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A Study of Undergraduate Mentoring and the Factors Affecting Students' Disengagement from Mentoring

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Abstract

The United States is in an educational crisis. Far too many of our students do not attend college, let alone graduate once they attend. While there are many factors that influence whether a student will attend college and subsequently graduate, mentoring has been identified as a worthwhile support that influences retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students. Unfortunately, many students who can avail themselves of free mentoring supports do not take advantage of what is offered. The study investigated the factors that influence student non-participation in an undergraduate mentoring program at a small private college in New York State. A theory of student involvement, the theory of academic and social integration and the theory of the hierarchy of needs were found to be relevant theories that relate to student participation in mentoring. Mixed methods research provided investigation of students' and mentors' perspectives through focus groups and interviews. A survey to non-participating students provided insight into the importance of identified factors that influence student non-participation. The findings indicate that there are numerous factors that influence students' disengagement from mentoring. Mentor-mentee relationships, students' need for independence, lack of available time, mentoring processes and non-registration for the semester all influence mentoring involvement. The study also gleaned information from mentors and staff members. Academic and social integration were identified as influential factors. Given the value of mentoring to student involvement and retention, v focus on the relationship, processes and students' needs will benefit current and future mentoring programs.

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A Study of Undergraduate Mentoring

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By

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Dedication

   I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Tom, who dealt with the chaos and held everything together while I traveled on this journey. To my children Teddy, TJ and Mikey, who always do their best and supported me through it all; to my sister Alice who has always encouraged and believed in me; and to my loving brother Ted who long ago told me I can do whatever I put my mind to; to my parents in heaven …their guiding love helped me strive to succeed in this extraordinary journey.

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Biographical Sketch

Janet Lyons is currently an adjunct professor teaching Marketing, Advertising and Business Communications at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. She is also a special educator working at the Hastings-on-Hudson School District in New York State. She attended Iona College in New Rochelle, New York from 1973 to 1977, obtaining her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Marketing. In 1979 she earned her Master of Business Administration degree in Marketing, also from Iona College. In 2004 she earned a Master of Science degree in Education from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. She began her doctoral studies in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010. She conducted her research studying undergraduate mentoring under the direction of Dr. Michael Robinson and earned her doctoral degree in 2012.

Abstract

The United States is in an educational crisis. Far too many of our students do not attend college, let alone graduate once they attend. While there are many factors that influence whether a student will attend college and subsequently graduate, mentoring has been identified as a worthwhile support that influences retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students. Unfortunately, many students who can avail themselves of free mentoring supports do not take advantage of what is offered.

The study investigated the factors that influence student non-participation in an undergraduate mentoring program at a small private college in New York State. A theory of student involvement, the theory of academic and social integration and the theory of the hierarchy of needs were found to be relevant theories that relate to student participation in mentoring.

Mixed methods research provided investigation of students' and mentors' perspectives through focus groups and interviews. A survey to non-participating students provided insight into the importance of identified factors that influence student non-participation. The findings indicate that there are numerous factors that influence students' disengagement from mentoring. Mentor-mentee relationships, students' need for independence, lack of available time, mentoring processes and non-registration for the semester all influence mentoring involvement. The study also gleaned information from mentors and staff members. Academic and social integration were identified as influential factors. Given the value of mentoring to student involvement and retention,

focus on the relationship, processes and students' needs will benefit current and future

mentoring programs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the problem statement for the dissertation topic, provide an overview of the theoretical basis for development of the dissertation, discuss the theoretical rationale, and describe study significance and the purpose of the study. Research questions will be posed and a definition of terms will be provided. A brief overview of the literature is included.

Statement of the Problem

The United States is a nation in an educational crisis. Only about 40 % of Americans hold a two or four year college degree. Of students who graduate high school and continue on to college, only 40% graduate within six years (Kanter, 2010). The United States has gone from first in the world in college graduation rates to twelfth for young adults in the 25 -34 year old range (Obama, 2010).

Not only does this hurt our competitiveness in the world, but poor undergraduate retention and graduation rates take an enormous toll on our institutions and government. Between 2003 and 2008 state and Federal governments spent approximately nine billion dollars on students who dropped out during their first year of college (Kellerman, 2010). Student drop out also has an impact on the financial vitality of higher education institutions, the economy of the local community and the nation. The seat left empty by one student who leaves could have been filled by another student. Institutions waste

academic resources and funds invested in students who drop out before degree completion (Tinto & Cullen, 1973).

The economic impact of a college education is substantial. High school graduates earn an average of $33,000 annually compared to college graduates who earn an average of $65,000 annually (US Census Bureau, 1999).

Undergraduate retention is a complex and ongoing problem in the United States (Tinto, 2007). Higher education institutions have focused on retention, yet it remains a large issue. However, the literature shows that mentoring programs can help improve persistence (Laden, 1999; Salinitri, 2005). A mentor can provide students the guidance they need to manage the many issues that arise for first year students.

Jacobi (1991) indicated that mentoring is increasingly considered as a retention and enrichment strategy. Mentoring is often designed for specific student populations such as first-generation college students (Hines, 2011; Laden, 1999; Terrell & Hassell, 1994). However, when given the opportunity to sign on and get involved in mentoring programs, not all students take advantage of this (Bowman, Bowman, & Delucia, 1990; Moseley, 1998; Turnbo, 2002; Wilson, 1994). Turnbo (2002) reported counselor frustration with students who sign on for an intrusive mentoring program but subsequently do not follow through with their mentor.

Rice and Brown (1990) found that students who are most open to new relationships were more interested in pursuing mentoring. A student with low self-esteem who needs nurturing and support is less likely to pursue mentoring. These are the students who most benefit from mentoring support and yet they shy away from it.

Greater understanding of undergraduate mentoring dynamics and any perceived barriers help in understanding this problem.

Theoretical Rationale

The work of three theorists provided direction for the dissertation. The first theorist is Abraham Maslow. His 1970 seminal work, *Motivation and Personality*, discussed a hierarchy of needs that motivates individuals to take certain action. A theory that draws from Maslow's work is provided by Astin's (1984, 1985) theory of involvement. Tinto's (1975, 1993, 1999) theory of student departure is also relevant when discussing undergraduate retention and involvement in college life.

Abraham Maslow (1970) developed a theory of motivation described and depicted as a hierarchy of needs. His theory discussed how humans have different levels of needs starting at the most basic human physical needs. Individuals progress through each higher level of need until they reach the highest layer, that of self actualization. The levels are most often depicted in a pyramid form. The first level of need is physiological. Humans must meet their physical demands for food and drink. Nothing else matters if one is truly hungry or thirsty. Once satisfaction is achieved for these basic requirements, our individual needs progress to the next higher level which, according to Maslow, is the need for safety. This relates to desiring to live in a safe environment, free from dangerous conditions. Maslow extended this concept to the need for familiarity in our environment.

Once the physical and safety needs are met, individual needs progress to the desire for love. "If both the physiological and safety needs are fairly well gratified, there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs, the whole cycle… will

repeat itself with this new center" (Maslow, 1970, p. 20). Maslow describes this level as the need for seeking love and attention, having friends and relationships, a mate. The concept of belonging to a group, a family, a team of people that the person feels comfortable with is the key idea at this level.

The next level in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy is the need for esteem, both self-esteem, and being held in high esteem by others. Maslow further described this level:

These are, first, the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of the world, and independence and freedom. Second we have what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity or appreciation. (p. 21)

Maslow's (1970) highest level of his hierarchy of needs is identified as self-actualization or the need to become whatever you are capable of becoming. "What humans can be, they must be" (Maslow, 1970, p. 22). Once individuals have progressed through the more basic levels, they seek to fulfill this higher level of need. They wish to maximize their personal potential.

Maslow (1970) has identified a theory of motivation through the progression of the various stages or levels. His theory has been the inspiration in the field of psychology, education, management and marketing. Advertisers tailor their marketing messages to meet the needs of their consumers (Perreault, Cannon, & McCarthy, 2009). Others have applied his theory to the acculturation of immigrants to a new country (Adler, 1977). Maslow's theory appears to be a theory with significant implications in many fields. It relates to college persistence and retention in that an understanding of

student motivators will help college institutions in their efforts to increase student persistence and retention.

A theory that has relevance and a relation to Maslow's theory is Astin's theory of involvement. Astin (1984, 1985) developed a theory of student involvement that relates to college retention. "Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1985, p. 518). He described student involvement as the amount of time and energy a student devotes to college activities. These include not only studying, but involvement in student clubs and other extracurricular activities. Astin's theory supports the idea that the student who is involved in college life and activities is more likely to stay in college. The student who is more involved in his or her learning and spends more time involved with academics will more likely persist. The less a student is involved in campus activities and academics, the more likely they may leave before completion of a degree.

Astin's (1984) theory of involvement is related to Maslow's theory of motivation. Maslow discussed the various needs of individuals or the motivators that make them do what they do. Astin's theory defined involvement as an active term and uses various concepts such as engagement, taking part in, joining in, and committing oneself to some endeavor. Astin (1985) stated that involvement is related to the concept of motivation, but that involvement is more measurable and more easily observable. Astin takes the question of how to motivate students and turns it into the question of how do you get students involved.

Astin's (1984) theory of involvement relates to the dissertation topic. Mentoring is a proven retention technique (Jacobi, 1991) yet some students do not participate or get

involved in their college mentoring program (Bowman, Bowman, & Delucia, 1990; Moseley, 1998; Shephard, 2004; Turnbo, 2002; Wilson, 1994).

Another theory that is related to Astin's (1984) theory of involvement and Maslow's (1970) theory of motivation is Tinto's theory of student departure (1975). Tinto's theory of student departure posits that students may leave college due to lack of academic and social integration within their environment. Departure can be viewed as a withdrawal and lack of involvement in their current environment. Students who are academically or socially integrated are less likely to leave. Students who are actively involved in and able to manage their academic work feel more integrated into their college environment, therefore persisting. Students who are socially integrated, meaning that they are involved in campus activities, have meaningful relationships and will persist at higher rates.

Tinto's work has been studied and evaluated by other researchers over the last 30 years (Coll & Stewart 2008, Pascarella & Terrenzini 1983, Stage & Richardson, 1985). Stage and Richardson studied the relationship between student motivation to attend college and Tinto's concepts of academic and social integration. Stage and Richardson (1985) found that students who were socially integrated and attended college for academic or cognitive reasons were more likely to persist. They also found higher levels of persistence among students who were goal oriented and academically integrated.

Through Maslow's (1970), Astin's (1984) and Tinto's (1975) theories, we see connections. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs we relate the student's need for love and self-esteem. This concept aligns well with Astin and Tinto in their discussions of the student's needs to be part of the academic or social core of the institution. Student

personal motivation and influence of the college institutions' initiatives are key to retention. Much of the literature on retention relates to activities and relationships that the institution and its members have with students. Higher education institutions continuously seek to maintain student motivation and involvement through a myriad of programs, supports and activities (Tinto, 2007). In fact, Tinto (2007) critiqued his own theory indicating that an important part of the retention equation is the institution itself. The college institution plays a key role in how students are involved, welcomed into their new environment and eventually retained.

Colleges now employ a wide variety of retention initiatives. Freshman seminars, counseling, academic intervention, early alert systems, academic help centers and learning communities are among the strategies used by colleges to encourage retention (Turnbo, 2002). Mentoring has also been identified as a useful tool in helping students persist by managing college demands, setting goals and adapting in a new environment.

In the review of the literature, there is clear evidence on the benefits of mentoring (Anderson, Dey, Gray & Thomas, 1995; Jacobi, 1991; Laden, 1999; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Terrell & Wright, 1988; Turnbo, 2002; Wilson, 1994). What needed to be explored were the reasons why students do not take advantage of mentoring opportunities. What are the factors that influence student involvement in undergraduate mentoring? What are the barriers to involvement in mentoring programs?

Significance of the Study

The impetus for this study was the need to understand student motivation and involvement in formal undergraduate mentoring programs. Jacobi (1991) indicated that mentoring is increasingly considered as a retention and enrichment strategy. This study

investigated the benefits of mentoring as perceived by students who sign on and then drop out of the mentoring program. The study sought to ascertain the factors that influence students' decisions to stop participation in a mentoring program on the undergraduate level. The characteristics of students who initially signed on for the mentoring program, participated in undergraduate mentoring and then became non-responders to mentor outreach were explored.

The literature shows that mentoring programs can help improve persistence (Laden, 1999, Salinitri, 2005). Participants in mentoring often give highly positive feedback on the mentoring experience. The literature also shows that many students do not take advantage of the benefits that a mentoring program can provide. (Bowman, Bowman & Delucia, 1990; Moseley, 1998; Pope, 2002; Shephard, 2004; Turnbo, 2002). Reasons for lack of participation were not found in the research. Understanding reasons for lack of participation aids in the development and improvement of current and future undergraduate mentoring programs.

The research study was conducted with students who initially signed on for mentoring, but subsequently stopped participating in the program. Research questions focused on identifying the factors that influenced students' decision to stop participation in the mentoring program. The study determined what influenced student initial participation in mentoring**.** Additionally, issues related to student mentoring participation as perceived by the mentoring staff were explored.

The study also investigated the demographic and academic characteristics of those students who signed on for mentoring and then stopped participating. These were compared to a group of highly involved mentored students. Identifying characteristics of

these populations assists in determining characteristics that influence participation in mentoring. Ultimately, development of best practices in undergraduate mentoring assists in the development of a gold standard to be used by current and future undergraduate mentoring programs.

Purpose of the Study

The dissertation studied undergraduate mentoring as a strategy to support student involvement, persistence and retention. The purpose of the study is to identify reasons why students who initially signed up for mentoring did not continue to participate in undergraduate mentoring. The study seeks to identify the elements of an undergraduate mentoring program that initially encouraged student involvement and participation in the mentoring program. The population studied were those students who signed on and then stopped participating. The study was performed at a small private college in New York State within the realm of their undergraduate mentoring program. The college, hereinafter identified as the College, was chosen as an ideal site for mentoring research. The College launched a comprehensive undergraduate mentoring program in 2008. All incoming students have the opportunity to participate in the program and the vast majority of students sign on. The data was readily available to the researcher. A mixed methods approach was employed. The goals for the research were to better understand the elements of mentoring and determine why students do not take advantage of the program elements.

The universe is the cohort of undergraduate students at the College. The population for the study is the group of students who enrolled in the College as first-year students from Fall 2008 through Fall 2011. The study population was the group of

students who enrolled in the institution from Fall 2008 through the Fall 2011 semester who signed on for the mentoring program, but stopped their participation in the College's mentoring program. A sample of these students who stopped using the College's mentoring support services were invited to participate in focus groups. The focus group was designed to explore reasons why these students do not take advantage of the mentoring program.

A survey questionnaire was delivered to the entire study population inquiring about various demographic characteristics of their backgrounds, and their understanding and perception of the benefits of the mentoring program. The demographic variables looked at were gender, and ethnic background. Students were asked to rate the factors that influenced their decision to stop participating in the College mentoring program. Student course of study, participation in college extracurricular activities and student work outside of the school environment were also asked in the survey. The number of participants receiving the survey was determined by the number of students who were non-participants to the mentoring program, which was 68 students. A non-responder student was identified as one who failed to respond to repeated requests from their mentor.

Additionally, mentors, and staff members associated with the mentoring program were interviewed to gain their perspective on students who drop out of the mentoring program. Some archival student data on the 68 non-responder students as well as 52 highly involved mentored students was provided by the College. The archival data provided the gender, ethnic background, area of college study, and high school grade point average of the students.

Research Questions

   The goal of the study was to uncover the most useful and meaningful elements of the mentoring program and reasons why students do not take advantage of mentoring. Research questions are as follows.

1. What are the characteristics of all the students who initially engaged in the College mentoring program between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and subsequently were identified as non-responders in the College mentoring program as compared to a group of highly involved mentored students?

2. For students who entered the College between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and initially engaged in the mentoring program, what are the primary reasons or factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program and become non-responders to mentoring?

3. Of the survey responders: a) How do those students who stopped participating in mentoring rate those factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program? b) What are the characteristics of the non-responder students who answered the survey?

4. From the mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what are the perceived barriers to student participation in mentoring?

5. From the non-responder students', mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what aspects of mentoring do they perceive to be the most meaningful or useful to the students?

Definitions of Terms

Mentor is defined: a knowledgeable individual who provides guidance and direction in a controlled setting to undergraduate students.

Mentee is defined: a student who is enrolled in the College's mentoring program.

Undergraduate retention is defined: registered first-year or second-year fall semester students who register for the spring semester.

Dropout is defined: a student who does not return to their original higher education institution and does not obtain an undergraduate degree at that institution.

Mentoring program dropout is defined: a student who initially signed on for the college's mentoring services, but subsequently does not use the mentor's services.

First-generation student is defined: the first student in the family to attend college.

Student population is defined: students attending one of the campuses of the College from Fall 2008 to Fall 2012 semester, who originally signed up for the College mentoring program, but subsequently stopped using the College mentoring services.

Non-responder is defined: a student who originally signed up for mentoring, but did not respond to multiple outreach efforts by his or her mentor.

Summary

The United States has an educational crisis of massive proportions. Institutions of higher education have been focused on retention for many years, yet it continues to be a significant issue. Researchers such as Astin (1984), Tinto (1975), have reported on the concepts of academic and social integration, involvement and motivation as drivers in the retention battle. Maslow (1970) provided insight into what motivates individuals to take certain actions.

Mentoring has been determined to be a very useful tool in increasing retention among undergraduate students. Unfortunately, not all students who have the opportunity to have a mentor take advantage of it. In chapter two key literature on retention issues and mentoring as a solution are discussed. Chapter three provides details on the research design for the study that determined why students do not using mentoring supports. Chapter four discusses the findings of the study. In chapter five the implications of the findings, recommendations and conclusion are presented.

Retention is a significant problem. Effort must continue to improve retention and graduation results in the United States.

<center>**Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**</center>

Introduction

This literature review discusses research on retention and mentoring in institutions of higher education in the United States. College attendance has been increasing over the last few decades as access to higher education has increased. Diversity in college attendance is increasing. College retention has been studied for decades and yet it continues to be a significant ongoing issue for institutions (Tinto, 2007). Research on the myriad of reasons why students leave before degree completion will be presented. Mentoring is one of the strategies employed by institutions of higher education to help students adapt to their environment and succeed (Jacobi 1991; Salinitri, 2005; Terrell & Wright, 1988; Wilson, 1994). The theoretical approach for this study is primarily guided by the works of Alexander Astin (1975, 1984, 1985), Abraham Maslow (1970), and Vincent Tinto (1975, 1993, 1999). These three theorists have made their life work investigating motivation, involvement and the persistence to continue.

Enrollment in institutions of higher education is on the rise. In 1970, approximately 8.6 million students were enrolled in college (National Center for Education, 2009). In 2008, there were approximately 19.1 million students attending college and about 65% of those students attended full time. It is estimated that college attendance will reach over 22.4 million students by 2019 (National Center for Education, 2011). Whites represent the majority of enrolled students, however, between 2008 and 2019 enrollment is projected to increase substantially for various ethnic groups.

Enrollment by Whites in 2008 was approximately 12.1 million and is projected to increase by 7% by 2019. Enrollment for Blacks in 2008 was approximately 2.6 million and is projected to increase by 30% by 2019. Hispanic student enrollment was approximately 2.3 million in 2008 and is projected to increase by 45% by 2019 (National Center for Education, 2011). Since the 1980s, the number of females attending college is higher than the number of males (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Graduation rates are also higher for females as well. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Enrollment by students aged 18 – 24 has increased from 8 million in 1994 to 11.5 million in 2008 and is projected to increase to 12.9 million by 2019 (National Center for Education, 2011). This represents an increase of approximately 12% overall. However, research indicates retention continues to be a significant problem for colleges.

Although college attendance in on the rise in the United States, college completion rates are poor and are not improving, even with effort and focus by institutions and the government.

> Current U.S. retention figures have not improved over time, even with large amounts of money expended by colleges and universities on programs and services to retain students. In spite of these programs and services, retention figures have not improved. In fact, only about 66% of high school graduates attend college and about 50% of those who attend college earn a bachelor degree (Seidman, 2010, "Center for Study of College Student Retention" para. 9).

