A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN THE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTS AT A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

by Theresa M. Strong

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2023

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN THE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTS AT A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

by Theresa M. Strong

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2023

APPROVED BY:

Christian Raby, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Andrea Bruce, Ed.D., Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges. The theory guiding this study is van Manen's theory on hermeneutical phenomenology, as it focuses on the lived experiences of the participants and interpreting their told stories. The setting of this research study consists of two-year community and technical colleges throughout the lower Southeastern United States. Participants in this study include faculty and academic chairs at two-year community and technical colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states who have experience in the student advising process. The faculty and academic chairs participating in the study have diverse backgrounds in teaching and work in various academic departments at their respective institutions. Data collection methods include individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. An analysis and triangulation of the three data collection methods were conducted in order to identify significant and related words, phrases, and sentences which detailed their lived experiences of the phenomenon. Triangulation occurred by converging the findings from each individual interview, focus group, and questionnaire and then integrating the merged data into emergent themes based on the coding and classification of ideas. The entire data collection of this research study funnels into three main overarching themes, individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication, as well as two sub-themes, system changes and technology tools.

Keywords: retention, recruitment, higher education, faculty involvement, two-year colleges

Copyright Page

Dedication

To my parents, who have been my support system, my biggest fans, and my guidance since I was a little girl. Thank you for making me the strong woman I am today and for being my eternal guiding light.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Academic advising is a traditional practice that has been part of the higher education landscape since students first began applying to colleges. The purpose of academic advising is to help students advance within higher education and towards their future (Larson et al., 2018). While the traditional frameworks of academic advising have only slightly shifted over the years to incorporate diverse areas of the institution, the faculty advising aspect has become increasingly popular throughout two-year institutions based on its ability to increase recruitment levels and completion rates (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006), as well as to increase retention (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; McArthur, 2005; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017; Smith, 2007). Chapter One details the historical evolution, societal influences, and theoretical development that have evolved over the years regarding faculty advising and its effect on recruitment and retention.

Background

High attrition rates, or low retention, and low enrollment in higher education have been triggered by various issues, some affected and influenced by the economy, while others relate to personal reasons, which include family issues, a dramatic lifestyle change, or an increased disinterest in their chosen major (Geisinger & Raman, 2013; Hossler et al., 2009). Low enrollment and retention at two-year institutions and the minimal faculty effort involved to potentially increase these issues are explained in the forthcoming sections regarding their historical, societal, and theoretical contexts. The societal effects of low retention and enrollment at two-year institutions include skewed job placement rates, low completion rates, and varying degree selection trends across colleges (Gordon, 2004; Sutton & Sankar, 2011; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Other societal results include underprepared job applicants, woefully skilled employees, and inconsistent state and federal funding based on poor completion and attrition rates (Camacho et al., 2021; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Theoretically, the problem is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students continuously, and there is little to no faculty involvement in these efforts (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). Social constructivism, a social learning theory established by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978), is what researchers have explained as an individual's everyday behavior, which creates truth and knowledge (Andrews, 2012). Viewpoints on learning support that cognitive development is socially based rather than on an individual level (Atwater 1996; Barak, 2016; Lemke 2001; Palincsar 1998).

Historical Context

Low retention and enrollment at two-year institutions and the minimal faculty effort involved to conceivably increase these issues have been in existence since the conception of the community or technical college model (Geisinger & Raman, 2013; Hossler et al., 2009). The two-year college system was founded on the combination of the needs of students that lived in rural areas, the hindrance of poor public transportation, as well as to not overburden the four-year college system (Fincher et al., 2019; Kane & Rouse, 1999). While recruitment can simply refer to attracting more students to a specific program, and retention can be defined in terms of the overall completion of a program, many more factors contribute to the accurate definitions of both recruitment and retention for the two-year college system (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). The definitions of recruitment and retention at the two-year college level are rooted in the four-year university standard definitions since they were put into place well before the birth of the two-year system (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). However, the antiquated definitions of recruitment and retention created by the university system offer far too narrow of a view to provide an accurate depiction of what recruitment and retention mean for the two-year college system (Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

The national economy, whether strong or weak, has a significant effect on an individual's decision to enroll in college (Camacho et al., 2021; Harrell & Reglin, 2018). During times of a recession, individuals who find themselves without a job, short or long-term, historically fill their time by returning to college. However, while the Recession of 2008 did induce a wave of new students and give retention a newfound strength (Troxel, 2018), the COVID-19 pandemic had the opposite effect. A large majority of the unemployed remained out of work, reliant on stimulus checks provided by the government to sustain their lives and wellbeing (Saloner et al., 2020). Institutions, while initially excited and hopeful for the unexpected boost in enrollment at the conception of the pandemic, quickly became worrisome and scrambled to revise strategic and emergency response plans to react to unprecedented events. While enrollment had been forecasted to steadily decline for the next five to ten years due to a strong economy, the administration was not prepared for what regularly distributed stimulus checks would do to their institutions regarding enrollment and retention (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020; Klinenberg & Startz, 2022). All colleges, particularly two-year institutions, due to their lack of allure in terms of students returning to high-ranking athletic teams, trendy housing complexes, and college-town lifestyles, were in unchartered territory as they began to rewrite their plans of action to work towards increasing enrollment and retention in a new economy, job market, and overall unfamiliar landscape.

Personal reasons, compounded with economic-fueled motivations, have deepened the rift in enrollment and retention at two-year institutions. Historically, individuals opt out of enrolling in college for the first time or returning for consecutive semesters as they work towards degree completion due to family issues, lifestyle choices, or disinterest (Hodges, 2005). As high school graduates evolve from living at home with their parents to living on their own or with friends, they sometimes lose interest in attending college. Individuals who may have initially enrolled in classes but now have experienced a significant lifestyle change, such as a forced or sudden relocation, marriage, or the birth of a child, are forced to put those responsibilities in front of their education (Baker & Griffin, 2010).

Social Context

Societal influences caused by low retention and enrollment at two-year institutions affect every constituent supporter of the college. Affected constituents include potential employers, industry and community leaders, and friends and family. The detriment of those two-year institutions with low retention and enrollment includes data that revolves around skewed job placement rates, low completion rates, and varying degree selection choices (Gordon, 2004; Sutton & Sankar, 2011; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Other societal influences which influence constituent supporters of the college and their industry include underprepared job applicants, woefully skilled employees, and inconsistent state and federal funding based on poor completion and attrition rates (Camacho et al., 2021; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Individuals who once attended college but then failed to complete their degree began their academic path on a solid note but ended abruptly and, because of that, are now inexperienced, uneducated, carry a large amount of student debt from student loans, and are underprepared for the workforce (Kuenzi et al., 2021; Spearing et al., 2021). The same individuals or constituents that are affected negatively by the problem can also benefit from the research that will be gathered from this study. Family stress, negative or positive, is a significant contributor as to why individuals do not apply to college or do not complete their degree. Adapting to a new lifestyle is not an overnight process, and while it is possible for those individuals to return to school, it is not typically immediate, as indicated by the trending low enrollment and retention rates (Geisinger & Raman, 2013).

Efforts to increase enrollment and retention at two-year institutions with the influence of faculty members will significantly affect the local and surrounding community, industry, and job market (Allen & Smith, 2008; Danis, 2009; Waldner et al., 2011). This research study's efforts may generate stronger, more highly skilled, and educated candidates for jobs, which will create a powerful sense of confidence in the two-year institutions and the graduates they are producing (Camacho et al., 2021). This study may also produce a newfound resilience in employee grit and tenacity (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Moser, 2017).

Theoretical Context

Recent studies have indicated that faculty advising efforts show a positive effect on student enrollment and retention at two-year institutions based on the foundation of how faculty advising plays a critically important role in generating an elevated student connection to the college and fostering an environment for a positive influence on student achievement and development, (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Current research conducted by Harrell and Reglin (2018), Moser (2017), Troxel (2018), and Vianden and Barlow (2015) all highlight the strong connection faculty have with their student advisees, and because of this connection, the following associated outcomes have surfaced: increased completion rates, consistently high enrollment, and the steady decline of the dreaded attrition rate. This research study will continue to narrow the focus on the positive effect that faculty advisors have on enrollment and retention. While the existing research has contributed considerably to the current knowledge base of the research topic, this research study has redefined the emphasis on the effect faculty advisors have on enrollment and retention at two-year institutions.

Problem Statement

The problem is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students continuously, and there is little to no faculty involvement in these efforts (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). Enrollment and retention have been longstanding issues within the higher education landscape that educators and administrators have battled to overcome (Larson et al., 2018; Smith & Harris, 2021). While the problem has remained steady over the years as the political and social landscapes have changed drastically due to economic and industry fluctuations, viable solutions have fluctuated.

The need for the study is evident by the lack of empirical research on the topic of faculty involvement from an advising perspective on student enrollment and retention. While current studies have proven that faculty advisors do positively influence enrollment and retention at two-year institutions (Hassanein, 2022; Smith & Harris, 2021; Troxel, 2018), additional research is necessary to focus the efforts of researchers in order to close the gap on what influence faculty advisors truly have on student enrollment retention. Current research is in its infancy stages and does not provide depth as to how faculty advisors have a long-lasting positive effect on student enrollment and retention.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges. Strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges will be generally defined as increased recruitment and retention. The current research that has been conducted on the problem of low retention and enrollment at two-year institutions regarding faculty involvement is still lacking in perspective, and this research study aims to fill the areas that need more context (Hassanein, 2022; Smith & Harris, 2021).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will demonstrate to the reader that this study extends knowledge, improves practice, and sheds an in-depth light on the effect faculty have on recruitment and retention rates at a two-year institution based on their involvement with student advising efforts (Tracy, 2010). The following section details the theoretical, empirical, and practical significance of the study in detail. Addressing the theoretical, empirical, and practical significance of the study aids in validating a level of substantiative contribution made by the researcher (Richardson, 2000).

Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study is grounded in the theory of social constructivism (Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978). Social constructivism, a social learning theory established by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978), has been explained by researchers as how an individual's everyday behavior creates truth and knowledge (Andrews, 2012) and that viewpoints on learning support that cognitive development is socially based, rather than on an individual level (Atwater 1996; Barak, 2016; Lemke 2001; Palincsar 1998). Social constructivism relates to understanding the world in which people live and work in (Creswell & Poth, 2018; He & Hutson, 2016), the way that individuals search to comprehend their own world and create their own specific meanings that correlate to their individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ghosh et al., 2016). Throughout this study, social constructivism provides the benchmark for describing the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges (Barak, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978). It also provides the framework for promoting the utilization of the proven strategies identified throughout the study as a progressive approach of advising at two-year colleges (Barak, 2016).

Empirical Significance

The empirical significance of the study resonates with similar studies on the same topic that have already been conducted. In their study, Smith and Harris (2021) discussed the pertinent role that faculty play in creating and improving the strategic enrollment management initiative in North American institutions of higher education. Their study included faculty members and enrollment managers at 19 higher education institutions who participated via individual interviews (Smith & Harris, 2021). Similar to this research study, Smith and Harris (2021) set out to determine what role faculty play in implementing strategic enrollment management initiatives such as first-time student orientation, potential student interventions, student engagement, recruitment, and retention, as well as initial student advising, the development of faculty, and systematic reviews within academic programs. Hassanein (2022) supported the claims of Smith and Harris (2021) by detailing the crucial role that faculty, staff, and students have in managing enrollment and retention. Described as the pit crew in Hassanein's study (2022), the stakeholders of higher education, faculty, staff, and the community gain confidence and appreciation for enrollment and retention when they are encouraged to envision their effect on the path that students take. Puckett (2021) compounded the findings reported by Smith and Harris (2021) and Hassanein (2022) by explaining that since students are generally being recruited more to individual programs rather than along a more traditional route of general admissions, it has proven to be more efficient and effective for faculty members throughout the specific programs to become more involved in the recruitment and admissions process. A heavier presence of faculty that assists with the admissions process has demonstrated higher enrollment and stronger retention (Puckett, 2021).

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this research study is that the participants themselves, as well as their colleagues within the higher education industry, can take the results and apply them. The problem is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students continuously, and there is little to no faculty involvement in these efforts. This study is an attempt to shed new light on the issue of recruiting new students and retaining existing ones each semester. While the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the struggle that higher education institutions endure as they enter new recruiting seasons, it was an existing issue that had been bubbling to the surface for many years (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; Walsh et al., 2021), and needed to be addressed on a lower level in terms of faculty involvement. The strategies detailed throughout this study used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges will ideally be implemented within their own departments at their home institutions. The practical significance of this research study will sustain changes in student demographics, academic program development, and social, economic, and political climate changes.

Research Questions

The role of research questions in qualitative studies is a critical component of conducting a valid and accurate study, and it governs the method by which the study will be conducted (Mantzoukas, 2008). The continuing process of questioning is an essential part of understanding the lives, stories, and viewpoints of others (Agee, 2009). The following section lists the central and three sub-research questions for this study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of faculty with increased retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges?

Sub-Question One

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the retention of current students?

Sub-Question Two

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the recruitment of new students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the lived experiences of faculty on how the centralized advising and recruitment departments work cohesively to aid in the continued retention of current students and the recruitment of new students?

Definitions

1. *Academic Advising* – Academic advising is the action that takes place when an individual, staff, or faculty member utilizes their expertise within the field to help students advance within higher education and towards their future (Larson et al., 2018).
2. *Enrollment* – Enrollment is the action of admitting and matriculating students into degrees and classes (Parks & Taylor, 2019).
3. *Faculty Advising* – Faculty advising is the interpersonal relationship between faculty and students as faculty members mentor and coach students on their required placement

exams, prerequisites and course selection, degree path, internship opportunities, and transfer paths to four-year institutions (He & Hutson, 2016; Roessger et al., 2019).

4. *Retention* – Retention is student sustainability (Almond, 2020).

Summary

The problem is that some community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students continuously, and there is little to no faculty involvement in these efforts (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges. The proven strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges will be generally defined as increased recruitment and retention (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the problem has remained steady over the years as the political and social landscapes have changed drastically due to economic and industry fluctuations, the solution has remained at the forefront of our educators and administrator's minds and the doorsteps of our two-year institutions: faculty advising (Hassanein, 2022; Smith & Harris, 2021).

While the traditional frameworks of academic advising have only slightly shifted over the years to incorporate diverse areas of the institution, the faculty advising aspect has become increasingly popular throughout two-year institutions (D'Amico et al., 2014). The faculty advising aspect has become more widespread at institutions based on its proven ability to increase recruitment levels and completion rates, create an elevated student connection to the college, and to generate a positive influence on student achievement and development (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Pechac &

Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). Increased retention is another direct result of faculty advising (Donaldson et al., 2016; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017; Smith, 2007).

The need for this study is evident by the lack of empirical research on the topic of faculty involvement from an advising perspective on student enrollment and retention. Current studies have proven that faculty advisors do positively influence enrollment and retention at two-year institutions (Hassanein, 2022; Smith & Harris, 2021; Troxel, 2018). However, additional research is necessary to focus the efforts of researchers to close the gap on what effect faculty advisors truly do have on student enrollment retention.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A methodical review of the literature was conducted in order to examine how community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students continuously with little to no faculty involvement in these efforts (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). Chapter Two displays a review of the existing literature related to the topic of this research study. The theoretical framework of the study, social constructivism, is discussed in the first section and is followed by a synthesis of the related literature pertaining to three different academic advising models, centralized, decentralized, and shared, as well as the impacts marketing has on academic advising efforts.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative phenomenological study will describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges is grounded in the theory of social constructivism (Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978). This study aligns with social constructivism as it relates to understanding the world in which people live and work in (Creswell & Poth, 2018; He & Hutson, 2016). Social constructivism also connects with the way that individuals search to comprehend their own world and create their own specific meanings that correlate to their individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ghosh et al., 2016).

Andrews (2012) attests that an individual’s everyday behavior creates truth and knowledge in social constructivism. Researchers have also argued that viewpoints on learning support of which cognitive development are socially based rather than on an individual level with social constructivism (Atwater, 1996; Barak, 2016; Lemke, 2001; Palincsar, 1998). Learning is regarded as a cultural, social, and motivational process developed by an individual’s subconscious dialogue and interaction with those who are important to the learner (Barak, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kraiger, 2008; Lemke, 2001).

The social constructivism approach allows the researcher to see the participants, faculty, and academic chairs who participate in advising efforts as individuals capable of thorough questioning, and it focuses on the perceived benefits of faculty advising (Tian & Singhasiri, 2016). Individuals who follow the framework of social constructivism believe that social interactions and subconscious discourse improve cognitive transformation (Barak, 2016; Kraiger, 2008). Social constructivism stresses the significance of human interaction to increase learning for the individual and understands that the aspect of human interaction cannot always be face-to-face, especially in our post-COVID-19 pandemic environment (Kraiger et al., 2022). Therefore, social constructivism will aid in the comprehension of how the participants of this study will perceive the benefits of faculty advising (Ghosh et al., 2016). Throughout this study, social constructivism will serve as the benchmark for describing the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges (Barak, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978). It also provides the framework for promoting the utilization of the proven strategies identified throughout the study as a progressive approach of advising at two-year colleges (Barak, 2016).

Related Literature

An extensive, cultivated literature review is the underpinning and motivation for significant, purposeful research (Boote & Beile, 2005). Presenting a synthesis of the related literature demonstrates the significance of learning how to recognize, evaluate, and incorporate research literature proficiently (Maxwell, 2006). The following literature review examines three main advising models: centralized, decentralized, and shared, as well as the effects a marketing department has on student advising efforts.

Academic Advising Models

Presently, there are three main academic advising models: centralized, where all of the tasks associated with academic advising take place in one office, typically admissions or an advising center; decentralized, where faculty take on all of the advising efforts and responsibilities within their own academic departments, and shared, which is when a student begins their advising journey in a centralized office such as admissions and is then referred to a faculty advisor for more degree-specific assistance (Pardee, 2004; Roessger et al., 2019). While the shared model is currently the most used due to its connection to admissions and faculty within their chosen major (He & Hutson, 2016; Lockwood et al., 2013), there are limitations. Within the hierarchy of a traditional two-year college setting, faculty report directly to their academic chairs or program directors and have no allegiance to the centralized advising office at the school (Darling, 2015; Hu, 2020; Kapinos, 2020). Faculty reporting directly to their academic chairs or program directors can potentially create a frustrating situation for the centralized advising office or advising coordinator (Kapinos, 2020). With two offices overseeing the same task, a generous amount of miscommunication may occur as well as confusion for the student if there are two places to go for advising (D'Amico et al., 2014; McArthur, 2005). Two-year institutions typically operate with the majority of their processes internalized, versus outsourcing them to third-party vendors, but having two separate areas, one within academic affairs and one within student affairs, puts unnecessary obstacles and roadblocks in place for the student. Despite the potential for miscommunication between the two offices as part of the shared model, Hatch & Garcia (2017), Hutson (2013), and Ryan (2013) argue that one of the most important relationships at the ground level of an institution occurs between the student-faculty interactions of academic advising sessions.

Centralized Advising Model

The centralized advising model consists of a main area within the institution where the department is staffed with expert advisors who are trained to assist students in specific programs or degrees (Chiteng Kot, 2014). Institutions that utilize a centralized advising model typically do not outsource their students to faculty advisors at any point during their academic career (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014). Under the centralized advising model, students also tend to remain with the same expert staff advisor within the centralized advising department through graduation (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014).

