore themes to further into a

conversation (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). In this study, a semi-structured interview instrument was used in the student and academic advisors' conversations as they occur in a natural setting (Hendricks, 2013). Yin (2016) noted the researcher must have the capability to appreciate differences in meanings and conversations among human perspectives in qualitative research. When using interviews as a data collection method in qualitative research, it is important to understand the interviewer is considered an adaptable and flexible instrument (Webb, 2015).

Another method of research considered but rejected was mixed methods research (Creswell, 2014). The idea of mixing collected quantitative data and qualitative data to provide a better understanding of a research problem or suggestions in a study is a newer methodology (Creswell, 2014). A mixed methods study approach involves analyzing the mixing of qualitative and qualitative data separately and then comparing the results to determine if the findings endorse each other (Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) also stated mixed methods research is intended to encourage the development of new processes and specific procedures, unlike in this particular study where the utilization of qualitative research was constantly evaluating existing processes. Tinto (2012) stated universities determine how the more traditional practices of advising could promote student success and retention by not declaring a new process, but providing advisement strategies fitting the current needs of the student.

The knowledge of students' perceptions regarding advisement strategies arises from real life interactions with faculty and academic advisors (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). The data collected for this study captured the perspectives of real-world events by the people who live them, and not the values, or pre-conceptions or meanings interpreted

by the researchers (Yin, 2016). By using qualitative methodology in this study, it allowed the researcher to explore, interpret and provide meaning to the data collected (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

The selected population for this study included allied health students who had not yet been accepted to a competitive allied health degree program. The private faith-based university utilized in this study is composed of one main campus and three branch campuses. The general student population for the main campus is approximately 1,500 students. This study was conducted at a branch campus of primarily allied health programs with a population of approximately 740 students.

There were two student focus groups in this study (Yin, 2016). One group consisted of five participants; the other group had six participants. Purposive sampling in this study was used to select participants who have a variety of experiences needed to provide specifics of this qualitative study (Fraenkel et al., 2016). The purpose for selecting certain participants produced the most relevant data given for the topic of the study (Yin, 2016).

Magnusson and Marecek (2015) stated words similar to sample and sampling should be avoided when referring to participants in a qualitative study. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) also recommended focus groups or purposive selection to be the preferred terminology when referring to interpretive research. Unlike random sampling which ensures the researcher has drawn the participants from a random population (Lub, 2015). Participants were advised there could be the possibility comments are recognized by other participants in the interview process of the study (Lub, 2015).

A range of academic advisors exists in different departments of the main campus and branch campuses of the selected university. For this study, academic advisors from the same allied health branch campus as the two student focus groups were individually interviewed. Three academic advisors were included in a semi-structured interview for the promotion of open conversations in evolving ideas, perceptions and reactions to the researcher's questions (Yin, 2016).

Instrumentation

Original, semi-structured questions were utilized for students within focus groups to assume a conversational mode, rather than a tightly scripted format (Yin, 2016). Questions for the student focus groups in this study were designed to discover students' perceptions of life experiences about how effective advising strategies can promote retention (see Appendix A). Participants in the focus groups were questioned to offer any input and feedback they may have to improve the process of effective academic advisement strategies, to reveal barriers to effective advisement (Creswell, 2014).

The second instrument used in this study included an interview protocol for individual discussions between the researcher and academic advisors (see Appendix B). These interview questions were exclusive to the advisor's perceptions of what actions were considered strategic in assisting a student to a successful academic career path. The interview protocol questions also included what barriers in academic advisement could cause a student to be unsuccessful in a career path. All interview questions were designed to be open-ended to allow participants to explain their intentions, reactions, and reflections on the given topics involving advising strategies for students and barriers which could conflict with advisement (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

Reliability and validity. The reliability and validity of instruments used in this study were legitimized by using valid research processes, beyond academic reflection (Lub, 2015). Creswell (2014) stated in qualitative literature, areas addressing validity were authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness. Interview and focus group questions were subject to pilot testing prior to research approval to establish the content validity (Lub, 2015).

The intent of the pilot test is to ensure the questions were administered to the student focus groups without variability (Creswell, 2014). The pilot test provided an opportunity to understand the time necessary for the focus group questions and validate the wording of the questions for the participants (Fraenkel et al., 2016). According to Yin (2016), pilot studies help test and refine one or more features of a study. Therefore, professional colleagues reviewed the two focus groups data to garner the multiple perspectives obtained and validated accuracy obtained in the pilot test study (Lub, 2015).

The intent of the academic advisor pilot test was to ensure the questions were administered to each person consistently (Creswell, 2014). Academic advisors not included in the study were ask sample interview questions in the pilot study to reveal any defects in the study design (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Administrative professionals and the researcher reviewed the academic advisor interview results gathered from each individual to establish validity and reliability (Lub, 2015). The pilot data obtained from the student participants and academic advisors were incorporated into the final instrument revisions (Creswell, 2014).

Additional approaches to address reliability and validity in the study included member checking, clarifying bias and triangulation (Creswell, 2014). Member checking

for the student participants and academic advisors was utilized to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Yin, 2016). The validity final reports and descriptions of themes within the data collected were given back to the student participants and academic advisors for validation and accuracy of the data received (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

To clarify bias, the researcher provided background information relating to her position at the University (Creswell, 2014). This information was given to the participants while reviewing the informed consents (Creswell, 2014). The researchers' reflection created an open and honest narrative, which resonated with the readers to include how the researcher would avoid personal bias (Yin, 2016).

Triangulation of data was utilized to increase the validity of evaluation and research findings (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Triangulated techniques were helpful for crosschecking and used to provide validation and inclusiveness (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). The utilization of triangulation with data can provide multiple research methods by decreasing the weakness of one research method to strengthen the outcome of the study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). To triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence allows information to be built and justification for themes (Creswell, 2014).

The point in research when the perspectives converge was seen to represent the present reality (Yin, 2016). Furthermore, by utilizing more than one piece of evidence, triangulation verified participants' perspectives to add to the validity of the qualitative study (Fraenkel et al., 2016). A valid study is one involving interpreted data, so conclusions represent and reflect the real world, which data were studied (Yin, 2016).

Data Collection

Communication between the gatekeepers at the institution where the study took place were contacted (see Appendix C). Formal approval procedures were obtained through Lindenwood University (see Appendix D). The research review board at the private faith-based university in the study was also approached to provide approval for this research study (see Appendix E). Once approval from both institutions was obtained, the data collection process began (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

Invitations to participate in the research study were sent out to student focus groups and academic advisors. Electronic mail was sent to the student focus groups introducing the study and requesting their participation (see Appendix F). Students who were willing to participate in the discussions were asked to contact the researcher to receive information about participating in one of the two scheduled focus groups. The time, date and location, along with contact information for the researcher were also given. Each focus group and interviews took place at the allied health branch campus.

On the scheduled day of the focus groups, the purpose of the study was reviewed. The researcher reviewed the permission form verbally and reiterated to the participants their option to leave the study at any time (Yin 2016). Students were asked to sign the written adult consent form (see Appendix G). Once the official paperwork was complete, the focus groups commenced by answering questions, which were recorded through audio. All student participants were asked the same questions, allowing each student opportunities to elaborate on answers to provide clarification and ensure consistency (Creswell, 2014).

A separate electronic mail was sent to the academic advisors at the university to recruit their participation in the study (see Appendix H). An explanation of the study included the topics of effective student advising strategies and barriers academic advisors experience during an advising appointment for undergraduate students. The academic advisors who were willing to participate in the study were asked to contact the researcher to receive information about a scheduled time to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

Each academic advisor was given the option to be interviewed by phone or in person. The time, date and location along with contact information for the researcher were agreed upon by the advisor. On the scheduled day of the interview, the purpose of the study was reviewed. The researcher reviewed the permission form verbally and reiterated to the academic advisor the option to leave the study at any time (Yin, 2016). The academic advisor was asked to sign an official consent form to participate in the study (see Appendix I). Once all the official procedures were complete, interview sessions with academic advisors commenced. The sessions were audio recorded to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) emphasized data analysis and collection must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. Qualitative research is interpretive research in which a personal assessment as to a description fits a situation or themes to capture categories of information (Creswell, 2014). Interpretation of qualitative data in this study involved the conversion of interviews, observations and conversations from audio to textual form (Hendricks, 2013). The text was analyzed to search for categories and specific themes

within the data, also referred to as thematic analysis (Hendricks, 2013). The data

gathered from the student focus group conversations and academic advisor interviews

enabled patterns of shared meanings, reflections, points of view and experiences

(Magnusson & Maraecek, 2015).

The data were categorized, organized, and reviewed repeatedly to ensure internal

validity during the research process (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2016) stated qualitative

research could be used for elaboration of generalization of processes already established.

The data were transcribed and analyzed for end points of a qualitative study to include

theories, patterns, and themes emerging from data collection and analysis (Creswell,

2014).