While college enrollment continues to rise, graduation rates are poor. For first-time, full-time bachelor's degree seeking students, the graduation rates are disappointing.

In comparing the 1996 starting cohort to the 2001 starting cohort, four year graduation rates have improved gradually in the range of between two to three percent for Whites, Blacks and Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). While it is encouraging to see an increase over time, college completion is still alarmingly low.

In examining the data for all four year institutions, in the 2001 starting cohort, a total of 36.2 % graduated after four years. Whites in this cohort graduated at a rate of 39.1%. Of Black students, 21.4 % graduated and 25.8% of Hispanics in the cohort graduated after four years (National Center for Education, 2009). After five years, the graduation rate of the 2001 cohort increased to 52.6%. Graduation of White students increased to 55.8%, 35.8% for Blacks and 42.1% for Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Within six years of starting college, the graduation rates continue to improve, however they remain within the 40 to 60 percent range. After six years, graduation rates for Whites increased to 60.3%; graduation rates for Blacks increased to 41.5% and graduation rates for Hispanics increased to 48.3% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Poor retention and graduation rates present a significant challenge for the United States.   The United States has gone from first in the world in college graduation rates to twelfth for young adults in the 25 -34 year old range (Obama, 2010). To maintain our leadership in the world, the United States needs many more individuals who are college educated. President Barack Obama has challenged higher education institutions to do what is necessary to bring the United States back to being first in college graduation rates by the year 2020.

Additionally, the need for our future workforce mandates that we improve our college graduation rates (Obama, 2010). Educated individuals are needed to assume jobs that require higher level thinking skills and abilities. Through education and training, the human capital available as a resource in our country increases. "Over 80 percent of market value in today's global markets is allocated to intangible assets. Increasingly, this is a measure of talent in the form of strategic knowledge, creativity, adaptability and execution in the workforce" (Human Capital Institute, 2011, "Education for a New and Creative Discipline," para. 1). Our workforce must be properly trained and educated for the needs of our global economy. According to Zemsky and Oedel (1994) high paying jobs are migrating away from manufacturing and are moving to services and technology. The need for blue collar workers with only a high school education is on the decline (Zemsky & Oedel, 1994).

The economic impact of a college education is substantial. High school graduates earn an average of $33,000 annually compared to college graduates who earn an average of $65,000 annually (US Census Bureau, 1999). That is a significant difference over a lifetime. Over a 40 year span the college educated individual will earn close to $1.3 million more than a person with only a high school education. This translates into greater spending power which supports the United States economy. College graduates also pay more in taxes over their lifetime compared to high school graduates, contributing to the financial vitality of the United States (College Board, 2010). Unemployment rates are lower among college graduates as compared to high school graduates.

The college experience adds positively to a person's quality of life. College graduates have greater job satisfaction and are more inclined to participate in volunteer

activities as compared to high school graduates. College graduates also live healthier lifestyles when compared to high school graduates (College Board, 2010).

Poor retention and graduation rates bring about tremendous waste and inefficiency in the United States (Kellerman, 2010). A significant amount of money is spent on students who do not complete their education. Student drop out has an impact on the institution's financial vitality, the economy of the local community and the nation. Between 2003 and 2008 state and Federal governments spent approximately nine billion dollars on students who dropped out during their first year of college (Kellerman, 2010). High school graduates are more likely to end up on public assistance as compared to college graduates (College Board, 2010).

What Influences Undergraduate Retention

Retention is a complex and ongoing issue for colleges (Tinto, 2007). Institutions of higher education first realized retention was an issue about 40 years ago. Originally it was considered a reflection on the student's abilities, motivation and skills and looked at from a psychological perspective. It was the student who failed, not the institution (Tinto, 2007). As time passed and much research was accomplished, colleges realized they can and must be part of the solution. Higher education institutions have focused on retention, trying different approaches, yet it remains a large issue.

Transition to college is a challenging time for many students (Tinto, 2007). Students experience greater independence, but with that comes greater responsibility to manage their lives on their own. They may face time management issues, difficulty in maneuvering through the complexities of financial aid, scheduling and academic and social demands (Laden, 1999). This is particularly true for first-generation college

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attendees who do not have the benefit of a family member with college experience to share or rely on (Laden, 1999). These students have to become acclimated to an environment that may be foreign to them.

Attrition and retention in higher education is an important issue. One prominent researcher in this field is Vincent Tinto. Tinto (1975, 1993) developed a theory on why students depart from college before graduation. His theory of student departure posited that retention and persistence are related to the social and academic integration of the student into the college community. Tinto's theory was partially derived from Durkheim's (1997) theory of suicide. Durkheim's work was originally published in 1897. He categorized suicide into different groups depending on a person's situation. The category that is applicable to college dropout is Durkheim's belief that suicide is in part brought about by a person's lack of integration into some part of society. Durkheim's idea was that individuals need to be morally integrated into society or have an attachment to a group in society. The complete detachment from any group and society could lead some individuals to suicide.

Tinto related Durkheim's theory of suicide and the concept of completely dropping out from society to student drop out from higher education. Tinto (1975) discussed the need for the individual to perceive that he or she was a competent member of the college community on a social and academic level. Student integration into social systems within the college is necessary for the student to become acclimated and successful in their college environment. Tinto indicated that student academic success in coursework and involvement in campus activities, clubs and the social scene are important to a student's comfort and integration into the setting. Maslow's (1970)

discussion of the need for safety relates well to Tinto's (1975) theory. Maslow's (1970) concept of the individual's need for safety in new situations, and the need for love aligns well with the challenges of transition to college. In new situations a person will first need to feel safe in the new environment. Once he feels safe he will feel the absence of friends, moving up the hierarchy of needs to the need for love (Maslow, 1970). Social integration is key.

Tinto's (1975) early work focused on the social and academic systems within the institution and how these systems affected the student. His theoretical model was developed based on his synthesis of research available in the early 1970s. He attempted to develop a model that explored the interactions between student and the institution that could lead some students to drop out of college. His model is also partially developed based on the cost and benefit analysis involved in individual decisions in investing in other potential educational activities.

The key elements of Tinto's (1975) model are social and academic integration, student academic achievement and student commitment to the institution and the student's own personal goals. His theoretical model is based on the interactions a student has with the social and academic structures within the college. The student's experiences and involvement with the social and academic systems are influential factors in the student's level of commitment to degree completion at that particular college. Overall, the higher the student's interaction with the social and academic systems within the college, the stronger their commitment to their goals and the institution, the more likely the student is to persist.

Additionally, every student has a unique background they bring to their college experience (Tinto, 1975). Family background, student academic experiences, intellect and personal values are key elements in the retention model. For example, students who are first in their family to attend college have greater difficulty in persisting than students who have family members who attended and graduated college (Laden, 1999). Family support or pressure can be very influential. Astin (1975) believed that more educated parents may put greater pressure on their children to persist in college as compared to children of parents who have less education.

Astin (1975) also studied student drop out. His study was longitudinal. The subjects of his study were freshmen students who were surveyed in the Fall of 1968. The original population of students in 1968 was 243,156. Some of these students were surveyed again in the Fall of 1972. The students were selected from 358 two year and four year institutions. Due to cost constraints, the 1972 follow-up questionnaire was mailed to 101,000 students. Of the completed questionnaires, over 41,000 were completed correctly and usable. The initial Fall 1968 questionnaire obtained information on student race, sex, religion, achievements, extracurricular activities in high school, parents income, education and occupation. Student SAT or ACT scores were also compiled. Information was obtained on the student's career plans, educational goals, daily activities, reasons why they chose their particular college and their thoughts on what the future held for them. The follow-up 1972 questionnaire asked information on student educational progress, enrollment status, graduation status and how the students financed their education.

In total there were 110 student personal characteristics that were investigated. The information received was evaluated with the goal of identifying experiences or characteristics that appeared to influence student drop out. Through a regression analysis Astin (1975) was able to identify 53 student variables that were indicators of potential drop out. The key variables fell into these general categories: academic background and ability, family background, educational aspirations, study habits, college expectations and other student characteristics. Some of the specific variables were high school grade point average, student rank in his or her graduating class, and college admissions test scores. The better the student standing in these indicators, the less likely they were to drop out. Rating of the students' high school, family background which included measures on religion, income, education level of parent and type of town from which the student came were also strong indicators of likelihood of dropping out. Students who indicated a religious preference were less likely to drop out. Students from small towns were found to be more likely to drop out perhaps due to the difference in environments.

Work experience, student residence situations and how students were paying for their education were also evaluated. Many of the results that Astin (1975) determined were well aligned with Tinto's work. Astin found many of the same drivers that could directionally determine which students were candidates for drop out from higher education.

Social integration. Tinto (1975) and Astin (1975) both determined that the concept of social integration was important for retention. Social integration includes the idea that students become acclimated to their new environment, can establish a base of friends and feel comfortable within their setting. It is the idea that there is an appropriate

fit between the individual and the social environment of the college (Tinto, 1975).

Extracurricular activities can provide appropriate interactions that generate increased

student commitment to the institution. The caveat here is that excessive socialization can

lead to academic dismissal if the social activities dominate and academic focus suffers.

Additionally, Tinto (1975) stated that social relationships with like-minded students who

are not academically focused can ultimately lead to departure. Anderson, Dey, Gray and

Thomas (1995) found this to be true as well. Students who spent much time socializing,

or were involved in time consuming hobbies had less time for academic work and this

had a negative impact on their grade point averages.

It is important for students to feel they are a part of the social elements of their

college environment (Tinto, 1993). Students who live or work off campus find it difficult

to be integrated into their college environment (Astin, 1985). He found that students who

work off campus are less involved in college life due to time constraints. These students

are more likely to find it difficult to become socially integrated into campus life which

can lead to attrition. Working full time was clearly detrimental to student persistence.

Astin (1975) found a 15% increase in drop-out rate among women who worked full time

and 13% among men who worked full time and attempted college. Students who are

working full time have far less time for studying, potentially leading to academic

difficulties. College students who worked 20 hours or more were less likely to graduate

(United States General Accounting Office, 2003).

Conversely, Astin (1975) found that students who work on campus are more

likely to persist. Working on campus is conducive to continued social integration. The

student is still in the college environment, interacting with other college students and

possibly faculty. This can work to the student's benefit. Astin also found that if a student worked part-time off campus starting in freshman year, this reduced the chance of drop out.

Campus culture is also a factor in a student's comfort level with their chosen school. Students may encounter people with diverse cultural backgrounds and situations that are foreign to them (Haring, 1999). The first year of college is a time when students are socialized into their new college culture and environment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Some students leave due to the feeling that they do not "fit" into the environment (Astin, 1985; Lee, 1999). Religious backgrounds, ethnic diversity, the size of college all can impact how well students integrate and persist in their environment. There may be a lack of congruence between the college environment and the student's background, leading to student discontent. Some students find it difficult to manage these new situations and challenges on their own and they may give up and quit (Astin, 1985). This is not necessarily a failure of the student, but a mismatching of student to college institutional characteristics and environment (Tinto, 1975). Seidman (2005) echoed this sentiment stating that colleges that promoted institutional fit were more likely to recruit students that would want to stay. Griffin (2012) added that the concept of belonging in your environment leads to involvement and success.

Academic achievement and integration. Another crucial aspect of persistence and retention is the very important aspect of student achievement in academics (Tinto, 1975, 1993; Astin, 1975). Intellectual integration is essential to student persistence. Students must feel competent academically in order to persist. Students who have the opportunity to interact with their teachers in or out of the classroom are more likely to

persist according to Tinto. The educational experiences that a student has prior to entering college have a definitive impact on his or her ability to persist. Students who performed well in high school are better prepared for college work and therefore more likely to persist (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1975) posits that academic integration brings about a stronger commitment to personal goal achievement.

The continuation of solid academic performance provides validation to the student and encourages retention. Additionally there are internal and external validators tied to academic performance and success that relate to retention (Tinto, 1975). Internally, students feel the personal validation of their academic achievements and their ability to pursue their chosen goals. Externally, there may be the recognition through good grades and accolades. Grades are an external measure of academic integration (Tinto, 1975). Personal validation and academic success relates to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. Individuals seek self-esteem in their worth. Successful people will feel capable and self confident (Maslow, 1970).

A major challenge for some students is their need for additional academic support. Many students enter college insufficiently prepared for the rigors of university study and need additional services to keep up with their course work (Tinto, 1999). This can lead to academic difficulties and the inability to complete coursework successfully, leading to departure. Of the 2004 graduating high school seniors who moved on to a four year college institution, approximately 14% of them required remedial reading, about 22% needed remedial writing and about 23% required remedial math courses (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Astin (1975) found that slightly less than one quarter of the students in his study dropped out due to poor grade performance. As such,

there may be a disconnect between the student's abilities and the expectations of the university (Tinto, 1975). One of the indicators in Astin's study was poor study habits. Students who indicated they had relatively poor study habits were more likely to drop out. This certainly ties to academic performance.

Student involvement. Astin's (1985) theory of involvement is aligned with Tinto's (1975, 2007)) work. Astin reports that as a student's involvement in academics increases, his or her ability to persist improves as well. The more time students spend on academics the more successful they will be. Anderson et al. (1995) also found that the time students dedicated to their studies was a good predictor of grades in college. Student overall involvement in their college experience is important, especially during the first year of college (Tinto, 2007). Tinto (1999) supported the concept of learning communities in college classrooms. Involvement in the classroom is crucial. Student relationships with faculty and other students in the classroom leads to relationships outside the classroom (Tinto, 1999). Involvement starts in the classroom. "This is the case because the classroom is for many students, the one place, perhaps only place, where they meet each other and the faculty. If involvement does not occur there, it is unlikely to occur elsewhere" (Tinto, 2007, p.6).

The influence of faculty, family and goals. There are other indicators that can predict persistence and retention. The influence of faculty involvement with students, family background and student goals are indicators for a student's likelihood of persisting (Astin, 1975, Tinto, 1975). Astin (1975) supported the premise that frequent interactions between students and faculty has a positive influence on student persistence and retention. Tinto (1993) further reinforces the importance of student achievement in

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academics and the role that faculty play in this. Interaction with faculty both in class and out of the classroom environment not only helps students achieve academically but also helps the students feel more involved and a part of the college community (Tinto, 1993). While interactions with fellow students help increase social integration, interaction with faculty helps foster positive feelings about the institution, making the commitment to the organization even stronger (Tinto, 1975).

Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2009) conducted a qualitative case study analysis on four first-generation, white, male, first semester, college freshmen. The students attended a large urban research university in the South. The students were recruited from first year seminar courses. Six students initially indicated interest in the project but two dropped out due to work obligations. The four remaining students were interviewed every two to three weeks throughout the fall semester of 2001. These students discussed their transition to college and their concerns. First generation students typically do not have family resources to rely on for advice on college issues. Following Tinto's (1990) premise of the importance of faculty – student interaction and its relation to retention, the researchers sought student perception on this topic. Through the interviews, these students voiced their concerns with feeling intimidated by faculty members. One student voiced the concern that he wanted to be able to feel that he was in control of his success, that he was responsible for himself, therefore asking for assistance would make him feel needy and less able. One of the students did not want to bother the professors. They felt that asking for assistance from faculty would be a bother to the professor. Another student felt intimidated by some of the faculty members. Another student discussed the significant difference in the amount of individual attention received

in high school as compared to college. This student expected more aid from the professor, as he received from his high school teachers. This led the student to wonder if the faculty member cared about him and his success. All four students indicated that they believed the faculty members did not care about them.

In the Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2009) study, all four of the students dropped out of college after their first semester. This is in comparison to a 32% drop out rate for white first year students at this college. One of the students dropped out due to a family illness, two of the men were on academic probation and the fourth student was on academically dismissed.

Zalaquett (2006) conducted a study of 12 Latino and Latina students who were attending a large urban university. All the students were recipients of a Hispanic scholarship program. All students had at least a 3.0 high school grade point average. They were asked to share their stories by answering questions about their motivation to attend college, their life story, what challenges they had to overcome to attend college. The majority of the students reported that they could not rely on their parents for assistance in the college process. Their parents either did not speak the language and or had not attended college themselves. Four of the twelve students relied on others such as high school guidance counselors or teachers for direction in pursuing the college process. All the students however gave great credit to strong family support that enabled them to succeed in their pursuit of college. For some of the students, pursuit of an education and career were done to honor their parents. They felt a sense of obligation to their parents.

In his model, Tinto (1975) included the idea of student expectations related to a degree and the commitment to their goals. Educational aspirations can be a barometer for

risk of drop out (Astin, 1975). For example, students with a goal of pursuing a Masters degree would be expected to be very committed to completion of an undergraduate degree. A student with the expectation of pursuing a law degree will more likely persist in college. Astin (1975) found that students who entered as freshman and had clear degree goals were much more likely to have completed their undergraduate degree as compared to students who had no degree goal or a goal to complete an Associates degree. Of the surveyed population in Astin's (1975) study, 45.4% of the students who indicated they would obtain a bachelor's degree had completed their degree or were already in graduate school at the end of the four years. Only 35.6% of the students who said they had no educational goal had either completed their degree or were already enrolled in graduate school at the end of four years. For the students who indicated that an Associates degree was their goal, only 12.5% had completed a bachelor's degree or moved on to graduate study.

Another related influential element that is related to goal identification is the involvement of family. Tinto (1975) found that a student with family members who may have attended the same college might be more motivated to complete their degree. The goal of being part of the family legacy can positively influence the student. Tinto (1975) stated that even a student who is minimally integrated into the social and academic systems, but are driven by a goal may persist due to their strong desire to complete the degree. Conversely, a student with no specific goals and low commitment to their chosen institution are more likely to drop out.

Other research supports this and has also determined that identification and commitment to a career goal has an influence on retention (Hull-Blanks, Kurpius, Befort,

Sollenberger, Nicpon, and Huser, 2005). Hull-Blanks et al., found that freshman students with a career goal made more positive persistence decisions than those first year students that did not have a specific career goal. Focus on a long term goal adds to a student's motivation and aids in persistence.

Supporting this concept, Sharkin (2004) found that college counseling can have a positive impact on retention. Counselors can guide students with academic issues, help students identify goals and work on career planning. Counselors can also support social-emotional needs and help students become better acclimated to their new environment, encouraging persistence. In support of this idea, attrition has been noted in undergraduate situations where student dissatisfaction with career counseling and advising services was high (Seidman, 2005).

Students undergo a continual cost and benefit analysis in their decision to stay or leave, according to Tinto (1975). The benefits of the degree, the academic benefits and social aspects of the college experience must be evaluated against the financial implications, time and any other concern about their ongoing attendance. Some students drop out due to the immediate prospect of a job. Other students may reevaluate their decision to stay in college based on the belief that there are no available jobs in their chosen field. Individuals' perceptions of the current situation play heavily into their decision making process.

Supporting studies. Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) supported Tinto's theory upon completion of their statistical study that measured students' opinions on social and academic integration attributes and how they related to retention. Pascarella and Terenzini conducted a longitudinal path analysis study on incoming freshman at a large

residential university in New York State. An initial questionnaire was mailed to 1,906 randomly selected incoming freshmen in July 1976. Responses were received from 1,457 students. The initial questionnaire assessed student expectations for college and student academic background, family demographics and education level.

In the following spring semester of 1977, these students were mailed a second survey inquiring about their freshman year experience. After follow-up phone calls, 763 usable responses were obtained. It was determined that these 763 students were a representative sample of the entire freshman population. Student records were then checked to determine if they had persisted or left.