Staff Advisor Training

Centralized advising models are, by far, the most used advising strategy among colleges and universities due to their traditional framework and structure (Queen, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). Under a centralized advising model, new and returning students are directed to either the admissions or advising office, whichever the institution has onsite, for guidance on their major, potential career paths, graduation track, and course selection for the upcoming semester (Marin et al., 2022; McGill et al., 2020; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). Faculty are not involved in the centralized advising model at all other than when students ask them for advising help, and they refer them to admissions (Mann, 2018; McGill et al., 2020). Staff within admissions are hired with the intent that their sole responsibility will be to advise students and have varied levels of training offered to them, depending upon the institution (Evans et al., 2019; Mann, 2018). While some staff advisors go through extensive training on how to effectively handle various student questions and situations regarding career uncertainty, major selection, and programmatic course timelines and layouts, many others do not (Choompunuch et al., 2022; Evans et al., 2019; Marin et al., 2022; McGill et al., 2020). Those that find themselves immersed in such a committed degree of training are able to assist and support their students at a much higher level than their undertrained counterparts at other institutions (Choompunuch et al., 2022; Evans et al., 2019). Staff advisors that lack initial or intermittent training can be detrimental to students and misguide them towards a career that may not be suitable, incorrectly advise them to take classes outside of their degree or even repeat classes when unnecessary (Evans et al., 2019; Marin et al., 2022; McGill et al., 2020; Schneider, 2019). Training is an integral part of any new hire program, advising or not, and when absent, it creates an underprepared employee and, more specifically, it also leads to unsatisfied students with their futures in potential jeopardy due to the underprepared staff advisors (Choompunuch et al., 2022; Evans et al., 2019; Mann, 2018).

Staff Advisors and Student Support Services

Staff advisors typically work in the admissions office or in a separate advising office at an institution (Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). Colleges and universities are separated into two distinct areas: student support services and academics (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sapir, 2022). Admissions and advising are part of the student support services side of the institution, while faculty are housed on the academic side. Noting the separation of student support services and academics is important to mention because both sides operate very differently and frequently do not have an open dialogue between them (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sapir, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). Student support services include admissions, advising, counseling, financial aid, student accounts, registrar, student affairs, and student engagement (Bennett et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sapir, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). In an ideal situation, all eight areas within student support services would work cohesively with each other. However, all areas within student support services working together is rare and hard to achieve (Bennett et al., 2021; Sapir, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). Poor communication is the number one reason for the lack of cohesiveness between the student support service areas, and because of this deficiency in communication, more responsibility and weight inadvertently fall on the shoulders of the staff advisors (Bennett et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Queen, 2022; Sapir, 2022). Students bring more than career, graduation, and course selection questions with them to an appointment with their staff advisors. They come armed with a myriad of questions that revolve around financial aid, tuition and bill payment options, and parking. While these seem outside the natural window of advising, students tend to treat their advisors as a one-stop-shop where they hope to gain answers to all of their questions (Barragan et al., 2022; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). When there is a disconnect between all the departments within student support services, students feel lost and gravitate toward those that they think will help (Barragan et al., 2022; Picton & Kahu, 2021). In this case, the people that will help them in their eyes are their staff advisors due to their advising and guidance tendencies (Barragan et al., 2022; Picton & Kahu, 2021).

To create a more cohesive and unified feel and atmosphere for students, more training and professional development are required in the various areas of student support services (Mann, 2018; Marin et al., 2022; McGill et al., 2020). Implementing mandatory full professional development days where staff from all areas of student support services come together to not only understand what each area does and how it serves their students but also to get to know their fellow employees, as well as brainstorm ways that they can work together to best serve their students (Mann, 2018; Marin et al., 2022; McGill et al., 2020; Reimers, 2022). Students, while not always seen as a college or university's customer, are just that: the institution's customers (Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). When customers leave unsatisfied, they share that information with their family and friends, who then share it with others. Customers who leave a business, or in this study, a college or university, feeling as though they were heard, their questions or problems were addressed and handled appropriately with a resolution either readily available or within grasp leave feeling thankful, satisfied, and relieved (Bennett et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). Colleges and universities that treat their students as their customers and give them what they are asking for, which in this specific case is proper advising guidance, will equip them with the necessary tools to navigate their program or degree curriculum and continue toward their projected path to graduation (Bennett et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021). Institutions that do the opposite and do not properly advise their students set them up for failure or mishaps along the way due to incorrect or repetitive courses during a semester, as well as delaying their path to graduation (Bennett et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021).

Staff Advisors: Enrollment and Retention

Enrollment and retention, two important parts of every institution's forecasted budget and bottom line, are heavily affected by all types of advising (Queen, 2022; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). Historically, staff advisors have little to no insider ownership when it comes to enrollment and retention at the college or university. In other words, staff advisors have little to nothing to lose if enrollment increases or decreases each semester (Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Staff advisors are permanent employees of the institution, and their positions are not enrollment driven. On the academic side, faculty advisors who work in enrollment-driven academic departments are extremely reliant upon increased enrollment and retention semester to semester and year to year in order to keep their program alive, well, and thriving, as well as their employment status within the department (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017). When enrollment significantly decreases year to year, layoffs and downsizing are imminent within the department in terms of faculty (Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). While the institution's goal is to always increase enrollment and retention, staff advisors have little to no motivation to become more involved in those efforts outside of their normal job duties (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Faculty advisors are motivated due to their department's dependency on increased enrollment and retention, and staff advisors could contribute to those efforts on a much grander scale (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019).

Staff Advisor's Perspectives of Staff Advising

Staff advisors are hired to do one main task for an institution: to properly advise students (Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). While proper advising may seem like an easy task, it is sometimes met with apprehension due to a lack of training (Choompunuch et al., 2022; Evans et al., 2019; Mann, 2018). Individuals who work in admissions as staff advisors are there to help students get on track with their graduation plans, choose the correct classes for the upcoming semester, and to answer various other questions that may arise during an advising session (Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022; Tippets et al., 2020). The feedback from staff advisors includes a mixture of satisfaction from helping students succeed to frustration from lack of training. Staff advisors who are trained and prepared for their job excel in their positions, take great pride and joy in providing a high level of customer service to the students they see, and feel part of the institution's organizational culture (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Staff advisors who are not properly trained or prepared for their job have a higher turnover rate and feel less connected to the institution (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022).

Organizational culture, while intangible in nature, becomes tangible when it transforms into a feeling that employees and students can physically and literally describe in conversation with one another (Mangundu, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). It is a feeling of belonging that cannot be falsified just to emulate cohesiveness between departments, staff, faculty, or students (Mangundu, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). When there is little to no insider ownership on behalf of staff advisors, the job becomes repetitive and monotonous. When staff advisors feel connected to their institution and believe in what they are doing in order to best assist and service their students, their jobs become an extension of who they are. Their tasks become natural, and their desire to go above and beyond to help students becomes innate in nature (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Staff advisors report their want and need to feel connected to the institution on a larger scale in order to feed their desire to assist students to their best ability (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022).

Student Perspectives of Staff Advising

A student's perspective of the advising services that they receive from their staff advisor goes hand in hand with how well-trained the advisor is for the job (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Students report various levels of satisfaction from their interactions with staff advisors: high satisfaction, low satisfaction, and indifference. Students that report having a high satisfaction with their staff advisor describe the following reasons for their level of enjoyment: the ease of making an initial advising appointment, the quick turnaround time from start to finish during an appointment, and the advisor answering or addressing all of the student's issues (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Students that report having low satisfaction with their staff advisor describe the following reasons for their level of disappointment: difficulty with making the initial advising appointment either due to software malfunctions or calendar syncing issues with their smartphones or tablets, a lengthy meeting or follow-up required due to the advisor having to research several of the student's questions, or the staff advisor's overall inability to answer and resolve the questions posed by the student (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Schneider, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). Students who felt indifferent to their interaction with their staff advisors attributed that feeling to their preexisting uncertainty towards college, their degree, or projected path towards graduation, as well as the general feeling of the student wanting their questions answered by someone and not feeling interested or invested as to who handles those questions (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). While some students desire to form a bond or long-term relationship with their staff advisor to last the tenure of their college degree, others are there to get answers, take classes, and get a degree (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Schneider, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). The latter of the two falls into the category of feeling indifferent toward their staff advisors, regardless of how hard that advisor may or may not work (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019).

Decentralized Advising Model

The decentralized advising model used by institutions assigns faculty to new and returning students as their advisors rather than using dedicated expert staff advisors housed within a main advising department (He & Hutson, 2016). Faculty advisors are assigned to students who are majors within their own programs and do not advise outside of their expert areas (He & Hutson, 2016). Under the decentralized advising model, students may transition from different faculty advisors throughout their academic careers leading up to graduation (He & Hutson, 2016).

Faculty Advisors and Student-Faculty Relationships

Faculty advising allows students to become acquainted with their professors on a different level, outside of the classroom, and it also allows each party to see each other in a new light. Faculty typically have one set of lenses on: the educator. When advising is introduced to a faculty member's repertoire of tasks and duties, this individual can remove the educator hat, take a bit of a step back into a more casual setting, and allow a natural dialogue to commence between the student and faculty member. The unique interaction between a student and faculty advisor encourages growth, confidence, and trust within the student-faculty relationship, as well as promotes self-confidence, reassurance, and determination within the student (Henderson & Pollock, 2021; Price et al., 2021). While some argue that faculty carry their own biases into advising sessions or may not be trained adequately on advising within their program (Coleman & Smith, 2021), those properly trained do play a critically important role as developmental mentors to students (Astin, 1993; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and their guidance has a significant effect on student achievement (He & Hutson, 2016; Hutson, 2013), the student's connection to the institution (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Lockwood et al., 2013); as well as increased retention (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Setterbo et al., 2017; Smith & Harris; 2021). Allowing room for the faculty member and student to bond and connect in a way much different from their traditional roles nurtures a space for trust, security, creativity, and assurance on behalf of both parties.

Faculty Advisor Training

While some institutions have implemented robust training sessions and programs on faculty advising (Hatch & Garcia, 2017), most have not, yet still require faculty to advise as part of their job description (Baird, 2020; Gordon et al., 2000; Myers & Dyer, 2005). Faculty frustration, coupled with their desire to properly advise students, has led to an evolution in professional development opportunities directed at faculty advising (Smith & Harris, 2021). A study has indicated that while frustrated with the lack of training associated with advising, faculty want to participate, and 91% believe advising should be part of tenure or rank and count towards their teaching loads (Baird, 2020). Of that 91%, 36.4% reported that faculty advising was already part of their rank and tenure, and only 41.3% reported that their current teaching loads would allow enough time to advise students (Baird, 2020). Faculty believe that two-year institutions require much more than their four-year counterparts in terms of faculty responsibilities (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020), and their increasing workload only compounds the pressure of performing up to par.

Faculty Advisors and Self-Service Advising Platforms

Although the non-traditional student demands a less faculty-assisted approach to advising and more of a self-service model, the need for training in advising programs still exists (Hu, 2020; Roessger et al., 2019). Self-service advising web-based platforms such as Ellucian Degree Works and Aviso Enterprise have greatly assisted with not only the non-traditional student who prefers a more independent approach to advising but also faculty advisors who are expected to learn and use these platforms (Price et al., 2021; Vijjapu, 2019; Zambito, 2015). Aviso, a web-based student success platform, allows students to self-advise and faculty to co-advise their students by viewing and navigating degree paths and course selection in real-time (Price et al., 2021; Vijjapu, 2019). A study has shown that Aviso also aids in retention efforts by identifying at-risk students through its automated academic alert system (Vijjapu, 2019). Ellucian Degree Works, similar to Aviso, is a web-based advising and degree auditing tool which allows students and faculty advisors a simple way to navigate graduation requirements, student degree paths, course selection, and transferability to a four-year institution (Zambito, 2015). Both Ellucian Degree Works and Aviso Enterprise offer self-service options that include course prerequisite checks, course registration, course and degree transferability, current GPA, financial aid status, and any holds on a student’s account, as well as an intentional path toward graduation. Classes are grouped by semester according to the degree, and each class lists pertinent information related to which semester it is offered, if it has any prerequisites, and if so, if they have been met, as well as any internship requirements. Classes that require prior or additional approval are locked and not open to self-registration by students without contacting the designated academic chair or faculty member. While web-based advising platforms have given the traditionally untrained faculty advisors an edge, there is still an aspect to learning those systems as well.

Despite the increasing desire by non-traditional students to pursue, plan, and control their own learning (Roessger et al., 2019), web-based advising platforms such as Ellucian Degree Works and Aviso Enterprise have removed the potential stigma of reaching out to a faculty advisor for help as students self-advise, due to the ease of each program, and the newly created common ground between student and faculty advisor (Price et al., 2021; Vijjapu, 2019; Zambito, 2015). Students who planned to self-advise but found themselves requiring faculty assistance feel confident to ask questions since both parties use the same online advising system. Faculty training on such web-based advising systems as Ellucian Degree Works and Aviso Enterprise is also a necessity, as typically, only advising staff in centralized advising models are formally trained on them (Williamson et al., 2014). Cultivating relationships with students is a full college effort, and adding self-service advising platforms continues to strengthen the foundation of the student-faculty connection in order to provide the best possible experience and service to students (Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Henderson and Pollock, 2021; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Price et al., 2021). However, while web-based advising platforms do give both faculty and students the confidence they need to work independently or in a collaborative fashion, the platforms do lack the human aspect of advising. The human aspect includes faculty who can share stories, discuss graduation and future career opportunities, act as subject matter experts in their designated field, as well as students who can share their concerns, ask their questions, and learn from the faculty advisors as they are mentored.

Intrusive Faculty Advising

Intrusive advising, or aggressive faculty advising, allows students to expel less energy in navigating their degree path and course selection each semester (Donaldson et al., 2016; Grote et al., 2022). Typically, intrusive advising is when a faculty member reaches out to the student to initiate the advising session, and when the educator is met with uncertainty or no response at all, they will continue to contact the student until there is an adequate response. Part of intrusive advising includes the faculty member explaining what classes the student is required to take as part of their degree completion plan, creating a solid plan toward graduation, as well as physically registering the student for their chosen classes (Grote et al., 2022). While some institutions only utilize intrusive advising with a select student population based on their academic and personal needs (Cholewa et al., 2017), such as underprepared or inexperienced students, it does eliminate the stress associated with seeking out transfer information for students who plan to advance to a four-year institution after they graduate with their two-year degree

(Grote et al., 2022), and is proven to increase retention by strengthening the student-faculty member bond (Donaldson et al., 2016; Ryan, 2013; Smith, 2007). Intrusive advising, while not commonly used within two-year institutions currently, is becoming increasingly popular and accepted by administration and faculty. Students have also reported appreciating the great lengths that their faculty advisors go to during the intrusive advising process in order to help the student (Cholewa et al., 2017; Grote et al., 2022).

Faculty Advisors: Enrollment and Retention

One of the most valuable benefits of faculty advising, other than the student connection, is an increase in student enrollment and retention. The faculty advising model has been proven to show an increase in enrollment and retention of students by various researchers (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017). Several reasons contribute to the increase in enrollment and retention, which includes an improved student connection to the college, especially since traditionally, most students who are enrolled at a two-year college live off campus, and a positive effect on student achievement and development (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Students who feel more connected to their school, professors, and studies are more likely to return the next semester and work towards graduation than those who lack viable student-faculty relationships or any strong ties to the institution (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Smith & Harris, 2021).

Faculty Perspectives of Faculty Advising

The faculty perspective on academic advising is two-fold. On one side, faculty are eager to help and guide students through their degree plans and towards graduation, and on the other, they are already overwhelmed and burned out with an incredible amount of responsibility outside of their normal teaching load (Baird, 2020). Faculty are not typically exposed to formal training on advising (Baird, 2020; Gordon et al., 2000; Myers & Dyer, 2005) and often feel inadequate when they are forced to take student advisees on (Baird, 2020; Gordon et al., 2000).

One of the negatives of inadequate training is it can lead to an increase in personal bias brought into advising by faculty members (Coleman & Smith, 2021). Faculty may try to intentionally or unintentionally persuade students to take courses that are low in enrollment in hopes of helping the course run, they may try to coerce students to take one of their own courses to increase their personal enrollment numbers or may misadvise entirely due to lack of knowledge from inadequate or missing training (Coleman & Smith, 2021). Coleman and Smith (2021) reported that with uninformed faculty advisors also come misadvised placement decisions by the faculty advisors. 47% percent of the students in English classes and 29% of the students in Math classes, who their faculty advisors felt were placed too high, earned a C or better, and most of the students in the English classes earned an A or a B (Coleman & Smith, 2021). Without proper training on prerequisites and placement exams, faculty advisors can become subjective with the placement of their advisees into classes, specifically the general education courses. With misadvising comes frustration on the student side (McArthur, 2005) as well as on the administrative side (Kapinos, 2020). When faculty are not trained and are expected to perform at levels outside of their reach, they begin to lose interest and refuse to participate in voluntary tasks, such as faculty advising (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020).

Student Perspectives of Faculty Advising

Student frustration with academic advising, something that should be a benefit to them, can spread like wildfire through an institution. One student may have a poor experience with an advisor who misadvised him on his degree path and is now several courses out of sequence

(McArthur, 2005), and may tell another not to attend faculty advising sessions because of his experience. One adverse comment from a disgruntled student may result in an onslaught of negative comments and complaints from students to administration, which trickles down to the faculty as perceived incompetence, inadequacy, and unprofessionalism, when the issue originated with either no faculty training on advising or insufficient training (Coleman & Smith, 2021; Kapinos, 2020; McCarthur, 2005). Hatch and Garcia (2017) argued that to reduce and prevent future dissatisfaction, institutional funding should be allocated to professional development activities such as advising training sessions for faculty.

Student dissatisfaction with faculty advising may result in more self-service advising by students, which also leads to mistakes and frustration with the natural lack of help as students complete tasks on their own (Coleman & Smith, 2021; Hu, 2020). Some students, similar to their professors, lack the ability to self-advise for the same reason that faculty struggle with it: they are inexperienced in it and have never been trained. In terms of communication between admissions, a centralized advising center, and students, many are completely unaware that they have a faculty advisor because they were never alerted as to who their advisor was, never introduced to their faculty advisor, or their faculty advisor was never available for the student to meet with (McCarthur, 2005). When students do meet with their faculty advisor, some of the complaints include frustration that there is a tangible disconnect between the registrar’s office and the faculty advisor, that the faculty advisors do not have enough time to dedicate to the student if more than one issue needs to be discussed, and the dissatisfaction with faculty advisors not having access to all of the necessary advising and enrollment programs since they are not part of the centralized advising office (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020; McCarthur, 2005). Many faculty view academic advising and registration as two completely separate issues and do not follow through with the student in order to register them for their classes (Baird, 2020). However, when properly trained and given adequate time to complete student advising, faculty advising can result in numerous benefits to the student and institution. Students have reported enjoying the insider knowledge that faculty advisors have about their degrees, which includes transfer requirement knowledge and procedures at neighboring universities (Grote et al., 2022; Hutson, 2013; Zambito, 2015). Students also report appreciating the benefit of an improved student-faculty relationship that develops from faculty advising sessions (Hutson, 2013).

To combat the frustration felt on both sides when faculty are either complacent about advising or blatantly against it, in addition to training, incentives can become a valuable resource (Baird, 2020). Integrating faculty advising as a mandatory task for each faculty member will help for general cohesion across the college so that all faculty have a shared vision, and instead of simply adding it to their already robust list of responsibilities, offering a course release in its place would boost morale and instill in faculty that administration has their best interest in mind (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020). Faculty morale, while sometimes left to middle management or academic chairs within the college, changes the landscape of an institution from the ground up, beginning with the students.