Ethical Considerations

The participants in this study were protected and assured of confidentiality and

privacy guidelines (Yin, 2016). The researcher obtained permission to interview various

undergraduate students, along with academic advisors (Yin, 2016). There was an adult

consent form signed by each student participant, and each academic advisor before the

face-to-face interview process began. The interview process was recorded by audio

capabilities in an informal, semi-structured event (Lub, 2015).

The in-depth interviews allowed the academic advisors to reveal much about their

academic role (Lub, 2015). During such interviews, a measure of intimacy developed

between the interviewers and participants (Fraenkel et al., 2016). The qualitative

researcher does not try to adopt any uniform demeanor or behavior for each interview

(Yin, 2016). Rather, the interviewer needs to follow a conversational mode, allowing the

interview to lead to a social relationship individualized to each participant (Yin, 2016).

Furthermore, the interviewer must be protected against any misunderstanding on the part of the participants as to the purpose of the interview itself (Fraenkel 2016). Ellis (2014) explained the importance of a standardized open-ended interview model as a semi-structured event to minimize the differences in items presented to the participants. The researcher must remember to be neutral in the interview process because of the lack of objectivity (Yin, 2016).

Anonymity assurance. Creswell (2014) stated qualitative research is interpretive research meaning the inquirer is typically involved in intensive experience with the participants in the study. Therefore, obtaining permission to a research site and other ethical issues such as confidentiality may arise, and it is the researcher's role to ensure all steps have been taken to protect the rights of the human participants (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2016) stated participant anonymity, together with pseudonyms, would be the researchers' choice. The limitation and assumptions will be discussed later in Chapter Five to discuss how the impact of this research study can be narrowed down to further explore the topic of effective advising strategies and student retention.

Confidentiality assurance. Fraenkel et al., (2014) recommended the researcher utilize an observational protocol for recording multiple observations during the focus group sessions and academic advisor interviews. The recommendation of an observational tool would be a single piece of paper divided into sections of characteristics of the participants, reconstruction of the dialogue, accounts of particular events and reflective notes (Creswell, 2014). The transcribed files will be printed and locked in a file under the supervision of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The transcribed files will be stored on a personal computer, protected by a password. The audio from interviews

will be downloaded into audio files and locked in a cabinet. All documents and files will be destroyed three years from completion of the research project (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

The methodology utilized for this study was described in this chapter. The focus of this research was to examine students' perceptions of effective academic advising, and what barriers students face when receiving advisement. Academic advisors' perceptions were gathered to determine if the best advising strategies for students are being utilized, and what barriers the academic advisors face when meeting with a student to create a plan for academic success.

This qualitative study was designed with Tinto's departure and retention theoretical frameworks (Natoli et al., 2015). The data analysis processes and findings are discussed in Chapter Four. Summaries of two student focus group interviews and three academic advisor interviews are given. The subsequent findings and recommended further research are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

This study was designed to discover if a decrease in student retention rates could be contributed to a lack of strong institutional relationships between students and academic advisors (Lukosius et al., 2013). Student retention can be influenced by the expectations the institution establishes for the level of effort required for a student's successful performance (Tinto, 2012). The findings from student focus groups and academic advisors' interviews will be discussed in this chapter. Questions guiding this study were based on student and academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advisement, and barriers prohibiting effective academic advisement. The justification for using these research questions to guide the study was based upon topics emerging from the literature review as areas of concern for student retention in higher education institutions.

Demographics

In this study, data were collected from two sample populations (Yin, 2016). Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had a variety of experiences needed to provide specifics of this qualitative study (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Students who attended focus group sessions were interviewed in an interactive format (Yin, 2016). A request to collect a purposeful selection of possible participants for the study was made to the university compliance manager to obtain contact information for pre-allied health degree-seeking students.

The request was granted generating 128 email addresses. Potential student participants were emailed information regarding the research study, and steps to take to participate. Six students responded to the initial email. Additionally, university faculty

informed students about the research study within pre-allied health classes. The second

set of emails were sent from the researcher to the student population. Five more students

replied to the researcher by email agreeing to participate in the research study. The two

focus groups consisted of eleven students.

Academic advisors who work with students in the program were also interviewed

to gain a better understanding of academic advising strategies and advising barriers. The

second sample population included academic advisors. The advisors were emailed by the

researcher to request interviews to be conducted at an agreed upon location. Three

academic advisors replied to the request. The individual in-depth interviews allowed the

researcher to listen to personal experiences, feelings, and opinions from the academic

advisors relating to advising barriers and strategies (Yin, 2016).

Data Analysis

Yin, (2016) explained nearly all qualitative studies contain information about the

actions and voices of individual participants. Qualitative analysis involves labeling and

coding of the data to recognize similarities and differences (Fraenkel et al., 2016). The

analysis of data in this qualitative study was ongoing, and conclusions were drawn

continuously throughout the data collection and analysis process (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

The first instrument utilized in this study included original, semi-structured

questions, which were used in student focus groups. One focus group's participants were

labeled by the letters of the alphabet, and the second focus group's participants were

identified by numbering one through five (Magnusson & Marecek 2015). Ten questions

were presented to the student focus groups. The members of the focus groups provided a

wealth of rich data representing students' perceptions of effective advising strategies

considered to promote retention (Fraenkel et al., 2016). The focus groups allowed the researcher to adjust and adapt to the situation without altering the original context of the data (Yin, 2016).

Selecting specific participants for the focus groups allowed relevant data to emerge for the topic of this study (Magnusson & Marecek 2015). Questions regarding demographic information were asked to gain a better understanding of the participants. The students had the opportunity to expand on answers in a relaxed setting, to broaden the understanding of the questions, and include in-depth responses (Yin, 2016).

The second instrument utilized in this study included interview questions exclusive to academic advisors. A semi-structured interview protocol guided the dialogue between the researcher and each academic advisor allowing meaningful conversations to take place utilizing the advisors own words (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Ten interview questions using an open-ended interview format were used for the academic advisor interview sessions. Questions allowed the advisors to express their own perceptions of effective academic advising techniques in their words, and not the researcher's terminology (Creswell, 2014). The academic advisors were able to explain their reactions, reflections, and intentions on the given questions (Lub, 2015). Each academic advisor had the opportunity to share advising experiences in a conversational mode, allowing a natural part of routine spoken communication (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

Student focus group interviews. In this section, the responses from the student focus groups will be presented. The information is summarized to answer each focus

group question. The first question provided the program of study the participants

currently enrolled in at the allied health branch campus.

      Focus group question #1. *What is your program of study?* The participants in

this study were split between pre-nursing and pre-radiology students. All participants

were completing coursework required to apply for select admission programs.

      Focus group question #2. *The topic for this study will be to discuss effective*

academic advising strategies that promote student success, and barriers to effective

academic advising. How often do you meet with an academic advisor each semester?

The answers to question number two varied depending on the participant. The answers

ranged from as needed to weekly appointments. The most common answer for meeting

with an academic advisor was twice per semester. In addition, students discussed

everyone's needs were different, so it was difficult to determine one right way for

advisors to work with students.

      Several participants discussed their meeting times with advisors. Students

elaborated on advising sessions, which includes students seeking out resources and

explaining how often they sought advisement. Student #3, who meets with their advisor

once per week stated, "… she likes to see how I am doing this week, I do not have good

test taking skills. It has helped me out quite a bit." Student #2 who did not have a

consistent meeting time with their advisor noted, "Usually I only meet with my advisor

when I need to. I have the ability to schedule my own classes".

      Focus group question #3. *Describe a typical advising session if applicable,*

where you felt meeting with an academic advisor was unsuccessful. Once again, the

answers varied between students regarding what was considered an unsuccessful

academic advising experience. Some students did not have experience with unsuccessful advising sessions. A lack of general campus information shared between the academic advisor and students including specifics of classes and program requirements had contributed to an unsuccessful advising session for Student #1.

The lack of knowledge relating to a specific allied health program was also mentioned as a negative experience by Student #2. Student # 5 stated, "I felt like the academic advisors should tell us what they do a little bit more." Student # 5 continued to explain students perceive advisor duties as only to schedule classes, and did not know the academic advisor role assisted with other student needs including extra advisor meeting times.

Focus group question #4. *What suggestions would you give an academic advisor on what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success?* The most common answers students reported in the focus group regarding effective advising strategies were consistent communication and collaboration regarding available resources on the campus. Student #4 suggested the academic advisor provide additional communication to students regarding how to navigate the college website. Student participants noted resources on the website were hard to find, and not readily available.