The goal of Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) was to test Tinto's theoretical model in terms of the affect of social and academic integration on retention. They also investigated how the student's level of commitment to the institution or the student's commitment to their personal goals influenced retention decisions. The follow-up survey was designed to gather information about the students' freshmen year experiences. In Pascarella's and Terenzini's (1983) follow-up survey, students were asked various questions that were measures of social and academic integration. The researchers tested numerous variables or scales by having students respond to statements related to academic and social integration. Students responded with a range of responses from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Pascarella and Terenzini developed the scales based on their interpretation of Tinto's (1975) factors relating to academic and social integration. Freshman year grade point averages, students' perceptions of their academic development and interactions with faculty in class and out of class relating to academics or career concerns were part of the survey. These scales or variables were the measures

of academic integration. To measure social integration questions were asked on involvement in extracurricular activities, interactions with faculty about non-academic issues, and relations with their peers. Students responded with answers ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) reported that their findings validated Tinto's model. They found that students who feel more integrated into their setting, and were on solid academic ground were more inclined to continue in school. Academic integration was very important for students with poor social integration. The reverse was also true. Students with strong social integration skills were able to overcome academic weaknesses and persisted. They also found that for the women in the study, social integration was a more important factor in the decision to persist. For the men in the study, academic integration was the more important factor in retention.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that academic integration influenced student goal commitment. The impact of academic integration also influenced institutional commitment. The belief is that academic involvement and positive interaction with faculty also influences the student's commitment to the institution. Similarly, social integration influenced institutional commitment. Students who were involved in the social elements of the institution exhibited greater connection to the institution.

Interestingly, the impact of institutional commitment on retention was nearly three times the effect of goal commitment. Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) attributed this to the relative selectivity of the university where the research was conducted. If

competition for entry to that particular college is high, stronger student commitment to the institution would be logical.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) reported from the July, 1976 survey, that student background did not have a strong influence on retention results. The influence of freshman year activities had a greater impact on retention. This seems to validate Tinto's (1975) premise that what occurs at the institution is a more important factor than the student's background. The only pre-attendance factor that exhibited influence on retention was female goal commitment. Female pre-college goal commitment influenced social integration and subsequent retention.

Coll and Stewart (2008) conducted a study based on Tinto's (1975) theory and Pascarella and Terenzini's (1983) research. Coll and Stewart studied 304 students enrolled in an introductory course in an undergraduate teacher education program at a Rocky Mountain regional University. The study was conducted over three semesters with a pre-test and post-test using the same survey. Students were given the survey at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. Coll and Stewart used Pascarella and Terenzini's scales to measure academic and social integration. Coll and Stewart also created and included career goal scales in their study. The purpose of their study was to determine if their retention assessment and factor analysis of the scales would help counseling staff identify areas of student need. Coll and Stewart were using their study to support the initiator – catalyst model. The initiator-catalyst model is an approach where college counselors take a proactive role in working with various departments within colleges to generate collaborative relationships, which in turn will attract committed students and retain them (Archer & Cooper, 1998). The researchers

evaluated the results comparing at-risk students to individuals who were not-at-risk. Coll and Stewart defined the at-risk populations as those who did not persist, were placed on academic probation, or were suspended.

Coll and Stewart (2008) found the scales meaningful in identifying factors related to retention. The researchers found that overall, both the at-risk and not-at risk population of students reported limited interactions with faculty. But, they determined that students who were academically integrated and persisted reported that their interactions with faculty had a positive influence on them. At-risk students identified lower faculty interest in them. The not-at-risk population reported higher faculty interest in students. Additionally, career decidedness was scored higher by students who were academically not-at-risk. Students who were at-risk scored significantly lower in their career decidedness. Coll and Stewart felt that these findings were important in identifying areas of need at the research location.

Stage and Richardson (1985) studied the relationship between student motivation to attend college and Tinto's concepts of academic and social integration. Their study was conducted at Arizona State University with entering freshman in the fall of 1983 as the subjects. Surveys were mailed to 185 students in the spring of 1984 and usable forms were obtained from 124 students. The researchers wanted to determine what elements motivated entering freshman and how their motivations related to their academic and social integration. Stage and Richardson used Boshier's (1971) Education Participation Scales and Pascarella and Terrenzini's (1983) institutional integration scales along with other questions related to student background and involvement in college activities. Background characteristics were level of education of each parent, age and gender of

student, and student ethnicity. Motivational elements to attend college included recommendation by others, social reasons, cognitive learning, certification for career advancement or degree completion, competition, or other reasons that were unidentified in the research report. Given the relatively small population, upon completion of the study the researchers grouped the motivational categories into academic or cognitive, social and other reasons and personal goal orientation elements. Academic integration was measured by a statistical analysis of first year grade point average, credit hours earned, academic development, faculty concern and student involvement in school performance activities such as theatre or band, publications or professional clubs. Social integration was measured by student involvement with faculty, peers and hours spent involved in extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs. Stage and Richardson also asked a question about student dissatisfaction with their college experience.

In support of Tinto's theory, Stage and Richardson (1985) found that academic and social integration influenced persistence. The background element that was significant in persistence was the educational level of the mother and father. Surprisingly, student dissatisfaction had virtually no influence on persistence. For the students motivated by personal goal objectives, academic integration and parent education were the strongest predictors of persistence. For the students motivated by social or other reasons, both academic and social integration as well as ethnicity and commitment were all significant in predicting persistence.

For the students motivated by academic or cognitive reasons, social integration was the most important predictor of persistence (Stage & Richardson, 1985). The researchers surmised that these students who were academically motivated were strong

students and the difference in persistence was driven by their level of social integration. Overall, the researchers recommended caution in making solid conclusions given the small population size, however, their work validated Tinto's theory of social and academic integration and built upon his theory by looking at motivational elements that have been shown to influence the decision to stay or leave. However, there are other considerations in the decision to leave.

      Economics. There are other reasons why students leave college before completion. Economics and affordability play a part (Tinto, 2007). Astin (1975) found that 28% of the students in his study who dropped out indicated financial difficulties as part of the reason why they did not continue. Although financial aid may be available, college costs are significant. The average cost per year of a public four year institution in 2008-2009 was $14,256. The average cost per year of a four year private college education in 2008-2009 was $31, 704 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). This is a tremendous obligation for parents and students. Additionally, keeping up with the financial aid paperwork can be a large obstacle for some students (Curto, 2009). They may need help managing the procedures. This is especially true for students with parents who have not attended college or are not adept at the English language. It can be extremely challenging to manage. Students who do not know what to do may put the paperwork aside and not get back to it, potentially losing any financial aid.

      While the majority of Tinto's work has been validated by other researchers such as Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) and Stage and Richardson (1985), Tinto (1982), found several issues with his own theory after much continued research. He felt that finances played a larger part in persistence and retention which his original theory did not fully

explore. His early work, also, did not explore the differences in students who transferred to other institutions as compared to students who completely drop out. He criticized his early work in lacking exploration of differences in students' race, gender, social backgrounds. Additionally, Tinto's early work focused on four year institutions and did not explore drop out from two year institutions.

Types of interventions. There are numerous factors that have been identified as contributors to persistence and retention. While it has been studied, it remains an issue. Tinto (2007) asserted that while attrition and retention are serious concerns for colleges and universities, little has been done to focus on the deep roots of student attrition. Tinto's theory (1993) included the belief that involvement of the entire college educational community is crucial to student integration and persistence. Higher education institutions must be committed to the education of all students. Programs addressing retention must be long term and aid the student in becoming a part of the college social community (Tinto, 1993). Some colleges add a freshman seminar course as a way to help retention. But, that might not be sufficient. Tinto recommended a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach that encompasses support from all levels and departments within the college institution to encourage retention.

Colleges are well aware of the issues and what is at stake. Using different strategies, colleges attempt to retain students with a variety of programming. Turnbo (2002) completed a study in Delaware and the four surrounding states and the District of Columbia. She mailed questionnaires to 160 higher education institutions in Delaware, four surrounding states and the District of Columbia. Her questionnaire was designed to elicit information on retention strategies used at these various institutions of higher

education. Eighty-one usable responses were received. The responding institutions indicated the use of a wide variety of programming designed to aid student persistence and retention. Early intervention systems, advising, freshman year programs, learning communities, financial aid support, counseling services, retention committees, student success programs and mentoring programs were employed.

In categorizing the responses, Turnbo (2002) identified the most popular strategies employed by these colleges. Programs that helped students acclimate to their new environment were the most frequently mentioned. The second most popular type of support program identified was student counseling. Variations on this theme were peer counseling, faculty advisors, advisement centers were part of this mix of employed methods. The third most frequent support identified was academic support programming. The strategies mentioned are designed to meet the greatest needs of the students.

Bai and Pan (2009) conducted a study to identify interaction between student characteristics and various types of intervention programs used at a large Midwestern urban university. The university used 20 different intervention programs. The researchers categorized these into four main approaches. They were career and academic advisement, academic assistance for students who needed help in specific courses or needed learning strategies, first year seminar focusing on transition to college, college survival and career and personal development, and social integration support promoting peer and faculty relations, and learning communities. A general orientation program was used for comparison to the more specific intervention programs. These were all designed to assist in student retention and reduce drop out. Students participated in only one of these programs.

There were 1,305 full-time freshmen students who were part of the study (Bai & Pan, 2009). The programs were designed using Tinto's (1975) theory of academic and social integration and Astin's (1975) theory of involvement. The students participated in the intervention programs during the fall quarter of the 2000 school year. The students were tracked during the fall quarters of 2001, 2002 and 2003 school years. Student demographics, high school grade point average and selectivity of the student's college within the university were also tracked. All students had access to tutoring services all year long.

Results indicated that the advising program had a significant impact on retention as compared to the general orientation program (Bai & Pan, 2009). Students were 24% more likely to return in advisement group. The advisement programming also worked better for students in the more exclusive colleges. Over three years, however, there was not a significant difference between the advisement group and the general orientation group. Other results indicated that the first year programming worked better for older students and males over the three years. The social integration programs were more effective for females and students in the more exclusive colleges within the university. It also appeared that the students in the academic support group needed more assistance in the form of social integration added on to academics. Overall however, the intervention programs had better retention results as compared to the general orientation programming.

Diversity in higher education is on the rise and has an impact on retention rates. Women have overtaken men in college attendance and graduation rates since the 1980s (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). College enrollment is on the rise and

ethnic diversity is increasing in undergraduate education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Meeting the needs of a diverse population is an ongoing struggle and challenge for institutions of higher education. Retention rates have not improved although much effort has been placed on keeping students in college.

Undergraduate Mentoring as a Strategy

Many of the challenges that students encounter in their transition to college can be impacted by mentoring as a retention strategy. Many of the factors that influence retention are part of mentoring programs. Mentor is defined "a trusted counselor or guide" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2012, p. 1). Mentoring is about creating a meaningful relationship between mentor and mentee with an emphasis on learning (Salinitri, 2005). Mentoring is described in different ways depending on the activities involved. There is much criticism in the literature for the lack of a clear and definitive description of mentoring. The focus of some mentoring programs may be on academics, others may focus on developing and supporting minority students. Wunch (1994) proposed that the definition of mentoring be determined by the goals, actual activities, and outcomes of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring has become a regular activity in higher education since the 1980s (Salinitri, 2005; Shephard, 2004; Terrell & Wright, 1988). Terrell and Wright (1998) indicated that planned or formal mentoring arose amid concerns for the progress and attrition of minority students who were failing in part due to cultural isolation in academic environments dominated by Western White men. According to Terrell and Wright (1998) mentoring has helped improve minority undergraduate student retention and achievement.

The concept of mentoring has its roots in Greek mythology. In Homer's (trans. 1997) *The Odyssey*, Mentor, a friend of Odysseus, acted as an advisor when he was asked to protect Odysseus's son. Ragins and Kram (2007) state that mentoring is about real relationships that have been part of social life for thousands of years. They indicate that mentoring is often related to career advancement and psychosocial elements such as personal growth, identity and self-efficacy. The depth of the mentoring relationship depends on mentor and the mentee's needs. The relationship may also evolve through stages or phases such as an initiation phase where they get to know each other, which then can move to a cultivation of the relationship. Thereafter it may morph into a separation stage or redefinition stage (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The mentee may outgrow the relationship and separate from the mentor or the relationship is redefined. Their relationship may develop into an ongoing friendship. Mentors may offer mentees different supports depending on the mentee's needs.

Gibson (2004) describes career mentoring functions in terms of coaching, sponsorship and protection where the protégé becomes better prepared for career advancement. The psychosocial functions are related to friendship, counseling, role-modeling and enhancing the protégé's feeling of competence. Burke (1984) found that mentors influenced male career choice while women were more impacted on the psychosocial level.

In business, it has been found that mentored individuals receive more promotions and earn higher salaries (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). Kram (1983) states that mentoring in organizations helps young professionals to develop their sense of competence and effectiveness in their roles.

Jacobi (1991) indicated that mentoring is increasingly considered as a retention and enrichment strategy for undergraduates in higher education. The literature shows that mentoring programs can help improve persistence (Laden, 1999; Salinitri, 2005; Wilson, 1994). A mentor can provide students the guidance they need to manage the many issues that arise for first year students. Additionally, student-faculty interactions can provide mentor-like guidance in career development, emotional or psychosocial support and role modeling (Jacobi, 1991). Social emotional support as part of a student faculty mentoring relationship can aid in student integration and commitment to the institution (Jacobi, 1991). Student-peer mentoring relationships have been found to help new students acclimate to college life and a campus environment (Anderson, Dey, Gray & Thomas, 1995). Crone and MacKay (2007) have found that this generation of college students seeks more direction, structure and praise than previous generations of students.

Mentoring is often designed for specific student populations such as first-generation college students, minorities, women, or academically unprepared students (Hines, 2011; Laden, 1999). Mentoring can be voluntary and informal or it can be a part of a more comprehensive orientation program. Laden (1999) indicated that a mentoring relationship is agreed to by individuals by mutual choice. Lee (1999) indicated that formal mentoring programs are becoming part of university culture in the United States. Mentoring programs can take different forms such as peer mentoring, faculty – student mentoring, structured or informal mentoring. Formal mentoring programs are planned and structured.

Terrell and Hassell (1994) surveyed 70 institutions whose representatives attended a second annual conference on mentoring in Western Michigan University in

May 1989. The theme of the conference was "Creating Success Through Caring". The

goal of their research study was to determine what types of programs were established

and to which populations they were directed. Focus was placed on identifying program

details, objectives, the target audiences, strategies and performance outcomes. The

researchers used a survey they developed. Of those 70 institutions surveyed 38

responded. The 38 institutions were a variety of large public institutions as well as

smaller liberal arts colleges, church-affiliated institutions and community colleges.

Of the responses from the Terrell and Hassell (1994) study, 45% of the mentoring

programs were implemented for freshman only, while 53 % indicated their programs

were for freshman year and beyond. Forty-two percent indicated their program was

directed at students that needed extra academic support to be successful in college. Forty

percent were directed at students with low SAT or ACT scores. The most important goal

identified was that of promoting retention, especially among minorities. Approximately

82 % indicated that minority retention was a goal and 73.3 % indicated academic

performance improvement was a major goal.

Other programs were directed at specific groups of students such as special needs

students, students with low grades, first-generation students, honors students and some

more specific themes such as students with specific career interests or students with

athletic scholarships. Minority groups were often the targeted participants for these

mentoring programs. African Americans represented the largest target population at 63 %

followed by Hispanics at 55%. Native Americans were part of the target population in 40

% of the responses. Some institutions reported that all entering students were involved in

their mentoring program.

Terrell and Hassell (1994) found that programs used faculty members as mentors most frequently, but staff, peers and alumni also served as mentors. Meetings between mentor and mentee focus on academic issues, career paths and some personal concerns. Over one third of the respondents indicated meetings between mentor and mentee occurred weekly. About one quarter met biweekly and about one third met monthly. Only five percent of the respondents indicated there was no set meeting pattern. Some programs required small frequent gatherings to discuss academics and other programs required large mentee gatherings at least twice or more each term. Social activities and interactions were part of the meetings in over 80 % of the responses. Students reported various responsibilities in the mentoring relationship. Seventy-one percent indicated responsibility for scheduling mentoring meetings, 76% reported successes to their mentors, 90% reported to their mentor on difficulties they were having, 29% indicated responsibility for reading related materials, 55% indicated they were receiving study skills support and 45% needed stress management counseling.

Wunch (1994) purported that clear expectations must be set for participants in formal mentoring programs and that training of both mentor and mentee is needed to insure effective use of the process. While informal mentoring relationships may occur in various situations within the realm of higher education, they may happen more slowly, and be more unpredictable. Formal mentoring in higher education is more systematic and organized (Wunch, 1994). Pairing of mentor and mentee, selection of activities and time allotted for mentoring need to be part of the planning process. In a comprehensive program, training and orientation is imperative for the participants to understand the goals and how to make effective use of what the program has to offer. There must be a

time commitment on the parts of mentor and mentee. Regular meetings must be scheduled so that mentor and mentee can work on specific goals and activities. Without this ongoing contact, the mentoring relationship may flounder and be ineffective.

The mentor must have a good understanding of what is required of them and be able to make the needed commitments. The mentor must be knowledgeable in the areas where their mentee needs assistance. Wunch (1994) further highlights that some mentors are paid while others are not financially compensated, but may be rewarded through recognition or other forms of rewards. The mentee must be committed to the relationship. The mentee must be able to communicate effectively with their mentor and advocate for their needs.

Involvement in mentoring. Astin's (1985) theory of involvement is concerned with student interactions with college academics, extracurricular activities, clubs and college life. His theory also relates to student involvement in mentoring programs. Students can be encouraged to be more involved in their learning through a supportive mentoring relationship. Astin (1975) suggested counseling and advisement as a strategy to provide students with assistance, encouragement and direction. Terrell and Hassell (1994) stated that effective mentoring increases a student's sense of involvement and integration by helping them socially and intellectually. This clearly supports Tinto's theory of academic and social integration.

Terrell and Hassell (1994) provided some reasons why students participate in mentoring. According to Terrell and Hassell, students appear to pursue mentoring from two different viewpoints. The first is that students seek guidance when they do not yet have a strong sense of direction for their academic or career goals. These students

believe a mentor can help them find direction and grow personally. A second viewpoint in approaching mentoring is the student who wishes to clarify his or her purpose or direction. These students may already have a chosen field of interest but wish to learn strategies and share insights with a mentor.

Interestingly, Rice and Brown (1990) found somewhat of a paradox around which students choose to get involved in mentoring. Students who are most open to new relationships were more interested in pursuing mentoring. Those students, however, might need mentoring less than others. A student with low self esteem who needs nurturing and support is less likely to pursue mentoring. These are the students who most benefit from mentoring support and yet they shy away from it. Other researchers have found that when given the opportunity to have additional support and get involved in mentoring programs, not all students take advantage of them or use their mentors for their benefit (Mosely, 1998; Turnbo, 2002; Wilson, 1994).

Anderson et al. (1995) conducted a study on faculty – student mentoring including the academic impact of that type of relationship as well as mentoring's influence on goals for a degree. The study used data collected from the Cooperative Institutional Research program which is sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. The survey was designed to assess the impact college has on students. The initial survey was administered in the spring and summer of 1987 to incoming fall semester freshman. Close to 280,000 students completed the survey from 562 colleges. Low responses from certain colleges forced those data to be excluded. That lowered the student population to about 210,000 students from 390 colleges in a national sampling.

The researchers used a stratified sampling to reduce their population down to 5615 students. The follow-up survey was sent in June, 1991. The follow-up survey was designed to gather information on how college environments and mentoring affect student development.

Anderson et al. (1995) determined that mentoring activities can positively influence college degree aspirations. Anderson, et al. found that students are positively influenced by faculty taking a personal interest in their progress, spending time together with faculty outside the class, or working on a professor's research project. The study results indicated a positive relationship between access to mentoring and student academic success. The results showed there was a relationship between mentoring and academics, but not necessarily causality and not for all students. Mentoring interaction with faculty had a strong association with academic achievement in men and their related grade point averages, but only a weak association for the women in the study. The researchers felt there may be other factors such as students having good social skills or being assertive that brought on the mentoring relationship and good grades. Anderson et al. indicated however, that many undergraduates lack access to faculty mentoring. Almost half of the students in the study reported that no faculty member had taken a personal interest in their pursuits.