Faculty Advising & Funding Sources

Federal and state funding sources have experienced shortages and downfalls recently, and less money is being allocated to two-year institutions because of it (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016). Institutions have implemented the use of faculty advising in place of a more traditional outsourced or centralized approach that would require more financial resources in an effort to combat limited funding sources (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; D’Amico et al., 2014). The faculty advising approach has positives and negatives associated with it, with the biggest downfall being the fact that faculty are not traditionally trained to advise students (Grote et al., 2022; Kapinos, 2020). Although faculty are subject matter experts within their own discipline, they are rarely versed in academic advising and can feel inadequate when their institution asks them to participate (Baird, 2020; Gordon et al., 2000; Myers & Dyer, 2005). Faculty feel less inclined to participate in advising efforts due to their lack of knowledge and training on the subject, and even when offered optional training sessions, some tend to opt out due to already having too much on their plate in terms of teaching, holding office hours, grading, setting time aside to work on mandatory institutional committees, and involving themselves in the local community and industry (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020; Smith & Harris, 2021).

Shared Advising Model

Institutions that utilize a shared advising model use the services of both the centralized advising staff and the subject matter expertise of faculty advisors under the decentralized advising model together (He & Hutson, 2016). Typically, under the shared advising model, first-time students are advised by an advising staff member and then transition to faculty advisors once their first semester is complete (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014). Under the shared advising model, once transitioned from a designated staff advisor to a faculty advisor, students may shift faculty advisors throughout their academic career leading up to graduation (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; He & Hutson, 2016).

Foundational Framework: Communication is Key

The shared advising model is a newer type of strategy that colleges and universities have implemented to join forces between the student support services side of the institution and the academic side (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). The shared advising model consists of newly admitted students beginning with a staff advisor to discuss first-semester courses and then transitioning to a faculty advisor for all future advisors. The staff advisor handles all of the initial admittance tasks, such as guiding the student on their choice of major, choosing classes and registering the student for their first semester, and creating a tentative graduation path (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). The faculty advisor steps in as of the second semester to choose and schedule all upcoming classes as well as review the student's projected graduation path and revise if necessary (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). For the remainder of the student's tenure at that institution, the faculty advisor assumes most of the course selection and registration responsibilities but does rely on the staff advisor during periods of requested time off, scheduled breaks as staff tend to have different weeks off than faculty, or during exams as faculty carry heavy teaching loads (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022). While the staff advisor's main responsibilities are upfront, when the student is initially admitted to the institution and selected program, and then intermittently throughout the student's academic career, both parties do need to keep an open line of communication for questions and referrals (Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). The partnership between the staff advisor and faculty advisor does not end after the first semester, and in order for it to work correctly, both sides must continue to strengthen it semester to semester.

Forging a partnership with faculty from academic departments and staff advisors within admissions creates a level playfield that should allow for both sides to come together as one and work together as a team. Institutions have conducted research that shows a true partnership between the two may provide better results for students, contrary to utilizing the centralized or decentralized advising models that many institutions are accustomed to (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). However, colleges and universities have encountered learning curves related to the newly devised shared advising model, and communication is at the root of the issue (Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020).

Communication continues to be the foundation of what holds an institution together, and when lost or nonexistent to begin with, the framework of what holds it up begins to deteriorate. Institutions that have implemented a shared advising model that combines the efforts of the student support services side of the institution and the academic side have been noted to reap benefits on a grand scale or have drastically failed due to a lack of communication (Picton & Kahu, 2021; Schneider, 2019; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). Students are the ones reaping the rewards from a college or university’s ability to brilliantly weave the two sides of the institution together or suffering the consequences of an institution’s lack of communication between its two sides. Colleges and universities who have implemented a shared advising model continue to struggle with the sometimes unnatural and progressive strategy of joining both sides of the institution together to work as a team to better serve their students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Mangundu, 2022; Schneider, 2019; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020; Tippetts et al., 2022; Zick et al., 2022).

Faculty and Staff Advisors: Both Sides of the House

Faculty from academic departments and staff advisors in admissions historically do not work together in any capacity. The shared advising model ties both of these traditionally separate entities together in order to best serve students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). While communication remains the key to the progressive partnership between staff advisors and faculty, what nurtures it over time is each side’s willingness and desire to not only work together as a cohesive unit, but also continue to work separately at times in order to best serve the student. Finding the appropriate balance between working together as a unit as well as individually, is the biggest obstacle that both staff and faculty advisors report (Queen, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Both parties are accustomed to working at their own speed and ability and factoring in someone else's work behavior and response time can be difficult. Timeliness is reported as an issue on behalf of both the staff and faculty advisor, with one typically having to wait on the other person for a response in order to answer a student's question or resolve their issue as a whole (Nix et al., 2021; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Stratton et al., 2022).

However, the alternative side to the developing relationship between faculty and staff advisors under the shared advising model are the rewards and benefits that both parties reap (Reimers, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022). Potential rewards and benefits include fewer tasks for one individual person if the workload now falls on the shoulders of two people, an open line of communication between both sides of the institution, student support services and academics, one party resolving some of the student's questions or issues before referring them to the other department, and overall response time (Reimers, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Suárez & Beatty, 2022; Zick et al., 2022). Students report having two individuals to ask questions to is better than one, as wait times for that one individual may be extensive at certain times during the year when academic advising is at its heaviest (Chang et al., 2022; Petrucci & Rivera-Figueroa, 2022; Reimers, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Suárez & Beatty, 2022).

Marketing and Academic Advising

Marketing efforts made on behalf of a higher education institution in order to increase the awareness of registration periods for new and returning students have proven to be influential for students (Chase et al., 2019). Specifically for returning students, targeted marketing outreach efforts aim to notify and direct students' decision-making after enrollment is complete (Chase et al., 2019). Targeted marketing outreach efforts directed towards new students may include degree and major choice as well as campus location (Chase et al., 2019).

Marketing in a Post-Pandemic Era

The marketing department at a college or university can play a pivotal role in the public relations that surround enrollment for a new semester, the launch of new academic programs, as well as other campus-wide student events. Traditionally, marketing efforts that are initiated by a college or university target the institution as a whole, not specific departments or programs (Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022; Kisiołek et al., 2021). Internally, the budget for marketing efforts aimed at college-wide events falls under the office of academic affairs, while budgets for individual programs or departments are housed under those areas specifically (Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022; Kisiołek et al., 2021). Budgets within the office of academic affairs are much larger than the individual departmental budgets, so marketing efforts on behalf of the individual programs are typically much smaller in nature. However, many colleges and universities are implementing a progressive approach to enrollment and retention and branching out to incorporate the marketing department in those efforts (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022; Hassanein, 2022; Kisiołek et al., 2021).

Marketing efforts on behalf of the college itself or individual departments in an attempt to increase enrollment and retention, while not new in theory, have become more widespread in a post-pandemic era (Angelo et al., 2021; Hassanein, 2022; Hayes et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic catapulted the world of higher education into the unknown, with many students not returning to their full-time or even part-time status as they were pre-pandemic. Because of the pandemic, institutions lost millions in revenue due to an unprecedented decline in student tuition (Angelo et al., 2021; Hayes et al., 2021; Kisiołek et al., 2021). Colleges and universities were forced to think differently in terms of how they would get their students back in a post-pandemic era, and incorporating a new marketing strategy became a widely used tactic. Administrators at institutions began to look at marketing in a different light, and during a time when budgets were more robust than normal at the mid and end point of their fiscal years due to not spending any money on travel during the pandemic, institutions were able to redirect that money towards a new cause: marketing efforts to increase enrollment and retention (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Hassanein, 2022; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021).

Marketing and Advising Models

Whether an institution uses a centralized, decentralized, or shared advising model, targeted marketing efforts that focus on increasing overall student enrollment and retention can have a great effect (Hayes et al., 2021; Phillips, 2020). Institutions that use a centralized advising model tend to relay control to the marketing team itself and provide little to no input as far as the design and style of the campaigns (Barragan et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020; Tudor, 2018). The reason behind very little input from a centralized advising model to the marketing team is that the staff advisors that work within a centralized advising model have no insider ownership or deep-rooted connection to the reason behind advising students (Phillips, 2020; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Staff advisors are there to do a job: correctly advise students and successfully lead them to graduation (Mangundu, 2022; Mbindyo et al., 2021; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Faculty advisors who are part of a decentralized advising model, specifically those who work within an enrollment-driven academic department, work internally with the other faculty and program chair in their program to develop customized marketing campaigns that precisely target those that are currently enrolled in order to increase retention (Barton, 2021; Hayes et al., 2021; Tudor, 2018). Faculty advisors have insider knowledge related to what their current students prefer in terms of flexible start options for classes, preferred modalities, and possible degree or certificate graduation pathways (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). Having insider knowledge allows the faculty advisors and their program colleagues to create specific marketing campaigns via various mediums, such as social media, television, radio, outdoor media, etc., that they have prior knowledge of that their students frequent and appreciate (Barton, 2021; Nuseir & El Refae, 2021; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017). Staff advisors who work under a centralized advising model do not have the luxury of having prior knowledge of students, which leads to a much weaker marketing campaign (Phillips, 2020; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Faculty and staff advisors who work together under a shared advising model share the benefit of possible shared departmental budgets as well as shared insider knowledge. Faculty advisors are able to share their intel regarding what their current students like and appreciate with their staff advisors to create a highly customized marketing campaign (Barton, 2021; Hayes et al., 2021; Nuseir & El Refae, 2021; Phillips, 2020; Tudor, 2018).

Targeted Advising Marketing Efforts: Advantages and Disadvantages

There are several advantages to implementing a customized marketing campaign at an institution geared towards increasing enrollment and retention to aid in the academic advising process. Some advantages that come from the students who view the targeted marketing campaigns include the following: they experience a stronger connection with the institution and, when done correctly, feel as if the marketing campaign was directed specifically towards them; a faster turnaround time to either register for classes or schedule an appointment to meet with their advisor in order to choose classes; and it acts as a pathway that allows the advisor to strengthen and nurture their relationship with the student over time (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Tudor, 2018).

Students desire to feel wanted, and broad marketing campaigns implemented either by the college's marketing team as a whole or by individual departments who focus their efforts on a much more targeted marketing campaign fulfill that need (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Tudor, 2018).

Staff and faculty advisors who work together under a shared advising model have a unique opportunity to work together in order to push enrollment and retention statistics above and beyond (Phillips, 2020; Queen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Learning how to collaborate effectively is typically the first challenge in the staff and faculty advisor equation, but with time, training, and patience, it can bloom into an educational masterpiece. Under the shared advising model, faculty and staff advisors must view the student as their clients and treat them appropriately (Hayes et al., 2021; Phillips, 2020; Picton & Kahu, 2021). Ushering students in and out of an advising appointment just in order to get to the next student is poor practice and only weakens the incredibly important relationship and tie between the student and advisor (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013). Students desire to feel heard and understood, especially in terms of planning their educational path and success journey (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Tudor, 2018). Advisors, staff, or faculty need to address those emotions expressed by students and apply them to how they handle them during an advising appointment in order to ensure that students report the highest level of satisfaction. Satisfied students are more likely to return the next semester compared to those that leave feeling dissatisfied, unheard, or unimportant by their advisors (Hayes et al., 2021; Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Phillips, 2020; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Tudor, 2018).

Possible disadvantages of implementing a customized marketing campaign at an institution geared towards increasing enrollment and retention to aid in the academic advising process include spending a large portion of either the marketing department's budget on targeted ad campaigns or exhausting most, if not all, of an individual department's marketing budget, as well as mistargeted ad campaigns, or students feeling indifferent towards the ads (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Tudor, 2018). An institution's fiscal responsibilities and obligations include very little to no breathing room as far as increasing the budget at mid-year in order to accommodate new or unplanned expenses, so marketing campaign expenses should be meticulously planned out prior to finalizing the fiscal year's budget for either the marketing department or an individual program (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Tudor, 2018). While the COVID-19 pandemic left breathing room in many institution's budgets across the country, a different type of unprecedented event could have a completely opposite effect on the institution and wreak havoc on its budget to accommodate for the unknown (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Hassanein, 2022; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021).

While members of the marketing team should be experts at their job and have extreme precision in their targeted marketing campaigns, there is always room for error. Staff and faculty advisors working as part of a shared or decentralized advising model may experience a much greater level of failure associated with the disadvantages of mistargeted campaigns due to a lack of marketing expertise (Brown-Nevers, 2021; Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022). Staff and faculty advisors are required to be the subject matter experts of their field: advising students effectively and successfully (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017). While sometimes immersed in a project that is traditionally outside of their normal vantage point of expertise, these individuals may find themselves underwater in terms of the success of their targeted marketing campaigns (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Hassanein, 2022; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021). Wasted financial resources, manpower, and intellect are some of the losses that may be associated with failed marketing campaigns created and implemented by inexperienced staff and faculty advisors. Incorrect placement of outdoor media such as digital and print billboards, wrong time segments purchased for radio, and improper social media platforms chosen for campaigns are all possible breakdowns of a failed marketing campaign (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021).

Students experience a feeling of indifference towards the targeted marketing campaigns can be seen as an immense failure by the institution regardless of who created the campaign (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Hassanein, 2022). Wasted money and lack of results lead to poor performance reviews and potential disciplinary action if it occurs on an ongoing basis. Faculty and staff advisors at institutions that conduct market and industry research on how to correctly create and implement a targeted marketing campaign that focuses on increasing enrollment and retention experience greater results than those who do not (Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022; Hayes et al., 2021; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021).

Targeted Advising Marketing Efforts: Types of Campaigns

Social media, television, radio, and outdoor media ad campaigns are among the most popular by colleges and universities specific to their targeted demographic. Social media has consistently been the first chosen marketing channel by marketing departments and advisors because of its integrated demographic and geographic capabilities (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2022). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok have expansive tools and resources within their apps that allow even an inexperienced individual to create and launch a strong targeted marketing campaign (Angelo et al., 2021; Avogo et al., 2022). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are popular because they take a lot of the guesswork out of the effort surrounding how to create a targeted marketing campaign by incorporating tutorials and training on how to improve your ad campaigns and target your specific market. Another benefit to using social media as the chosen platform for advisors who implement targeted marketing campaigns directed toward increasing enrollment and retention is the feedback and reporting analytics that the apps are capable of producing (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2022). Manipulating data derived from social media platforms can be extremely difficult for those that are not familiar with it, so having it generated by one of the platforms is an extreme advantage.

While some institutions tend to play it safe and stay with social media due to the sheer volume of students who are social media users, many institutions have started to think outside the box and incorporate other mediums. Outdoor media traditionally has a much higher price point than social media and, because of this price difference, has been utilized more since the COVID-19 pandemic due to unplanned areas of budget excess (Angelo et al., 2021; Brown-Nevers, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2022). Colleges and universities who previously could not spend $800+ for a two-week digital billboard stint found themselves able to spend a bit more freely than ever before (Angelo et al., 2021; Hayes, 2021; Kisiołek et al., 2021; Sullivan et al., 2022). Faculty advisors that are part of decentralized advising models have reported that the increased use of outdoor media, digital billboards specifically, has had a positive influence on their student enrollment and retention rates in a post-pandemic era (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2022). While social media campaigns are easier to direct toward a target market and require less thought upfront on how to do so, digital billboards require an extensive amount of planning before the launch of the campaign (Angelo et al., 2021; Avogo et al., 2022). Faculty advisors have to be well-versed in where to place the digital billboards, what time of the day to run them, and for how long each day, as well as how long the duration of the campaign should be. Pricing depends on all three factors: location, live time each day, and the total duration of the campaign (Avogo et al., 2022; Sullivan et al., 2022). While an extensive amount of planning and research is required upfront before the launch of a campaign, there is a lot of room for uncertainty related to digital billboards (Avogo et al., 2022; Sullivan et al., 2022). Returning or potential students may drive by the ad too quickly to notice, other ads may have allocated more money to consume a larger daily run time which overshadows the targeted marketing campaign launched by the institution, or as mentioned previously, with the overall advantages and disadvantages of a targeted marketing campaign, they may feel indifferent towards them.

Targeted Advising Marketing Efforts: Student Incentives

Paired with the targeted marketing campaigns implemented by an institution to increase overall student enrollment and retention on behalf of staff or faculty advisors, student incentives to register have generated positive results (Angelo et al., 2021; Edwards, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021). Although the incentives may sometimes be small or trivial to others in nature, to students, they can be the determining factor to make them return to school or to register for classes at all (Edwards, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; McKinney et al., 2022). Raffles, sweepstakes, and contests are all effective ways to entice potentially new and returning students on campus to schedule an appointment with an advisor to choose and register for classes (Barton, 2021; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022). Staff and faculty advisors have reported a larger influx of students coming in to register for classes when incentives are part of the targeted marketing campaign compared to when they are not (Edwards, 2020; Hayes et al., 2021; McKinney et al., 2022; Phillips, 2020). Incentives may include winning a tablet from a contest for registering early, to promotions offered by local restaurants for making an initial appointment with an advisor, to waived technology fees, or bookstore credits (Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022). While the effect of incentives has been reported as favorable by faculty and staff advisors, and it does lead to a higher rate of student enrollment and retention in some areas, some staff advisors also report that it adds more responsibility to their already long list of tasks associated with advising students (Edwards, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; McKinney et al., 2022). Incorporating the issuance of incentives to students by advisors leads to longer advising appointments and, sometimes, more administrative tasks that fall on behalf of the advisor (Barton, 2021; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022, Tudor, 2018). However, faculty advisors that are part of a decentralized advising model who work within an enrollment-driven department or program report little negativity surrounding the issuance of incentives as they acknowledge that the targeted marketing campaign strategy was effective and they were successful in getting the student to register for classes (Bennet et al., 2021; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022).

An unplanned for and added bonus associated with targeted marketing campaigns that include incentives would be the positive word-of-mouth advertisement shared student-to-student or student-to-potential student (Avogo et al., 2022; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022). Just as consumers who leave a store feeling satisfied and well taken care of share their positive experience with others, students do the same when they leave their advisor’s office feeling heard, understood, and having all of their issues resolved (Angelo et al., 2021; Avogo et al., 2022; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022; Sullivan, 2022). Students will share their positive experiences with their family, friends, fellow classmates, and even other professors or staff within the college and university as free marketing (Avogo et al., 2022; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022). However, just as consumers share their positive experiences with others, they tend to share their negative experiences with others at an even higher level. Unhappy or dissatisfied students will not wait to share their negative encounters with others; it will be at the forefront of their minds, and they will share it much more rapidly compared to a positive experience (Avogo et al., 2022; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022). Free marketing, or word of mouth by students regarding their personal experiences with their staff or faculty advisors, no matter what the type of targeted marketing campaign, incentive or no incentive, should be taken very seriously by college and university leaders, staff, and faculty as it can either lead to a much higher rate of retention and increase enrollment or just the opposite, lower retention and a decreased rate of enrollment (Avogo et al., 2022; Edwards, 2020; McKinney et al., 2022).