Several students agreed improved directions, regarding how to find the resources on the student portal and the college website, would help students be more successful. Student #1 described specific resources such as web advisor and the self-service areas on the student portal as being difficult to operate. Student #5 commented about the bookstore on campus when they mentioned: "with the bookstore, I have to google it every

time I look for the bookstore as I can never find it on the website." Students A, B, and E agreed on effective advising strategy to promote student success includes clarity and consistency in communication efforts between a student and academic advisor. Students discussed how effective communication between the advisor and student includes more than just registration for classes each semester.

Focus group question #5. *Tell me about an academic advising experience that you considered to be negative to your learning experience in college.* Student #4 asked if the question was only related to this college because since they had enrolled at the current institution, there has never been a bad experience. Student #4 went on to state, "the advisors [at this institution] are very polite and patient, and typically they answer all of my questions."

A negative learning experience shared by Student #2 consisted of a scenario where an academic advisor confused one allied health program with another, and program information given to the student was not accurate. Student #2 went on to explain how knowledge about the correct guidelines had to be obtained from another resource. Student #1 also mentioned issues regarding lack of clarity relating to specific program information was considered a negative experience. Student #1 explained how two different academic advisors relayed conflicting program information to them causing confusion. The lack of clarity on program information was discussed as a group as a negative advising experience for all.

Focus group question #6. *How much consideration is given to a student's schedule and needs when setting times to meet with academic advisors?* The majority of student participants agreed the academic advisors were always willing to meet around a

student's academic and personal schedule. Student #1 discussed how their advisor encouraged emailing first, stating some advisement can be done through email. Student A explained how the advisor accommodated the student request to meet by allowing different meeting times to fit with the student's schedule. Student A stated, "…the advisor used her own time to schedule me for classes when I did not have an appointment."

Focus group question #7. *In your opinion, name two things that would lead a student to withdraw from college.* The participants reported several examples of how student perceptions could cause a student to withdraw from a higher education institution. In the focus groups, students discussed how negativity from college advisors and faculty, student responsibilities outside of school and time management could be reasons why a student would withdraw from college. Student C commented, "…when professors don't make you feel confident, and when you have advisors that are not helpful, then a student feels like nobody likes me and wants to help me."

Although, Student B offered another perspective when stating, "It [lack of responsibility] from the student could also cause frustration and student withdrawal from college." The dialogue in the focus groups surrounded the discussion of students are responsible for his or her part in the academic success plan. Student F discussed how students should prioritize college courses over work, and the ability to study as much as possible in the pre-requisite courses, which would ultimately lead to a specific degree.

Focus group question #8. *Do you feel like your academic advisor has helped you in areas outside of college, to include personal areas of your life?* The participants agreed academic advisors had helped in areas of their personal lives. Student B

emphasized an increase in the area of confidence within current courses, but not necessarily in a personal area of the student's life. This increase in confidence was contributed to a positive attitude the academic advisor displayed during advisement sessions. This positive attitude was mentioned by the students to be contagious in their experience of advisement. Student F told of her experience meeting with an academic advisor for assistance with time management skills regarding her personal and academic life. Student F shared how an advisement session of scheduling courses led to a positive and supportive session regarding priorities of being a single mother, and accomplishing academic obligations to stay enrolled in college and pursue an academic dream.

Student B also mentioned the positive advice given by their academic advisor to manage time between personal and academic schedules. Student #5 shared a personal experience related to a health problem. The student mentioned how the advisor supported the student's decision to withdraw from college and assured the student this would not end their career path. Listening and understanding were a few of the comments students utilized interchangeably in conversation to describe how the academic advisors guided students in areas of their personal lives outside of college.

Focus group question #9. *Do you feel your academic advisor has provided you the resources you need to be successful in your allied health program of study?* The question for number nine was answered thoroughly by the participants giving examples of how the academic advisors provided resources needed to help create the student's academic plan of study. Student #4 discussed how the advisors written plan of study was helpful in the planning of courses. Student #4 went on to state the written plan of study was a motivating factor in the completion of course work.

Student A described how an advising meeting guided them through stressful feelings regarding some of their courses, and this interaction reassured the student the academic advisor was available to help the student succeed. Student F discussed an advising session where the academic advisor referred Student F to the main campus for help regarding an online course. Student F concluded the help received assisted with the challenges of the online course.

Focus group question #10. *How do relationships in a college institution impact a student's desire to stay enrolled or withdraw*? The two focus groups consistently answered question #10 regarding how relationships between professors, advisors and student classmates had a positive impact on staying enrolled at the college. Student C discussed how having a relationship with a classmate made her feel, "Comfortable about maybe I am not the only one who may not understand something." Student C explained how the relationships built with other students in the class gave her confidence to reach out for help regarding coursework if needed.

Student #5 explained the importance of instructor and student relationships. Student #5 expressed how the instructors were supportive and willing to assist students in course work encouraging a positive relationship between a student and the instructor. Student A concluded the focus group session with stating, "Not only are the student's relationships with the professors important, but the academic advisor's relationships with the professors are just as important. The relationships here are awesome; it is has made a tremendous impact on my studies."

Academic advisor interviews. In this section, the academic advisor interview questions will be presented. The advisors' information was summarized to answer each

of the 10 questions. These qualitative interviews followed a conversational mode, with the quality of the relationship with each academic advisor individualized to each participant (Yin, 2016).

  Interview question #1. *The topic for this study will be to discuss effective academic advising strategies that promote student success and barriers to effective academic advising. What do you like most about advising students? What do you like least?* The academic advisors' responses regarding advisement with students included positive interactions and discussions toward achieving a successful, educational goal. These discussions with students contributed to the creation of an educational plan, assistance with personal and professional goals, and the ability to share a student's success plan from start to finish.

  Academic Advisor #1 stated, "To see them so excited about doing well and reaching their goals, and sharing with me is my favorite part of advising." Academic Advisor # 1 also mentioned how many of the students continued communication with the advisor, even after a student has entered a specific allied health program. Academic Advisor # 2 stated, "What I like most about academic advising is I help them with their personal and professional goals." Academic Advisor #2 concluded knowing just enough about a student's personal life builds a relationship up to where the student feels a connection with the academic advisor and is integrated with the college.

  The least preferred portion of academic of advisement reported by the advisors was working through situations where students were not chosen for entry to select allied health programs. Academic Advisor #1 stated, "The part I like least about advising students is when I have to discuss their plan B for them when they are not successful in

obtaining admission into an allied health program." Academic Advisors also reported struggling with conversations where students were unable to learn certain specific concepts in pre-requisite courses. These difficult conversations between the advisor and student included dialogue consisting of students being at risk of non-selection for the chosen allied health program. As Academic Advisor #1 stated, "[Difficult conversations] are directly tied to a student's fear of an uncertain future, along with the emotions involved with fear because the student is usually not happy about the other plan."

Interview question #2. *Approximately how many student advisees do you have?* The participants in this study had varied numbers of students on their advisee lists. Advisor #1 supported 90 students. Advisor #2 advised and interacted with 108 students. Advisor #3 had the largest number of advisees; 160 students. Academic Advisor #3 mentioned the students assigned each semester to a specific academic advisor could change based on enrollment. Academic Advisor #1 mentioned the number of assigned student advisees could also fluctuate with the beginning of a new semester due to change in student degree plan of study.

Academic Advisor #2 discussed the privilege of sharing Christian values with students at the private faith-based university. She stated, "As a Christian, it is my obligation to provide all students with available resources, including the spiritual needs of students." The advisor stated the sharing of Christian values came in different forms, sometimes a brief conversation or an uplifting email. Although, Academic Advisor #2 mentioned difficulty with vast numbers regarding their caseload made it difficult to extend this type of service to each student.

Interview question #3. *What are your advising philosophies and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?* Academic philosophies varied in the responses from each advisor. Although, the common response to question number three included the strategic goal of advisement with students in academia was to prepare each student professionally and academically to reach an educational goal. Advisors #1 and #2 discussed the role of an academic advisor was to provide information toward enrollment into an allied health program, and the student's role consisted of being responsible for their own success.

Academic Advisor #1 discussed interactions between a student and advisor consist of creating a … "a healthy balance may depend on family, work, life and school." Academic Advisor #1 also noted the importance of the student "making academic decisions based on what the individual can do or not do in college, I leave decisions up to the student regarding seated versus online courses as this gives the student fulfillment of being in control." Academic Advisor #3 explained how the student to advisor relationship was like a banking system. She explained each advisement session approach should be a positive interaction, promoting engagement with the academic advisor. Academic Advisor #3 stated, "The positive interactions are like a deposit, and the negative conversations and interactions between the student and advisor are like a withdrawal."

Interview question #4. *Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within the areas of allied health care programs?* The participants discussed a common understanding in the areas of general education course advisement. The academic advisors discussed how the general

education course offerings were offered on the branch campus to fulfill the students'

academic schedule in a pre-allied health degree program. Academic Advisor #1

discussed advisement expertise was not needed in the specific allied health programs, as

each program had its own specific degree plan once a student was admitted. In addition,

Academic Advisor #1 mentioned if details of a specific allied health program were not

known, advisors had the ability to guide a student to available resources located on the

college portal, or to a specific program director.