Pope (2002) surveyed 375 minority students enrolled at 15 community colleges in various locations around the United States. A questionnaire was administered to the students asking their opinions on mentoring, whether their institution provided any mentoring services and what types of mentoring were important to them as students. Types of mentoring supports were peer mentoring, faculty mentoring, and staff

mentoring. The respondents were positive in their perception of mentoring. At least 70% of the respondents felt that mentoring was important. Surprisingly, however, over 30 % indicated that their individual participation in mentoring was not important. There is no further information in this study to indicate the reason for this discrepancy. Students feel mentoring is important, but it is not important for them personally.

Mosely (1998) conducted a correlational study at Northern Arizona University during the 1996-1997 school year. Her goal was to investigate the relationship of personality and academic preparedness with the level of participation in an undergraduate mentoring program. Freshman students enrolled in an education major program of study were invited to participate in the mentoring initiative. There were 120 students who initially participated in the mentoring program. By the end of the school year, 102 students had completed the mentoring program.

Mosely's (1998) goal was to determine if people with certain personality traits or academic characteristics would be more inclined to participate in mentoring. Her subjects were freshman aged 17-23, 87.9% were female and 75.9% were Caucasian. They were all enrolled in an education major program of study. Mentoring was available through the Center for Excellence faculty/student mentoring program. Students were asked to complete the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, developed by R. Cattell, A. Cattell and H. Cattell (1993). The questionnaire contains 185 items that encompass the 16 personality factor scales. Personality factors of extraversion, anxiety, tough-mindedness, independence and self-control were examined. Degree of participation was measured by the amount of meetings and workshops the student attended along with direct contact between mentor and mentee by phone or in person meetings. Mosely also analyzed

student SAT and ACT scores and high school grade point averages. Fifty-eight of those 102 students who participated in the mentoring program completed the study in the spring of 1998.

Students were invited to a specified location to take the personality inventory, which takes about 45 minutes to complete. A multiple regression analysis was used to measure the degree of relationship between the level of participation in mentoring and the personality factors. Mosely (1998) found no significant relationship between personality and participation in mentoring. She did find a relationship between standardized test scores and mentoring, but the degree of the relationship was low. Students with lower ACT or SAT scores were more likely to participate in the mentoring program. However, Mosely cautioned against its reliability in a larger setting. High school grade point average had no association with mentoring participation.

Shephard (2004) conducted a study investigating the relationship of attachment and mentoring. The concept of attachment was presented as having a base of family members or friends on which you can rely. His study was conducted at Stony Brook University in New York State. The mentors were faculty or staff members. The sample population was drawn from entering freshmen in Fall 1982. The study involved students who joined a mentoring program and the control group was the group of students who decided not to join the mentoring program. One hundred fifty students volunteered for the mentoring program. The researcher recruited 32 students for the test group and 32 students for the non-mentored control group. The mentored students were paired with one of 17 mentors. The students were self-identified as Asian, Black, Latino and White males and females. Shephard's hypothesis was that students who have secure

attachments to other individuals are more likely to join in mentoring as compared to those students who do not have secure attachments.

Shephard (2004) used three instruments. All students in the study were asked to complete an entering student assessment survey that provided demographic data, goals, and information on pre-college involvement in mentoring, clubs and any other relationships with adults in the student's life. All participating students were given an attachment assessment at the beginning of the school year. Students who participated in mentoring completed an end of year mentor-student relationship satisfaction assessment.

The researcher used a newly developed narrative methodology to assess attachment and representation of the mentor-student attachment. The methodology was validated against the Adult Assessment Interview (Rodrigues, 2000). Students are given word prompts and they then write a story completing the picture of what could happen in the scenario. The researcher then scored each student's writing. Key words and phrases, such as evidence of empathy and compassion, and awareness of emotional state are evaluated and then scored from one as evidence of low attachment to seven as evidence of strong attachment. Shephard (2004) determined that students who participated in the mentoring program had more secure attachments to others. The mentored students who were more secure in their attachments were more goal-directed in their relationship with their mentor. The non-mentored students in the control group were found to have less secure attachments. In some cases, the non-mentored students had a history of poor relationships with adult figures. Shepard also found that students who were working were less likely to sign on for mentoring. Female students were more likely to join the mentoring program than were males.

Evidence of mentoring success. Research indicates that mentoring can be successful as a retention tool when done well. Terrell and Hassell (1994) stated that mentees improve their social and interpersonal skills and form more positive relationships. This helps in improving retention. Salinitri (2005) showed that mentoring had a substantial effect on retention of students with academic challenges.

One successful mentoring program is the Puente Project, a California community college program (Laden, 1999). This comprehensive program targets Latino students who may be at risk of leaving community college during their first year due to academic concerns. The program has been in existence since 1981. This program focuses on the social and academic needs of students. Academic and counseling support is provided to the student participants. The mentors are successful Latino members of the community. The mentors are involved in providing academic support, career advice and overall assistance in maneuvering college life. The mentees also receive intensive writing and reading support through a freshman college course. At least 48% of all students who complete the Puente program transfer to a 4-year institution compared to less than seven percent for non-Puente students (Laden, 1999). Student participation is voluntary. Students must make a commitment to the program. If they do not follow the requirements of the program, they may be asked to leave the Puente group program. Cooper (2002) found that some Puente participants were influenced by family or peer pressure both in a positive and negative way. She found that peer pressure may negatively influence some students who do not use the Puente program to its fullest. The students' friends may not want their peers to succeed and leave their current environment. Family situations can affect students' ability to participate in the mentoring program.

Family responsibilities may discourage the student from participating in the program (Cooper, 2002).

Valencia Community College in Florida developed a retention program involving a first year orientation course along with a faculty mentoring component. According to Nelson (1993), students who participated in the test program had an 81% passing rate for their courses compared to a passing rate of 56% for students who participated in a different first year college preparatory course. Students in the test program had a next term return rate of 78% as compared to 57.6% for all other students. Additionally, students who saw their mentors four to six times during the semester earned more credit hours and achieved a higher grade point average than other participants. This speaks to the impact a mentoring program can have on its participants.

Turnbo (2002) studied the impact of an intrusive advising model on undergraduate student attrition. The advising model was akin to a mentoring program designed to provide vital information and assistance to students during their first weeks of starting college. Two graduate students pursuing degrees in counseling served as the advisors. The counselors discussed goals, interests, course scheduling and campus resources with the students assigned to them.

The qualitative study designed by Turnbo (2002) was conducted at a private higher education institution in Delaware where 100% of the students were commuters, not living on campus. The students attended the college during the fall semester of the 1999/2000 academic year. There were initially 300 students in the advising treatment group and 282 students in the control group. The control group students were not

exposed to the advising model. The students in the test group were chosen randomly from the total population of incoming freshman.

Turnbo (2002) reported that during their initial meetings the counselors interviewed students in the treatment group. Students were asked what they hoped would happen during their college years. Students who persisted to the spring semester mentioned meeting new friends, earning a degree and expanding their horizons. The responses from the students in the treatment group who left after the fall semester also mentioned the goal of earning a degree, but also indicated the desire to develop or improve their organization, communication and leadership abilities.

Retention was monitored from Fall 1999 to Spring 2000 in the control and test groups (Turnbo, 2002). Questionnaires were mailed to students who did not return after the Fall 1999 semester. Follow-up phone calls were made to non-responders. If the non-responding students were reached by phone the questionnaire was administered during the call. Personal interview comments were recorded by the student advisors. Focus groups were also run with retained students and those students who left the college.

Turnbo (2002) reported positive impact of the intrusive advising model on retention. Only 42 students out of the initial 300 or 14% of students in the treatment group left the college after the fall semester as compared to 27.7% of the control group members. Students reported that finances, family obligations, work-college conflict, relocation, medical reasons, or goal achievement were the reasons they left college. The number one reason for leaving was financial issues. Coinciding with this, 80% of the students in the study year group indicated they were working full time. Some of these

students who dropped out reported that they were happy with services provided by the college, especially the advising program.

The counselors in Turnbo's (2002) study reported much positive feedback on the mentoring program but also frustration. They reported that the program was worthwhile; they were able to assist many students. The counselors reported that some of the students were pleased to have someone to talk to about their concerns. Some students needed support with time management. The counselors also helped the students with any issues arising with their professors. Discussions on careers were a frequent topic of conversation between student and counselor. The counselors also advised students on available support services that were available at the college, such as academic support.

Turnbo (2002) reported that the counselors provided suggestions on managing the program based on their interactions with students. The counselor must be knowledgeable about courses, must be a good listener, must be willing to listen to the student's personal concerns, must be available at different hours, provide information that is correct, have ample time for meeting with the student, be honest, be personable, give ideas on other ways to earn college credit and in general explain the workings of college. Developing a personal relationship between counselor and student helped the interactions. The counselors also recommended that the program be kicked off before school begins so they can reach out to their students and make connections early on in the program. A summer orientation program for students was suggested by the counselors.

Turnbo (2002) reported that the counselors recommended mandatory meetings for students with their advisor. A higher staffing level was suggested to meet student needs. The counselors recommended that future mentors must be aggressive in their outreach to

their students. Prompt phone calls and call backs were advised. Counselors also suggested more training be available for future programming.

Turnbo (2002) indicated that at times the counselors felt poorly equipped to handle the students' needs. The students needed to see their academic advisor to handle some concerns that the counselor could not manage for them. The counselors reported frustration in not being able to provide service for some of the students. The counselors were frustrated in not being to reach some of the students. Some students made appointments to see them, but then never showed up. Some of the students did not use the program. Turnbo did not identify the reasons why students did not take advantage of the program, nor did she indicate how many students fell into this category of non-responders. The counselors noted that the adult aged students took the program more seriously than the traditional aged students. Overall, however, the intrusive advising program was considered a success based on the retention results and feedback from the students and mentors.

The research site chosen for this study is a small private college in southern New York State. All statistics mentioned were obtained from the College. It serves students at five New York state campuses in the Bronx, Manhattan, and three other small town locations. The College offers degrees in Business, Education, Health and Natural Science, Liberal Arts, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Most of their classes have less than 30 students per class.

The College serves approximately 10,000 students. The College is a designated Hispanic serving institution. Approximately 30 % of the college population is Hispanic, about 26% Black or African American and about 29% White (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2010). Many of these students are first generation college attendees without family members who are experienced in college life. The College launched the Mentoring program in 2008. The program was designed to provide mentoring support for students and improve retention with the goal of increasing graduation rates. The College's enrollment has increased by more than 20 % since 2007.

All incoming freshman students are assigned a mentor. The mentors are professionals who are trained to facilitate academic, career, financial and personal support for their mentees. The mentor helps the student navigate all areas of college transition including academic needs, financial aid management, goal setting, career interest and planning, internships and time management issues. These are the areas research has shown to be obstacles to retention. The mentors endeavor to develop a close relationship with their mentees through ongoing meetings and other methods of contact throughout the academic year. The mentors are highly involved and motivated to help their mentees. They do not necessarily have backgrounds in counseling, but are trained in all aspects of college life once hired. Frequent follow-up with the students is part of their daily activities.

The mentoring program launched with a cohort of 50 students in 2008. It had grown to 572 students in 2009 with 10 mentors supporting these students. Feedback obtained from participating students who are involved and use the services indicate that students appreciate the mentor's efforts and they find the program useful.

One of the major goals of the program is student retention. The program has proven in the short term to be meeting that goal to a significant extent. Of the original cohort of 50 students, the retention rate from Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 was 83 %. Of the

2009 cohort the fall to fall retention rate ranged from 25 % for students with high school GPAs (grade point average) of less than 75. The retention rate for members of the 2009 cohort was 90 % for students with high school grade point averages between 85 and 89.9.

However, not all students take advantage of this program. The mentors often must repeatedly seek out some of their mentees. The mentors must continuously seek out some of their mentees by way of phone, email or by physically going to their classes. For the fall 2010 cohort, the program began with approximately 800 students. By the end of first semester, 50 students had not responded to repeated contacts by their mentors. Feedback obtained from mentors indicate that the mentors believe that these students did not buy into the program; that they did not understand the benefits. After many attempts to reach these students, the mentors stopped and these students were considered to be dropped out of the program.

Understanding the nature of the breakdown in the mentor to mentee relationship would be advantageous to the College and other institutions undertaking this type of endeavor. The research clearly shows that mentoring can be a very successful strategy for improving student retention. Students who take advantage of mentoring indicate their positive feedback and results. There is a gap in the literature in researching why students do not take advantage of comprehensive mentoring programs.   Reasons why students choose not to participate in or take advantage of a comprehensive mentoring program that leads to successful outcomes are absent from the literature.

Summary

This literature review has addressed the potential topic of mentoring as a strategy in aiding undergraduate student retention. The theoretical bases and work of Maslow,

Astin and Tinto were introduced as influential in the study of student motivation, involvement, persistence and retention. Research conducted by others reinforce student commitment, academic and social integration and involvement as key elements in retention. Persistence and retention continue to be significant issues in higher education. This paper provided evidence from the literature on how a comprehensive mentoring program can improve retention and persistence. The research also shows that participation in mentoring on the undergraduate level is useful but underutilized by students. Background information on a current undergraduate mentoring program that is successful and yet underutilized by students was provided. The research study sought to identify reasons why some students do not use mentoring. In Chapter 3 the research design methodology for the study is discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Retention is an ongoing issue in the United States (Tinto, 2007). Higher education institutions have focused on retention, yet it remains a serious issue. Only about 40 % of Americans hold a two or four year college degree. Of students who graduate high school and continue on to college, only 40% graduate within six years (Kanter, 2010). Jacobi (1991) indicated that mentoring is increasingly considered as a retention and enrichment strategy. Student use of mentoring has been shown to improve retention (Laden, 1999). Mentoring can provide students the guidance they need to manage issues that arise during transition to college (Laden, 1999). However, when given the opportunity to sign on and get involved in mentoring programs, not all students take advantage of this (Bowman, Bowman, & Delucia, 1990; Moseley, 1998; Turnbo, 2002; Wilson, 1994).

This research study focused on undergraduate student use of mentoring services and the reasons why students who initially signed on, stopped using the services. The purpose of the research was to identify the factors that influenced the students who originally signed up for mentoring, to subsequently stop using mentoring services. The study is significant because it provides valuable information that can help improve current and future mentoring programs and improve overall results, leading to improved student involvement and retention.

A sequential mixed methods approach was employed. Sequential mixed methods procedures typically begin with one method and follow-up with another method to expand on the findings (Creswell, 2011). In this study, qualitative research methods were first used, followed by quantitative methodology. Qualitative research methods are used to help answer complex questions that need explanation, description and understanding of the topic being explored (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). Cottrell and McKenzie (2011) indicate that qualitative research is used to study motivation and exploration of insights of behaviors. The study provided an understanding of the students' thinking, concerns, difficulties, and issues they had encountered in working within the College mentoring program. The qualitative research component sought to discover reasons why students did not use the program. The study endeavored to uncover the factors and influences that caused students to stop using mentoring services.

The qualitative elements of the study were designed as a phenomenological initiative. A phenomenological study focuses on individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon or concept (Creswell, 2007). Creswell indicated that a phenomenological study is valuable in understanding several individuals' experiences with the phenomenon. In a phenomenological study, interviews are conducted with several individuals who have shared the experience (Creswell, 2007). van Manen (1990) describes the purpose of phenomenology as describing the essence of the experience of the phenomenon. The researcher describes and interprets the meaning of the experiences (van Manen, 1990). Moustakas (1994) puts more focus on the description of experiences and less so on interpretations by the researcher. Greater understanding of undergraduate

mentoring dynamics and any perceived barriers, help in understanding this problem of disengagement.

There were two sources of data for the qualitative component. The first source was a focus group and interviews with students who initially signed on for mentoring and then stopped using the program. The second source of qualitative data was gathered from interviews with mentors and staff members involved with the mentoring program. The insights obtained from the qualitative elements then informed the development of a quantitative survey.

A researcher led focus group was conducted with two students and interviews were conducted with six students who originally signed on for mentoring and subsequently stopped their participation in the program. The students were asked how they first learned about the mentoring program, their initial experiences with the program, awareness of mentoring benefits, interactions with their mentors, what mentoring elements they considered to be most useful, what they found problematic that brought about their decision to stop using the mentoring services.

Additionally, interviews with five mentors and three College staff members who were involved with the program were conducted to gain the mentors' and staff members' perspectives on why students drop out of the program. The mentors and staff members were asked to provide their perspective on the differences in students who use mentoring as compared to those who started and then disengaged from mentoring. They were asked to expound on their experiences with students who disengaged from mentoring in order to shed more light on the phenomenon.

The quantitative components of the study were survey research and analysis of selected archival data. The survey provided a third source of data. Survey research is used to sample a population to determine their opinions or attitudes (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). The survey was cross-sectional, with the data being collected at a specific time. Vogt (2005) indicates that a cross-sectional study reaches a sample of a population or the entire population at a specific point. A survey designed by the researcher was administered to all students in the study population who signed on for mentoring, but subsequently stopped participating in the program. The survey was developed based on the learning from the student focus group and interviews. A list of factors that influenced student non-participation in mentoring was generated through the feedback from the focus groups and interviews. Students were asked to rate the factors that influenced their decision to disengage and provide other perspectives on the mentoring experience.

The survey provided data on undergraduate students who had signed on for the mentoring program and then stopped participating. The survey provided information on student gender, and ethnicity. Other questions were designed to identify the student's course of study, participation in college extracurricular activities, work inside or outside of the school environment, what elements of mentoring he or she felt were most useful, and the factors that influenced their reasons to not continue using the mentoring program. Greater understanding of undergraduate mentoring dynamics and perceived barriers help in understanding the problem of disengagement. The student focus group and interviews, mentor interviews and student surveys serve as three different sources of information that allowed for triangulation of the data.

The College had indicated they would allow the researcher to have access to other student data. Written approval for access to their data was obtained. This additional data helped inform the study. As a source of comparison, the College provided selected data on 68 non-responder students and 52 highly involved mentored students. The data was explored seeking demographic characteristics of students who drop out of mentoring. Student area of study, ethnic background, and high school grade point average were compared in search of trends as they related to participation in mentoring. This information was explored for useful statistics and trends that helped define characteristics of students who drop out of mentoring as compared to those who are actively involved in mentoring.

Originally the research plan called for investigation of the College data from the National Student Survey of Engagement, (NSSE), 2011 study. However, College research personnel deemed the data to be lacking in specificity, so that data source was not used.

Study research questions are as follows.

1. What are the characteristics of all the students who initially engaged in the College mentoring program between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and subsequently were identified as non-responders in the College mentoring program as compared to a group of highly involved mentored students?

2. For students who entered the College between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and initially engaged in the mentoring program, what are the primary reasons or factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program and become non-responders to mentoring?

3. Of the survey responders: a) How do those students who stopped participating in mentoring rate those factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program? b) What are the characteristics of the non-responder students who answered the survey?

4. From the mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what are the perceived barriers to student participation in mentoring?

5. From the non-responder students', mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what aspects of mentoring do they perceive to be the most meaningful or useful to the students?

Research Context

The dissertation topic was undergraduate mentoring as a strategy to support student involvement, persistence and retention. The purpose of the study was to identify the reasons why students who initially were engaged in the mentoring program, subsequently stopped participating in the mentoring program.

The study was conducted at a small private college in New York State. The College, founded in 1950, is a four year private, nonsectarian, coed institution serving approximately 6000 undergraduate students, of which about 4100 attend full time. Its main campus is in a small town community in New York State. It also serves students at four other New York state campuses in the Bronx, Manhattan, and two other small town locations. The College offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in Business, Education, Health and Natural Science, Liberal Arts, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Most of their classes have less than 30 students per class. Approximately 30 % of the college population is Hispanic, about 26% Black or African American and about 29%

White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The gender split is approximately

28% male, 72% female. Many of these students are first generation college attendees

without family members who are experienced in college life. While the College has

facilities for living on campus in dorms or in off-campus housing, most students

commute.

The College has identified retention as a major goal within its organization.

Retention is a current and important issue in higher education. The College has a

comprehensive mentoring program that is open to all students. The mentoring program is

designed to support the students throughout the four years of college until graduation.

The College launched the mentoring program in Fall, 2008 with a cohort of 50 students.

The director of the Mentoring program indicated that retention is up approximately 20%

for their first cohort (personal communication, November 4, 2010). The overall school

population has increased due to the appeal of the mentoring program. The College staff

and mentoring organization have been very excited and motivated by their initial results.