Summary

Researchers have conducted numerous studies on the effect of faculty and staff advising from enrollment, retention, student outcome, and achievement perspectives (Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Setterbo et al., 2017). Studies have proven that there is a connection between faculty advising and strengthening the student-faculty relationship to increased enrollment and retention (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2013; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Ryan, 2013; Setterbo et al., 2017). These studies have demonstrated that faculty advising plays a critically important role and, in addition to the aforementioned benefits, also leads to an increase in completion rates, an elevated student connection to the college, a positive influence on student achievement and development, a reduction of barriers at two-year institutions, all due to the one-on-one student-faculty relationship model which offers individualized service and personalized advising (D’Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Lockwood et al., 2013; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

While extensive research has been conducted on the various benefits of faculty and staff advising, the majority of it tends to focus on the student benefit in terms of achievement (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Habley et al., 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Further research is necessary to focus on what specific effect a decentralized or shared advising model, which focuses on faculty advising, has on enrollment and retention at two-year institutions, specifically in a post-pandemic era. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, advising was much more centralized and housed at the institution within admissions or a main advising center (Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; Walsh et al., 2021). Once institutions closed and went entirely remote during the pandemic, advising also shifted (Cheslock & Jaquette, 2022; Kisiołek et al., 2021). Administration scrambled to find the best way to continue advising efforts across the institution to hopefully keep enrollment up or flat, but once the traditional format of a centralized advising system which was conducted mostly in person was eliminated, they began outsourcing their need to their own faculty (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; Walsh et al., 2021). Faculty, while hesitant to take on the additional responsibility, felt obligated under the current circumstances and began to advise students remotely, which had not previously happened on a large scale (Henderson & Pollock, 2021; Price et al., 2021). The efforts were slow to start, but as the momentum gained and faculty learned how to navigate an entirely remote educational landscape, the hidden benefits of not only faculty advising under a decentralized advising model but also remote faculty advising began to reveal themselves to institutions (Brammer & Clark, 2020; Kamssu & Kouam, 2021; Walsh et al., 2021).

Decreasing enrollment and retention has been a long-standing issue within higher education throughout the two and four-year landscape for different reasons (Geisinger & Raman, 2013; Hossler et al., 2009). Declining enrollment and retention have been an issue, specifically at two-year institutions where potential students are not motivated by athletic scholarships, luxurious housing units, or lavish meal plans (Geisinger & Raman, 2013; Hossler et al., 2009). Traditionally, the typical student that attends a two-year school chooses that route for one of three reasons: 1) a two-year college is a less expensive route to accomplish the first two years of a four-year degree, 2) an individual who only needs a two-year degree for a specific job or job market, or 3) an individual who wants to learn a technical trade (HVAC, plumbing, electrical lineman, etc.) while pursuing a two-year Associate in Art or Science degree (Bahr, 2013; Nielsen, 2015; Strawn, 2019).

Further research is necessary in order to provide a solution to the problem, which is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students on a continuous basis (Barbera et al., 2020; Hassanein, 2022). The results from additional research will potentially lay the groundwork for two-year institutions across the country on how to implement faculty advising efforts effectively and successfully, all while moving towards the same end goal: increased enrollment and retention (Smith & Harris, 2021; Troxel, 2018). Efforts are needed in order to increase enrollment and retention at two-year institutions, and faculty advising is part of that initiative (Harrell & Reglin, 2018; Moser, 2017; Troxel, 2018; Vianden & Barlow, 2015).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges (D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Setterbo et al., 2017). The proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges will be generally defined as increased retention and recruitment. The following sections and subsections are explained in Chapter Three: research design, research questions, setting and participants, researcher positionality, procedures, data collection plan, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

For this qualitative research study based on the influence of faculty involvement on the retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges, the hermeneutic phenomenology approach has been selected as the primary research method. The hermeneutic phenomenology approach, founded by van Manen, is defined as research focused on the lived experiences of participants and interpreting their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges. The proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges will be generally defined as increased retention and recruitment. Due to the complex lived experiences of faculty that were researched and analyzed at different two-year colleges, the hermeneutic phenomenology approach was an ideal fit.

Compared to the transcendental phenomenology approach, which pulls from the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology, as well as the statistical analysis procedures of Van Kaam and Colaizzi, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach focuses specifically on the lived experiences of those directly involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hermeneutical phenomenology is a qualitative method based on textual interpretation, which means the researcher listens to the stories told by the participants of the study and then codes and deciphers various themes from their text or words (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Phenomenological hermeneutic research must begin in solid thought, with the effort to construct into words what was at stake in lived experience (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). The hermeneutical circle, conceived in 1927 by Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, is an integral part of phenomenological hermeneutical research (Lengyel, 2018). The hermeneutic circle is a method used by researchers that demonstrates an understanding of text or words established by our personal understanding of each specific part individually, including our own perception of how each specific part relates to the whole body of text (Lengyel, 2018).

For this research study, 12 interviews with participants at various two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states were conducted, in addition to focus groups and questionnaires. The participants' lived experiences about how faculty involvement has increased the retention of current students and the recruitment of new students were listened to and recorded. The stories differ in nature dependent upon the participant and setting, but the results of increased retention and recruitment are similar. The hermeneutical phenomenological approach allows the researcher to consider the diverse lived experiences of the participants while collecting evidence that is similar in nature (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The hermeneutical phenomenological approach is unique in that it allows you to listen to stories from people of diverse backgrounds, all leading down the same path of production: increased retention of current students and recruitment of new students at two-year colleges (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021).

Research Questions

The role of research questions in qualitative studies is a critical component of conducting a valid and accurate study, and it governs the method by which the study will be conducted (Mantzoukas, 2008). The continuing process of questioning is an essential part of understanding the lives, stories, and viewpoints of others (Agee, 2009). The following section lists the central and three sub-research questions for this study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of faculty with increased retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges?

Sub-Question One

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the retention of current students?

Sub-Question Two

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the recruitment of new students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the lived experiences of faculty on how the centralized advising and recruitment departments work cohesively with them to aid in the continued retention of current students and the recruitment of new students?

Setting and Participants

The setting and participant section identifies where the study will be conducted and who its contributors will be (Patton, 2002). Defining both the setting and participants for a study aids the reader in understanding why both were chosen for the study and what roles they play in the results (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). The following section discusses the setting and participant criterion for this study.

Setting

The setting of this study consists of two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states. The two-year colleges are diverse in nature, in that each public institution will have a varied student population of mixed races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Edenfield & McBrayer, 2021). The two-year colleges that were used throughout this study offer various diplomas, certificates, and degrees among their wide array of academic majors (Bemmel et al., 2008). The setting of two-year community and technical colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states was chosen due to their similar geographic region, climate, student population, and degree selection. All of the two-year institutions included in the study have the traditional hierarchy framework of higher education, which includes the president, vice presidents, academic deans, academic chairs, and faculty. Ethical considerations have been made throughout the study to ensure complete privacy and confidentiality through the use of individual and institutional pseudonyms (Gemma, 2021; Köhn & Siré, 2022).

Participants

The sample of participants used in this study is purposeful and criterion-based in nature (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by having similar characteristics of position or rank and involvement in student advising for at least one calendar or academic year. The sample consists of 12 faculty members and academic chairs at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states (Browne-Ferrigno, 2012; Coleman & Smith, 2021; Hern et al., 2019; Kapinos, 2020; Peterson, 2016). No more than four participants per institution have been included in the study to maintain substance and to avoid saturation or the inundation of repetitive data (Saunders et al., 2018; van

Rijnsoever, 2017). The participants in the study possess diverse backgrounds in teaching and industry experience, as well as work in various academic departments at the institution. The criterion for participating in this study includes participants that are faculty or academic chairs at a two-year institution in the lower Southeastern states who participate in academic advising and have done so for at least one calendar or academic year (Coleman & Smith, 2021; Hern et al., 2019; Kapinos, 2020). To protect the privacy of committed participants, consent letters were administered electronically, which included a description of the study, a confidentiality clause that ensures complete privacy and discretion of names and institutions, as well as a detailed description of the criterion for participants.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher's positionality within a study refers to the researcher's worldview regarding their philosophical, ontological, and epistemological assumptions (Holmes, 2020). Positionality also describes the researcher's take they have adopted towards a research task (Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013). The following section describes the positionality of my study in terms of my philosophical, ontological, and epistemological assumptions.

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework of social constructivism highlights who I am as a qualitative researcher. As detailed by Creswell and Poth (2018), the possible research goal of the social constructivism interpretive framework is to understand the world in which people live and work. The goal as a qualitative researcher is to observe the world around me, relate what I have observed to my research topic, and then interpret the views of my participants in my own words (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My Godly worldview as a qualitative researcher using the interpretive framework of social constructivism is one of honesty, dedication, and integrity. As noted in 2 Timothy 2:15, we are guided to “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Timothy 2:15). Timothy 2:15 expresses a desire to show God that students study and then to understand the truth of what we are researching. Strength is also a key component of being a strong qualitative researcher. Proverbs 18:10 tell us to put our faith and trust in God and that he is our support system. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Proverbs 18:10). As my Godly worldview as a qualitative researcher, I have done everything within my power to remain true and dedicated to God’s plan and intended purpose for me.

Philosophical Assumptions

In qualitative research, philosophical assumptions play an integral role not only throughout someone’s life, as these assumptions tend to be centered around an individual’s foundational values and belief systems but also in how an individual conducts research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The three philosophical assumptions qualitative researchers should address are ontological, epistemological, and axiological (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This qualitative phenomenological study is grounded in the theory of social constructivism (Vygotskiĭ & Cole, 1978), as it relates to understanding the world in which people live and work in (Creswell & Poth, 2018; He & Hutson, 2016), the way that individuals search to comprehend their own world and create their own specific meanings that correlate to their individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ghosh et al., 2016). Using the interpretive frameworks of social constructivism, the ontological beliefs, or the nature of reality, describe that multiple realities are created through our own lived experiences and connections with other people (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemological beliefs, or how reality is known, under social constructivism, explain that reality is designed between the researcher and those researched and is sculpted by individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The third philosophical assumption, the axiological beliefs, or the role of values under social constructivism, explains that individual beliefs are respected and are negotiated among individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontological Assumption

As a researcher writing a phenomenological study, the ontological assumption of examining the nature of reality and its characteristics is extremely important (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In phenomenological studies, the researcher focuses on the lived experiences of the participants and interprets their told stories (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher of this study, I committed myself to listening to the stories of contributing participants and took their diverse realities into account. Collected stories from participants on their own lived experiences related to the study funnel into narrowed themes and more focused ideas. The varied realities that the participants live in are what add depth, complexity, and strength to the study. My role as a researcher of this phenomenological study was to ensure that my own personal bias has been removed from any scholarly declarations made throughout the study and to focus on the lived experiences of the participants, who all have diverse backgrounds, education, experience, and upbringings.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions refer to what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a qualitative researcher, it is important to get as close as possible to the participants of the study to increase the overall awareness and comprehension of the participant’s story or lived experience that the researcher has asked of them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was beneficial to the study for me to spend as much time as possible with my participants, and doing so nurtured an environment where the relationship evolved so that I became more acclimated with those involved in the study, and it allowed me to gain firsthand information by becoming immersed in their environment, who they are, and what their story is.

Axiological Assumption

In a qualitative research study, axiological assumptions refer to the role of values in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to omit any personal bias or influence towards the study and only include the input of the contributing participants. Phenomenological studies are based on the lived experiences of the participants and interpreting their told stories, not the opinions of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, I acknowledge my personal bias towards the topic of discussing the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges as an academic chair who has been involved in a similar type of strategy previously. At no point in time did my experience with the subject matter, my own individual opinions of the advantages or disadvantages of it, or my recommendations play a role in this study. To ensure that all personal bias remained void of the study, there was not any data collected or contributing participants used from the institution where I currently work. All research that comprised this study consisted of the data derived from the contributing participants outside of my current institution.

Researcher's Role

As an academic chair and professor at a two-year college in the lower Southeastern states who has had extensive experience with advising students, I share the same lived experiences of the participants being studied in this research. As the researcher of this hermeneutical study, my role was to collect and analyze data, report the findings from the study, and make recommendations about further research (Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013). I do not have an existing personal relationship with any participants that are engaged in the study, and my role as a researcher at the various institutions was to function solely as the interviewer and data collector. My role as a researcher after the conclusion of collecting data was to continue to analyze, report data, and summarize results. While potential bias may include my existing passion for the topic of this study, it did not sway the results in any way, and the hermeneutic circle was used to remove my biases and bracket my experiences (Lengyel, 2018).

Procedures

The procedures section of a study is one of the most important components for evaluating research (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). The following section describes the necessary steps to conduct this study in terms of all required permissions, its recruitment plan, as well as its data collection plan, and the trustworthiness of the study. An effectively organized procedures section provides future scholars with a roadmap of how to replicate the study for their own potential research (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

Permissions

For this study, all the necessary permissions were obtained prior to reaching out to any potential participants. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an organizational body that was formed to safeguard the rights and well-being of individuals sought after to recruit in order to engage in research pursuits conducted within the canopy of the institution with which it is associated and their approval letter is listed as Appendix A (Johnson, 2008). Informed consent is another permission that will be included as it will notify the potential participants of the study and what their participation will consist of (Johnson, 2008). The electronic consent forms for each participant are referenced in more detail in the next section.

Recruitment Plan

Potential participants were identified using the three following strategies: a) emailing academic chairs at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states who are listed as faculty advisors on their institution's website, b) emailing faculty at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states who are listed as faculty advisors on their institution's website, and c) using a snowball strategy where current participants recommend or nominate other academic chairs or faculty that are interested in participating (Browne-Ferrigno, 2012; Hern et al., 2019; Peterson, 2016). Recruitment letters were electronically sent to potential participants asking for their involvement (Miranda et al., 2021) and are referenced as Appendices B and C. The letters include a description of the study, a detailed description of the criterion for participants, and an introduction to a confidentiality clause that explains the use of pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants and their institutions if they choose to participate.

The sample size for this study consists of 12 participants who are in an academic chair or faculty role at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states and have experience in academic advising for at least one calendar or academic year (Coleman & Smith, 2021; Kapinos, 2020). All participants of the study completed the questionnaire and participated in an individual interview. Two focus groups were conducted for this study and consisted of four and six participants from various institutions, and the researcher-led and moderated these sessions. Once participants accepted the terms of the study and agreed to participate via the recruitment form, they were automatically linked to the electronic consent form as the next approval based on their data collection approach. The consent forms are joined with the recruitment letters on the same document and are referenced as Appendices B and C. The consent forms explain the purpose of the study, potential risks, and benefits of participating in the study, a confidentiality clause that details how individuals were protected throughout the study, how data collected is secured and protected, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any point (Browne-Ferrigno, 2012; Kapinos, 2020). A joint recruitment letter and consent form for the questionnaire and interview will be sent to all participants (Appendix B) and a separate one for those selected for a focus group (Appendix C). Upon submission of the electronic consent form, the researcher and all committed participants automatically received an electronic copy after submission via email.

Participants were presented with the consent form and the full questionnaire, all in one setting via an electronic link and submission (Somerville & Green, 2012). The consent form and the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire were both housed within the same Google form, and the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire was located at the end of the consent form. Once participants clicked the link on the Google form for the questionnaire, they were automatically brought to the SurveyMonkey page to complete the questionnaire. Once all of the participants completed the questionnaires, virtual meeting dates and times that work for both the participant and researcher were arranged for the individual interviews via email (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Robinson, 2014). Prior to the interview, a preliminary questionnaire was emailed to all participants, which consisted of four open-ended short-answer questions related to the participant's name, title, department, and institution, as well as three close-ended Likert scale-based questions on the size of the participant's home institution, student wise, years spend in higher education, and duration of time spent as a faculty advisor (Robinson, 2014) and is listed as Appendix D. The data derived from the preliminary questionnaire provided the researcher with a foundation for beginning the individual interviews. Once the interviews concluded, the organization and planning of the focus groups began. Participants for the focus groups were chosen by the researcher, and virtual meeting dates and times that work for both the participants and the researcher were arranged via email (Hennink et al., 2019; Rabiee, 2004).

Data Collection Plan

For the research topic of faculty involvement in the retention and recruitment of students at a two-year college, a progressive approach, the three data sources incorporated into the research study include questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus groups. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach is this study's chosen research design, which builds on the lived experiences of the chosen participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). The hermeneutic phenomenological approach is an excellent fit for this type of study, where data is collected at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states.

Questionnaires Data Collection Approach

The first data collection approach utilized for this study is the use of questionnaires. In terms of research studies, questionnaires are one of the most frequently used forms of data collection (Woolf & Edwards, 2021). Questionnaires consist of a set of prewritten questions authored for the participants by the researcher, which allows the researcher to potentially reach an audience outside of the normal geographical scope (Woolf & Edwards, 2021). While questionnaires often go unanswered, when the participant does respond, they provide an extremely valuable perspective from outside participants who the researcher may not normally connect with via email or in person.

The faculty advisor questionnaire, Appendix E, was edited from its original format by omitting and modifying some questions to best fit the needs and purpose of this study. The permission to modify the original questionnaire was granted by the consent of its author, William

B. Robertson, Ph.D. (Appendix F). Dr. Robertson is a professor of biomedical sciences at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. Dr. Robertson utilized the faculty advisor questionnaire in his dissertation, Community college faculty advising: Testing a model of student interaction and satisfaction, in 2018 at Iowa State University (Robertson, 2018). Validated by its publication by ProQuest, LLC, utilizing Dr. Robertson's questionnaire added depth and perspective to this study by engaging the participants by beginning with a combination of four open and close-ended demographic and informational questions, transitioning to 23 close-ended questions based on a Likert scale, and ending with two final open-ended short answer questions (Robertson, 2018). The edited version of Dr. Robertson's questionnaire used in this study took less than 30 minutes to complete. The Likert-scale-based approach is easy for participants to understand, and with its ease of use came the hope that any potential bias has been minimized (McCall et al., 2020). The benefits of using a Likert scale in qualitative studies is that participants are able to measure their responses on a five-point scale, which allows for a wider range of brevity to their responses, in addition to being able to be built into a collection to support reliability and validity (McCall et al., 2020). The data derived from a Likert scale-based questionnaire is considered ordinal data, which, for this study, acted as reinforcement and support of the data derived from the individual interviews and focus groups (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018).

The rationale for the questions used in the questionnaire data collection approach is to understand the participants' lived experiences with faculty advising efforts and their relation to enrollment and retention. The main purpose of the Likert scale-based questionnaire was to use its ordinal data to provide reinforcement and support to the data collected during the other data collection approaches used throughout this study, individual interviews, and focus groups (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018). All participants were presented with a link to the electronic questionnaire delivered via SurveyMonkey at the end of the consent form (Somerville & Green, 2012). The questionnaire began with a combination of four open and close-ended demographic and informational questions, then transitioned to the bulk of the questionnaire, which consisted of 23 close-ended questions based on a Likert scale and ended with two final open-ended short answer questions.