     Interview question #5. *What do you consider as an advising barrier in your*

current job role as an academic advisor? Academic Advisor #2 emphasized how the

lack of communication prohibits a seamless transition of resources and information

between the academic advisor and the student. One example given by Academic Advisor

#2 was how the main college campus did not always communicate changes within the

course transfer process which in turn impacts some transfer students on the allied health

campus.

     Another advisement barrier discussed included the importance of the student's

responsibility in the advisement process. Academic Advisor #1 provided an example

explaining how a student might be unsuccessful in fulfilling the requirements for an

allied health program due to previous college experiences, and a lack of preparation on

following the educational plan for obtaining admission. This example given by the

Academic Advisor #1 explained how program information is given to the student, but the

academic advisor has no control over "…when the classes are offered, what grades have

been earned by the student in the past, or what classes are equivalent as a requirement."

Academic Advisor #1 concluded to say these circumstances are outside of the advisor

role; therefore, the student has to take responsibility on pursuing another career path.

Academic Advisor #2 mentioned students' perceptions of time management. Discussions by Academic Advisor # 1 and Academic Advisor #2 encompassed how some students are not aware of the academic advisors' time, resulting in the students need for immediate satisfaction regarding an academic situation. The advisors recognized the difference in student needs based on categories of generational differences. Therefore, the advisors realized how academic advisement sessions would be specific to each student based on the expectations communicated between each student and advisor.

Academic Advisor #2 discussed the lack of adequate time needed to devote to students. This lack of time was due to the high number of students assigned to less than five academic advisors. Advisor #2 stated, "I am not speaking for all of the academic advisors, but I do not feel I give enough time to each advisee that is needed."

Interview question #6. *Tell me what you consider to be an effective advising strategy to promote student success as an academic advisor.* The semi-structured mode of interviewing participants regarding effective academic advising strategies allowed several examples to be shared of student success. Maintaining a positive and interactive relationship was a common goal for academic advisors to implement with students. Academic Advisor #1 noted an example of an effective advisement strategy included knowing all resources available for a student, allowing the academic advisor to be prepared for the student advisement session.

Specific examples of how an advisor can be prepared for a student advisement session included assistance with study tips, and the ability to provide outside information needed regarding personal issues while attending college. Another effective advisement

strategy noted by Academic Advisor #2 included being available for the student.

Therefore, the advisor would arrange working hours of availability to accommodate the

students preferred meeting times. Academic Advisor #2 stated, "This means staying later

for the student advisement appointment, or working through your lunch hour to

accommodate the student request to meet for an advisement appointment."

  Interview question #7. *Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.* Similar to question #5, academic

advisors felt a barrier which could cause an unsuccessful advising session included

students not being prepared to consider other options for a degree differed from the

original educational plan. A specific example mentioned by Academic Advisor #1 was a

student who was unsuccessful in pre-requisite courses multiple semesters specific to

nursing. Academic Advisor #1 discussed options available with other allied health

programs with the student. The student refused to discuss the information and was not

willing to accept the information provided by Academic Advisor #1. The student went as

far as to visit another advisor to see if a different answer could be obtained. Academic

Advisor #1 concluded the student advisement session was unsuccessful because the

student did not accept the responsibility for following the educational plan provided by

the advisor.

  Another example of an unsuccessful student advisement session by Academic

Advisor #2 included the lack of preparation for the advisement appointment from the

student. The lack of responsibility described by Academic Advisor #2 described the

student not obtaining prior personal arrangements to include access to books, financial

aid, babysitting, and transportation before the scheduling of courses. The lack of

personal arrangements by the student sometimes resulted in a call to the academic advisor requesting the cancellation of classes previously scheduled based on the inability to prioritize personal obligations first to accommodate a college academic schedule.

To avoid negative experiences, advisors discussed creating positive experiences with students in an effort to retain students. Experiences consisted of assisting students in navigating through resources, policies, and procedures at the beginning of the students' tenure at the college. Therefore, negative advisement experiences can be avoided by advisors implementing positive and clear expectations for a student entering college.

Interview question #8. *Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?* As mentioned in question #3, an academic advisor's role includes the creation of an educational plan toward student success. The academic advisors agreed students need guidance in personal areas of their lives in order to be successful in their academic career, due to both areas influencing a student's career path. The personal success of students may depend on the academic advisor helping create a "…healthy balance may depend on family, work, life, and school" stated Academic Advisor #1.

The academic advisors interviewed indicated a student's personal life could affect their academic life; therefore, advisors were prepared to provide resources and assistance needed so students could obtain their educational goals. Academic Advisor #3 indicated resources available to assist the students with personal difficulties included outside references for the students' needs, or access to a campus counselor. Academic Advisor #1 mentioned an advising strategy was as simple as sharing her personal faith experiences with the students. Academic Advisor #1 discussed the privilege of working

at a private faith-based university where she can pray with students experiencing personal or academic difficulties.

Interview question #9. *Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a students' desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?* The academic advisors agreed students need timely information, and clear expectations to assist students in navigating the first year of college through graduation. Academic Advisor #3 indicated every positive interaction has an impact on a student's desire to stay enrolled at an institution, and every negative interaction could influence a student to leave an institution. The academic advisors were consistent in their responses regarding building relationships and helping students stay connected in college, enabling students to feel engaged within a university.

Academic Advisor #1 indicated the intentions and commitments with students entering college matter, but the interactions student engage in can determine if a student stays or leave a college. All of the advisors who were interviewed noted student interactions have to be specific, and students cannot all be advised in the same manner. The discussion also included if a relationship is formed with the advisor, the student realizes the relationship is working to their benefit. Another example offered from the interviews described if one specific allied educational path did not work for the student; the established relationship with personnel at the college could offer other choices for a career path.

Interview question #10. *Do you feel administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising duties?* Advisors discussed how administration supported their

needs and was open to discussing requests made to promote job effectiveness and consistency. According to the interviewees, administrators were willing to share with the academic advisor's individual program updates and changes to promote optimal advisement for the students.

Academic Advisor #3 mentioned how professional development needs were supported by allowing attendance to academic advising workshops. Professional development opportunities for the academic advisors were encouraged by the administration to enable the academic advisor with more tools and advisement information to be shared with students. One advisor emphasized how the advisors and administrators work as a team. This collaboration was seen as empowering the academic advisor to be a voice for the students, knowing they are supported by the administration.

Emerging Themes

During the final stage of data analysis, themes emerged. These themes included topic areas of personalized advising, relationships matter and a consistent campus. The development of topics led to the exploration of areas to seem most salient. Therefore, student and academic advisors' experiences were further uncovered as subthemes to support the main themes (Workman, 2015). It was at this stage in research topics began to connect the emerging themes, which allowed conclusions to be drawn throughout the course of the qualitative study (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

Emerging theme: Relationships matter. Student participants and academic advisors discussed positive relationships are needed to achieve a successful educational plan of admission into an allied health program. Academic Advisor #1 mentioned students should take the initiative in developing relationships with their advisors.

Advisor #1 also discussed the role of academic advising is a partnership between the academic advisor and student. This partnership is based on the advisor communicating opportunities and services at the college with the student, and the student taking responsibility in fulfilling the educational plan set by the academic advisor. Student #5 mentioned how positive relationships with academic advisors and pre-allied health instructors were helpful to students knowing they are always willing to support and encourage students. Student participants agreed positive interactions with academic advisors and faculty promote student satisfaction and the desire to stay at an institution.

Academic Advisor #3 discussed how "every interaction with a student can have an impact on a student's desire to stay enrolled at an institution whether the experience is positive or negative." The advisors recognized the importance of making each advisement session specific to a student's needs and preferred learning style. These advising sessions were described as making the students feel welcome to college, and not threatened by a lack of communication from the advisor to the student. Academic Advisor #2 discussed the importance of personalizing advisement to each student. The notion of advisors personalizing interactions with students was supported by student C stating, "With every student, there are things in life that happen. My academic advisors and professors are always around, therefore providing the support needed in difficult times."

In addition, the advisors discussed the importance of identifying areas where students were disconnected in college. Academic Advisor #2 discussed during a face-to-face advising session, it is important the student, "Know I am here for them, and I am interested in what their goals are and not what I want them to do." By identifying areas

of disconnect for students, Academic Advisor #1 discussed the role of academic advising in a student's academic life is compared to a partnership with the student. This partnership included engaging students in a caring environment to promote and improve student interactions on the allied health campus.

Emerging theme: Personalized advising. In analyzing perspectives of students and academic advisors, the first significant theme to emerge from data indicated advisement is personalized for each student. Students are more numerous, affluent, better educated, and more diverse in higher education institutions (Workman, 2015). Student participants discussed the importance of academic advisors meeting the preferred learning style of the student for a better connection between the student and advisor. Furthermore, the student's needs, expectations, and life circumstances change over time (Tinto, 2012). Student A stated, "For me, I need everything written out, clear cut, where I can go back and know what classes to take to keep on track."