Additionally, industry organizations have given accolades to the College for its

innovation and initiative in this highly important area of improving student retention and

graduation rates.

The program has been expanded each year and now is open to all entering

freshman. Each year the College population has been increasing. In Fall 2010 it had a

freshman class of approximately 900 students. In Fall 2011 there were 1100 entering

freshman. Each year some students drop out of the mentoring program. In years' past,

the College has found a number of students who initially sign on for the mentoring

program, then subsequently stop using the mentoring services. The College wishes to

keep its mentoring program retention rate as close to 100% as is possible. The mentors

spend a great deal of time pursuing students who are non-responders in the hopes of

keeping them involved and retained. Their data shows that the College mentoring

program has improved the College's overall retention.

The study population was intended to be selected from the entire universe of

approximately 1100 undergraduate students who entered the College during the Fall,

2011 semester and registered for the Spring, 2012 semester.   Of those 1,100 students

approximately 950 signed for the Mentoring program. Through the investigation of the

original data obtained from the College, it was learned that the population of students

from Fall 2011 who signed on for mentoring and then became non-responders was 33.

This was deemed to be too small a study population, so the investigation was expanded to

include all non-responder students who had entered the College's mentoring program

from 2008 through 2011. There were 1,823 students who entered the College and signed

on for mentoring from Fall 2008 to Fall 2011. This provided a larger overall population

and a larger group of non-responders. Expanding the population to all the students who

signed on for the College mentoring program provided a larger study population of 68

non-responder students.

The goals for the research were to better understand the elements of mentoring

and also to focus on why students stopped participation in the College mentoring

program. The qualitative research was conducted at times and locations that were

convenient for the students, staff and mentors. The key instrument for the focus groups

and interviews was the researcher. Patterns and themes were identified from the

responses. The survey was developed based on information gleaned from the student

focus group and student and staff interviews.

The study relied on three main sources of data including the student focus group

and student interviews, mentor and staff interviews and a researcher designed survey. The

researcher also had access to College archival data. The researcher also completed the

online training provided by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that was required by

the College. A certificate of completion was submitted to the College.

Research Participants

The population to be studied was the cohort of undergraduate students at the

College who signed on for the Mentoring program from 2008 to 2011. The subjects of

the study were the students who enrolled in the institution from Fall 2008 to Fall 2011

semesters, signed on for the College mentoring program, but stopped using the mentoring

program. A focus group was conducted with two of these students who stopped using

mentoring. Interviews were conducted with six students in the study population.

The College provided the list of students who initially signed on for mentoring

from Fall 2008 through Fall 2011, and then stopped using the services as of January 31,

2012. These students were identified as non-responders by the College mentors.

From the total study population of students who stop using mentoring, twenty-one

students from the College's main campus were invited to participate in focus groups.

Students from the College's main campus were chosen for ease of access to the students.

The College mentors felt the main campus students were more accessible to the

researcher. Non-responder students at the College's other two smaller campuses were all

commuter students and the Mentors indicated it would extremely difficult to attempt to coordinate a focus group with students from the other two campuses.

The students were initially contacted by the College mentoring staff through an email invitation to the students' College or personal email account. The mentors introduced the study and the researcher to the students, and invited them to participate in the focus group research.

A goal was set of generating a minimum amount of participants of between five to ten students for the focus groups. After the Mentors contacted the students, the researcher followed up with multiple email and phone messages. Participating students were offered a $25.00 gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their effort. Four students agreed to participate in the focus group, but two of these students did not show up. Another six students were not available for a focus group, but agreed to be interviewed one on one. The focus group and interviews were conducted in April, 2012.

Students in the population were invited to share their thoughts and opinions on the mentoring program. Since these students initially signed on but then stopped using the mentoring services, they were asked to share their perspectives on why they stopped using the services. Identities of students were kept confidential.

The focus group and interviews were held at times and locations that were convenient for the students. Students were asked to participate a 45 minute session. They were told they could leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable or decided they did not wish to participate. The focus group and interviewed participants were invited to share their thoughts and ideas on the College mentoring program. The students were told

that the focus group meeting and interviews would be audiotaped and a release form was obtained prior to their participation. The participants were all over the age of 18.

Separately, five mentors and three staff members associated with the College mentoring program were invited to share their perspective on why students stopped their participation in the mentoring program. These interviews were conducted at two of the College's campuses at a day and time that was convenient to the mentors and staff members. The interviews were audiotaped with each participant's approval. There was no incentive provided to the mentors and staff members for their participation. A list of mentors was obtained from the program director. Their names were written individually on paper. Three mentors from the main College campus, two mentors from another campus and one mentor from a third campus were randomly selected and invited to participate in an interview. The selected mentors and staff members were contacted by phone and invited to participate in an interview requesting their opinions on the College mentoring program. All the mentors and staff members agreed to be interviewed. Their identities were kept confidential.

Once the student interviews and focus group were completed, a survey was designed and delivered by email to all 68 students in the study population. A list of these students' email addresses were compiled in Excel. All students in the study population were emailed an invitation to complete the student survey. The initial invitation was sent from their mentor, introducing the researcher, the study topic and requesting their support for the research. Shortly after that, the survey was distributed using Qualtrics survey software.   The survey information was collected and tabulated anonymously. As an incentive to participate, all survey participants who indicated their positive preference,

were entered into a random draw sweepstakes. One $100 gift certificate was awarded to one person who completed the survey and indicated she wished to be entered in the drawing.   The researcher also emailed multiple reminders to the survey recipients encouraging them to complete the survey.

Finally, in order to determine any differences in the characteristics of the non-responder students as compared to a group of highly involved students, eight mentors from the main College campus as well as the Bronx and Manhattan campuses were asked to provide names of students who were highly involved in mentoring. Those mentors provided names of 52 students they considered to be active and highly involved in mentoring. These students were identified because they saw their mentors frequently and were responsive to their mentors' outreach. The 52 students were attendees from the main College campus as well the Bronx and Manhattan campuses.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The identified research questions were used to guide the questioning during the interviews and focus groups. The researcher was the primary instrument in the focus groups and interview sessions.

The survey was designed after the qualitative student focus group, student interviews and staff interviews were completed. The input received from the focus groups and interviews informed the design of the questions in the survey. The survey questionnaire was emailed to all 68 students in the study population who were identified as non-responders to mentoring.

The survey inquired about various demographic aspects of the students' backgrounds, their involvement in other College activities or work, their frequency of use

of mentoring and their perception of any barriers to mentoring. The students rated the importance of the factors on a scale of ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Another question asked students to indicate important elements in the mentoring program. This question was answered on a scale of "not at all important" to "extremely important". The survey was emailed to the students through their college email account or their personal email account, depending on which account was identified by the student as their preferred email.

The number of students who received the survey was 68. It was originally estimated that approximately 100 surveys would be distributed, but the study population was smaller than originally planned. A 20% response rate was the goal. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) indicate that a 20% response rate can be expected from a mailed survey. Higher responses can be expected for an emailed survey. However, since this population was disengaged from mentoring, it was expected that the response would be more consistent with a mailed survey response rate. Follow-up emails were sent to encourage as high a response rate as possible. A 14.7% response rate was achieved.

Qualtrix survey software was utilized to design, deliver and analyze the survey results. The majority of the questions were designed using a Likert scale where the respondents ranked their responses. All items except two were structured, where the respondents choose from answers that were provided. There was one open ended opinion question and one question related to the $100 gift certificate drawing.

A draft of the survey was shared with a panel of experts in the field of mentoring for face and content validity. The panel consisted of two College Directors who are directly involved with the Mentoring Program, an external college professor who is a

published expert in research methodology and one College mentor. Given the qualitative

nature of the survey and the small study population, the survey was not piloted. The

focus group and interview responses informed the development of the survey questions.

Once face and content validity had been established, the survey was emailed to all

students in the population. A late Spring 2012 distribution was accomplished.

Various documents used in the study are included in the appendices. Focus group

research questions are included in Appendix A**.** The invitation to participate in the focus

group is provided in Appendix B. Student letter of consent is attached in Appendix C.

The script of the invitation to mentors and staff is attached in Appendix D.   Questions for

the mentors and staff are included in Appendix E. Staff member consent form is included

in Appendix F.   The invitation to complete the survey is in Appendix G. The survey is

provided in Appendix H.

Data Analysis

All research was concluded by late Spring 2012. Student focus group comments

and mentor and staff responses and comments were recorded, transcribed, summarized

and categorized in search of emerging themes. The researcher conducted the focus

groups and interviews and transcribed the recordings. The researcher coded the

transcribed interviews in search of common themes. Creswell (2007) indicated that

researchers review their data and highlight significant sentences, quotes or comments that

help provide understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher then takes these

sentences and comments and groups them into clusters of themes. The essence of the

comments and emerging themes from the comments and feedback were reported in

written narrative form along with tables. Significant results indicating all possible reasons for student mentoring drop out are indicated in figures in chapter 4.

Results of the researcher designed survey were analyzed for patterns of importance, commonalities among the responders and the ranking of factors that influence student non-participation in mentoring. Results are described in chapter 4 in the narrative. The small number of survey participants precluded the relevance of comprehensive statistical analysis. Ranking of influential factors are reported and discussed. Emerging patterns and factors are reported in figures and narrative form in the dissertation. Tables are also provided in chapter 4 to indicate significant trends and tendencies using percentages.

Results of the College provided archival data for highly involved and non-responder students were evaluated for trends and common themes and comparisons. Demographic data was investigated in search of patterns that align with non-participation in mentoring.

Summary of the Methodology

The methodology of the research is described as a mixed methods approach. A researcher designed survey, student focus groups and staff member interviews were used. Other data including student archival data were incorporated in the analysis in Chapter 4.

College approval was obtained in December, 2011. Research and data gathering concluded in May 2012. Results were analyzed beginning in May 2012.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

The study investigated reasons why students who sign on for a comprehensive mentoring program subsequently stopped participating in the program. The students who stopped responding to their mentors were identified as non-responders. The mixed methods study included interviews with mentors, staff members and non-responder students and a focus group with non-responder students. A survey was also sent to non-responder students. Demographic data for highly involved mentored students was compared to data on the non-responder students in search of any significant differences between the two groups of students.

Interviews were conducted with five mentors representing staff from three of the College's main campuses. Interviews were also conducted with two mentoring program staff members and one staff member who provides support services for students. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. Twenty-one students from the main College campus were invited to participate in a focus group. After multiple reminder emails and phone calls a focus group was arranged with two students and interviews were conducted with six students.

Once completed, transcripts of the recorded mentor, staff and student interviews and focus group were read several times and interviewee statements were coded. Transcripts were analyzed using inductive coding. Once all coding was completed, the

coded statements were then reorganized into related groupings of emerging themes. Similar subthemes were gathered under each particular emerging theme.

After completion of the staff and student interviews and focus group, the survey was designed. The survey questions were developed based on the data obtained through the mentor, staff and student research. The survey was emailed to 68 students who were identified as non-responder students by the College mentors. Non-responder students are those students who do not respond to repeated outreach by their mentors. The list of non-responders was compiled from lists generated from the College in January 2012 and April 2012. The College mentors issued an emailed announcement to the 68 non-responder students encouraging them to complete the survey. Multiple reminder emails were issued to the survey recipients by the researcher. Ten students responded to the survey for a 14.7 percent response rate. The survey data was compiled in Qualtrics software (Qualtrics Labs, Inc., 2012) and various student responses were cross-tabulated.

Demographic data was obtained and analyzed for 52 highly involved mentored students and compared to the group of 68 non-responder students. The College mentors generated a list of their most involved mentored students and demographic data for these and the non-responder students were provided by the College.

The original plan for the research was to conduct the study on non-responder students who were first year students in the 2011-2012 academic year. This population was deemed too small so the study population was expanded to include any student who signed on for the mentoring program from the 2008 through 2011 school years and subsequently stopped responding to their mentor's outreach. This adjustment allowed for a larger population of 68 non-responder students for the survey.

The chapter is organized by response to the research questions. The findings gathered from each type of research tool will be presented and discussed as each research question is reviewed.

1. What are the characteristics of all the students who initially engaged in the Mentoring Program between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and subsequently were identified as non-responders in the College Mentoring Program as compared to a group of highly involved mentored students?

2. For students who entered the College between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and initially engaged in the Mentoring Program, what are the primary reasons or factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program and become non-responders to mentoring?

3. Of the survey responders: a) How do those students who stopped participating in mentoring rate those factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program? b) What are the characteristics of the non-responder students who answered the survey?

4. From the mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what are the perceived barriers to student participation in mentoring?

5. From the non-responder students', mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what aspects of mentoring do they perceive to be the most meaningful or useful to the students?

Data Analysis and Findings

In reviewing the data collection, it was found that students disengaged from the mentoring program for numerous reasons. According to the data, there were many

barriers the students faced as they attempted to attend college and be successful. The

students and mentors shared stories filled with challenge and in many cases, victory. The

data indicated that the mentoring program had significant value to the students, even for

those who stopped using it.

      Research question one. What are the characteristics of all the students who

engaged in the Mentoring Program between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and subsequently

were identified as non-responders in the College Mentoring Program as compared to a

group of highly involved mentored students? The data for this question was gathered

from multiple sources. Various archival data was made available to the researcher which

provided information on the 68 non-responder students and a selection of 52 highly

involved mentored students. Mentors and staff members also provided their insights on

the characteristics of the differences in the two groups of students.

      Of the 68 non-responder students, 42 were female and 26 were male. Of the 52

highly involved students 36 were female and 16 were male. The largest group of non-

responders were the students who started college in the Fall of 2011. See Table 4.1. The

second largest group of non-responders students began college in the Fall of 2010.

Table 4.1

Year Non-Responders Entered College

Academic School Year	Number of non-responder students in study
Fall 2008	1
Fall 2009	8
Spring 2010	1
Fall 2010	17
Fall 2011	33
Fall 2011 transfer students	8
Total	68

Additionally, it was learned through the College data that 33 of the 68 non-responder students or 48.5% were not registered for the Spring 2012 semester. The 33 students who had not registered had begun their college career in different years ranging from 2008 to 2011. It was assumed by the mentors that some of these students transferred to other colleges, but that data was not available to the researcher. The Fall 2011 students were freshman who were beginning their college career. According to the data from the mentors and staff, students in their first year of college represent the group that needed the most support since they were just beginning their college experience.

The research also indicated that financial status influenced a student's ability to pay for their education.   Figure 4.1 shows the data on the Effective Family Contribution (EFC) for 61 non-responder students. Effective Family Contribution is the amount the Federal Government indicates a family can contribute to funding their child's education. Effective Family Contribution data was not available for the 52 highly involved students, thus, a comparison could not be made to the data for the non-responder students.

Figure 4.1. Effective family contribution for non-responder students.
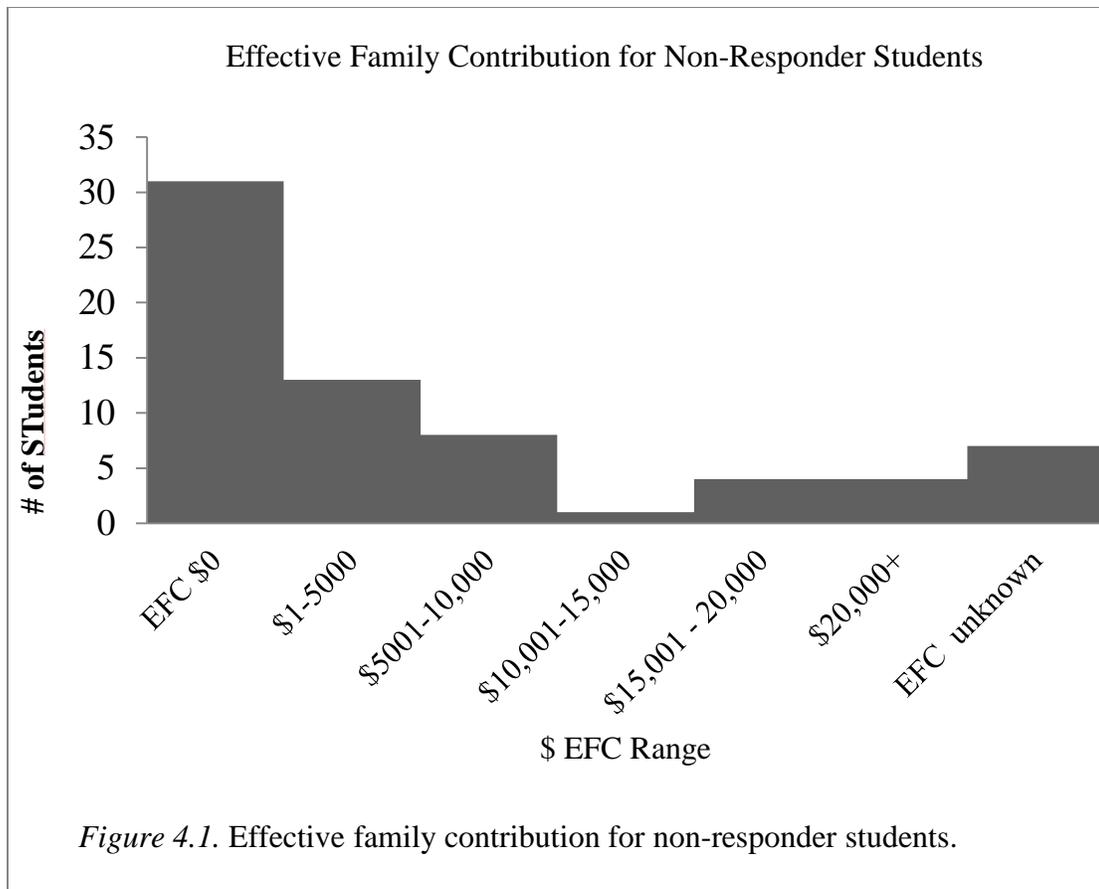
In continuing to review the data, it was noted that non-responder students also had financial challenges facing them. Approximately half the students where data was available had an effective family contribution of $0, indicating that their family did not have the means to provide any financial assistance in paying for college.

In Table 4.2 the grade point averages for the non-responder group were compared to a sampling of highly involved mentored students. While the data was pulled from a small sample, the numbers indicated that a greater number of non-responder students have high school grade point averages that were comparatively lower than the sample of highly involved students. In looking at the grade ranges of the non-responder students, there was no significant grade differences attributable to the gender of the students.

Table 4.2

High School Grade Point Average Comparison

High school grade point average	Highly involved students	Non-responder students
75.0 – 79.9	7	33
80 – 84.9	7	17
85 – 89.9	22	10
90 – 94.9	12	2
95 – 99.9	2	0
Total	50	62

The ethnic backgrounds of the highly involved students were compared to the group of non-responder students. Data was not available for all the non-responder students. See Table 4.3 for the comparison. The largest numbers of students for both involved and non-responder groups were Black or Hispanic which is consistent with the College's overall population. A greater percentage of the non-responder students were Black as compared to the highly involved students. The data on ethnic background was only available for 48 non-responder students. The ethnic background for 20 non-responders was not available.

Table 4.3

Ethnic Background Comparison

Ethnic Background	Involved students	Involved students percentage	Non-responder students	Non-responder students percentage
Black	16	30.8	21	43.7
Hispanic	26	50	20	41.7
White	8	15.4	4	8.3
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	1	1.9	0	0
Asian	1	1.9	1	2.1
Two or more races	0	0	2	4.2
Total	52	100	48	100
Not identified	0	0	20	-

Mentors and staff also perceived a difference in the students who were highly involved as compared to those who became non-responders. Mentors stated that many highly involved students were motivated and goal oriented, and had support and encouragement from home. First-year freshman were often the most involved as this was their transition year from high school. Interestingly, mentors also mentioned that some of their most active students were those who were shy, emotionally needy, or academically weak. These students realized they gained valuable support from their mentors and used the support. Students who had little support from home also relied on their mentors more frequently as a support system.