Questionnaire Questions

1. Please enter your contact information:
    a. Name
    b. Company
    c. Address
    d. City/Town
    e. State/Province
    f. ZIP/Postal Code
    g. Country
    h. Email Address
    i. Phone Number
2. How many advisees do you have? SQ1, SQ2
3. On average, how much time do you spend with each advisee? SQ1, SQ2
    a. <5 minutes
    b. 5-10 minutes
    c. 11-20 minutes
    d. 21-30 minutes
    e. 31 minutes or more

4. Optional comments regarding time for advising appointments: SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

   Please answer questions 5-27 based on the following Likert scale:

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

5. The method of assigning faculty advisors to students at your institution is equitable. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
6. Given my teaching assignment, my advising load is reasonable. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
7. I have sufficient time in my schedule to meet with my advisees. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
8. Students and faculty advisors should be required to meet each semester. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
9. Advising students brings me satisfaction. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
10. I collaborate with other faculty advisors regarding best practices when visiting with advisees. SQ1, SQ2
11. While I have been a faculty coach at my institution, I have received professional development training to help me develop the skills necessary to effectively counsel and academically guide my advisees. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
12. When my advisees come with difficult problems, I am confident in referring them to the appropriate campus resources. SQ1, SQ2
13. I collaborate with my advisees to identify reasonable academic goals based on what they share about themselves. SQ1, SQ2
14. I suggest appropriate degree or certificate programs/pathways that my advisees might

pursue. SQ1, SQ2

15. I possess sufficient knowledge of my advisee's degree program or pathway to help him/her select specific courses. SQ1, SQ2
16. I use my advisee's academic record (including test scores and grades) to help me determine what courses are the most appropriate for him/her to take. SQ1, SQ2
17. I assist my advisees when they are confronted with canceled courses or other scheduling problems. SQ1, SQ2
18. When my advisee is faced with difficult academic decisions, I explain the alternatives and help them decide which one is the best choice. SQ1, SQ2
19. I keep my advisees informed of their academic progress by discussing their academic records (including test scores and grades) with them. SQ1, SQ2
20. I am knowledgeable about the academic requirements my advisees need to complete their degree program and graduate. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
21. I feel comfortable discussing my advisees' difficult personal matters. SQ1, SQ2
22. I help connect my advisees to campus resources when they have problems in and out of the classroom. SQ1, SQ2
23. My advisees and I discuss their interests and plans outside of academics. SQ1, SQ2
24. I have received enough training to use my institutional advising software proficiently (Ellucian Degree Works, Aviso Enterprise, etc.). SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
25. Faculty advising increases the retention of students. CRQ1, SQ1
26. Faculty advising increases the recruitment of new students. CRQ1, SQ2
27. There is a student benefit to the faculty advising model. CRQ1, SQ1, SQ2
28. Describe your biggest challenge working as a faculty advisor. CRQ1, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

29. Describe your biggest accomplishment working as a faculty advisor. CRQ1, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

The above-listed questions were selected for this study due to their relation to the study's chosen topic of faculty involvement in the retention and recruitment of students at a two-year college (Baird, 2020). The participants in this study are faculty and academic chairs at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states. The participants also have experience with student advising for at least one calendar or academic year, which is why the faculty-directed questions have been selected.

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

The data derived from the Likert scale-based questionnaire conducted in this study is considered an ordinal data collection, which, for this study, acted as reinforcement and support of the data derived from the individual interview and focus group data collection approaches (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018). The 23 close-ended questions were framed as statements, and participants were asked to measure their agreement or disagreement with each statement based on a five-point Likert scale (Fitzpatrick, 2020). Ordinal data, while supportive in nature and different from the data derived from individual interviews and focus groups, can be quantified (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018).

To aid in the process of data analysis, all of the files acquired from the Likert scale-based questionnaire data collection were safely secured on a protected computer with an encrypted passcode. The files were backed up on an external drive and secured with an encrypted passcode in case any of the original files on the original computer became corrupt. As the data analysis process progressed through reading each questionnaire, detailed notes were taken, which were used to support and reinforce the data collected and analyzed from the individual interviews and focus groups. The notes then transitioned to the coding process, which focused on searching the data for words and sentences that have related meanings and then classifying and organizing them within specific terms (Belotto, 2018). The coding process allows the researcher to decipher large sections of text in new ways in order to see new and emerging themes (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the items as strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. In terms of coding, the Likert measurements were paired as follows in order to accurately express the data collected: strongly agree→more likely to, agree→likely to, neither agree nor disagree→neither more or less likely to, disagree→less likely to, and strongly disagree→not likely to. Once coded, an analysis of the coding was conducted, which enabled the researcher to convey the data as follows: the participant showed, according to the Likert scale, a propensity to being more likely to/likely to/neither more or less likely to/less likely to/not likely to collaborate with other faculty advisors regarding best practices when visiting with advisees (question 10), possessed sufficient knowledge of my advisee's degree program or pathway to help him/her select specific courses (question 15), kept my advisees informed of their academic progress by discussing their academic record (including test scores and grades) with them (question 19), and so forth (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The ordinal data derived from a Likert scale-based questionnaire acts as reinforcement and support of the data derived from the individual interviews and focus groups (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018). Visualization of the ordinal data collected from the Likert scale-based questionnaire includes charts and graphs (Harpe, 2015; Liddell & Kruschke, 2018).

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Personal interviews provided a deeper and more robust understanding of the level of faculty involvement in academic advising and how they assist with the efforts of increasing the retention and recruitment of students. There are many variations of interviews for qualitative research studies, but for this specific study, I utilized one-on-one semi-structured interviews where via video conferencing technology, I conducted the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which was recorded and lasted for 60 minutes or less. Semi-structured interviews (SSI) are designed to discover subjective responses from individuals concerning a specific situation or phenomenon they have experienced (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). While in-person interviews allow for a deeper understanding of what the participant's lived experience is, distance sometimes hinders that. However, the integration of video conferencing technology, such as Zoom, allowed for more flexibility and removed distance and travel constraints.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe your current position and its job duties. CRQ1
2. Describe the involvement of individual academic departments regarding an increase in student retention. SQ1, SQ3
3. Describe your role within your academic department in terms of increasing student retention. SQ1, SQ3
4. Describe your challenges when attempting to increase student retention within your programs. SQ1, SQ3
5. Describe successful practices you use when attempting to increase student retention within your programs. SQ1, SQ3
6. Describe how your department devised the faculty efforts and procedures to increase student retention within your programs. SQ1, SQ3

7. Describe how student retention has increased, decreased, or remained the same since the incorporation of faculty involvement in retention efforts within your academic department or programs. SQ1, SQ3
8. What else would you like to add to our discussion of faculty involvement in terms of increasing student retention within your programs or academic department that we have not discussed? SQ1, SQ3
9. Describe the involvement of individual academic departments regarding an increase in student enrollment. SQ2, SQ3
10. Describe your role within your academic department in terms of increasing student enrollment. SQ2, SQ3
11. Describe your challenges when attempting to increase student enrollment within your programs. SQ2, SQ3
12. Describe successful practices you use when attempting to increase student enrollment within your programs. SQ2, SQ3
13. Describe how your department devised the faculty efforts and procedures to increase student enrollment within your programs. SQ2, SQ3
14. Describe how student enrollment has increased, decreased, or remained the same since the incorporation of faculty involvement in retention efforts within your academic department or programs. SQ2, SQ3
15. What else would you like to add to our discussion of the faculty involvement in terms of increasing student enrollment within your programs or academic department that we have not discussed? SQ2, SQ3

The above-listed questions were selected for this study due to their relation to the study's chosen topic of faculty involvement in the retention and recruitment of students at a two-year college (Baird, 2020). The participants in this study are faculty and academic chairs at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states. The participants also have experience with student advising for at least one calendar or academic year, which is why the faculty-directed questions have been selected.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The data that is derived from the individual interviews conducted throughout this study were analyzed using several different approaches in a non-linear approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approaches used throughout this study to analyze data include managing and organizing data, reading and making note of emergent ideas, describing and classifying codes into various themes, developing and assessing interpretations, and representing and visualizing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thematic analysis was used on the responses from the individual interviews in order to identify themes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

To begin the process of data analysis, all of the files were safely secured on a protected computer with an encrypted passcode. The files were backed up on an external drive and secured with an encrypted passcode in case any of the original files on the original computer became corrupt. As the data analysis process progressed through listening to each recorded interview and transcribing the audio, detailed notes were taken, which allowed me to begin to summarize key themes into sidebar notes. The notes then transitioned to the coding process, which focused on searching the data for words and sentences that have related meanings and then classifying and organizing them within specific terms (Belotto, 2018). The coding process allows the researcher to decipher large sections of text in new ways in order to see new and emerging themes (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Once all of the transcribed interviews were coded, an analysis of the coding used throughout all of the interviews was conducted, and similar themes from various interviews were grouped to show a larger developing overarching theme or themes from the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Themes are topics where the data from the study has been funneled into similar ideas by the researcher's analysis of clustering data pieces (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The larger themes that were derived from the coding of the interviews were analyzed and organized into a visualization of the data, which indicated a primary point of view and account of the findings. Visualization of the data may include models, trees, and matrixes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Tree modeling is used to illustrate options, decisions, and actions, while matrixes are used to integrate two or more dimensions, variables, or relevant ideas to the topics of interest (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013).

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

Focus groups, a form of group dialogue about a subject led by a trained group leader, are the third and final data collection approach for this study (Sim & Waterfield, 2019; Stewart & Williams, 2005). The purposeful use of focus groups in this study allowed the participants to expand on their lived experiences as discussed in the initial individual interviews but in an informal group session (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, focus groups are incorporated into studies to promote the development of patterns and themes, which were revealed during an analysis of the initial data collection approach, individual interviews (Patton, 2015).

For this study, focus groups allowed the researcher the same type of feedback as interviews but on a larger scale. As Pringle Barnes and Cheng (2019) demonstrated in their research study, the participants were invited to the focus groups via email by the researcher and used a semi-structured approach. Two focus groups were conducted for this study and consisted of four and six participants from various institutions, and the researcher-led and moderated these sessions. The focus groups were recorded and consisted of six semi-structured questions that spanned a duration of 60 minutes or less (Sim & Waterfield, 2019; Stewart & Williams, 2005). The questions guided participants into a larger discussion about their lived experiences with academic advising and how it affected the retention and recruitment of students at their institution (Cahill et al., 2015; Wao et al., 2011). The focus group approach allows participants to compare their experiences, which can expand into additional feedback and data to use for the research study (Kent et al., 2020).

Focus Group Questions

1. What is your role in faculty advising, and how do you collaborate with each other within your department(s) regarding advising? CRQ1
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of faculty advising? SQ1, SQ2
3. In your experience, has faculty advising led to increased student retention and enrollment at your institution? If so, how? SQ1, SQ2
4. What has been the best outcome from one of your faculty advising sessions, and how did that affect you and the student? SQ1, SQ2
5. What challenges have you encountered with students in terms of faculty advising? SQ1, SQ2
6. Based on your experience advising students, what is your advice in terms of best practices to other faculty who may be interested in incorporating faculty advising into their responsibilities? SQ1, SQ2

The above-listed questions were selected for this study due to their relation to the study's chosen topic of faculty involvement in the retention and recruitment of students at a two-year college (Baird, 2020). The participants in this study are faculty and academic chairs at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states. The participants also have experience with student advising for at least one calendar or academic year, which is why the faculty-directed questions have been selected.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The data derived from the focus groups conducted throughout this study was analyzed using several different approaches in a non-linear approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approaches used throughout this study to analyze data include managing and organizing data, reading and making note of emergent ideas, describing and classifying codes into various themes, developing and assessing interpretations, and representing and visualizing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thematic analysis was used on the responses from the focus groups in order to identify themes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

To begin the process of data analysis, all of the files were safely secured on a protected computer with an encrypted passcode. The files were backed up on an external drive and secured with an encrypted passcode in case any of the original files on the original computer became corrupt. As the data analysis process progressed through listening to each recorded focus group session and transcribing the audio, detailed notes were taken, which began to summarize key themes into sidebar notes. The notes then transitioned to the coding process, where each transcribed focus group session was analyzed and coded into broad emergent themes. Coding focuses on searching the data for words and sentences that have related meanings and then classifying and organizing them within specific terms (Belotto, 2018). The coding process allows the researcher to decipher large sections of text in new ways in order to see new and emerging themes (Belotto, 2018).

Once all of the transcribed focus group sessions were coded, an analysis of the coding used throughout all of the focus group sessions was conducted, and similar themes from the focus groups were clustered to show a larger developing overarching theme or themes from the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Themes are topics where the data from the study has been funneled into similar ideas by the researcher's analysis of clustering data pieces (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The larger themes that were derived from the coding of the focus groups were analyzed and organized into a visualization of the data, which indicated a primary point of view and account of the findings. Visualization of the data may include models, trees, and matrixes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Tree modeling is used to illustrate options, decisions, and actions, while matrixes are used to integrate two or more dimensions, variables, or relevant ideas to the topics of interest (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013).

Data Synthesis

Triangulation in research studies refers to the use of various methods or data sources in order to create an inclusive understanding of the problem (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation has also been explained as a strategy within qualitative research which tests the validity of the study by merging information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). For this study, triangulation includes the data which was derived from the three chosen data collection approaches: individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. Triangulation occurred by converging the findings from each individual interview, focus group, and questionnaire and then integrating the merged data into emergent themes based on the coding and classification of ideas. The entire data collection of this research study funnels into three main, overarching themes and two sub-themes, which the three data approaches will support.

Epoché, or the action of setting aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about topics, is the first step in being able to see things as they appear (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché can also be seen as a planning period for obtaining new knowledge, as well as its own individual experience (Moustakas, 1994). By setting preferences and preconceptions aside, epoché allows the researcher to view ideas, experiences, and individuals from the angle of a fresh consciousness as if seeing them for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). Each unique view of perception adds something to an individual's understanding of the perspectives of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The epoché process includes a descriptive snapshot of how things appear and a reduction to what is linear and foundational (Moustakas, 1994). The epoché approach to explaining an individual's knowledge is known as transcendental phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental aligns with the belief that everything has meaning, phenomenological refers to the world being converted into mere experiences, and reduction in that it directs us back to our own understanding of the way things are (Moustakas, 1994).

The next step after transcendental phenomenological reduction in the research process is imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation is to seek out potential connotations through the utilization of imagination, altering the context for reference, implementing separations and setbacks, and approaching the phenomenon from different angles, viewpoints, roles, or functions (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of imaginative variation is to reach structural descriptions of a lived experience, the inherent and deciding factors which attribute to what is being experienced; specifically, the how that connects to circumstances that illustrate the what of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Essence, or the instinctual incorporation of the underlying fundamental and textural descriptions into a cohesive statement of the experience of the phenomenon overall, is the final step in the phenomenological research process (Moustakas, 1994). The essential fundamental-textural synthesis symbolizes the essence at a specific time and place from the viewpoint of one single researcher (Moustakas, 1994). An individual's knowledge of the nature, values, and descriptions of epoché, transcendental phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis is crucial in order to conduct phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Through such research, one learns to see innocently and new again, to value true experiences, to appreciate the testimony of one's senses, and to shift toward a mixed understanding of things, individuals, and unique experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout the analysis of this study, the hermeneutic circle was used, which allowed for the demonstrated understanding of the text or words explained by the lived experiences of its participants to synthesize (Lengyel, 2018).

Trustworthiness

While Lincoln and Guba (1985) established the foundation of trustworthiness and terms used for validation in qualitative research, it is important to note that all four traits should be held to the highest level of authenticity and integrity for each qualitative study that is conducted. Regardless of the topic, setting, or institution where the researcher is a doctoral candidate, it is crucial to acknowledge that all four traits should be held to the highest level of authenticity and integrity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The four fundamental traits of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness plan include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the researcher's findings in the study correctly detail the truest form of reality, specifically related to the participant's lived experiences or perceptions in a hermeneutical phenomenology approach. Credibility was achieved in three ways throughout this research study: (a) triangulation, (b) peer debriefing, and (c) member-checking. Triangulation validated the accuracy of this research study by using the three chosen data collection methods: individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. Throughout the peer debriefing process, colleagues of mine, who served as vital scholarly friends, encouraged me, as the researcher, to examine and analyze the research process from various perspectives (Figg et al., 2009). As indicated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is a critical part of creating trustworthiness in qualitative research as it delivers an approach for the researcher to ensure an accurate depiction of the participant's voices (Candela, 2019). Throughout the process of member checking, the participants of this study had the opportunity to verify the accuracy and interpretation of data, which added credibility to the qualitative study (Candela, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability is conducted to ensure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and the participants or those being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Another goal of transferability is to ensure that the results of the study can be applied to similar individuals or situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transferability is achieved by utilizing thick descriptions while describing the steps, process, and findings of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Detailed descriptions and the proper organization of those thick descriptions will allow others, those beyond the study itself, to find similarities in their own interests or current academic environment.

Dependability

Dependability is sought after by researchers to validate that the study could be repeated and is consistent with the format of similar studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Efficient researchers create audit trails within their study by detailing the intended purpose of the study, explaining how and why certain individuals were chosen as participants for the study, illustrating how the data was collected and how long the data collection period lasted, describing how the data was delineated for analysis, explaining the interpreted data and presentation of the findings from the study, and discussing the techniques used to govern the credibility of the data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Procedure descriptions in this study are thorough and comprehensive enough for another researcher to conduct the same type of study with ease. The research method descriptions used for this research study, in addition to being supported by a full literature review, are detailed and straightforward enough to support future research using this study as a model.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability occurs once credibility, transferability, and dependability have all been recognized (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). For this research study, the following techniques have been incorporated to achieve confirmability: acknowledging or bracketing the participant's lived experiences, member checking, and conducting a detailed audit of the data to ensure that the data coded is valid and accurate.

Ethical Considerations

The privacy of the participants of this study and their institutions is crucial and of the utmost importance. For this research study, the following ethical considerations have been made to ensure complete privacy and confidentiality: (a) acquiring participant permission, (b) gaining consent forms from participants which informed them of the voluntary nature of the study, as well as explaining their right to withdraw from the study at any time, (c) using pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of all setting locations and participants, and (d) locking and encrypting all data on my computer (Copes et al., 2018; Hammer, 2017). Any data that was collected and not used for the final dissertation will be destroyed after three years (Khoza-Shangase et al., 2022; Ranney et al., 2015).

Summary

Chapter Three discusses the purpose of this phenomenological study, which is to describe the proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges. The setting of this research study consists of two-year community and technical colleges throughout the lower Southeastern states, and participants in this study are faculty and academic chairs at those institutions who have been involved in student advising for at least one calendar or academic year. The study was conducted via individual interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. The data derived from the three chosen approaches of data collection is cohesive in nature and does not function as independent resources for this study. The findings from each individual interview, focus group, and questionnaire evolved into emergent themes based on the coding and classification of ideas. The entire data collection of this research study funneled into overarching themes, which the three data approaches support and strengthen (Belotto, 2018; Savin-Baden & Howell-Major, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). Chapter Four begins with an interpretation of the lived experiences of 12 participants, all of which are faculty or chairs with at least one academic or calendar year of experience with faculty advising. All of the institutions that the participants are employed with are two-year colleges within the lower Southeastern United States. The experiences were garnered through focus groups, individual interviews, and a questionnaire. The three main themes that emerged from the data collection methods were identified using data steps detailed in Chapter Three in partnership with the hermeneutic circle (Lengyel, 2018). Two unexpected findings are also included, as well as a discussion of the central research question as well as each of the three sub-questions, which can be found at the end of the chapter, followed by an overall summary.

Participants

The following table details the demographic data for each participant in this study. These statements reflect the general experiences of faculty or chairs within the two-year college setting in the lower Southeastern United States with at least one academic or calendar year of experience with faculty advising. Participants were identified as qualified for the study by their position and years of experience with faculty advising (Hern et al., 2019). Once the participants were identified using criterion and snowball-based sampling, voluntary consent was digitally provided by each participant via the recruitment email and Google Form consent form (Miranda et al., 2021). Through focus groups, individual interviews, and a Likert-based questionnaire, narratives were formed by the researcher in order to analyze the participants' overall experiences (Fitzpatrick, 2020). Pseudonyms have been used, and all personal identifiers were removed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants of the study (Gemma, 2021; Köhn & Siré, 2022). The participants consisted of 12 faculty members or chairs within the two-year college setting in the lower Southeastern United States with at least one academic or calendar year of experience with faculty advising. Table 1 displays the demographics of each participant of the study.