An example between students and advisors stated by Academic Advisor #1 included, "A student requires answers for educational needs, and it is the student's responsibility to find out the information from available resources, and use the provided information toward a plan of educational success." These interactions are pertinent to create a positive relationship between students and academic advisors to which the student turns for help with transitions into college (Workman, 2015). Academic Advisor #2 explained how some students preferred a personal fulfillment of being in control of the career decisions instead of the advisor telling them what to do. Therefore, a student has a sense of ownership for their proposed educational plan toward admission into an allied health program.

Emerging theme: A consistent campus. The student focus group participants and academic advisors spoke of the inconsistency of student information and resources between the main campus and allied health branch campus in this research study. First, students discussed how a lack of transparency regarding information pertinent to following a successful education plan was inconsistent between academic advisors, the main campus, and branch campus. Therefore, the emerging theme kept arising in conversations with the participants as a need for campus consistency to promote a successful college experience.

Student participants discussed frustrations regarding inconsistencies with textbooks, scheduling of admission test, course and class descriptions. Student A reported a need for more updates regarding admission testing from the academic advisors. Student A stated, "I would have liked a further update on a specific admission test. I had never received an email, or updated information regarding this test and this was stressful to me as a student." The study participants concluded with a need for consistency in program information disseminated to students and consistency with all resources related to obtaining admission into the allied health programs.

The academic advisors interviewed also identified a lack of consistent communication and student offerings between campuses. Advisors #1 and #2 mentioned the lack of student support groups, lack of tutoring sessions, and limited areas to study due to fewer library hours. Another example by Academic Advisor #2 discussed a lack of communication regarding how certain courses transfer into the university. Most of the advisors agreed the lack of transparency in course changes or requirements could have a negative impact on the student.

As Academic Advisor #1 stated, "If the advisor does not have information, and not informed of changes, this would definitely be a barrier between the academic advisor and student keeping me from effectively doing my job." Academic advisors mentioned how students referred to the allied health branch campus as the forgotten campus, stating the branch campus does not have the same student resources as the main campus. The academic advisors discussed how branch campus administration did relay updates and changes pertinent to the specific allied health programs as the administration was notified of changes by the main campus.

Summary

Academic advising points to the power of communication, advisement and mentoring students toward success and persistence to graduation (Tinto, 2012). Participants in this study discussed the importance of interaction with academic advisors in both formal and informal settings helped establish a positive connection with the university. Students mentioned an academic advisor should be familiar with college resources, support services, and degree requirements. The higher the frequency of student and academic advisor interactions, the greater their satisfaction with college environment (Lukosius, 2013).

The academic advisors in this study discussed the importance of a continuous process of personal contact between an advisor and student. Participants discussed how inconsistent academic information from the academic advisors could cause frustration. Overall, the students reported having a certain amount of stress regarding the lack of communication with the academic advisors regarding campus resources and processes needed for a successful attempt into admission into an allied health program.

The findings from this research study, along with the conclusions drawn from the study, are presented in Chapter Five. Implications from this study are addressed to include the best academic advising strategies to promote student retention. In addition, recommendations for future research on this topic are discussed as well as a final summary containing a complete overview of the major components of this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore if students and academic advisors'perceptions of effective advisement strategies were related to persistence and success toward an allied health degree program. Guided by Tinto's theories of student departure (1975) and student retention (2012), this qualitative study provided an opportunity to understand the functions of an academic advisor related to effective student advisement in an academic setting. Themes emerged to include relationships matter, personalized advisement, and a consistent campus. An understanding of academic advising to include effective career planning, interactive student relationships and student utilization of campus support resources, were also discussed to promote student success (Alvarez & Towne, 2016; Darling, 2015).

Findings

In this section, the focus group and interview questions are categorized based on their connection with the research questions. The research questions were written to consider students and academic advisors perceptions of effective advisement strategies, which affect a student's success in college. Perceptions of academic advising were discussed with students to gain an understanding of experiences with the advisors at a branch campus. Students noted in their experiences, advisors had a positive impact on the student making the decision to choose to stay or leave college based on the support advisors gave them. Participants also discussed barriers prohibiting effective academic advising strategies with students and advisors.

Research question one. The first research question guiding this study was: *What are students' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies that impact*

undergraduate, pre-allied health student success? This research question was answered by the responses obtained in the student focus groups conducted. As described in Chapter Four, students' perceptions of effective advising included personalized techniques of advising, supportive relationships, and interactive advising meetings. Focus group discussions revealed different styles of advisement to include accommodations for millennials and other generations of students. Students expressed how advising relationships included the advisor learning about the individual student, and adapting advising strategies to meet the need of the individual student. Students attributed a positive academic and social environment provided meaningful relationships to their lives personally and academically.

Dialogue during advisement sessions was described by participants as intended to encourage growth between the student and advisor in areas of experiences, challenge and relationships. Students emphasized how the academic advisor encouraged students to take initiative for their education by taking charge of their decisions and actions toward success in an allied health program. Students expressed conversations with advisors had a positive effect on the students. Because of the relationships with the advisors, students were encouraged to persist in allied health classes.

The students who participated in the study discussed the importance of receiving program information specific toward successful entry into allied health programs. The majority of participants emphasized the need for location and availability of campus resources. These resources were specific to the availability of tutors, counselors, testing taking information, bookstore information, study group sessions and further instructions for navigation of the college website.

Areas, where students expressed the most satisfaction, included the academic advisor's availability when the student needed assistance. Available meeting time with the academic advisors was considered social involvement. The flexibility of advisement sessions was seen as a positive approach by the students. In addition, participants expressed how advisors were able to discuss issues outside of academia. Students shared how personal situations were discussed with the academic advisors. Furthermore, the academic advisors offered students resources for counseling or other areas of need outside of the branch campus offerings. Student participants concluded successful encounters with academic advisors resulted in topics described as support, communication and college affiliation.

Research question two. The second research question guiding this study was: *What academic advising barriers do students report most adversely affecting effective advising?* This research question was also answered from the responses from the focus group with students. Factors associated with barriers of effective advisement included a lack of consistent communication regarding academic programs, resources, and limited academic integration. Students reported the need for detailed information due to the lack of familiarity with allied program admission requirements. As a result, students depended on the academic advisors for clarity on how and when to apply for a program.

Based on focus group interviews, the need for detailed instructions regarding academic resources was evident. Students emphasized the need for more instruction related to the location of resources and accessibility of resources. Most students described the advisors lack of knowledge of available resources as a barrier to success. Students provided examples of the inability to access the learning management system,

student accounts, and online bookstore. Students described the resources available online were helpful, but there was a learning curve on how to locate the resources on the college website.

Research question three. The third research question guiding this study was: *What are the academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies for undergraduate, pre-allied health student success and retention?* Effective academic advising must be guided by a clear definition of what is good or positive advising. Tinto (2012) discussed how researchers have addressed the practical question of what works, although our knowledge of effective academic advising remains fragmented and poorly organized.

Based on interviews, the academic advisors nature of effective advisement included the ability of the advisor to assist students in professional and personal goals. Academic advisors discussed the students who are most successful have developed a relationship with an academic advisor who can help the student navigate the social and academic rules of college. Students were advised on traditional topics such as an educational plan, registration, and grades. In addition, advisors' perceptions of effective advisement included discussions regarding career and family life planning. Advisors also mentioned the ability to assist the students spiritually, by providing spiritual guidance when necessary which is part of the mission of a Christian university. The ability to refer students to counseling on the allied health branch campus was also viewed as an advisement strategy.

Establishing relationships with students enabled academic advisors to construct an advisement plan based on what was best for the individual student. Advisors recognized

different learning styles of students and explained the importance of advising to meet the

personal and professional preferred style of enrollment such as seated versus online

courses. Discussions included the advisor encouraging the student to have an active role

in being accountable and accepting responsibility enabling a simple and transparent

relationship to develop between the student and academic advisor. Advisors expressed

these advisement strategies allowed the student a personal fulfillment of control of their

educational plan.

Research question four. The fourth research question guiding this study was:

What are the academic advisors' perceptions of barriers that prohibit effective academic

advising strategies? According to the majority of academic advisors, lack of

communication and transparency between the main campus and allied health branch

campus were noted as barriers to effective advisement. Advisors revealed course

requirement changes were not always relayed to the branch campus from the main

campus. Discussions included the lack of communication caused frustration to the

student, labeling advisement sessions as a potentially bad experience.

Advisors also reported a lack of tutoring sessions, support groups, and limited

areas to study due to fewer library hours. Advisement barriers included the discussion

for the need of the same resources on the branch campus as what if offered on the main

campus. Academic advisors discussed how students often elaborated the branch campus

was sometimes viewed as the "forgotten" campus.