Research question two. For students who entered the College between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011 and initially engaged in the Mentoring Program, what are the primary reasons or factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program? Twenty-one out of the 68 non-responder students were invited to participate in a focus group. A total of eight students agreed to participate in the research. Two students agreed to participate in a focus group. The other six non-responder students were interviewed individually. Through the student focus group and interviews five themes were identified. The identified themes were the relationship with the mentor, the time availability consideration, the students' desire for independence, the mentoring office processes and environment, and student non-registration for the semester. Table 4.4 provides the leading themes and associated subthemes that emerged through the student focus group and interviews.

The most frequently reported theme that emerged as to why students became non-responders was the absence of a good relationship between the student and the mentor. The second highest reported factor that impacted students' involvement in mentoring was the belief on the student's part that they did not have the time in their schedule to meet with their mentor. Work schedules, conflicting demands on time and inconvenience were stated as considerations. The third most common reason students provided was their belief that they could manage the demands of college without mentor support. Some students felt that they did not need to connect with a mentor to meet those needs. The fourth most frequently cited factor related to the mentoring environment and processes within the mentoring program. Some students felt that they did not want to wait to see their mentor given other demands on their time. Additionally, some students reported

frustration with the perceived lack of a communication process for addressing academic

issues. Finally, students were not registered for the Spring semester and were therefore

not on campus.

Table 4.4

Factors Influencing Student Disengagement from Mentoring

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme # 1	Relationship with Mentor	Mentor does not help me Mentor does not seek me out Mentor gave perceived negative feedback Mentor is not interested in student Mentor is not knowledgeable or helpful Weak relationship Student fear of mentor's opinion of them Student discontent with mentor advice Mentor strict approach Student did not make the effort to engage
Theme #2	Time Consideration	Student has a job/must work Bus/hotel issues Student needs personal time (meals, rest) Student needs time for homework Student did not want to wait Perceived waste of my time Student cannot physically get to school Not convenient
Theme # 3	Student Independence	Student believes they can do it on own Student feels no reason to go
Theme # 4	Process/Environment	GPA issues/early warning system Student does not want to wait to see the mentor No appointments, too many people in room waiting Mentor uses email not used by student
Theme # 5	Student was Not Registered	Student was not registered for the semester

According to the students, the relationship between the mentor and student was a key component of retaining a student in mentoring. One non-responder student had an experience with his mentor that caused him to have a negative reaction toward him and the student decided not to return. According to the student, he was not doing well academically in his classes. The student reported that he did not like the way the mentor communicated with him about the academic issue. Student Participant 1 stated, "What ruins it is the negative perspective, the negative side. I was taken aback by that. It wasn't a positive feeling". The student did not receive the advice from the mentor in a positive manner and that affected the student's perception of the mentor and their relationship. Their relationship soured and the student did not return to see his mentor.

Although students recognized that they shared a responsibility in the relationship with their mentor, some students felt that the mentor should have been aggressive in pursuing them when they became non-responders. Student Participant 2 said, "They (the mentors) should be more proactive. Some of them are, but some of them aren't." Other students felt that the mentor could not help them or did not have the answers they needed.

Another student felt that after not seeing her mentor for a long period of time, it would be awkward to go back to her. For example, Student Participant 3 stated, "I think she (mentor) stopped. She usually would email me, but she doesn't do that… she probably thinks…this girl doesn't want to see me". Student Participant 2 stated, "I don't see her as often, so I guess it's not that much of a relationship."

Another significant theme that impacted students' non-responsiveness to their mentor was the influence and availability of time. Some of the students reported that

they did not see their mentors due to a lack of available time on the part of the student. Student work schedules affected their ability to meet with their mentors. One student worked full-time three days a week which seriously impinged on her ability to meet with her mentor.

Access to the mentoring office was challenging for some students given their desire for time to take care of other personal needs. Some students lived in off-campus housing and had to work their schedule around the bus that takes them to and from campus and back to their housing. The bus schedule was a factor affecting their ability to make the time to see their mentor. Other issues put demands on the students which limited their ability to see their mentors. One student reported that he wanted to make sure he purchased his meal before getting on the bus back to his housing. Student Participant 4 said, "I get out of my classes at 2:30 and the shuttle bus comes at every :45; so for me to come to talk to my mentor, it will be a small conversation… but then I miss the bus, with 15 minutes I get out of class I don't have time to come talk to her and get food to take back to my room, so I feel I want to come talk to her, but sometimes I feel so drained." Students also reported that they did not want to wait for the mentor if the mentor was seeing other students. Other demands such as a desire to catch up on homework or sleep affected their decision not to wait to see the mentor. Student Participant 5 commented, "I think mentoring is a good idea, I just can't get there." Participant 3 added, "It is time consuming getting over there all the time".

A third major theme that emerged from the research was the students' belief that they could manage their college career on their own, without the mentor. Many of the participants reported that they felt that they could manage their business and did not see

the need to meet with their mentor.   Student Participant 2 stated, " I started doing the stuff myself." Student Participant 3 stated, "I did not find an actual reason to go to her all the time. I knew how I was doing in classes, my teachers informed me of that. Besides the fact that I needed a resume, I did not find any other reason to go. I just figure, I can do most of the stuff on my own." This sentiment was echoed by other students as well. They did not see the need; they felt they could take care of themselves.

A fourth evident theme was process related. In instances related to the time factor, some students reported frustration with the process of waiting to see their mentor. Student Participants 3 and 4 reported that at times the mentoring area was filled with students and if they did not have an appointment, they would have to wait. Other students without appointments had jumped ahead of them and they were frustrated by that. This made the process seem to be lacking in equity and fairness.

Some students reported frustration with the early academic alert process where the student was unaware of a poor grade point average. In this case, the students felt that the mentor's ability to be proactive in the students' progress was absent from the relationship. The students' felt that the mentor should have been aware of the academic situation and should have warned the students. Other students reported frustration when they did not realize they were not doing well academically in a particular class and the mentor had not warned them.   The student perceived that the mentor did not reach out to the student to make them aware of the academic issue before it became a serious problem. The students said they wanted the mentor to seek them out when they were receiving poor grades in a class. Student Participant 2 stated, "They (the mentors) should be more proactive."

The last major theme that emerged was that the student was not registered for the semester or they had registered, but then they stopped attending school altogether. Personal, financial and family issues were a significant part of the reasons why students were not registered and therefore became non-responders to mentoring.

Research question three. This research question has two parts. The first part (3a) related to the students' rating of the factors that influenced their decision to disengage from mentoring. The second part of the question, (3b) related to other characteristics and opinions of the students who answered the survey. Question 3a follows. How do students who drop out of the mentoring relationship rate those factors that influenced their decision to disengage from the program? A survey was conducted upon completion of the focus group and interviews with the non-responding students. The survey was emailed to 68 non-responder students. Six females and four males responded for a total of ten. Survey responses were analyzed. Table 4.5 provides the responses from the students who answered the survey, which indicated which factors influenced their decision to become less involved in the mentoring program. The factors were established based on the feedback obtained from the student interviews and focus group comments.

Two out of nine respondents believed they could manage college demands on their own, while two respondents did not agree or disagree with that statement. However, five of the respondents disagreed somewhat or strongly that they could manage college demands on their own. In other words, they recognized the need for the mentor. Similarly, seven of nine respondents disagreed somewhat or strongly that a mentor was

not important to them. Restated in the positive, seven of nine students felt that having a

mentor was important to them.

Table 4.5

Students' Ratings of Factors Influencing Disengagement

Rate the Influence These Factors had on Your Decision to Become Less Involved with the Mentor Program.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Responses
I believe that I can manage college demands on my own and do not need a mentor.	3	2	2	2	0	9
Having a mentor is just not important to me.	6	1	2	0	0	9
The relationship with the mentor who was assigned to me was not positive.	6	3	0	0	0	9
At times the PACT offices are very busy and it is difficult to get to see my mentor.	3	2	2	2	0	9
Given my schedule, it is difficult to schedule time to meet with my mentor.	6	1	0	0	2	9

Two of the respondents strongly agreed that their schedule made it difficult to schedule time with their mentor. However, seven of the respondents disagreed somewhat or strongly disagreed that their schedule was a problem in scheduling time with their mentor. Two of the survey respondents agreed that busy mentoring offices made it difficult for them to see their mentor. Five of the respondents did not agree with the statement that the mentoring offices were very busy making it difficult for them to see their mentor.

The second part of question three, (3b) related to the profile and other opinions of the students who answered the survey. Question 3b follows. What are the characteristics of the non-responder students who answered the survey? The gender and ethnicity of the survey respondents is shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Gender and Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

	African-American	Hispanic	Other	Asian	Caucasian	Total
Male	3	1	0	0	0	4
Female	2	3	1	0	0	6
Total	5	4	1	0	0	10

Half the respondents were African-American and four out of ten were Hispanic. There were no Caucasian or Asian responders to the survey. Of the ten survey respondents, seven were enrolled for the Spring 2012 semester and three were not registered. Table 4.7 indicates school enrollment by division.

Table 4.7

School Enrollment

School Enrolled in	Number of Students
Liberal Arts	3
Business	3
Health and Natural Sciences	2
Education	1
Social and Behavioral Science	1
Total	10

The surveyed students were asked if they worked while attending school. Four of the respondents worked while in school with three of those students working more than 10 hours off campus. Six of the respondents did not work while attending school, as shown in the Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Students Working While Attending School

Did you work while attending school?	Male	Female	Total
No	3	3	6
Less than 10 hours per week on campus	0	1	1
Less than 10 hours per week off campus	0	0	0
More than 10 hours per week on campus	0	0	0
More than 10 hours per week off campus	1	2	3

Of the three students who worked more than ten hours per week, it was also noted that two of those students were enrolled in the spring semester, and one was not enrolled. However, in looking at work and student enrollment in the cross tabulation in Table 4.9, two students who were not enrolled for the Spring semester also did not work, leading to an assumption that the students may have transferred to another institution. However, there was no data to support this assumption.

Table 4.9

Work and Enrollment

		Do you work while attending school?					
		No	Less than 10 hours per week on campus	Less than 10 hours per week off campus	More than 10 hours per week on campus	More than 10 hours per week off campus	Total
Were you enrolled during the Spring 2012 semester?	Yes	4	1	0	0	2	7
	No	2	0	0	0	1	3

Students were asked about their level of involvement with their mentor at the beginning of their mentoring relationship. It was noted in Table 4.10 that the respondents indicated varying levels of frequency of contact with their mentors from the start of their relationship. When the students started in the mentoring program, four out of ten indicated a high level of involvement, meeting with their mentor once a week or more, with another two students seeing their mentor two to three times a month. One student

signed on for mentoring but never went to meet his or her mentor indicating he or she

was never engaged in the process.

Table 4.10

Frequency of Student Meetings with Mentor

When you first signed on for mentoring how often did you meet with your mentor?	# of students
Never	1
Less than once a month	2
Once a month	1
2 – 3 times a month	2
Once a week or more	4
Total	10

Separately, when the students were asked about their involvement with

extracurricular activities, eight of the ten respondents indicated they were not involved

with any other school activities and two students indicated they were involved in other

school activities.

The relationship between mentor and mentee was important as indicated by the

student interviews and focus group. As seen in Table 4.11, the survey results indicated

that seven respondents felt they had a good to excellent relationship with their mentor.

Two students indicated they did not spend enough time with the mentor to develop a

relationship. One respondent did not answer all survey questions resulting in less than

ten responses for all questions. None of the respondents indicated that they did not have

a good relationship with their mentor.

Table 4.11

Student Ratings of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

	Male	Female	Total
My mentor and I did not have a good relationship.	0	0	0
My relationship with my mentor was good.	1	2	3
My relationship with my mentor was excellent.	2	2	4
I did not spend enough time with my mentor to develop a relationship.	0	2	2
Total	3	6	9

Interestingly, of the eight respondents who answered a question on whether they would recommend the mentoring program to others, all eight students said they would recommend it. Given the fact that these students were all mentoring non-responders, this is a surprising finding.

The students were asked if they had the same mentor from the beginning of their mentoring relationship. Six of nine respondents indicated they had the same mentor from the start of their relationship and three students indicated they did not retain the same mentor. However, seven out of eight respondents indicated they felt that their mentor met their needs as a student, even though some of them may have had a change in mentor.

The students who took the survey were asked if their parents had attended or graduated from college. See Table 4.12 for results.

Table 4.12

Ethnic Background and Parents' College Status

Ethnic Background	My parents did not attend college	One of both of my parents attended college but did not graduate	One or both of my parents attended college and graduated	Total
Hispanic	4	0	0	4
African-American	1	1	1	3
Other	0	0	1	1
Total	5	1	2	8

Five of the eight respondents indicated their parents had not attended college, thus those students faced the challenges of college on their own. Another student's parent had attended college, but had not graduated. There was one open ended opinion question where the student could provide their thoughts on mentoring but no student answered it.

Research question four. From the mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what are the perceived barriers to student participation in mentoring? Five mentors and three staff members from the College mentoring program were interviewed. They provided their perceptions of students' reasons for non-participation in mentoring. Seven themes emerged. Three themes that were evident to both staff and students were the mentor-mentee relationship, time needed to meet with the mentor, and the students' belief that they could manage college demands on their own. The unique themes generated from the mentor and staff interviews were the issues that students did not see the value of mentoring, the students' personal issues conflicted with college attendance, a lack of family support for college, and the lack of student motivation and involvement. Table 4.13 provides detail on the themes and subthemes.

Table 4.13

Mentor and Staff Perspectives on Why Students Stop Participation in Mentoring

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme # 1	Personal Issues	Financial concerns Cannot manage family, school and work demands Student must support their family Registration restrictions (due to financial issues) Personal illness, pregnancy Commuter Homesickness Difficulty getting to campus College is not for them Failure, stop-out, transfer
Theme # 2	Value of Mentoring	Students do not appreciate the value of mentoring Students do not see the long term benefits
Theme # 3	Relationship with Mentor	Mentor turnover Personality mismatches Weak relationship Personality clashes Loss of trust in mentor Communications issues Negative experience with mentor Gender pairing mismatch
Theme # 4	Lack of Family Support	First generation student Parents do not understand/cannot relate and do not give support
Theme # 5	Student Motivation and Involvement	Lack of interest Apathy No goals or direction Just want to hang out Students are immature Student did not buy in to the concept from the start
Theme # 6	Student Autonomy	Student can do it on his own Student wants to be independent, not "babied" Student is in control
Theme # 7	Time Constraints	Student is busy with dating, residence life

The most significant theme to emerge from interviews with mentors and staff was Theme #1 which was related to personal issues experienced by some of the students. Management of financial aid paperwork and family related financial challenges was mentioned by all the staff members. Students often had difficulties managing the financial aid process and while the mentors worked hard to keep the student on top of the paperwork, if the student did not respond, they lost scholarships and funding. Some students lost their ability to register for the next semester because the proper paperwork had not been filed.

Other personal issues such as pregnancy, illness, and even homelessness had impacted the students. Some students had difficulty physically getting to school and could not attend classes or see their mentor. Mentors reported that some students' work schedules negatively impacted their ability to stay connected with their mentor.

The second theme to emerge from interviews with mentors and staff members was the perceived value of the mentoring program from the students' perspective. The mentors and staff frequently indicated that some students did not understand the value and benefits of the program. Mentor 1 stated, "I think some of them think that it is not really worth it… they don't understand the importance of it". Mentor 2 stated, "They lose interest in the program, maybe they don't see what the program can do for them". Staff Member 1 indicated that, "A lot of students are very independent or they assume they know what they are doing or they know what they need."

The third major theme to emerge from the mentor and staff interviews was the importance of the relationship between the mentor and the student. The mentors referred to personality clashes or mismatches, communications issues and mentor turnover as

issues that had arisen that lead to the student not coming back to see the mentor.   Mentor 2 stated, "Students will lose faith in the system… and just stop coming." Mentor 3 stated, "They may have had a really good experience with somebody, then someone new comes in and it's hard to bring them back in after that. Some of them have gone through two, three, four mentors." The students developed trust with one mentor and then they lost it when they had to begin over with a new mentor.

The fourth emerging theme was the demands of family which weighed heavily on non-responding students. Mentors and staff reported that some students did not have family members at home that encouraged them to complete college. The mentors reported that at times families would ask their children to quit college and get a job so they could help to support the family. These conflicting messages made it very difficult for the student to keep their focus. One staff member gave the example of the student who was taken out of college and put into a professional school in order to produce fast cash for the family. Many of the students were first generation college students. The mentors knew that some parents had not had the college experience, thus, the parents were at a loss to assist their student with college demands.   The lack of family support, encouragement and direction brought about the right environment for non-response and non- involvement in mentoring.

An issue that was mentioned by the mentors was first generation students with families who had no experience with the college financial aid process. Those students who were eligible for financial aid needed to complete a significant amount of paperwork.   While one of the mentors' important responsibilities is to assist with financial aid processing, when students avoided their mentors, the paperwork in many

cases was not completed. The mentors indicated that the financial aid process was a significant hurdle for some of the students.

Student lack of motivation was the fifth theme that became apparent. The student's lack of interest was an influential component in non-response to mentoring. Mentors indicated that some students were simply immature, or they lacked interest in the program. This concept of immaturity was especially pertinent when discussing college freshman since the mentors said that the students had not come to realize the importance and value of a mentor. Staff Member 1 said, "They get distracted by residence life, by dating, by being away from home for the first time… so they stop responding to us because we're not important." Some mentors even went to the student's classes trying to find him or her to help them re-engage in mentoring.

A common theme that was frequently mentioned in student and staff interviews was that students believed they could handle college demands themselves. Mentors indicated that the students wanted to be autonomous in this area, taking on the responsibility themselves. Students felt they did not need any assistance. Students did not want to be "babied" according to Mentor 4. She said, "They are away from home and they want to just be adults."

As noted earlier, time to meet with the mentor was a shared theme of concern for mentors and students alike. The staff discussed how students preferred to "hang-out", get involved in residence life, activities, dating and enjoying the college experience. Mentoring for some students did not fit into their social lives.

Research question five. From the non-responder students', mentors' and staff members' perspectives, what aspects of mentoring do they perceive to be the most

meaningful or useful to the students? This question is answered from multiple sources.

This question was asked during the student focus group and interviews. The question

was also posed on the student non-responder survey. Additionally, mentors and staff

members provided their perspectives on what aspects of mentoring the students appeared

to value most in the mentoring process.

There were five themes which emerged from the student focus group and

interviews. These themes included perceptions of support from the mentor on a personal

level, support with college processes, the mentor-mentee relationship, assistance in career

development, and guidance in student life at college. Table 4.14 provides detail on the

themes and related sub-themes generated from the student interviews and focus group.

Overwhelmingly, the students mentioned the overall feeling of support they felt

was available to them as mentees. They stated that they liked the idea that they felt

personally supported with a mentor who helped them with personal issues or problems.

They also said they felt they could get advice from their mentor and they felt they had a

personal connection to another person who cared about them. The second emergent

theme was that students also appreciated the procedural support with registration,

assistance with professors, academic assistance, housing issues and general reminders.

Student 2 said "I am not completely by myself."

Table 4.14

Focus Group and Interviewed Students' Perceptions of Helpful Aspects of Mentoring

Number of Themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Theme # 1	Support – Personal	Overall feeling of support
		Mentor helps me identify my goals
		Mentor gives good advice
		A personal connection
		I am not alone
		I have a personal counselor
		Mentor is there for you
		Mentor helps me research and discover
		Mentor helps with problems or personal issues
		Mentor helps me catch up
Theme # 2	Support – Process	Registration
		Academic support
		Assistance with professors
		Help with process
		Reminders
		Kept me on track
		Homework
		Explains things to me
		Housing
Theme # 3	Relationship with Mentor	Someone to talk to
		Mentor is a friend
		Good relationship
		Mentors are nice
		Like my Mom/Like a brother
		Roomful of mentors willing to help
		No gender or race issues
Theme # 4	Career/goals	Resume/Workshops
		Internships
		Help with finding a job
Theme # 5	Involvement	Mentor got me involved in clubs and community service

The third emerging theme was the value of the relationship with the mentor. These students recognized the value of the mentor-mentee relationship. Students commented that their mentors were nice and that there was a roomful of mentors just waiting to help when they needed it, even if it was not the student's designated mentor.