The demographic information provided delivers an inclusive depiction of various positions within a two-year college setting (Coleman & Smith, 2021; Hern et al., 2019; Kapinos, 2020). The participants' responsibilities touch upon several facets of the student experience, which include academic and administrative aspects. This demographic blend of participants provides a wide array of faculty involvement in student retention and recruitment from varied viewpoints. They also represent a range of two-year institutions and have varied levels of experience, allowing for a more in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon in question.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Position Title	Department	Years in Faculty Advising	Number of Advisees
Alexandria	Instructor	Sociology	1	200
Andrea	Lead Instructor	Business Administration	7+	44
Benjamin	Instructor	Psychology	7+	2
Chloe	Academic Chair	Business Administration	4-5	100
Christopher	Instructor	Geography	5-6	25

Pseudonym	Position Title	Department	Years in Faculty Advising	Number of Advisees
Melinda	Academic Chair	Business Administration	7+	30
Molly	Academic Chair	Business Administration	7+	71
Myla	Academic Chair	Business Technology	7+	17
Olivia	Instructor	Accounting	7+	445
Ryan	Instructor	Advanced Manufacturing	7+	90
Samantha	Instructor	Business Administration	4-5	140
Suzanne	Instructor	English	4-5	30

Results

The analysis and data triangulation of three data collection methods includes the following: two focus groups, an individual interview, and a Likert-based questionnaire. All participants were assigned the same 29-item questionnaire, which consisted of a combination of six open and close-ended questions and 23 Likert-based questions, and were also asked the same 15 questions in the individual interviews. The participants in the two focus groups were asked six questions, and each participant was given ample opportunity to respond. An analysis of the three data collection methods was conducted in order to identify significant and related words, phrases, and sentences which detailed their lived experiences of the phenomenon. The relevant words, phrases, and sentences were then coded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The codes which were generated from the data analysis were used to identify emergent themes, which provided the framework for the phenomenon of addressing faculty and chairs' experience with faculty advising (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Nvivo software was used to code the themes from the focus groups, individual interviews, and Likert-based questionnaires, which identified the codes and then grouped them into categories of related responses. The emergent themes rose from the classification of the codes, which delivered responses for the central and sub-research questions that were researched within this study (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I generated the themes from the data analysis to recognize and describe the participants' lived experiences of proven strategies used by faculty to increase retention and recruitment at two-year colleges. The three main themes for this study include individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication. The following table displays the impactful statements from each of the 12 participants in this study.

Table 2: Impactful Statements

Pseudonym	Impactful Statements about Individualized Attention	Impactful Statements about Consistency in Advising	Impactful Statements about Proactive Communication
Alexandria	*"Knowing each student personally allows me to tailor my approach."*	*"I think one of the biggest problems is just that we have so many students and not enough advisors. So, the consistency is not there because we're spread too thin."*	*"Definitely reaching out. Developing a rapport with students is really important that they get to know you as a person. I get to know them as a person."*
Andrea	*"Tailoring the guidance to each student's unique situation."*	*"A little more consistency, a little more time dedicated to getting to know the students."*	*"I think building relationships with the students, letting them know that you care about them, trying to be proactive and reach out to them and let them know, 'hey, it's time to register, let's go.'"*

Pseudonym	Impactful Statements about Individualized Attention	Impactful Statements about Consistency in Advising	Impactful Statements about Proactive Communication
Benjamin	*"Personalized outreach can make a significant difference in making students feel supported and valued, which can lead to improved retention."*	*"It seems like there's a lot of inconsistencies in the advising. Some students get really good advising, and some students don't. And I think that that's a problem."*	*"So, kind of jumping the gun in seeing what's going on with that student and being able to help them with whatever it may be, to keep them back on track."*
Chloe	*"But my role is to advise them as far as program requirements, and I go a little bit further and tell them that sometimes our systems are cumbersome and if they need anything and they can't find the answer, I try to let them be a little bit independent, but I know our systems, so whatever they need, instead of them spinning their wheels, I'll go out and do for them, or get the information to them."*	*"I think there's a real benefit to students to have the same advisor, not necessarily for their whole time, but at least for a significant chunk of time where they can build that relationship and have that continuity."*	*"I try to communicate very proactively with my students, and I try to make sure they know what's going on and what's expected of them to try to reduce that anxiety."*
Christopher	*"The willingness to assist students with any questions they might have, even those not related to the program, is crucial."*	*"The quality of advising can be inconsistent, depending on who the student gets as their advisor."*	*"Communicating not just for regular advising things, but also things like reminders about registration coming up or reminders to apply for graduation."*
Melinda	*"Then once their curriculum is ready, they come to us on the academic side, and often you have them in class, and you're advising them. So, we are starting to build that relationship."*	*"Uniformity in processes and systems could improve the cohesion and effectiveness of faculty advising."*	*"I like how we can text the students through Aviso. At my other college I was at, we could not text them through Aviso."*

Pseudonym	Impactful Statements about Individualized Attention	Impactful Statements about Consistency in Advising	Impactful Statements about Proactive Communication
Molly	*"She was really thankful that I reached out and sent that message to her."*	*"Some advisors are simply more skilled or dedicated than others."*	*"We have a success coach, and we also have faculty members... that gives us the opportunity to reach out either via email or a text or hopefully a face-to-face to see if there's anything that we can do as advisors to help."*
Myla	*"Ask the student questions, get to know them, ask them more questions, because I think you can better advise them if you know them and kind of their direction."*	*"Having the same advisor for their academic journey makes a big difference."*	*"We're expected to be available to new student inquiries, whether it's by email, in person or through the phone."*
Olivia	*"Just to give you an example, I had a student that had a child and just as we were talking via email, I asked her, 'how's your baby doing? Is she doing well?' And she sent me a picture when the baby was born."*	*"The advisor becomes a constant in their lives."*	*"I try to email them, reach out to them, ask them if they're okay, do they need any help, do they have any questions? Trying to keep them."*
Ryan	*"I've gotten some pretty good feedback for those students that do respond back saying, 'hey, thanks for reaching out. I appreciate it.'"*	*"Advisees are not evenly distributed, or all departments/divisions do not advise the same way."*	*"I'm sending out emails, trying to meet with them on a more regular basis, doing some surveys with them, things like that."*
Samantha	*"What has been most successful for me is sending individual communication to their personal email, just reminding them about advising, even prompting them with 'hey, there's the space*	*"The need for consistent advising efforts is key."*	*"Keeping students informed and offering support whenever they need it."*

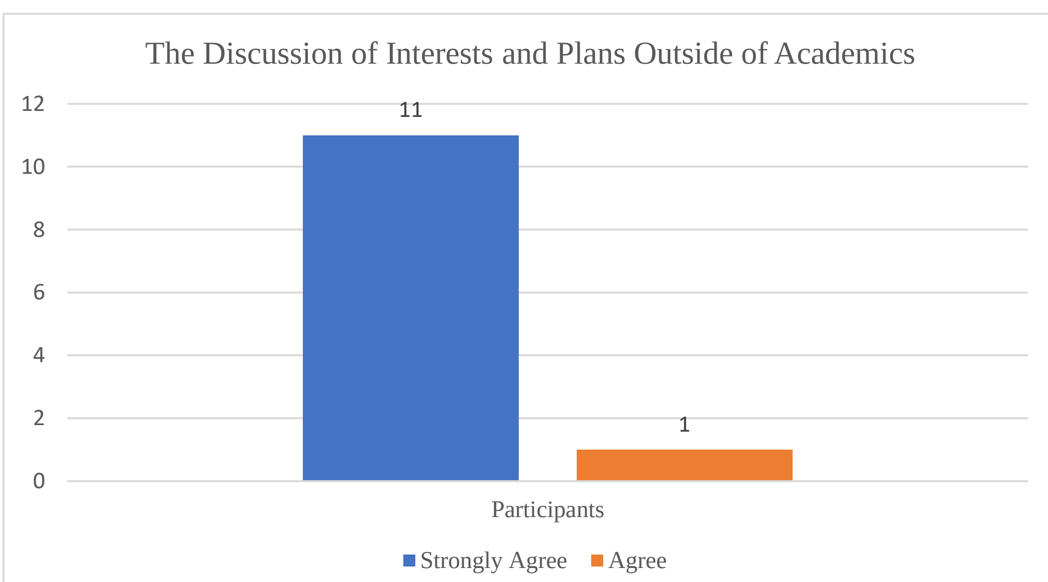
Pseudonym	Impactful Statements about Individualized Attention	Impactful Statements about Consistency in Advising	Impactful Statements about Proactive Communication
	available in these classes that you need to complete your program. I can assist you with getting registered.'"		
Suzanne	*"I would say my language choices and how I approach those conversations. One thing that I like to do is if I already know that the student has already had some initial email went out, I like to reach out to them and keep it general in the beginning."*	*"Being able to provide consistent advising services from one department to another would be extremely helpful to students and put everyone on a level playing field."*	*"Reaching out to students before they reach a point of struggle."*

Individualized Attention

Based on the results of the focus groups, individual interviews, and Likert-based questionnaire, the theme of individualized attention surfaced (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). All 12 participants noted in their questionnaire results, individual interviews, as well as throughout the focus groups that an emphasis on individualized attention aids in faculty advising and yields greater results in terms of increased retention and continued enrollment. While in the focus groups, the following question was posed, "Based on your experience advising students, what is your advice in terms of best practices to other faculty who may be interested in incorporating faculty advising into their responsibilities?" Benjamin responded with the following, "Personalized outreach can make a significant difference in making students feel supported and valued, which can lead to improved retention," echoed by Andrea, who stated, "Tailoring the guidance to each student's situation."

Individualized attention, a pertinent theme to this research study, highlights the power of focusing one's efforts, those of a faculty advisor, specifically on the needs of each student on an individual basis (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). The magnitude of this focused effort has displayed an increase in the retention of students, as well as the recruitment of new students, based on the findings of this study. Instructors, specifically Olivia and Ryan, commented on how their efforts of individualized attention have resulted in positive feedback from their students by stating the following, respectively, "I had a student that had a child, and just as we were talking via email, I asked her, 'how's your baby doing? Is she doing well?' And she sent me a picture when the baby was born," and "I've gotten some pretty good feedback for those students that do respond back saying, 'hey, thanks for reaching out. I appreciate it.'" The participants found that this method improves a student's sense of being appreciated and understood, thus supporting their continued engagement with their academic career and enrollment. Table 3 displays the responses of the participants related to individualized attention regarding the level of comfort faculty advisors feel related to discussing personal interests and plans outside of academics with their students from question 23 of the Likert-based questionnaire.

Figure 1: Discussion of Personal Interests



Consistency in Advising

The theme of consistency in advising arose in the results generated during the analysis of the focus groups, individual interviews, and Likert-based questionnaires (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022). A robust discussion emerged in the focus groups once the topic of consistency was approached by participants Myla and Olivia. Myla stated that "…having the same advisor for their academic journey makes a big difference," and Olivia supported her sentiments by proclaiming that "…the advisor becomes a constant in their lives." These responses emphasize the faculty's belief that having a constant and reliable student-advisor relationship can greatly improve student retention. Academic chair, Chloe, stated that she thinks "There's a real benefit to students to have the same advisor, not necessarily for their whole time, but at least for a significant chunk of time where they can build that relationship and have that continuity." From this point, the conversation remained on the consistency of advising but expanded to include services and capability, not just consistency in the same advisor. Lead instructor Andrea and instructors Benjamin and Christopher all proclaimed that there are inconsistencies in the advising process, specifically in how well-prepared the faculty advisors are. Ben stated, "It seems like there's a lot of inconsistencies in the advising. Some students get really good advising, and some students don't. And I think that that's a problem." Christopher supported his statement by stating that "The quality of advising can be inconsistent, depending on who the student gets as their advisor." Participants Melinda, Samantha, and Suzanne all highlighted the importance of consistency in advising and the perceived benefits of continuity in advising. Per the feedback from the focus groups, participants expressed that students appreciate the consistency that builds relationships between students and faculty advisors, which results in the increased retention of students returning each semester for further advising services (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022).

System Changes

A sub-theme that emerged from its parent them, consistency in advising, revolves around system changes. The majority of the 12 participants stated that frequent system changes are a hindrance to effective faculty advising and attempting to increase enrollment and retention (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2021). Olivia stated, “We've been through two significant advising structure changes in the last five years, and it's difficult. It's really hard to keep up with what's going on.” Ryan mentioned that “Institutional stability is important for both the advisors and students,” and in terms of anticipating further change, Andrea stated that “I just have a feeling that we're going to have a bunch of new initiatives that are going to be coming down the pipeline from the retention consultants.” Per the feedback of the 12 participants, systemic changes, or unanticipated system changes, such as changes in institutional systems or implementing physical or fiscal resource constraints, can hinder the efforts of faculty advisors to attempt to increase recruitment and retention (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2021).

Technology Tools

A second sub-theme that arose from its parent them, consistency in advising, focuses on the potential of technology tools in terms of improving collaboration and communication between faculty advisors and student advisees (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hu, 2020). The feedback provided by various participants in the study suggested that modern software and technology solutions may be the key to increasing student retention and improving recruitment strategies (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hu, 2020). Melinda and Christopher both indicated that they have seen a positive impact on the faculty advising process by incorporating new software. Suzanne stated that "…online tools have made the advising process more efficient and accessible," and Benjamin, Chloe, and Alexandria mentioned the use of Aviso, DegreeWorks, and Navigate. These advising software platforms improve efficiency in the advising process, which indicates that the effective use of technology tools could be a vital strategy for retaining students. Myla stated that "Proper use of technology can make our jobs as faculty advisors easier and more efficient," and Olivia supported her statement by expressing that she thinks there is "A lot of potential for technology to really improve the advising process. But we need to ensure that we're using it in the right way and not just as a way to replace the human element of advising."

Proactive Communication

The emergent theme of proactive communication was quick to surface from all of the participants' participation in the focus groups and interviews, as well as their responses to the questionnaire (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). Per the feedback of the participants of this study, proactive communication may entail routine check-ins via email, text, or phone call, regular office hours, and being readily available as a faculty advisor to offer support for any academic or personal issues that students may encounter. Participants Myla and Benjamin echoed the same sentiment of suggesting that by anticipating student needs, offering support, and maintaining open lines of communication by regularly reaching out via various methods may prevent common struggles that students have, as well as nurturing a supportive environment which is beneficial to increased retention. Andrea stated that "I think building relationships with the students, letting them know that you care about them, trying to be proactive and reach out to them and let them know, "hey, it's time to register, let's go,'" and Chloe supported her statement by stating that she tries "…to communicate very proactively with my students, and I try to make sure they know what's going on and what's expected of them to try to reduce that anxiety." Participants Alexandria, Benjamin, and Suzanne all describe proactive communication strategies that they exercise as faculty advisors, which are described as attempting to address issues or points of concern before students reach the point of struggling. Melinda states that "Reaching out to a student indicates that proactive communication can foster positive student relationships and potentially improve retention."

In terms of the recruitment of new students, a proactive communication approach can increase visibility and awareness of the institution and its programs, which attracts a broader group of potential students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022). Christopher stated that proactive communication is "…not just for regular advising things, but also things like reminders about registration coming up or reminders to apply for graduation," and Myla expressed that at her institution, proactive communication is expected, as they are required "…to be available to new student inquiries, whether it's by email, in person or through the phone." Ryan described his experience with attempting to recruit new students and stated that if he has "…spoken with them about the program, and they've expressed interest, if I can get them to take that first step, oftentimes it's more of a domino effect versus them actually having to take that first step." Olivia agreed and compounded Ryan's sentiments by stating that "I try to email them, reach out to them, ask them if they're okay, do they need any help, do they have any questions? Trying to keep them."

Outlier Data and Findings

Two outlier themes emerged from the analysis of this research study. These findings are noteworthy because while they were exclusive to only 25% of the participants, they have the potential to be relevant within select institutions. Two instructors expressed a need for an increased knowledge and understanding of financial aid processes, and one academic chair explained the importance of mandatory advising (Miller & Weiss, 2022; Zick et al., 2022).

Financial Aid Awareness

The two instructors that indicated during their individual interviews that an increase in financial aid awareness should be taught to faculty advisors had previously held positions in financial aid (Miller & Weiss, 2022). Alexandria stated that "I guess for us, the biggest challenge for advising is, a lot of the questions that they have really pertain to the financial piece. As a faculty advisor, we have no access to that information." Andrea echoed Alexandria's statements by expressing that "financial issues can be a barrier," and "…being able to provide clear guidance on financial aspects could be a crucial strategy in recruiting new students."

Mandatory Advising

Chloe is the only participant that expressed the desire for mandatory advising across institutions (Baird, 2020; Kapinos, 2020). She that, "The current institution that I'm at, where academic advising is mandatory, it certainly does help with that retention." Chloe also mentioned that as students progress through their academic career at her institution, they "…are required to meet with an academic advisor every single semester before they can even register for courses."

Research Question Responses

The central and two sub-research questions guided the research of this study. These three questions were developed to explore the lived experiences of faculty with increased retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges. The goal of these questions was to examine the most successful strategies used by faculty members to increase the recruitment and retention of students, as well as to understand the lived experiences of faculty on how the centralized advising and recruitment departments work cohesively to aid in the continued retention of current students and the recruitment of new students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020).

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of faculty with increased retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges? The participants' described individualized attention, consistency in advising, and the utilization of proactive communication as the major themes from their lived experiences of attempting to increase retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022; Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Andrea stated, "As far as recruitment with students first coming in, they're going to meet with personnel within the department that they are majoring in, to help them sign up for courses and answer any questions that they have." She continued by saying that "Then, as they go through their time at the college, they are required to meet with an academic advisor every single semester before they can even register for courses." All participant experiences demonstrated that spending a considerable amount of personalized time with student advisees is instrumental to their success, which leads to increased retention from semester to semester (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). During his interview, Christopher stated that "I feel like the retention efforts have been more kind of trying to target an individual, from the faculty advisor perspective, to do your part to try and keep students here." The lived experiences of the faculty and academic chairs resulted in a rich tapestry of challenges and opportunities. The challenges surface from lack of technology and frequent system changes while the opportunities arise from the faculty advisor's persistence in individualized attention via various communication methods, to a consistent approach to advising, and ultimately, from continued outreach approaches which include an extremely aggressive and proactive communication strategy.

Sub-Question One

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the retention of current students? The participants focused on the importance of individualized attention in retaining students, as well as consistency in advising (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Alexandria explained that “Knowing each student personally allows me to tailor my approach,” and Andrea echoed her sentiments by stating that she tailors “…the guidance to each student's situation.” The relevance of these quotes to sub-research question one is that the faculty and academic chairs view their personal involvement and displayed support of students as a vital strategy in the retention of students. Participants also highlighted consistency in advising as a successful strategy used by faculty members to increase the retention of current students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022). Myla noted that “Having the same advisor for their academic journey makes a big difference,” and Chloe supported her claims by stating that “I think there's a real benefit to students to have the same advisor.” The relevance of these quotes to sub-research question one is that the faculty and academic chairs view the strategy of maintaining a stable advisor-student relationship as a significant way to improve student retention.

Sub-Question Two

What is the most successful strategy used by the faculty members to increase the recruitment of new students? The participants focused on a balanced and informed advising approach as an outreach strategy used towards increasing the recruitment of students (Pitts & Myers, 2022). Ryan suggested that a balanced approach between faculty advisors and a centralized advising office on campus could be beneficial for recruitment. Participants also expressed the significance of informed advising and what role it plays in the recruitment of new students (Pitts & Myers, 2022). Melinda explained that “Advisors who understand specific population challenges have a better chance of recruiting these students,” and Olivia supported her point by stating that “Our knowledge and understanding can be a game-changer in recruitment.” An active outreach strategy was also expressed by several participants who stressed the need for faculty and academic chairs to take an active role in the recruitment process of new students. Participants suggested participating in open house events and community gatherings as the ideal platforms to engage with potentially new students and to take the opportunity to provide them with information about their desired programs. Chloe stated that “I would say that the recruitment of new students has increased, and I base that on my participation in the open house.” Olivia also stated that in terms of strategies that increase the recruitment of new students, “All of my faculty were actively involved in a recent open-house event that we had, and we are doing some meet and greets in the community,” and “My role is to support my faculty for these events that they need to attend, making sure they've got the materials that they need to distribute to potential students.”