Another academic advising barrier discussed was the volume of students and not

enough academic advisors. Advisors expressed the importance of engagement with all

pre-allied health students but noted not all students were receiving individualized

advisement sessions. Based on the interviews, the advisors felt the high number of advisees did not allow the time needed for each student to receive personalized advisement.

Academic advisors are often put in situations where they must provide objective advice to students whose academic performance prevents them from pursuing an allied health program. Each student situation is unique, requiring a level of understanding of individual student needs. The academic advisors were aware of difficult conversations needed to advise students toward a different educational plan. Although these critical conversations are needed to guide a student toward a different academic plan, the academic advisors still mentioned how it could be difficult.

Conclusions

Conclusions obtained in this study are based on the themes developed from the data collected in the study. This section compared focus group and interview results with literature provided in Chapter Two. Recurring themes and patterns were identified and extracted from the data. The tabulation of each theme was linked back to the research questions (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Focus group and interview answers described how participants and academic advisors shaped the formulation of conclusions. Conclusions from the study will be aligned with research regarding effective advisement strategies and relationships in college, which can promote success and retention (Tinto, 2012).

Theme: Relationships matter. Academic advisors develop relationships with students by integrating and sharing responsibility for learning. The more students engaged academically and socially with people on a college campus, the more likely they

will stay and graduate from college (Tinto, 2012). As Tinto explained, college students pass through three stages from youth to adulthood. These stages are separations from past associations, transition, and incorporation (Tinto, 1987). Student A expressed how experiences with academic advisors at other institutions were not as helpful and non-judgmental as the academic advisors at the mentioned allied health branch campus.

Information provided by the participant focus groups and advisory sessions included the importance of a student and advisor forming a partnership. Students discussed how a partnership would include personalized advisement. Students preferred different styles of advisement such as developmental or prescriptive, to accommodate their needs. Student B stated:

> My response may show my age. One thing [I] have seen that would cause a student to leave college is the student's lack of responsibility. [I] feel like some things are the students own fault due to lack of communication and responsibility with the academic advisor.

Therefore, depending on the age and learning styles of the student, the academic advisors discussed the importance of communication with the student and holding the student accountable for the information given to the student. A relationship process with a student is critical for the academic advisor to understand what advising style is needed to accommodate the student in their needs of obtaining admission into an allied health program. In fact, a generational approach of advisement works well for higher education, including the prescriptive advising style needed for the millennial student (DeBard, 2004). Although, the developmental style best fits their needs of individualized attention (Montag et al., 2012).

During the initial phase of advisement, the academic advisor would need to establish a supportive and caring atmosphere so students feel mutual respect and trust (Darling, 2015). Therefore, the student can identify a problem and feel confident the advisement process will be a positive and productive experience (Gordon & Steele, 2015). As Darling (2015) explained, academic advisors can help students strategize and navigate their way toward successful educational goal by establishing these relationships. In addition, Student C discussed the importance of relationships between the students and professors. Student C identified how the professors are always around, and willing to stay after class and help. Student #5 stated, "If you have a professor that cares and knows you personally, it encourages a student to stay in the pre-allied health program."

The personalized relationship between a student and academic advisor is a constant learning endeavor (McGill, 2016). There is no denying the millennial students have the numbers to dominate the educational scene (DeBard, 2004). Soon, the Generation X will move into midlife and the Baby Boomers will move into elderhood. Therefore, the need for relationship building between academic advisors and students should continue to be busy, based on the practice of meeting millennial student's aspirations and other generations academic needs (DeBard, 2004). Effective academic advisors recognize higher education as a culture and understand student relationships are needed on this journey called college (Strayhorn, 2015). Academic advisors should hold high, but achievable, expectations for all students, who often rise to the expectations set for them (Strayhorn, 2015).

Theme: Personalized advising. Personalized advising was an emerging theme within the academic advisors and student participant's data analysis. Academic advisors

prepare students for the future by encouraging them to synthesize new information with experiences to create knowledge (Himes, 2014). Academic advising provides an opportunity for all students to engage in prescriptive practices such as guiding students through registration procedures and providing information about allied health programs (Montag et al., 2012). In addition, personalized advisement should include professional development for academic advisors including workshops and training accommodating the way different generations acquire knowledge (Gordon & Stelle, 2005). Additional training can provide advisors more strategies to address difficult situations with students in a professional and productive way in their educational plan, or needed a change of plan (Gordon & Stelle, 2005). Advisement can be personalized to make students more aware of their own priorities, talents, values and educational purpose (Himes, 2014).

Both advisors and students explained there is no one-way of student advisement in college. Some students discussed the academic advisor was only needed to schedule classes, while other students discussed the need of weekly advisement meetings to discuss test taking skills. The information gained from interviews and focus groups aligns with Lukosius et al.'s (2013) findings included effective advising is a continuous process, adapting to the resources and culture of an institution. Some students in the study suggested academic advisors did not always volunteer consistent, allied health program information. As a result, a number of students were put in the position of making incorrect decisions about their academic plans of study.

To meet the needs of a student, an academic advisor must know his or her own values, strengths and weaknesses (Himes, 2014). The advisor must consider the student as a whole person by learning his or her skills, beliefs, knowledge, emotional needs and

coping mechanisms (Himes, 2014). In addition, students need to discuss their particular needs regarding academic advisement. For instance, Student #3 discussed how their academic advisor accommodated their need to meet once a week to ensure test-taking skills were being discussed and evaluated. This is a perfect example of what King (1993) noted about how academic advisors play a key role in providing encouragement, support, and assistance for students to continue their education toward an end goal of success.

The student and advisor participants in this study realized the concept of personalized advising also led to dialogue encouraging both the student and advisor to learn and grow from one another (Darling, 2015). Donaldson et al (2016) stated how a developmental advising approach provided a foundation for advisors and students to engage in an educational plan from the beginning of an advisement session. The developmental style of advisement sessions was described by the students as helpful and allowed interactions needed for obtaining an academic goal. For example, Student A stated, "Every time I meet with my academic advisor I discuss long term goals…my advisor also told me my schedule is up to me and gave me options of taking courses how and when they were best for me." The academic advisors stated guiding students to find the answers help them align their goals and set realistic expectations.

Donaldson et al (2016) said personalized advisement could be different for each student depending on the age of the student. As illustrated in the literature review, an example is the millennial student's preference of prescriptive or proactive advisement (Anderson et al, 2014). Student A discussed how an advisement session expectation included the academic advisor having everything written out so an educational plan could be followed to achieve the goal of acceptance in to an allied health program. According

to Keeling (2003), most millennial students will expect the academic advisor to assist the students with specified details of their academic needs. Keeling (2003) also stated the millennial generation's different learning styles will challenge academic advisors to stay current with changing dynamics among their students. If the advisor is ready for these challenges, they will be able to advise the students in a personalized way.

Theme: A consistent campus. According to focus group results, students need an academic advisor who can give quick, accurate, straightforward advice about allied health majors, course requirements, and course offerings. Student responses aligned with the literature by Montag et al., (2012) emphasizing academic advisors could meet the needs for information while also guiding students toward other general resources on the campus. Participants discussed how academic advisors could improve student satisfaction by providing consistent information regarding the location of resources on the college website to include courses, registration procedures, bookstore information, and financial aid information. Student C mentioned the possibility of adding more student resources to the branch campus, to provide the same resources are available on the main campus. Student C also discussed the opportunity for more tutoring resources for the branch campus, and being able to "…feel like student resources here are the same as what is offered on the main campus."

The academic advisors also concluded in interview sessions aspects of educational and career choices with pre-allied health students were achievable as long as the guidelines were consistent with the main campus. Academic Advisor #1 stated, "Obtaining information across all areas of the college starting with the website, admissions and me as a third personal in the meeting with the student must be

consistent." This communication allows the advisor to focus on giving clear and straightforward guidance to the student with consistent information. Montag et al., (2012) stated the academic advisor provided individualized attention to the student by guiding them with consistent resources relevant to their major, and educational plans or links on the college website for student resources.

Implications for Practice

Academic advising has consistently been rated a top predictor of students' success and satisfaction during their undergraduate experiences in college (Anderson et al., 2014). Maintaining effective undergraduate academic advising strategies to meet the needs of students is an ongoing challenge for universities across the country (Tinto, 2012). Many colleges and universities struggle to develop and maintain effective advisement strategies to promote retention and student satisfaction (Anderson et al; Darling, 2015; Tinto, 2012).