The students who were interviewed or participated in the focus group felt that the relationship with their mentor was a significant positive factor. The students liked to talk to their mentor and some students considered their mentors to be their friend. Student 4 said, "You can have conversations about school, academics, internships or something maybe personal going on in my life, so that is good to have a connection." Some students felt the mentors were stand-ins for a parent or other family member. Student 3 said, "She's like another Mom… she kept me on track." Student 6 said, "He's like my big brother."

The focus group and interviewed students conveyed an appreciation for the multi-faceted components of the mentoring program. The students reported on their initial understanding of the program and indicated positive perceptions of the comprehensive nature of the mentoring program. Many of the students reported that their friends experienced very positive and valuable interactions and experiences with their mentors. Almost all of the students reported that they understood the value of the relationship with the mentor.

Continuing on the relationship theme, the students were asked if they had any concerns with the differences in gender or ethnic backgrounds between themselves and their mentors. Not one student raised it as a concern. They were very positive about the diversity of the mentors. They also felt that if they needed to talk to a mentor of the same

gender they could easily do that. All the mentors were available to talk to students even if the student had a different mentor assigned to him or her.

Theme # 4 revolved around career development support. Students appreciated support with career development in the form of resume writing, career and academic workshops and support in pursuing internships and jobs. Student 4 indicated, "I liked that they would help you get an internship".   The mentoring organization runs various career oriented workshops for students.   Students recognized the value of these.

Theme # 5 was the least frequently mentioned item, but it is deemed important and relates to the relationship with the mentor. Two students discussed how their mentor got them involved in clubs and community service organizations on the College campus. The student and mentor had common interests which manifested into involvement in clubs. This expanded their relationship to topics beyond typical academic or career discussions.

In the survey sent to the 68 non-responder students, the students were asked to rate in importance, the components of working with their mentors. The surveyed students' ratings supported what the interviewed students provided as reasons for their interest in the mentoring program. Table 4.15 shows the ratings provided by the students. The students completing this survey question rated almost all of the items as important to extremely important.

Assistance with registration and resume writing were rated extremely important by six out of nine respondents. All students rated registration as important to extremely important. Eight out of nine students rated assistance with financial aid and career goal development as important to extremely important.

Table 4.15

Surveyed Students' Ratings of Important Components in Mentoring

Question	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Total Responses
Assistance with academic support	0	2	3	1	3	9
Help with financial aid	0	1	2	3	3	9
Help in working with my professors	0	1	3	2	2	8
Help with transitioning to college life	0	1	4	0	3	8
Help in identifying career goals	0	1	4	1	3	9
Help with registration for classes	0	0	2	1	6	9
Assistance with my building my resume	1	1	1	0	6	9
Assistance in identifying and pursuing an internship	0	2	1	2	4	9

The mentors and staff were also asked to provide their opinions of what they believed students valued the most in the mentoring process. The mentors and staff echoed many of the same benefits in terms of the support they provide to the students with financial aid management, registration assistance, and career development. The mentors believed they had established strong relationships with many of their students and had that connection that was very important to the students. One staff member said the mentors knew their students and their life stories and that was important to the students. The connection to another individual was viewed as extremely valuable. The mentors were able to help students transition to college and then plan for their futures. The mentors felt they were able to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Summary

The research results indicated a wide range of reasons why students stop participation in mentoring. Student interviews and focus group provided the answers to why students stop participating in mentoring. These reasons were relationships, time availability, the student's perceptions of their abilities to manage college demands, and mentoring procedural issues as key factors in students' decision to disengage from mentoring. The mentors and staff echoed some of these same factors.

The student survey findings provided some conflicting findings. The issue of time availability was a common concern for focus group, interviewed and surveyed students. However, the students completing the survey disagreed with many of the factors that interviewed students said could lead to disengagement. For example, the survey responders were positive in their opinions of their mentors while some of the interviewed students had relationship issues with their mentors. The surveyed students

were mostly positive in their outlook on mentoring and saw the value of the relationship and support system. This was a surprising finding which will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, both groups of students see the benefits of mentoring. The surveyed students would recommend the mentoring program, indicating they saw its value even while they did not personally take advantage of it. Many of the focus group and interviewed students mentioned that their friends had successful relationships with their mentors.

Interestingly, according to the mentors, some students who were non-responders became re-involved in mentoring when it was time for registration for the next semester. The students came back because they needed to register and they relied on their mentor for this. Those students were then removed from the non-responder list and were considered active and involved in mentoring.

<center>**Chapter 5: Discussion**</center>

Introduction

   The research study investigates the reasons why some students who sign on for undergraduate mentoring subsequently stop their participation in the program. The study provides valuable information on important aspects of mentoring and the reasons why some students disengage from undergraduate mentoring. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings, limitations of the research, thoughts on future research studies, and recommendations.

   Mentoring improves retention ((Laden, 1999; Salinitri, 2005).   At the College where the research study was conducted, this is true as well. Mentoring does play a significant role in keeping students involved and helping students persist and be successful in college. Mentoring supports students' needs for academic support and social integration, goal development, and personal needs management. However, while mentoring can have tremendous influence on student success and retention, this study discovers factors that impact students' abilities to stay involved in a mentoring program. Importantly, mentors are able to bring some non-responder students back to the program by helping them overcome issues they face.

   The guiding theoretical perspectives of Maslow (1970), Tinto (1975, 1990, 1993, 1999, 2007) and Astin (1975, 1984, 1985) directed the research and the results are a validation of many of their findings. The insights gathered from this research can

provide direction to other undergraduate mentoring programs in existence or in development for the future.

Implications of Findings

The findings from this research study lead to implications that can be used in reviewing and improving current and future mentoring programs. There are implications for the mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee and how the mentors work with their students. Other implications relate to mentoring program mechanics, academic support, opportunities for socialization, family support, mentoring program promotion and, student transfer. Given the varied reasons for disengagement from mentoring, a personalized, creative approach will assist in meeting the students' needs and keeping them involved in mentoring.

Mentor-mentee relationship. The study findings indicate that the relationship between the mentor and mentee is important in establishing an ongoing successful mentorship. Many of the non-responder students appreciate that someone is "there" for them. The feeling of friendship and support cannot be understated. The personal connection and support is a benefit the students value. The mentors also report that many of their highly involved students see the importance of the relationship.

Students who have issues with their mentors are likely to disengage which has negative implications for the program. Some of these students are disappointed about their discontinuance of their relationship with their mentor. Attention must be given to the development and fostering of the relationship between mentors and mentees. The fact that the student-mentor relationship is so crucial speaks to the possibility of encouraging non-responders to come back to mentoring given the right conditions. However, the

relationship is not the only factor that influences engagement in mentoring. A number of the students who disengage do report positive relationships with their mentors, indicating that other factors affect disengagement from mentoring.

Student independence. College is a time for increasing independence on the part of the student. They desire to manage their own affairs. The need for independence on the part of the students is cited by many of the students and mentors. However, not all students exhibit the same level of need for independence. For some students, the desire for independence is a key factor in their decision to not use their mentor. These students want to manage their own affairs. Other students indicate a need for their mentors, and independence from the mentor is less important. Those students recognize the value of the mentor's assistance. Personal independence related to mentoring, is not a factor for those students. This is an interesting finding that speaks to the effect of multiple factors playing a role in the process of disengaging from mentoring.

This need for independence aligns with Maslow's (1970) fourth level in his hierarchy; that is the desire for internal and external self-esteem. Some of the students appear to be at this level; their need for independence and feeling responsible is a factor in their decision to become less involved in mentoring. Some of the non-responder students feel they can handle the demands of college themselves and want to be autonomous in managing their responsibilities.

External factors. The differences in the student survey responses, focus group and interviews indicate the wide variety of factors that influence students' decisions to disengage. What is important to one student may not be important to another. Factors that are seemingly out of the control of the student, such as financial issues or personal

problems, play a role in disengagement from mentoring. Students see the value of

mentoring, but in some cases cannot overcome other issues that hinder their involvement.

One of the largest factors influencing students' non-involvement in mentoring is

the financial consideration. As gleaned from the mentors' responses, they say that many

students face tremendous financial challenges from a personal or family perspective.

When the student has financial concerns they may become a non-responder to mentoring.

The students may find themselves in a difficult financial situation, not realizing that their

mentors may be able to help them. Mentors can assist with paperwork, but only if the

student reaches out to their mentor.   Often this issue is compounded by the family's lack

of experience with college. Research indicates that first-generation students have a more

challenging time managing college demands (Laden, 1999). The parents are unable to

assist the student with financial paperwork requirements. Curto (2009) validates this as

well. These parents may not understand the requirements and do not encourage their

child to seek out their mentor for assistance, leaving the student unsupported. The

students are then non-responders to mentoring and may ultimately leave college.

Another external factor that influences student non-participation in mentoring is

outside work pressures. In the study there were a few non-responders who work off

campus. A student may need to work to help support their family. Working makes it

more difficult for a student to be engaged and less likely for them to stay connected with

their mentor. One student in particular said she wanted to be involved with mentoring,

but her work schedule precluded her involvement. Astin (1984) also determined that

student work schedules can affect involvement and persistence in college.

Other external factors that lead to mentoring disengagement are personal matters. Students who have personal issues or who become pregnant may disengage from mentoring. The students are not able to manage multiple demands placed on them.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that student background had little influence on student proclivity to persist. The study findings differ from the path analysis study conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1983). However, given the qualitative nature of the study it is difficult to make a direct comparison. In the study, students are impacted by a variety of factors including their backgrounds which then influence their involvement in mentoring.

Academic/social integration. A review of the characteristics of non-responders indicate a tendency for having lower high school grade point averages as compared to highly involved mentored students. The highly involved students have higher high school grade point averages. This indicates that academic integration is related to continuation in mentoring. The study supports the notion that academically integrated students are also more likely to be involved and persist in the mentoring relationship. Students who are more successful in high school continue to be more successful in college and are open to utilizing resources that support their growth. Mosely (1998) found that high school grade point average was not an influential indicator for mentoring participation. Mosely's student participants however, were all freshman education majors and close to 90 percent were female. That may make a difference in the students' inclinations to persist.

In the study the high school grade ranges are consistent for non-responder males and females. There is no indication of any gender difference in the decision to persist

based on high school grades. High school grade point average is an indicator of college persistence, but in the study, gender is not linked to grade point average as an indicator for persistence in mentoring. In comparison, Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that academic integration was a more important factor for males as compared to females. Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that social integration was more important for females.

Additionally, students who have academic issues in their classes and are not aware of it are more likely to stop participation in mentoring. Their frustration with their academic performance and the lack of communication about the academic issues lead to non-response to mentoring. Academic success relates to Tinto's (1975) theory of academic and social integration and the data supports this premise. Students who do not feel academically integrated in their environment are more likely to disengage.

Social integration is also an important factor in college life and mentoring. For students to be successful they must feel socially integrated into their environment. The students in this study also indicate this need, but fulfill it in different ways. Some of the highly involved students use mentoring to help fulfill this need. They see their mentors frequently. They need someone to help them make the transition to college and to be accepted in the College community. These are the students who are seeking acceptance and they rely on their mentors for friendship and a connection to others.

Some of the non-responder students recognize the value of the social aspects of mentoring. However, students who were non-responders seem to rely more on their friends than on their mentors to meet this need for social integration. Some students often want to socialize and be with their friends more than they want to make contact

with their mentor. Tinto (1975) relates the need for friendship to his concept of social integration. This also directly aligns with Maslow's (1970) hierarchical level of the need for love and acceptance. On this level of Maslow's hierarchy, individuals seek acceptance and love. College students fulfill this need in different ways, through their mentors, or through their friends.

Some students do not feel integrated into their college. In the study almost half of the non-responders did not register for the Spring 2012 semester. The mentors indicate some of the non-responders transferred to other colleges. These students may not have felt academically or socially integrated at the College. The implication is clear; students who are considering transferring to another college are likely to stop participation in mentoring.

Mentoring program mechanics. The mechanics of the program do not always match the students' needs.   The workings of the mentoring program must be reviewed to ensure the components are well run. There are issues of timely meetings and perceived outreach by the mentors. Some students have issues with their ability to see their mentors on a schedule that meets the student's needs. Student appointments need to be well managed in the mentoring offices in order for students to feel their time is not being wasted. The ability of the mentors to reach their students is also an issue. Inability to reach their students due to inaccurate student contact information causes frustration on the part of the mentors and leaves the students feeling that the mentors have given up on them. The students who cannot be reached also miss valuable information on upcoming events, workshops, or updates on academic issues.

At times, student personal needs take precedence over the mentoring program. They do not have the time or motivation to schedule to see their mentor due to other pressures of college life. Flexibility in how mentor and mentee connect may be needed.

Value of mentoring. Mentoring has positive components for students. Some aspects of the mentoring program are appealing to non-responder students. Registration for the upcoming semester is the primary activity for which students use their mentor. The usefulness of the career and resume writing workshops, and assistance with internship pursuit are frequently mentioned by the students. These program offerings are a crucial area of interest for the students.

Interestingly, all the survey respondents said they would recommend the mentoring program to others. This certainly speaks to the understood value of mentoring. The students also appreciate the multitude of services that the mentors provide such as assistance with professors and academic advice. It would appear that even if a student has a problem with their mentor, or has other personal problems that interfere with the mentoring relationship, they still see the tremendous value that it offers. Pope (2002) also found that students are positive in their perception of mentoring. Pope's (2002) respondents felt that mentoring was important, although not necessarily important for them individually. That sentiment is consistent with the study findings.

Clearly though, not all students see the value of mentoring. There are differences in the opinions of the interviewed and surveyed students. Surveyed students are more positive about mentoring in almost all aspects in their responses. However, some interviewed students feel they can accomplish the tasks on their own indicating they do not see the "big picture". They are only seeing the short term components and benefits,

not the long term value. This difference in perception of the value of mentoring on the part of the students speaks to the need for clarity and frequency in the mentoring program value message.

In summary, the differences in perception of the issues in mentoring speak to the variety of reasons why students disengage. For some students, it is not necessarily a conscious decision to stop using their mentor. It is more of a slow process. Over time, they do not see the need, they feel less connected to their mentor and then, from their perspective, it becomes unnecessary. Given that almost half of the students who received the survey were not registered for the spring semester, it is clear that students who were non-responders were at risk of leaving the College. Unfortunately, we do not know if mentoring might have prevented them from leaving. Given that we know that mentoring influences retention and persistence, it would be reasonable to consider that there is a possibility that mentors could have prevented some of those students from leaving the College with more focused intervention strategies. These will be discussed later in this chapter in the Recommendations Section.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is the relatively small number of students in the sample size. Given that the students in the study population are non-responders, it is very difficult to motivate them to participate in a study. A larger population may garner a higher response to the survey. Achieving a greater number of responses would provide a stronger significance in the results.

The interviewed and focus group students were all selected from the main campus of the College. Including students from other campuses may provide some different perspectives on the mentoring experience.

The other limitation is the fact that almost half of the 68 non-responder students were not registered for the spring semester which impacted the survey response rate. Those students who are not registered for the semester have less of an investment in the mentoring program and possibly the College as a whole. The small response rate to the survey makes it more difficult to generalize the findings to a larger population.

The students who responded to the survey are very positive overall in their perspectives on mentoring. This may be a limitation: only students who are more positive in their outlook on mentoring are open to responding to the survey. Students who have a less favorable perspective on mentoring might have no interest in sharing their opinions on the subject.

The study was conducted at a college with suburban and urban campuses. The findings might vary for a study conducted in a more rural environment.

Additionally, some data was not available to the researcher. Demographic data for some of the students who did not register for the Spring 2012 semester was not available, creating an incomplete picture of the group of non-responders.

Recommendations

There are numerous recommendations related to future research and enhancement of current mentoring programs. Specific ideas are discussed by area of need.

Additional research studies would be useful in further exploring the undergraduate mentoring experience and reasons why students disengage. Expansion of

research sites would be beneficial. Other colleges offer undergraduate mentoring. A similar mixed methods approach at another college would provide greater access to a larger population. The study was conducted at a college with a large minority population with significant financial needs. A similar study at a more affluent institution might provide a different perspective on mentoring.

The students who did not register for the spring 2012 semester would be a valuable group for a follow-up research study. A study directed at the students who did not register for the spring semester would be valuable in determining their opinions on mentoring and what influence, if any, it had on their decision to leave the College.

Mentoring is a valuable support for undergraduate students. To improve retention in college mentoring programs, four areas of focus are recommended. The recommendations are to focus on the relationship between mentor and mentee, establish well organized mentoring program mechanics, promote the value message, and support students' personal needs. These are discussed in detail that follows.

Build the mentor-mentee relationship. A first priority is to develop and strengthen the relationship between mentor and mentee. The mentors can influence the relationship they have with their students by getting to know their students, their personalities, interests, family background, preferences, financial situation, and their need for independence. Creativity in approach in mentoring should be part of the program. The mentors must be trained in understanding their students in order to motivate them to achieve the highest success. The mentor must understand what type of relationship the student is seeking and tailor their style to fit the student. Some students may prefer a mentor who serves as a type of surrogate mother or big brother. Another student might

prefer a business type of relationship where the student has greater independence. The mentors must be attuned to their students' preferences and adjust their style to meet the students' needs.

As noted in the study and documented in other studies, the mentoring relationship can vary from simple advice to a more intense relationship and can progress through stages (Gibson, 2004; Kram 1983). The better the mentor understands his or her mentee, the more likely the relationship with be successful. The College might consider issuing a preference survey to incoming students before they begin the mentoring program to produce the most effective working relationships between student and mentor.

The College might consider getting the mentors involved in the recruiting process with high school students. Beginning the relationship between mentor and mentee in high school may strengthen their bond and have a greater influence on the student's inclination to persist.

In conjunction with specific attention on the mentor-mentee relationship is the need for a focus on retention of mentors and greater student involvement with more mentors. Colleges need to invest in ongoing training for their mentors and they must insure the right individuals are chosen for this responsibility. Additionally, colleges must craft multiple opportunities for the mentors and mentees to meet, both professionally and socially. Activities where students can get to know their mentor along with other mentors may alleviate student distress if their mentor leaves. If the students are introduced to more mentors and have collegial and friendly relationships with more than their own mentor, this could prevent the student from becoming a non-responder if a

change in a mentor occurs. Terrell and Hassell (1994) found social activities to be a common element in college mentoring programs.

The need for a good relationship between mentor and mentee relates to Astin's (1975) premise that frequent interactions between students and faculty has a positive influence on student persistence and retention. Interaction with faculty helps the students feel a part of the college community (Tinto, 1993). Mentor-mentee interaction is similar to the faculty – student relationship. Mentors provide support and friendship.

Establish well organized mentoring program mechanics. The second recommendation is related to orchestrating a well organized mentoring program. There are four components to this recommendation. The first is equitable management of meetings in the offices. Second, is the need for agreement between mentor and mentee on the most effective means of communication between the two parties. Third, is the need for creativity and flexibility in reaching students who have difficulty getting to see their mentor. The fourth component relates to the mentors' need for up-to-date student academic information and data on retention.

First, management of scheduling meetings in the mentoring offices must be maintained in an equitable way. Schedules and appointments should be maintained so that students' meetings are conducted on time. This will avoid the students' feeling that they are not being given attention.

Second, communications and meetings between mentor and mentee must be well coordinated.   Students must be able to schedule a meeting when convenient, while managing their other needs. During their initial meetings, student and mentor should agree on the preferred methods whether it be email, texting, social media, phone or other

means. They must agree to specific times to communicate. Hopefully this would avoid the common issue of the mentor not being able to reach their student. Wunch (1994) and Terrell and Hassell (1994) indicate that organized and frequently scheduled meetings between mentor and mentee are common in many mentoring programs.