Sub-Question Three

What are the lived experiences of faculty on how the centralized advising and recruitment departments work cohesively to aid in the continued retention of current students and the recruitment of new students? The participants focused on challenges with system changes as one of their main points of contention (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2021). Molly shared the difficulties she encountered due to various advising structural changes over a short period of time. Molly’s sentiments highlight the importance of strength and stability within centralized advising and recruitment departments. Participants also expressed the desire for adequate training, as indicated by the feedback from several instructors who stated that there is a lack of mutual training between the centralized advising and recruitment departments. Andrea and Olivia both shared their experiences related to inadequate training between the two departments, which hindered their ability to advise effectively. As indicated by several participants, the poor level of or omission of training is a problem that suggests that enhancing the quality and frequency of training sessions between the centralized advising and recruitment departments is vital to improving the working relationship between faculty and the centralized advising and recruitment departments (Baird, 2020). Chloe stated that “We need more training, especially when new systems or software are introduced,” and Myla echoed her sentiment by stating that “We need more support in learning how to use new technologies.”

Summary

Chapter Four discussed the lived experiences of the participants and the findings of the study based on the data collection methods and analysis. The three major themes which emerged from the analysis of the data were individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication. The theme of individualized attention stemmed from the participants’ feedback regarding how they communicate with their student advisees on a personal level (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Participants described individualized emails, texts, and phone calls as successful communication methods in order to reach their students, as well as the benefit of adding personal enhancement in those messages to increase engagement and the response rate (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Consistency in advising surfaced as a theme throughout the study by all participants who highlighted that in order to successfully increase recruitment and retention, a consistent advising approach is necessary throughout a student's academic career and path toward graduation (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022). Proactive communication emerged as a theme throughout the participant's feedback in the data collection methods, specifically focusing on the importance of attempting to provide a sense of confidence in students before any anxiety or worry about registering for classes is present (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). Overall, the combination of all three proven strategies, individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication, have demonstrated an increase in retention and recruitment at two-year colleges by faculty.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). The goal of this study is to realize and understand the lived experiences of the participants, faculty, and academic chairs, in terms of increased retention and recruitment of students at two-year colleges, as well as the lived experiences of the participants on how the centralized advising and recruitment departments work cohesively to aid in the continued retention of current students and the recruitment of new students. Chapter Five begins with an interpretation of the findings of the study, which details three main themes and two sub-themes. Chapter Five also includes the implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, as well as recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The themes that emerged while exploring the faculty and academic chairs' experiences regarding the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges are discussed in this section (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). This section begins with a summary of each of the three main themes, an interpretation of the findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, as well as recommendations for future research. The participants' experiences reinforced a foundation in individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication, which was extensively investigated throughout this study.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of findings begins with a summary of the three main themes discovered from the analysis of each data collection method on an individual basis. This section also includes how the three main themes were discovered through the triangulation of data, which was discussed in Chapter Four (Candela, 2019). A synopsis of the interpretation of the three main themes is included in addition to the three core interpretations: individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The themes discovered throughout this study were individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication within faculty advising. The participants all produced similar results based on the analysis of the data, which is indicative of saturation, as well as the validity and reliability of the data collected throughout the study (McCall et al., 2020). The participants' experiences guided the path to the interpretations and summaries of the themes detailed within this section. The main themes and sub-themes were a direct result of the data analysis of the three data collection methods: focus groups, individual interviews, and the Likert-based questionnaire.

Individualized Attention. Throughout the data collection methods, I was able to acquire a clear comprehension of the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges. It is apparent from the data analysis that faculty and academic chairs place a large amount of emphasis and importance on the aspect of individualized attention, which stems from asking students questions about what they need and want in order to best meet their needs in terms of faculty advising (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Literature mentions that a one-on-one student-faculty relationship model which offers individualized service, attention, and advising leads to an increase in the retention of current students as well as the recruitment of new students (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). This study expanded the existing research to explain that when an emphasis is placed on individualized attention by faculty advisors, it fosters growth in the personal relationship between the advisor and advisee and strengthens the partnership beyond that of a purely academic relationship. Students and faculty advisors bond on common interests, shared beliefs, and personality traits when discussed in a nurtured and comfortable shared environment (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Olivia reflected on the relationship she had with one of her advisees that just had a baby. She had implemented an individualized advising approach with her student, and between asking questions via email related to advising and registration for the next semester, she asked how her baby was. Her student responded favorably by discussing her baby with her, in addition to sharing a recent photograph of her baby.

My interpretation of these findings is that individualized attention in terms of faculty advising is vital to the success of students, as well as to the continuous improvement of faculty who possess the essential role of advisor in addition to educator (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). Throughout the findings of this study, all of the participants are in agreement with this interpretation. Alexandria echoed this interpretation by stating, “Knowing each student personally allows me to tailor my approach.” By creating and then nurturing those personal relationships between faculty advisors and students, it allows for a greater potential of the increased enrollment of new students, as well as an increase in the retention of current students. Based on the responses from all 12 participants, individualized attention is a necessity for faculty advising in order to create personal relationships with their student advisees.

Consistency in Advising. The results from the three data collection methods displayed a clear placement between the faculty advisor-student advisee relationship and an increase in the recruitment of new students and the retention of existing students at two-year colleges (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022). This theme is listed second, after individualized attention, since individualized attention is the most widespread theme which emerged from the analysis of the data collected, with consistency in advising following as a close second. Participants described being spread too thin in terms of their caseload of student advisees being too heavy, to inadequate or nonexistent training, followed by a revolving door of faculty advisors assigned to student advisees. During the focus group, Chloe stated that “I think there's a real benefit to students to have the same advisor, not necessarily for their whole time, but at least for a significant chunk of time where they can build that relationship and have that continuity.”

My interpretation of the findings is that while it is impossible to predict the future of current employees and how faculty advisors are assigned to specific students within the population due to unanticipated life events, it is critically important to foster a solid foundation of consistency throughout the entire process of academic advising. This interpretation continues on a more granular level which includes attempting to keep student advisees with the same advisor until it is no longer possible due to promotions, self-initiated exits from the company, or other life events that may lead a faculty member away from the role of advising. This is in addition to streamlining training opportunities across the board for all faculty advisors in order to ensure everyone is mutually educated to allow for a strengthened continuity in advising (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Keenahan et al., 2022).

Proactive Communication. Throughout the three data collection methods, I was able to gain a clear understanding of the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges. While proactive communication is listed as the third theme that emerged from this study, it is clear that from the data analysis, faculty and academic chairs who hold advisor roles place a large amount of significance on this final theme. Existing research details that proactive communication acts as a preemptive strike against any predetermined worry or anxiety students may have related to registration for the next semester, applying for graduation, or to new students registering for their first semester in college (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). This study continues to push the existing literature into a deeper delve into the impact of proactive communication on the recruitment of new students and the retention of current students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). In her focus group, Chloe stated that she tries "…to communicate very proactively with my students, and I try to make sure they know what's going on and what's expected of them to try to reduce that anxiety."

My interpretation of these findings is that faculty advisors who successfully implement a proactive communication approach with their advisees far exceed their peers who do not follow suit. By dedicating extra time and resources to communicate with their advisees in a proactive manner, it allows for endless opportunities which can emerge from the student advisee-faculty advisor relationship (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). Opening the door to limitless benefits from the nurtured relationships between student advisees and faculty advisors solely by implementing a proactive communication approach allows for an expansion of ideas and concepts not only within the faculty member's specific department, but also to the entire institution, when approached correctly. The strengthened relationships discussed here which exist between faculty advisors and student advisees, continue to solidify the foundation of increased retention and recruitment of new students at two-year institutions. In her focus group, Andrea stated, “I think building relationships with the students, letting them know that you care about them, trying to be proactive and reach out to them and let them know, ‘hey, it’s time to register, let’s go,’” produces a general increase on retention and recruitment of new students.

Relationship Between Individualized Attention, Consistency in Advising, and Proactive Communication

The problem is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students on a continuous basis, and there is little to no faculty involvement in these efforts. Existing research indicates a need for the implementation of individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication in faculty advising efforts (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022). This study focused on all three aspects, discovering that a lack of individualized attention leads to inconsistencies in advising, which does not foster proactive communication.

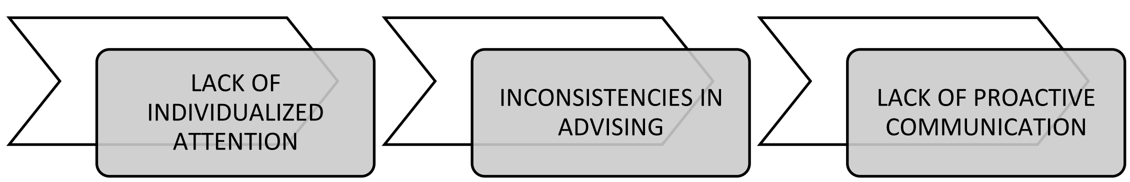


Figure 2: Relationship Between Individualized Attention, Consistency in Advising, and Proactive Communication

Implications for Practice

Discussion of the implications for policy and practice are included in this section to improve the recruitment of new students and the retention of existing students at two-year institutions. Listed implications for policy and practice include recommendations for various stakeholders of the institution (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Oripova, 2022). The summaries found in this section include recommendations for two-year higher education institutions in terms of the proven strategies that increase the retention of current students and the recruitment of new students, as well as their stakeholders.

Implications for Policy

This study established the value of personalized and proactive communication, constructive feedback by faculty advisors when advising students, psychological and emotional support when non-academic issues are discussed, and the use of online resources and other forms of technology regarding the recruitment and retention of students (Belotto, 2018; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). In terms of recruitment specifically, participants highlighted the importance of the course value and success, word-of-mouth referrals, cooperation with high schools, active outreach, and highlighting alumni success. Key to an effective and successful partnership between the advising and recruitment departments are inter-discipline and academic department collaboration, centralized student databases and software, all-inclusive student support, routine and relevant training, and lucidity and transparency of institutional and inter-departmental processes.

Recommendations for stakeholders who create and maintain policy start with facilitating the creation of a relationship between high schools and two-year colleges in order to expose high school students to the college setting, their classes and different modalities, as well as the various programs offered by the institution (Oripova, 2022). A second recommendation is to support and advocate for policies between high schools and two-year colleges that are aimed at enhancing the establishment of all-inclusive student support services in two-year colleges (Arch & Gilman, 2019). Student support services may include transfer and transient student departments with dedicated personnel who are experienced and well-versed in these areas, first-year experience classes which are housed within student support services and taught to the incoming high school students by training and knowledgeable faculty, as well as current students who attend the institution and are employed by the college as student advocates (Woods et al., 2018). Student advocates typically conduct college tours, explain the services available to students on and off campus, and discuss auxiliary services such as food, clubs, or athletics on campus, all while representing the current student body effectively and appropriately.

Implications for Practice

Recommendations for other stakeholders, which include institutional leaders and administration, the centralized advising and recruitment departments within the institution, and faculty members in order to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges, are discussed in this section. It is recommended that institutional leaders invest financial and human resources into training sessions and professional development opportunities for those faculty that advise students in order to stress the importance of and necessity of individualized attention (Jabbar et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Also, institutional leaders should strive to maintain a stable advising system and organizational structure with infrequent system changes, which may allow for a streamlined academic path for students.

For the centralized advising and recruitment departments within an institution, it is recommended that both areas focus on building a strong relationship and partnership with faculty in order to establish a well-balanced, educated advising strategy that places great importance and weight on the sensitivity to the individual demographic challenges potential students may face. Incorporating current technology may continue to improve cooperation and communication between the two different departments (Price et al., 2021; Vijjapu, 2019). It is also recommended that the centralized advising and recruitment departments should aim to adopt a culture of successful communication and collaboration on an inter-departmental basis. Two final recommendations for the centralized advising and recruitment departments within an institution include a) using a student database system (DegreeWorks and Aviso) to track and monitor student progress and become involved in making corrections or offer the student guidance when necessary and b) administer routine training and professional development to ensure transparency and lucidity of the inter-departmental processes.

Recommendations for faculty members include the encouragement of maintaining a fluid, proactive communication style with students, aim to predict and anticipate their needs, all in a timely fashion. It is also recommended that faculty members should work with the centralized advising and recruitment departments within an institution to attempt to increase student recruitment and retention, as well as augment the efforts that the two student services departments already deploy (Jabbar et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). The final recommendation for faculty members is to accept and embrace possibly new strategies which lay the foundational framework for creating and nurturing a supportive and inclusive educational environment, which may include routine feedback delivered in a constructive manner and also by supplying psychological and emotional support personally or via student support services.

For college administrators, it is recommended to create and deploy faculty training programs and professional development, which are focused on how to implement individualized and engaging instructional strategies. It is also recommended that college administrators routinely analyze existing curriculum to update it to ensure it aligns with industry needs. A final recommendation for college administrators is to invest financially in digital tools and other online resources that may improve student engagement (Jabbar et al., 2022).

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in the theory of social constructivism. Previous studies indicate that one of the most important interactions that faculty and students have are during academic advising sessions, and because of these critical sessions, faculty advising plays a significantly important role in leading to higher recruitment levels, better completion rates, an elevated student connection to the college, a positive influence on student achievement and development, as well as increased retention (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). The problem of community and technical colleges struggling to retain existing students and enroll new students on a continuous basis due to little to no faculty involvement in these efforts aligns with the traits of lack of individualized attention, as depicted in Figure 2. Lack of individualized attention impacts the rate of consistency in advising conducted by faculty advisors, which then influences their communication style, and proactive communication becomes less and less. This study contributed to the theory of social constructivism by studying the impact that faculty advisors and their involvement have on the recruitment and retention of students. This study extended the research by confirming that faculty advisors who spend a considerable amount of personalized time with student advisees are instrumental to their success, which leads to increased retention from semester to semester (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022).

The empirical implication of this study demonstrates that using the hermeneutic phenomenological approach allowed for an analysis of the effect that faculty advisors have on their student advisees in terms of increased recruitment and retention. Existing literature details the importance and impact of proactive communication on the recruitment of new students and the retention of current students (Al-Imamy & Zygiaris, 2022; Stratton et al., 2022; Tippetts et al., 2020). While the existing literature depicts the importance of proactive communication on the recruitment of new students and the retention of current students, a gap exists in the literature when attempting to comprehend the experiences of faculty advisors working with their student advisees and how their interactions, knowledge of the subject matter, and levels of preparedness have a perceived effect on recruitment and retention. This study added to the existing literature as the problem addressed throughout this study is that community and technical colleges struggle to retain existing students and enroll new students on a continuous basis due to little to no faculty involvement in these efforts, which aligns with the traits of lack of individualized attention, as depicted in Figure 2, a progressive approach which has not been extensively researched. This study aims to close the gap on what influence faculty advisors truly have on student enrollment retention.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study included the sample of participants used and the expectation that all faculty advisors are willing to invest the time and effort into tailoring their advising communication efforts to adopt progressive approaches which implement individualized attention, proactive advising, provide consistency throughout the advising process (Denny & Weckesser, 2019). It is important to note that the study might be skewed if the bulk of participants are from one specific group (e.g., lead instructors). While the recruitment letter was distributed to an even and fair mixture of men and women, the sample of participants that were ultimately used for this study consisted of 75% women and 25% men. Delimitations of this study include the criterion listed as a requirement for the sample of participants, which restricted participants to the lower Southeastern United States to ensure their strategies and practices align with each other under the same accrediting body, The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for future research begin with exploring the opinions and perspectives of students on the strategies used by faculty advisors in an attempt to increase recruitment and retention (Pitts & Myers, 2022). By incorporating the student's voice into future research, it would provide a more holistic outlook on how effective the proven strategies are. The second recommendation for future research, which includes students, is to compare and contrast the efficiency and effectiveness of various advising approaches and to comprehend the ideal balance between faculty advising and centralized advising.

The third recommendation for future research is to have college administrators, faculty advisors, and personnel in the centralized advising and recruitment departments at the college take an in-depth look at the role technology plays in the enhancement of recruitment and student retention strategies (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hu, 2020). Analyzing the role that technology plays in the enhancement of recruitment and student retention strategies will equip key stakeholders at the institution with more detailed information in terms of what type of technology supports the process and what type of technology may be a hindrance. A fourth recommendation which also falls in line with technology, is to analyze the impact of online resources and digital tools on recruitment and student retention strategies (Mangundu, 2022).

A fifth recommendation for future research is to investigate the effect of frequent system changes on recruitment and student retention and how this analysis may provide useful into how two-year colleges can potentially decrease any interruption of services during these changes (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2021). A sixth recommendation for future research which can have a relation to system changes is to explore the financial and human resource constraints faculty advisors face and how these barriers can be lessened or removed to strengthen their ability to provide effective student support (Farruggia et al., 2020; Hui et al., 2021). Frequent system changes can potentially impact the increase and decrease in student retention and is a critical area to conduct additional research in.

A seventh recommendation for future research is to delve deeper into the challenges faculty advisors face as they attempt to provide individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication. This investigation could provide beneficial insights into specific areas in need of improvement. An eight recommendation for future research is to conduct a comparative study that involves multiple two-year institutions (Houdyshell et al., 2022). The study should explore the various strategies used by each institution and their success rate. This recommendation may result in the benefit of having a more defined understanding of the comprehensive picture in this context.

By addressing the eight listed recommendations, which are all areas in need of improvement and expansion, future research has the potential to continue to improve the understanding of faculty advisor experiences and the proven methods and strategies behind the effective and successful recruitment and student retention at two-year colleges. The findings of this research study add to the expanding body of existing literature on the critical role that faculty play in student recruitment and retention. The findings also highlight the value and importance of an organized institutional effort, which emphasizes the essential need for a successful partnership between various departments at the institution (Hassanein, 2022; Puckett, 2021; Smith & Harris, 2021).

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges throughout the lower Southeastern United States. The study was grounded in the theory of social constructivism, and the sample of participants used in this study was selected based on purposeful and criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by having similar characteristics of position or rank and involvement in student advising for at least one calendar or academic year. The data collection methods used throughout this study were two focus groups, individual interviews, and one Likert-based questionnaire. An analysis of the data presented three major themes, individualized attention, consistency in advising, and proactive communication, as well as two sub-themes, system changes and technology tools. The results of the study confirmed that faculty advisors who spend a considerable amount of personalized time with student advisees are instrumental to their success, which leads to increased retention from semester to semester (Pitts & Myers, 2022; Sepulveda & Birnbaum, 2022).

References

Acevedo-Gil, N., & Zerquera, D. D. (2016). Community college first-year experience programs: Examining student access, experience, and success from the student perspective: Community college first-year experience programs. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2016*(175), 71-82.

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(4), 431-447. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390902736512

Al-Imamy, S. Y., & Zygiaris, S. (2022). Innovative students' academic advising for optimum courses' selection and scheduling assistant: A blockchain based use case. *Education and Information Technologies, 27*(4), 5437-5455. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10844-1

Allen, J. M., & Smith, C. L. (2008). Importance of, responsibility for, and satisfaction with academic advising: A faculty perspective. *Journal of College Student Development, 49*(5), 397-411. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0033

Almond, D. (2020). Reframing everyday language in higher education toward student sustainability. *College and University*, *95*(3), 19-22. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1267476

Andrews, T. (2012). What is social constructionism? *The Grounded Theory Review*, *11*(1), 39-46. http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/06/01/what-is-social-constructionism/

Angelo, T., Umberger, K., Cruikshank, D., & Partridge, S. (2021). What's next for real-time COVID-19-era marketing? *Journal of Education Advancement & Marketing*, *6*(2), 114-127.