The findings from this study led to a number of implications regarding effective academic advising strategies for the promotion of student success and retention. Conclusions of this study may be used to guide researchers and higher education administrators in the enhancement of academic advising practices to implement in the college setting. In addition, administrators and other university leaders should gauge if the advising services offered at their institutions are optimal for students. Strategic planning involving academic advisors include student integration to address special characteristics and traits of generation of students, but also increase educational persistence socialization and integrative efforts (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

Relationships matter. An important conclusion was formulated from the comments of student focus groups and advisory interviews. A critical component of student experiences were the positive relationships formed with academic advisors, instructors and staff (Tinto, 2012). The academic advising process enabled students to obtain information regarding independent thinking skills, understanding allied health careers and knowledge regarding campus resources designed to address their needs (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). This successful advisement meeting was the beginning of positive relationships on the allied health campus.

As with any new relationship, the first step is to establish a connection with the student advisee (Tinto, 2012). The techniques and skills provided by an academic advisor become a part of all effective advisement, regardless of the type of student (Gordon & Stelle, 2015). The academic advisor can help set the foundation for developing a learning experience for the student. Students who participated in the focus groups shared their own personal experience and academic history regarding the advisement sessions. These experiences reflected on the importance of the advisor acknowledging the personal and academic needs and then providing information to make the student feel the advisor cared (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Therefore, if the academic advisor allows time to know the student before diving into academic matters, this shows the students the advisors care. If the student senses the advisor cares, they care more about the learning process and overall academic advisement experiences.

Personalized advising. Academic advisement accessible only by students who seek support and resources will not reach all who need help in college (Donaldson et al., 2016). Many of the students' expectations of an effective advisement session were

defined as the advisor successfully meeting a student's needs based on the delivery of academic and personal resources to promote student success and retention (Anderson et al., 2014). The academic advisors' expectations revealed in the research the desire to develop a relationship with the student, and provide information and resources needed for the student to obtain admission into an allied health program. Without knowing the expectations of students, it is difficult for the academic advisors to successfully meet the needs of the student and build quality interactions to promote retention (Anderson et al., 2014).

Most advising approaches are described as either prescriptive or developmental, in which the advisor assists students with course selection and other logistical details (Anderson et al., 2014). It is clear from the study there is a need for academic advisors to know the preferred communication and advisement style for each advisee, allowing for a more prescriptive style of advisement. This integration was characterized by Tinto (1975) as structural and normative integration in which the student must meet institution's standards and identify with its academic system.

Claybrooks and Taylor (2014) stated students were recipients of services and products provided by faculty and staff, including the efficiency and efficacy of service delivery directly correlated with their satisfaction. Regardless of age, generation, or academic level, a student values receiving support and encouragement from academic advisors (Darling, 2015). Strategies for infusing interpersonal skills into an advising session include the advisor asking about challenges, successes and personalized questions to make a student feel appreciated (Williamson et al., 2014).

As indicated by focus group participants in this study, interactions with academic advisors coupled with successful communication, are vital. Instead of assuming a student's experience and perceptions of college, an academic advisor is encouraged to provide open-ended questions to the student to promote a personalized advisement session. An advisor could ask about a class being taken or get a feel for the commitment to a certain field of study. Personalized questions enable an academic advisor to understand the student's unique perceptions and experiences while taking pre-requisite courses for an allied health major. Students may doubt themselves or experience fear and anxiety about the academic process (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The academic advisor can reduce those fears to help a student succeed.

The advisement process needs to be invasive, knowing students can acknowledge understanding of program expectations (Donaldson et al., 2016). Himes (2014) discussed tools needed to support a multi-dimensional communication include text messaging, frequent email, small meetings with pre-allied health students, and college announcements within the learning management system. These tools are many of the skills an effective advisor can apply toward helping a student be successful (Donaldson et al., 2016). Advisors can maximize their impact on the student experience by anticipating their needs, understanding the university system and problem-solving on behalf of the student (Ellis, 2014).

The student's social and cultural characteristics vary, allowing an advisement plan to be created to fit an advisement style such as prescriptive or developmental (Darling, 2015). Frequent advisement appointments should be established with new pre-allied health majors to provide effective advisement plans despite the background or generation

of the student. The advisor should have an idea of his or her advisees' courses and program of study. Academic advisors must gain an understanding of the student as they develop a relationship (Ellis, 2014).

  A consistent campus. Universities utilize branch campuses to reach potential students in areas other than the main campus. In this study, the importance of academic advisors connecting and providing consistent resources for students enrolled on the allied health branch campus is emphasized (Ellis, 2014). An inconsistency in the availability of student resources between the main campus and branch campus may cause academic advisors to provide inadequate information to the student. The academic advisors expressed concern over the lack of transparency between the main campus and branch campus. The flaw in communication between campuses was discussed in the advisor interviews. The advisors explained how inconsistent information given to the student during the advisement process could cause confusion (Williamson et al., 2014). In order to ensure the best experiences for pre-allied health students, consistency of student information between the main campus and branch campus are necessary.

  As Tinto (2012) stated, students who enter college without proper social and academic support struggle to succeed in higher education. Therefore, assistance with a student's transition to college should be provided based on the student's needs (King, 1993). Focus group participants discussed many areas where the need for a consistent campus is important to college students. First, participants discussed the need for a mandatory orientation to the allied health campus. The orientation would allow students to become more knowledgeable about all resources offered on the main campus.

Students mentioned the main campus resources include an academic success center, academic tutors, online learning resources and the ability to study in the library in the evening and on weekends. Participants questioned why the allied health branch campus did not provide the same student resources as resources provided on the main campus (Suvedi et al., 2015). The focus group discussions included how the students were sometimes offered these academic resources on the main campus, although the student was responsible for making necessary arrangements to access the resources and travel to the main campus (Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

In addition, the students' emphasized academic advisement should be required as part of the orientation process for students entering the allied health college. This student orientation would mimic the orientation and academic advisement sessions required in the student success center on the main campus. The orientation requirement would familiarize the student with academic and personal resources by mandating a face-to-to-face meeting with an academic advisor. Donaldson et al., (2016) stated students overwhelming agree academic advising should be required for students entering college, and without the mandated participation, students would not seek help if they relied solely on their own motivation.

Student focus groups discussed the options of online orientations and the importance of the academic advisor connecting to the students by ways of email and videos to assist in the student's learning curve of learning how to access the needed resources. As Tinto (1987) mentioned, a student and retention framework discussed campuses must have the necessary resources such as financial aid, academic services, and student services to create a university-wide support system for students (Claybrooks &

Taylor, 2014). College administrators must consider ways current advisement programs can be altered to increase outreach by advisors to students rather than expecting students to approach the academic advisors (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is certainly encouraged in the area of effective academic advisement strategies to promote student retention. Similar to other studies, the recommendation for a larger population of focus groups and academic advisors may be beneficial for future research. Further studies could include public and private universities composed of all departments and colleges. This expansion to include all colleges would broaden the generationally of the diverse student body, and examine the different styles of advisement to include prescriptive, developmental or intrusive. Faculty advisors need to increase their skills and knowledge to understand student development, curriculum, and academic policies, while also providing a nonjudgmental and welcoming atmosphere to each student (Grites, 2013). The inclusion of all university academic advisors would expand the perceptions of what is advisors considered effective in student retention (McGill, 2016; Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013; Tinto, 2012).

Future research regarding professional development for an academic advisor would be beneficial by utilizing a mixed methods approach to improve the quality of student support (Dadgar et al., 2014). Initial student support is critical to the student becoming integrated within a university. Therefore, a quantitative survey would examine how new students enrolled on an allied health campus would benefit from mandatory orientation and academic advisement. A survey of pre-allied health students along with focus group interview sessions by major would be beneficial in further research for this

study. Descriptive statistics evaluated from the survey along with student focus group qualitative data collection would examine the necessary components required for integral student relationships with academic advisors. The relationship between an academic advisor and student increase a student's chance of graduation, therefore dedicated academic advisor positions are necessary and part of a university's overall strategic plan of student success and retention (Tinto, 2012).

Summary

This qualitative study was intended to examine student and academic advisors' perceptions of effective advising strategies to promote student success and retention in an allied health college. Students' interactions with their academic advisors play a significant role in their overall college experience (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Trust is facilitated through mutual respect between students and academic advisors (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). In addition, advisors' honesty about students' academic situations and advisors' knowledge of majors and careers also promote trust and respect between students and advisors (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

In Chapter One, the economic uncertainty of higher education institutions due to a decrease in retention was revealed (Himes, 2014). The background of the study was established, to include the problem and purpose statement. Student participants and academic advisors discussed effective advisement strategies along with barriers to effective advisement.