Third, colleges with mentoring programs may want to build their mentors' schedules with flexibility and creativity. Some students have issues in getting to the mentoring offices. Given the growth in online communication, this method should be given consideration. The College uses Blackboard for course delivery. Mentoring discussion boards might be used to supplement face to face contact between student and mentor. "Roaming" mentors that meet the students in other locations other than the office may build some flexibility into the program, helping out students who have little time due to work or other conflicting schedules. The students can be found in many locations around the College. If the students will not come to the mentor, the mentor can go to the student. This will facilitate the connection between mentor and mentee, helping keep the relationship strong. Along with this concept is the idea of a "speed-mentoring" element to the program. Given the students' busy lives, a quick check-in with their mentor for a brief connection might bridge the gap between longer mentor-student meetings.

The fourth component of the recommendation on mentoring program mechanics is to provide the mentors access to current student academic standings and contact information in order to advise their students of any issues. This is a concern for both mentors and students. Systems must be in place to address the issue. The lack of knowledge impedes student success. Students should not be unaware of academic

challenges they are facing. Colleges must insure that their mentors have the most up-to-date information on their student in terms of academics and contact information.

In conjunction with providing accurate information, the College should conduct follow-up research on an ongoing basis to determine why students leave the mentoring program and why they leave the institution. This information must be shared with the mentors. This will help inform mentoring practice and possibly influence retention.

Promote the value message. The value component of mentoring is significant. The third recommendation is to focus on the value of mentoring message. The students must be educated on the long term benefits of a college degree and how mentoring supports their efforts to achieve this goal. The College can include this message in their freshman seminar course. The greatest number of non-responder students are those who started in the Fall of 2011 as first-year students. This is a challenging time of transition for students. The College runs orientation events and first-year seminars directed to their unique needs. The value message must be conveyed in these sessions.

Students who are mentoring program graduates should be invited to speak with the current mentored students. Presentations by former students might be meaningful to current undergraduates who can relate to them. Just as the students value the workshops on topics such as internships and resume writing, they would also value this type of workshop. More workshops including academic support topics that are of interest to students would increase overall participation, instilling value in the program.

Including academic supports and social activities with the workshops would also provide value to the students. Social activities would provide students with networking opportunities. Given students' need for academic and social integration, (Tinto, 1975)

incorporating these aspects into the mentoring program may work well to encourage student participation and involvement in mentoring.

Taken together, increased focus on academic support systems, workshops and networking social opportunities may help students see the value of mentoring and keep them involved. The more varied the offerings, the greater the perceived value of the program and the more likely the students will be to stay involved in mentoring. Greater promotion and awareness of these initiatives may improve the perception of value.

Support students' personal needs. The last, and perhaps the most challenging recommendation is to support the students' personal needs. Although there are certain issues that mentoring cannot solve, the mentors can provide guidance on financial aid, counseling, and emotional support. Education and support for students and families in the management of the financial aid process is crucial. Financial aid management is a serious concern for students and is impossible for mentors to manage on their own. It must be a partnership between the mentor and the student and his or her family. Colleges must help educate the families on the importance of attending to the requirements and the risks of possibly losing financial aid. The ability to pay for college is a factor in college persistence (Astin 1975).

Additionally, the College should attempt to run more orientation events where the parents or guardians are invited and educated on the positive benefits of a college degree. First generation students often have greater challenges due to a lack of family support. The mentoring program must welcome these families and tend to their unique needs. Bilingual mentors may fill a gap.

A peer mentoring component may be considered. Students who are struggling may find additional support in a peer mentor who is slightly older and may have experienced some of the same challenges. A peer may relate well to the student.

Students who are having personal concerns are at risk of non-participation in mentoring. Mentors must be attuned to these signs and offer assistance where they can. Support and guidance may help students overcome personal issues they are facing.

As noted in the findings of the study and documented in other studies, mentoring undergraduate students is proven to be valuable for students and the colleges that provide the service (Laden, 1999; Terrell & Wright, 1988). Mentoring helps retain students and supports those students who might not be able to succeed without it. Continual reflection, research and adaptation of programming will enable programs to provide the best support possible for students.

Conclusion

The study provides insight into undergraduate mentoring as a retention strategy. The findings from the study help bring greater understanding of the undergraduate mentoring experience at a small college in New York State. The findings also shed light on the reasons why some students who choose to participate in a comprehensive mentoring program do not continue their involvement. The findings provide learning and implications for current and future college mentoring programs. The learning may provide guidance to institutions of higher education that continue to struggle with retention and college completion.

College retention and graduation rates have been and continue to be a significant problem in the United States. Colleges have been struggling with retention for the last 40

years (Tinto, 2007). Colleges attempt numerous strategies in order to increase their

retention rates, but the problem continues to plague institutions (Tinto, 2007). The

impact of poor college graduation rates has significant impact on the affluence of our

citizens and it decreases the standing of the United States in an increasingly competitive

and global society.

There are many factors that influence a student's ability to persist in college.

Theorists such as Tinto (1975, 1993, 1999, 2007) and Astin (1975, 1982) have studied

college retention and the factors that influence persistence. Tinto found that academic

and social integration were influential factors. The study affirms those factors as

important to a student's feeling of well-being and success in college. Astin (1975) found

multiple factors that affect a student's inclination to persist in college. Financial

resources, level of social integration and involvement in other school activities, and level

of academic success in high school were among the factors Astin (1975) attributed to

college persistence. In the study, the findings validate the importance of financial

resources and how the lack of financial viability hinders students. For some students in

the study, social integration with peers prevented them from participation in mentoring.

These students were persisting in college, but not in the mentoring program. Astin

(1975) also found that working off campus impacted a student's ability to persist which

was validated by the participants in this study. Students who work have limited time for

extra activities such as mentoring.

Mentoring has been identified as an effective strategy in helping to retain and

graduate college students (Laden, 1999; Salinitri, 2005). The mentoring program at this

New York State college is helping to improve its retention rates. The College's goal is to

use the mentoring program to continue improving retention and ultimately graduation rates. In order to achieve this, they need to retain students in the mentoring program as well.

The mixed methods study provides both qualitative and quantitative data.   There were 68 non-responder students in the study. The data was triangulated by having multiple sources of data: a focus group and interviews with students, interviews with mentors and staff members, a survey to non-responder students and College archival data. Eight students participated in the focus group or interviews, eight mentors and staff members participated in the interviews, and ten students responded to the survey. College archival data was available for 52 highly involved mentored students. Characteristics of these highly involved students were compared to characteristics of the non-responder students in the study.

The qualitative data from the non-responder students indicates that mentor-mentee relationship, student desire for independence, time availability, mentoring office processes and environment, and student non-registration for the semester, affected student participation in mentoring at the College. The most important factor that emerged from the non-responder interviewed students was the relationship factor, or the lack of a good relationship with their mentor. This element was cited most frequently by the non-responder interviewed and focus group students.

The mentors and staff members communicated three of the same factors that impact mentoring participation, which are mentor-mentee relationship, student desire for independence and time consideration. These are the common themes generated from students and staff. The unique factors the mentors and staff cited are that students do not

see the value of mentoring, the students' personal issues that conflict with college attendance, a lack of family support for college, and the lack of student motivation.

The survey findings provide a different and more positive look at factors that influence disengagement from mentoring. Students who answered the survey are mostly positive about mentoring; they see the value in mentoring and what the program offers. This group of students feel mentoring is important in numerous ways. The surveyed students indicate that they need the support of their mentor; that they cannot necessarily manage the demands of college completely on their own. Most of the surveyed students report they had good relationships with their mentors.

Both the interviewed and surveyed students feel that assistance with registration and pursuit of internships are two areas of benefit. The students who participated in the focus group and interviewed students indicate a strong appreciation for the overall support a mentor provides. They appreciate the ability to have someone to go to for assistance, and the ability to have a person to talk to if they needed that support. The mentors and staff members also recognize the value of the support they give to the students. The mentors can see the difference they make in the lives of some of their students.

The study provides insight into the multiplicity of reasons why students stop their participation in mentoring. The reasons may be related to personal or financial issues, problems with the mentor-mentee relationship, issues with lack of time, student belief that they can handle their own needs, or frustrations with the processes within the mentoring system. The mentors strive to get to know their students well so they can

assist them in the most effective way possible. At times, there are obstacles that surface that are beyond the abilities of the mentors to address.

Mentoring is an effective tool in increasing college retention and graduation rates. Most students at the College where the study was conducted understand the value of mentoring and take advantage of these services. Some students face obstacles that affect their commitment to the mentoring relationship which impacts their college success. With a goal of promoting social justice, mentoring supports and advocates for individuals with diverse backgrounds who seek to better themselves through education.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1917) said "There is no chance, no destiny, no fate, that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul" (p. 130). Given creativity, dedication and continual focus on the part of the institutions of higher education, the individuals who work there, and the students who attend these institutions, these obstacles can be overcome for the vast majority of students.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Non-responder Students

Good Afternoon. I am so glad you agreed to participate in my study on mentoring. I am a doctoral student who has been researching mentoring on the undergraduate level. I have found that many colleges offer different types of mentoring programs for their students. Although mentoring appears to be helpful, not all students take advantage of it. I am seeking to understand why that is. Why do students sign on but then not use the services? That is what I am hoping to learn from you today. I will begin with general questions and ask that you all participate.

When did you first learn about the College mentoring program?

At that time was it appealing to you and if so why?

What was it about the program that appealed to you?

What are some of the reasons you stopped using your mentor?

What are some of the factors that influenced your decision to stop working with your mentor?

Tell me about your relationship with your mentor.

If your mentor was of a different racial or ethnic background, how did that influence the mentoring relationship?

Please share other perspectives on your experiences with mentoring.

Appendix B

Letter Inviting Non-Responder Students to Participate in Focus Group

Dear College Student:

Your opinion is important and invaluable! Your thoughts are requested for a study on undergraduate student mentoring. You have been identified as a student who initially signed on for the College mentoring program, but since you have used these services minimally or stopped using them altogether, we would like to hear your thoughts.

Janet Lyons, a doctoral student, is conducting a study on undergraduate mentoring and the reasons why students don't use mentoring services. The research is for her dissertation for her doctoral work. The College mentoring department supports her research efforts.

In any research, there is a risk of a breach of confidentiality. However, your name and identity will be kept private. Comments made at the focus group meeting will be recorded, but all comments remain private and are not identified with a particular student. If at any point during the focus group you decide not to continue, you are free to leave.

As a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a $25.00 gift card, provided by Ms. Lyons, for your participation. The meeting should take approximately 45 minutes and will be held at the College campus.

Please consider participating. The College mentoring department is in support of this research effort. Your comments will help the program directors understand your concerns and needs as they continually strive to make the program be the best it can be! If you are willing to participate, please reply to Janet Lyons.   Contact her by email.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

College mentor

Appendix C

Student Focus Group Participation Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a study of students who stop using mentoring services, or use the services very minimally. This study is being done by Janet Lyons, a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College, who is completing this project as part of an Education doctorate in Executive Leadership.

As part of this study you will be asked to participate in a focus group that should take about 45 minutes. The focus group sessions will be audio taped so that comments can be transcribed. You have the right to review transcripts of the tapes and ask that portions note be used if you wish. There are no direct benefits from participating in the study, however, your assistance in this research will help current and future students who participate in the College mentoring program.

All of the study information will be kept private. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the study findings. Comments made by participants may be reported, but those comments will not be linked to any particular individual. All documents from this study will be kept confidential. There is a risk of breach of confidentiality. Data and tapes from the study will be kept in a locked secure place in the researcher's home, and will be destroyed in three years.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting this relationship. You may also choose not to answer questions during the focus group meeting. The researcher also may choose to withdraw you from this study if it is in your best interest.

As a token of appreciation I will receive a $25.00 gift card in exchange for my time at the focus group. The meeting should take approximately 45 minutes and will be held at the College campus. The focus group will meet during a to be determined time and place.

You are encouraged to ask any questions regarding the research to Ms. Lyons, who may be reached at her cell number. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the College has approved recruitment of participants for this research study. The IRB chairperson, can be contacted to answer questions about the rights of research participants. If you wish to find out the results of this study you may contact Janet Lyons by email.

SIGNED AGREEMENT

I understand that;

(a)	My signature indicates that I voluntarily agree to be a part of this research study.
(b)	By signing this form I do not waive any legal rights.

_____

Signature of Subject   Date

A copy of this agreement will be given to you for your records.

Appendix D

Invitation to staff for interview

Dear staff member:

Your opinion is important and invaluable! Your thoughts are requested for a study on undergraduate student mentoring. You have been identified as an individual who is knowledgeable of student who are involved in mentoring. I am interested in learning about students who initially signed on for the College mentoring program, but subsequently stopped using the services. .

I am conducting a study on undergraduate mentoring and the reasons why students don't use mentoring services. The research is for my dissertation for my doctoral work. Your name and identity will be kept private. Comments made at the interview will be recorded, but all comments remain private and are not identified with a particular individual. If at any point during the interview you decide not to continue, you are free to leave, no questions asked.

I would greatly appreciate your time. The meeting should take approximately 45 minutes and will be held at the College campus at a location of your choosing. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience.

Please consider participating. The College is in support of this research effort. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this email.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Janet Lyons
Doctoral Student

Appendix E

Interview questions for Mentors and Staff Members

Good Afternoon. I am so glad you agreed to participate in my study on mentoring. I am a doctoral student who has been researching mentoring on the undergraduate level. I have found that many colleges offer different types of mentoring programs for their students. Although mentoring appears to be helpful, not all students take advantage of it. I am seeking to understand why that is. Why do students sign on but then not use the services? That is what I am hoping to learn from you today. I will begin with general questions and ask that you all participate.

From your perspective as a mentor or involved staff mentor, what are some of the reasons you believe students are not able to take advantage of the mentoring program?

For students who start using mentoring and then stop, are there reasons you can identify as to why they stop?

What was it about the program that appealed to them?

Can you share any experiences with students who stopped using mentoring?

Could you describe the typical student who seems to use mentoring most frequently?

Could you provide an example of a student who stops using mentoring services?

Please share other perspectives on your experiences with mentoring.

Have you observed any special considerations impacting the relationship due to the racial or ethnic backgrounds of the mentor and mentee?

Appendix F

Informed Consent Staff Member Participation Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a study about students who stop using mentoring services, or use the services very minimally. This study is being done by Janet Lyons, a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College, who is completing this project as part of an Education doctorate in Executive Leadership.

As part of this study you will be asked to participate in an interview that should take about 45 minutes. The interview will be audio taped so that comments can be transcribed. You have the right to review transcripts of the tapes and ask that portions not be used if you wish. There are no direct benefits from participating in the study, but your assistance in this research may help current and future students who participate in the mentoring program.

All of the study information will be kept private. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the study findings. Comments made by participants may be reported, but those comments will not be linked to any particular individual. All documents from this study will be kept confidential. There is a risk of breach of confidentiality. Data and tapes from the study will be kept in a locked secure place in the researcher's home and will be destroyed in three years.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting this relationship. You may also choose not to answer questions during the focus group meeting. The researcher also may choose to withdraw you from this study if it is in your best interest.

The meeting should take approximately 45 minutes and will be held at the College campus at your convenience.

You are encouraged to ask any questions regarding the research to Ms. Lyons, who may be reached by phone. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the College has approved recruitment of participants for this research study. The IRB chairperson, can be contacted to answer questions about the rights of research participants. If you wish to find out the results of this study you may contact Janet Lyons.

<u>SIGNED AGREEMENT</u>

I understand that;

(c)   My signature indicates that I voluntarily agree to be a part of this research study.

(d)   By signing this form I do not waive any legal rights.

Signature of Subject   Date

I believe that the subject fully understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

Signature of Investigator   Date _____

A copy of this agreement will be given to you for your records.

Appendix G

Student Survey Invitation

Dear College Student:

Your opinion is important and invaluable! Your thoughts are requested for a study on undergraduate student mentoring. Janet Lyons, a doctoral student, is conducting a study on undergraduate mentoring and the reasons why some students don't use mentoring services. The research is for her dissertation for her doctoral work.

Your name and identity will be kept confidential. All comments remain private and are not identified with a particular student. If at any point during the survey you decide not to continue, you are free to stop.

Please consider participating. The mentoring department is in support of this research effort. Your comments will help the program directors understand your concerns and needs as they continually strive to make the program be the best it can be! **If you are willing to participate, please click on the button to complete the survey. It should not take more than a few minutes of your time.**

If you have any questions concerning this survey, email Ms. Lyons. You can also call Ms. Lyons. Thank you for your assistance!

Sincerely,

College Mentoring office

Appendix H

Survey to Non-Responder Students

You are being asked to participate in a survey on mentoring. This study is being done by Janet Lyons, a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College, who is completing this project as part of an Education doctorate in Executive Leadership.

As part of this study you will be asked to complete a survey that should take less than 5 minutes of your time. There are no known risks to you from participating in this study. However, your assistance in this research may help current and future students who participate in the College mentoring program.

All of the study information will be kept private. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the study findings. Comments made by participants may be reported, but those comments will not be linked to any particular individual. All documents from this study will be kept confidential.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop completing the survey any time without affecting this relationship. You may also choose not to answer questions during the survey.

AGREEMENT

I understand that;

(a)   I voluntarily agree to be a part of this research study.

(b)   By completing this survey I do not waive any legal rights.

- ● Yes
- ● No

Q2

☐

Gender

- ● Male
- ● Female

Q3

☐

Please identify your family background

- ● Hispanic
- ● African-American
- ● Asian
- ● Caucasian

- ● Other
- ● Choose not to identify

Q4
☐

Were you enrolled during the Spring 2012 semester?

- ● Yes
- ● No

Q5
☐

Please indicate your area of study

- ● Liberal Arts
- ● Business
- ● Health and Natural Sciences
- ● Education
- ● Social and Behavioral Science

Q6
☐

Do you work while attending school?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Less than 10 hours per week on campus
- ☐ Less than 10 hours per week off campus
- ☐ more than 10 hours per week on campus
- ☐ more than 10 hours per week off campus

Q7
☐

Are you involved in any extracurricular activities at the College? For example, sports, clubs

- ● Yes
- ● No

Q8
☐

When you first signed on for mentoring, how often did you meet with your mentor?

- ● Never
- ● Less than Once a Month
- ● Once a Month
- ● 2-3 Times a Month

- ● Once a Week or more

Q9
☐

How do you rate your mentor-mentee relationship?

- ● My mentor and I did not have a good relationship
- ● My relationship with my mentor is good
- ● My relationship with my mentor was excellent
- ● I did not spend enough time with my mentor to develop a relationship

Q10
☐

Have you had the same mentor since you began in the program?

- ● Yes
- ● No

Q11
☐

Do you feel your mentor meets your needs as a student?

- ● Yes
- ● No

Q12
☐

Rate these components in importance for you in working with your mentor

	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Assistance with academic support	●	●	●	●	●
Help with financial aid	●	●	●	●	●
Help in working with my professors	●	●	●	●	●
Help with transitioning to college life	●	●	●	●	●
Help in identifying career goals	●	●	●	●	●
Help with registration for classes	●	●	●	●	●
Assistance with my building my resume	●	●	●	●	●
Assistance in identifying and pursuing an internship	●	●	●	●	●

Q13

☐

Please rate the influence these factors had on your decision to become less involved with the program.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that I can manage college demands on my own and do not need a mentor.	●	●	●	●	●
Having a mentor is just not important to me.	●	●	●	●	●
The relationship with the mentor who was assigned to me was not positive.	●	●	●	●	●
At times the mentor offices are very busy and it is difficult to get to see my mentor.	●	●	●	●	●
Given my schedule, it is difficult to schedule time to meet with my mentor.	●	●	●	●	●

Q14

☐

Please elaborate on any other reasons why you feel the mentoring program is not useful to you at this time.

Q15

☐

How likely are you to recommend the mentoring program to your friends?

- ● I would not recommend the program

- ● I am not sure if I would recommend the program

- ● I would recommend the program

Q16

☐

For research purposes, please indicate if either of your parents attended or graduated from college.

- ● My parents did not attend college

- ● One or both of my parents attended college but did not graduate

- ● One or both of my parents attended college and graduated

Q17

☐

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like to be entered in a drawing for a $100 VISA gift certificate please provide your email address below. This is required only for the selection of the winner. Your identification will not be used in connection with this survey research.   The winner will be selected from all the respondents who provide their email address.