In Chapter Two, the literature review including Tinto's (1987; 2012) theories of student departure and retention were presented. Tinto (2012) purported students leave an academic institution due to a lack of integration and trust with a university, because of

academic difficulties, by not obtaining needed resources and the inability of a student to complete their educational goals. In addition, the literature review supported the claim academic advising is a continuous process throughout a student's educational experience, adapting to the culture of an institution (Williamson et al, 2014). Academic advising strategies involve effective communication, personalized advising, and consistency in the offering of academic resources (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

In Chapter Three, the methodology and the study procedures were presented. The research questions were created intended to gather perceptions to see if positive and strategic academic advisement strategies are effective in student retention at a private faith-based university's allied health program. Student participants and academic advisors were included in the study. The data collected in this study revealed real life experiences from the students and academic advisors on the allied health branch campus. (Siekpe & Barksdale, 2013) discussed institutional approaches to improve student retention must address the economic challenges within a university, and emphasized the need for a model of a student success center as a solution to student departure.

In Chapter Four, the personal perceptions of academic advisement from student participants and academic advisors were presented. A triangulation of data from different sources built a coherent justification for emergent themes (Creswell, 2014). These findings lead to implications in Chapter Five for established policy and practice within a higher education institution, as well as student success (Anderson et al., 2014).

In conclusion, policymakers attempt to identify best practices for academic advising (Donaldson et al., 2016). This study identified positive aspects of advisement, providing a resource for administrative leaders interested in evaluating advisement

programs in a qualitative manner (Donaldson et al., 2016). Therefore, the idea for a success center would focus on each student as an individual, allowing academic advisors to implement processes and educational plans for a student to achieve a final goal of graduation.

Appendix A

Student Focus Group Questions

Introduction (Read Aloud):

1. What is your program of study?

2. The topic for this study will be to discuss effective academic advising strategies that promote student success, and barriers to effective academic advising. How often do you meet with an academic advisor each semester?

3. Describe a typical advising session if applicable, where you felt meeting with an academic advisor was unsuccessful.

4. What suggestions would you give an academic advisor on what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success?

5. Tell me about an academic advising experience that you considered to be negative to your learning experience in college?

6. How much consideration is given to a student's schedule and needs when setting times to meet with academic advisors?

7. In your opinion, name two things that would lead a student to withdraw from college.

8. Do you feel like your academic advisor has helped you in areas outside of college, to include personal areas of your life?

9. Do you feel your academic advisor has provided you the resources you need to be successful in your allied health program of study?

10. How do relationships in a college institution impact a student's desire to stay enrolled or withdraw?

Conclusion and wrap-up

Please feel free to add any additional comments (dialogue) to what you consider

effective academic advising strategies and what barriers you may see from a student

perspective that may prevent effective academic advising. We have come to the end of

our focus group interview questions today. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B

Academic Advisor Interview Questions

Introduction (Read Aloud):

1. The topic for this study will be to discuss effective academic advising strategies that promote student success and barriers to effective academic advising. What do you like most about advising students? What do you like least?

2. Approximately how many student advisees do you have?

3. What are your advising philosophies, and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?

4. Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within the areas of allied health care programs?

5. What do you consider as an advising barrier in your current role as an academic advisor?

6. Tell me what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success as an academic advisor.

7. Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.

8. Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?

9. Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a student's desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?

10. Do you feel administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your

institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising

duties?

Conclusion and wrap-up

Please feel free to add any additional comments (dialogue) to what you consider

effective academic advising strategies and what barriers you may see from an

academic advisor perspective that may prevent effective academic advising. We

have come to the end of our interview questions today. Thank you for your

participation.

Appendix C

Dean Approval Email

Good Morning,

As I have been working on my dissertation, I want to share with you the focus and purpose of my research.

The purpose of the study is to measure and determine student perceptions and academic advisors' perceptions of academic advising.

I will be evaluating the relationship between effective academic advisement and student retention.

I understand the process of ███ research and review board for approval to conduct research with the students and advisors on your campus. As my immediate supervisor and dean, my intent of this email is to make you aware of the purpose of my research.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Stacy Soden
Doctoral Student
Lindenwood University

Appendix D

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY   ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: December 13, 2016

TO: Stacy Soden
FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [929220-1] Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student
                         Retention
IRB REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: 12/13/2016
EXPIRATION DATE: 12/12/2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project.
Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission.
This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the
risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this
approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Approval (Category 7) based on the applicable
federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the
study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form.
Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the
researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a
copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this
office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a   project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Leary at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them please contact Michael Leary at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board'

Appendix E

Review Board Permission from Institution

January 6, 2017

Stacy Soden

Re: Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention

Ms. Soden,

On January 6, 2017, the [board] completed a review of your application and supporting documents for the above named research proposal. The ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Board ▮▮▮▮ for ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ has determined that the proposed research project meets the criteria for Expedited status as per policy1.15.3 8▮▮▮▮▮▮ guidelines. Therefore, the project has been approved and work on the project may begin.

If any modifications to the expedited procedures are made the [board] will need to complete a new review of the changes to determine if the project remains Expedited or if further review is necessary.

Congratulation on the approval of your project and we wish you the best. If you have any questions regarding the [board's] decision, please contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix F

Student Electronic Email Request for Participation and Explanation of Study

Subject: Research Project

Dear Students:

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, majoring in Higher Education Administration and Leadership. I am also a faculty member and administrator for Southwest Baptist University.

For my dissertation, I am conducting research on students' perceptions of academic advising. This study is to evaluate the relationship between effective academic advisement, barriers to effective academic advising, and student retention. The purpose of this study is intended for your participation to discuss student perceptions regarding academic advisor interactions, strategies of advisement, and what you would consider barriers to the current academic advising process.

Participation in this research will include two focus groups of students composed of five to 10 students in each group. Your participation in this process will take less than one hour of your time. All information provided in this focus group session will be kept confidential, and at any time you may choose to withdraw from this research study. You will receive an email requesting your participation in this study at a later date.

If you have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to email me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or phone number of ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Rhonda Bishop, at Lindenwood University, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacy Soden,
Doctoral Student
Lindenwood University

Appendix G

Focus Group Consent

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

"Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention"

Principal Investigator __Stacy Soden_____

Telephone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮   E-mail: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Participant _____ Contact info _____

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stacy Soden under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to ascertain if students and academic advisors perceive academic advising as supportive or a barrier in regard to student retention.

1. Your participation will involve being a part of a student focus group in which you will answer questions about your experiences with academic advising. Focus groups will consist of 5-10 participants and will be conducted at a time and location agreed upon.

2. The focus groups will be recorded by audio and transcribed. After the interview has been transcribed, I will send you a link to view the transcript and ask you to review it for accuracy. The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 30-45 minutes.

3. There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include uncomfortable feelings from students that might come from answering certain questions regarding experiences with current advising processes.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about effective advisement strategies to promote student success and retention within a four-year university.

5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw

6. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the position of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Stacy Soden, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Rhonda Bishop ▮▮▮▮▮▮ You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date   Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date   Investigator Printed Name

Appendix H

Academic Advisor Electronic Email for Participation and Explanation of Study

Subject: Research Project

Dear Academic Advisor,

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, majoring in Higher Education Administration and Leadership. I am also a faculty member and administrator for Southwest Baptist University.

For my dissertation, I am conducting research on academic advisors' perceptions of strategic academic advising techniques. The purpose of this study is intended to discuss academic advisors' perceptions regarding academic advisor interactions, strategies of advisement, and what you would consider barriers to the current academic advising process.

Participation in this research will include less than five academic advisors to be interviewed in a private setting. All information provided in each interview session will be kept confidential and take less than one hour of your time. You will receive an email requesting your participation in this study. If you have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to email me at ███████████████ or phone number of ███████ ████. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Rhonda Bishop, at Lindenwood University at ███████████████

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacy Soden
Doctoral Student,
Lindenwood University

Appendix I

Academic Advisor Consent to Participate

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

"Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention"

Principal Investigator __Stacy Soden

Telephone: _____   E-mail: _____

Participant _____ Contact info _____

    You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stacy Soden under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to ascertain if students and academic advisors perceive academic advising as being supportive or a barrier in regard to student retention.

1. Your participation will involve being a part of an interview process in which you will answer questions about your experiences with academic advising. Interview questions will consist of strategies and barriers of academic advising and will be conducted at a time and location agreed upon. The interviews will be recorded by audio and transcribed. A transcriber of the recordings will be utilized and permission will be gained from the transcriber to ensure confidentiality. After the interview has been transcribed, I will send you a link to view the transcript and ask you to review it for accuracy. The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 30-45 minutes.

2. There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include uncomfortable feelings from students or the academic advisors that might come from answering certain questions regarding experiences with current advising processes.

3. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about effective advisement strategies to promote student success and retention within a four-year university.

4. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw

5. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the position of the investigator in a safe location.

6. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Stacy Soden, ███████████ or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Rhonda Bishop ███████████ You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date   Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date   Investigator Printed Name

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Vita

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Brett and Stacy have been married for 19 years. They have two children, Karly age 17 and Seth age 13. The Soden family loves the challenge of a busy schedule of attending sporting events for both children. They also enjoy spending time with family and friends by participating in camping and lake activities.