Arch, X., & Gilman, I. (2019). First principles: Designing services for first-generation students. *College & Research Libraries*, *80*(7), 996-1012. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.80.7.996

Atwater, M. M. (1996). Social constructivism: Infusion into the multicultural science education research agenda. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 33*(8), 821-837. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2736(199610)33:8<821::AID-TEA1>3.0.CO;2-Y

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited* (First ed.). Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.2307/2943781

Avogo, F. A., Appau, W. M., & Attakora-Amaniampong, E. (2022). The effects of word-of-mouth and online review marketing strategies on students' satisfaction with their housing selection during COVID-19 season. *Facilities, 40*(5/6), 394-411. https://doi.org/10.1108/F-09-2021-0085

Bahr, P. R. (2013). Classifying community colleges based on students' patterns of use. *Research in Higher Education, 54*(4), 433-460. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-012-9272-5

Baird, S. B. (2020). Faculty perceptions of academic advising at small, Christian universities. *Christian Higher Education, 19*(5), 321-335. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2020.1712559

Baker, V. L., & Griffin, K. A. (2010). Beyond mentoring and advising: Toward understanding the role of faculty "developers" in student success. *About Campus*, *14*(6), 2-8. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20002

Barak, M. (2016). Science teacher education in the twenty-first century: A pedagogical framework for technology-integrated social constructivism. *Research in Science Education (Australasian Science Education Research Association), 47*(2), 283-303. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-015-9501-y

Barbera, S. A., Berkshire, S. D., Boronat, C. B., & Kennedy, M. H. (2020). Review of undergraduate student retention and graduation since 2010: Patterns, predictions, and recommendations for 2020. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(2), 227-250. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117738233

Barker, S., & Mamiseishvili, K. (2014). Reconnecting: A phenomenological study of transition within a shared model of academic advising. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 51*(4), 433-445. https://doi.org/10.1515/jsarp-2014-0043

Barragan, C., Ryckman, L., & Doyle, W. (2022). Improving educational outcomes for first-year and first-generation veteran students: An exploratory study of a persistent outreach approach in a veteran-student support program. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *70*(1), 42-57. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2021.1908773

Barton, S. W. H. (2021). Niche marketing as a valuable strategy to grow enrollment at an institution of higher education. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print)*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2021.1925826

Belotto, M. (2018). Data analysis methods for qualitative research: Managing the challenges of coding, interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *Qualitative Report*, *23*(11), 2622-2633. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3492

Bemmel, E. P., Floyd, D. L., & Bryan, V. C. (2008). Perceptions and reflections of administrators: Community colleges transitioning to baccalaureate colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 33*(2), 151-176. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920802564923

Bennett, C. A., Hsiao, E., Dees, D. C., Kim, D., & Bochenko, M. J. (2021). The impact of TRIO student support services on academic performance of non-traditional students at a public state college in Georgia. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 27*(2), 157-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971420915938

Blankenberger, B., & Williams, A. M. (2020). COVID and the impact on higher education: The essential role of integrity and accountability. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 42*(3), 404-423. https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2020.1771907

Boote, D. N., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher, 34*(6), 3-15. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034006003

Brammer, S., & Clark, T. (2020). COVID-19 and management education: Reflections on challenges, opportunities, and potential futures. *British Journal of Management, 31*(3), 453-456. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12425

Brown-Nevers, M. H. (2021). Leading change during a pandemic. *College and University, 96*(4), 45-48.

Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Jensen, J. M. (2012). Preparing ed.d. students to conduct group dissertations. *Innovative Higher Education, 37*(5), 407-421. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-012-9212-5

Cahill, J., Bowyer, J., Rendell, C., Hammond, A., & Korek, S. (2015). An exploration of how program leaders in higher education can be prepared and supported to discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively. *Educational Research, 57*(3), 272-286. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2015.1056640

Camacho, M. M., Lord, S. M., Mobley, C., Main, J. B., & Brawner, C. E. (2021). Transitions of student military veterans into engineering education. *Social Sciences, 10*(6), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10060228

Candela, A. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *Qualitative Report*, *24*(3), 619-628. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*(5), 545-547. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *10*(6), 807-815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019

Chang, H., Lin, C., Wang, L., & Tseng, F. (2022). How students can effectively choose the right courses: Building a recommendation system to assist students in choosing courses adaptively. *Educational Technology & Society*, *25*(1), 61-74.

Chase, C., Geringer, S., & Stratemeyer, A. (2019). The effect of university marketing efforts on students' academic decision-making: An empirical study. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 19*(6), 40-48. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v19i6.2303

Cheslock, J. J., & Jaquette, O. (2022). Concentrated or fragmented? The U.S. market for online higher education. *Research in Higher Education, 63*(1), 33-59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-021-09639-7

Chiteng Kot, F. (2014). The impact of centralized advising on first-year academic performance and second-year enrollment behavior. *Research in Higher Education, 55*(6), 527-563. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9325-4

Cholewa, B., Schulthes, G., Hull, M. F., Bailey, B. J., & Brown, J. (2017). Building on what works: Supporting underprepared students through a low-cost counseling intervention.

Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 54(3), 261-274. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2017.1331445

Choompunuch, B., Lebkhao, D., Suksatan, W., & Suk-erb, W. (2022). A development of counseling competency for academic advisors in higher education. *Sustainability 2022, 14*(16), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14169907

Chudowsky, N., & Pellegrino, J. W. (2003). Large-scale assessments that support learning: What will it take? *Theory Into Practice, 42*(1), 75-83. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4201_10

Coleman, D. R., & Smith, D. A. (2021). Beyond predictive validity: A mixed method study of self-directed developmental education placement at a small community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 45*(6), 403-422. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1719938

Copes, H., Tchoula, W., Brookman, F., & Ragland, J. (2018). Photo-elicitation interviews with vulnerable populations: Practical and ethical considerations. *Deviant Behavior, 39*(4), 475-494. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2017.1407109

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications, Inc.

D'Amico, M. M., Dika, S. L., Elling, T. W., Algozzine, B., & Ginn, D. J. (2014). Early integration and other outcomes for community college transfer students. *Research in Higher Education, 55*(4), 370-399. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9316-5

Danis, E. (2009). An interview with Harvey W. Wall personal perspectives on the history of academic advising: Parts 1, 2, & 3. *NACADA Journal, 29*(1), 52-61. https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-29.1.52

Darling, R. A. (2015). Creating an institutional academic advising culture that supports commuter student success: Creating an institutional academic advising culture. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2015*(150), 87-96. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20130

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*(4), 314-321. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x

Donaldson, P., McKinney, L., Lee, M., & Pino, D. (2016). First-year community college students' perceptions of and attitudes toward intrusive academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, *36*(1), 30-42. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-15-012

Edenfield, C., & McBrayer, J. S. (2021). Institutional conditions that matter to community college students' success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *45*(10), 718-734. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1785353

Edwards, M. (2020). Putting students at the heart of marketing efforts to enhance impact. *Journal of Education Advancement & Marketing*, *5*(1), 52-61.

Evans, S., Henderson, A., & Ashton-Hay, S. (2019). Defining the dynamic role of Australian academic skills advisors. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *38*(6), 1121-1137. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1616676

Farruggia, S. P., Solomon, B., Back, L., & Coupet, J. (2020). Partnerships between universities and nonprofit transition coaching organizations to increase student success. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *48*(6), 1898-1912. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22388

Figg, C., Wenrick, M., Youker, C., Heilman, J., & Schneider, C. (2009). Implications and benefits of a long-term peer debriefing experience on teacher researchers. *Brock Education Journal*, *19*(1). https://doi.org/10.26522/brocked.v19i1.118

Fincher, M. E., Weems, S., Harrision, M., Harrison, Z., Kelly, C., Sumrall, F., & Wallace, L. (2019). The Mississippi community college story: From humble beginnings to extraordinary outcomes. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*(12), 854-864. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1542638

Fitzpatrick, N. (2020). 33 A qualitative analysis of cardiology practitioner opinion regarding the benefits, adverse effects and challenges associated with the potential introduction of public reporting of physician events and results (PROPER) to ireland. *Heart (British Cardiac Society), 106*(Suppl 4), A22-A23. https://doi.org/10.1136/heartjnl-2020-ICS.33

Geisinger, B. N., & Raman, D. R. (2013). Why they leave: Understanding student attrition from engineering majors. *International Journal of Engineering Education, 29*(4), 914-925. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/38933509.pdf

Gemma, N. (2021). Reconceptualizing 'reasonable adjustments' for the successful employment of autistic women. *Disability & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1971065

Ghosh, M., Fisher, C., Preen, D. B., & Holman, C. D. J. (2016). "It has to be fixed": A qualitative inquiry into perceived ADHD behavior among affected individuals and parents in western Australia. *BMC Health Services Research, 16*(141), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-016-1399-1

Gordon, V. N. (2004). The evolution of academic advising: One institution's historical path. *NACADA Journal, 24*(1-2), 17-23. https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-24.1-2.17

Gordon, V. N., Habley, W. R., & Grites, T. J. (2000). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. Jossey-Bass.

Gregg, S., McDougall, M., & Sajjanhar, T. (2019). G313(P) A qualitative study using a patient questionnaire to establish whether parents of pediatric patients will use proposed out of hospital models of care (OOHMS) instead of the pediatric emergency department and if not why not? *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, *104*(Suppl 2), A128. https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2019-rcpch.304

Grote, D. M., Richardson, A. J., Glisson, H. E., Knight, D. B., Lee, W. C., & Watford, B. A. (2022). Engineering community college transfer pathways through pre-transfer programs. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2022*(198), 77-91. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20512

Habley, W., Valiga, M., McClanahan, R., & Burkum, K. (2010). What works in student retention? Fourth national survey: Community colleges report. Iowa City, IA: *ACT, Inc.*.

Hammer, M. J. (2017). Ethical considerations for data collection using surveys. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *44*(2), 157-159. https://doi.org/10.1188/17.ONF.157-159

Harpe, S. E. (2015). How to analyze likert and other rating scale data. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *7*(6), 836-850. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2015.08.001

Harrell, J. C., & Reglin, G. (2018). Evaluation of a community college's nursing faculty advising program relative to students' satisfaction and retention. *College Student Journal*, *52*(1), 33-48. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Wenhao-Liu-14/publication/324695095_Relations_of_physical_activity_and_stress_vulnerability_in_university_students/links/6008ed60299bf14088adb075/Relations-of-physical-activity-and-stress-vulnerability-in-university-students.pdf#page=39

Hassanein, S. N. (2022). Reimagining higher-ed in the new era: Upskilling competencies toward enhancing enrollment management. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, *9*(4), 17-33. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2623908238?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

Hatch, D. K., & Garcia, C. E. (2017). Academic advising and the persistence intentions of community college students in their first weeks in college. *Review of Higher Education, 40*(3), 353-390. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2017.0012

Hayes, C., Parks, R., & Taylor, A. (2021). Registrar strategies to boost summer enrollment. *College and University, 96*(2), 57-60.

He, Y., & Hutson, B. (2016). Appreciative assessment in academic advising. *Review of Higher Education, 39*(2), 213-240. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0003

Henderson, S. E., & Pollock, K. (2021). SEM as a connector: Building relationships in a new normal. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 8*(4), 3-22. https://www.cctech.edu/wp-content/uploads/SEMQ-0804-Henderson-1.pdf

Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Weber, M. B. (2019). What influences saturation? estimating sample sizes in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research, 29*(10), 1483-1496. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318821692

Hern, L., McKay, R., & Brown, S. (2019). “We need community”: Assessing the impact of faculty, advising, campus social life, and racial formation on the transfer student experience at a diverse island campus. *Journal of Applied Social Science, 13*(2), 115-138. https://doi.org/10.1177/1936724419876680

Hodges, J. P. (2005). Faculty advising examined: Enhancing the potential of college faculty as advisors (review). *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(5), 564-566. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0050

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality--A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research--a new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education, 8*(4), 1-10. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1268044.pdf

Hossler, D., Ziskin, M., & Gross, J. P. K. (2009). Getting serious about institutional performance in student retention: Research-based lessons on effective policies and practices. *About Campus, 13*(6), 2-11. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.271

Houdyshell, M., Wang, C. X., & Plescia, M. (2022). Remote academic advising with a synchronous communication technology: A case study. *REM: Research on Education and Media, 14*(2), 71-81. https://doi.org/10.2478/rem-2022-0024

Hu, X. (2020). Building an equalized technology-mediated advising structure: Academic advising at community colleges in the post-COVID-19 era. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 44*(10-12), 914-920. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1798304

Hui, Y. K., Kwok, L. F., & Ip, H. H. S. (2021). CRESDA: Towards a personalized student advisory for professional development. *Interactive Learning Environments, 29*(2), 329-342. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1780270

Hurt, B. (2004). Using the balanced-scorecard approach for program assessment of faculty advising. *NACADA Journal, 24*(1-2), 124-127. https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-24.1-2.124

Hutson, B. (2013). Faculty development to support academic advising: Rationale, components, and strategies of support. *The Journal of Faculty Development, 27*(3), 5-11. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarl y-journals%2Ffaculty-development-support-academic-advising%2Fdocview%2F1553179248%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085

Jabbar, H., Schudde, L., Garza, M., & McKinnon-Crowley, S. (2022). Bridges or barriers? how interactions between individuals and institutions condition community college transfer. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, *93*(3), 375-398. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2021.1953339

Johnson, T. S. (2008). Qualitative research in question: A narrative of disciplinary power with/in the IRB. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *14*(2), 212-232. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800407308821

Kamssu, A. J., & Kouam, R. B. (2021). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on university student enrollment decisions and higher education resource allocation. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, *21*(12), 143-153. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v21i12.4707

Kane, T. J., & Rouse, C. E. (1999). The community college: Educating students at the margin between college and work. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *13*(1), 63-84. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.13.1.63

Kapinos, B. (2020). Community college advising coordinators: A perspective from middle management. *The Community College Enterprise*, *26*(2), 46-67. https://home.schoolcraft.edu/cce/26.2.46-67.pdf

Kent, V., Runyan, H., Savinsky, D., & Knight, J. (2020). Mentoring doctoral student mothers in counselor education: A phenomenological study. *The Professional Counselor*, *10*(4), 532-547. https://doi.org/10.15241/vk.10.4.532

Khoza-Shangase, K., Monroe, N., & Sebothoma, B. (2022). Conducting clinical research in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and lessons for speech-language pathology and audiology research. *South African Journal of Communication Disorders, 69*(2), e1-e14. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajcd.v69i2.898

King James Bible. (2017). King James Bible Online. https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/ (Original work published 1769)

Kisiołek, A., Karyy, O., & Halkiv, L. (2021). The utilization of internet marketing communication tools by higher education institutions (on the example of Poland and Ukraine). *International Journal of Educational Management*, *35*(4), 754-767. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-07-2020-0345

Klinenberg, D., & Startz, R. (2022). Covid, colleges, and classes. *Applied Economics, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print),* 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2022.2091110

Köhn, S., & Siré, N. (2022). Fragile connections: Community computer networks, human infrastructures, and the consequences of their breakdown in havana. *American Anthropologist, 124*(2), 383-398. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13727

Kraiger, K. (2008). Transforming our models of learning and development: Web-based instruction as enabler of third-generation instruction. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1*(4), 454-467. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2008.00086.x

Kraiger, K., Fisher, S., Grossman, R., Mills, M. J., & Sitzmann, T. (2022). Online I-O graduate education: Where are we and where should we go? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *15*(2), 151-171. https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2021.144

Kuenzi, K., Stewart, A. J., & Walk, M. (2021). COVID-19 as a nonprofit workplace crisis: Seeking insights from the nonprofit workers' perspective. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *31*(4), 821-832. https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21465

Larson, J., Johnson, A., Aiken-Wisniewski, S. A., & Barkemeyer, J. (2018). What is academic advising? an application of analytic induction. *NACADA Journal*, *38*(2), 81-93. https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-38.2.8

Lemke, J. L. (2001). Articulating communities: Sociocultural perspectives on science education. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *38*(3), 296-316. https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-2736(200103)38:3<296::AID-TEA1007>3.0.CO;2-R

Lengyel, Z. M. (2018). Hermeneutical circle in understanding. on an original link between hermeneutics and logic in the Heidegger – Gadamer dialogue. *Philobiblon*, *23*(1), 95-108. https://doi.org/10.26424/philobib.2018.23.1.05

Liddell, T. M., & Kruschke, J. K. (2018). Analyzing ordinal data with metric models: What could possibly go wrong? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *79*, 328-348. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.08.009

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage.

Lindseth, A., & Norberg, A. (2004). A phenomenological hermeneutical method for researching lived experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, *18*(2), 145-153. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2004.00258.x

Lindseth, A., & Norberg, A. (2021). Elucidating the meaning of life world phenomena. A phenomenological hermeneutical method for researching lived experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, https://doi.org/10.1111/scs.13039

Lockwood, P., Hunt, E., Matlack, R., & Kelley, J. (2013). From community college to four-year institution: A model for recruitment and retention. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *37*(8), 613-619. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668921003677191

Magnusson, E. & Marecek, J. (2015). *Doing interview-based qualitative research a learner's guide*. Cambridge University Press.

Mangundu, J. (2022). Higher education institutional innovation: An analysis of challenges to e-academic advising during emergency remote teaching. *South African Journal of Information Management, 24*(1)https://doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v24i1.1569

Mann, N. (2018). Application of clinical judgment models to the development of academic advisors. *NACADA Journal, 38*(2), 61-71. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-17-038

Mantzoukas, S. (2008). Facilitating research students in formulating qualitative research questions. *Nurse Education Today, 28*(3), 371-377. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2007.06.012

Marin, D. B., Karol, A. B., Sharma, V., Wetmore, J., Costello, Z., Henry, B., Robinson, M., Thompson, L., Peña, I., & Jandorf, L. (2022). M.I.C.A.H. project HEAL: Sustainability of a faith-based community health advisor training program in urban underserved communities in the USA. *Journal of Religion and Health, 61*(3), 2527-2538. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01453-w

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). Literature reviews of, and for, educational research: A commentary on boote and beile's "scholars before researchers". *Educational Researcher, 35*(9), 28-31. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035009028

Mbindyo, M., O'Connor, R. J., & Nandedkar, A. (2021). Linking transformational leadership theory to the practice of academic advising - A conceptual paper. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 21*(12), 172-182. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v21i12.4710

McArthur, R. C. (2005). Faculty-based advising: An important factor in community college retention. *Community College Review, 32*(4), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210503200402

McCall, D., Western, D., & Petrakis, M. (2020). Opportunities for change: What factors influence non-traditional students to enroll in higher education? *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *60*(1), 89-112. https://doi.org/10.3316/aeipt.226331

McGill, C. M., Heikkila, M., & Lazarowicz, T. (2020). Professional development, performance expectations and academic advisors' perceptions of relational skills: A sequential explanatory mixed methods study. New *Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, *32*(4), 50-69. https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20296

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, *2*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674

McKinney, L., Burridge, A. B., Lee, M. M., Bourdeau, G. V., & Miller-Waters, M. (2022). Incentivizing full-time enrollment at community colleges: What influences students' decision to take more courses? *Community College Review, 50*(2), 144-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/00915521211061416

Miller, C., & Weiss, M. J. (2022). Increasing community college graduation rates: A synthesis of findings on the ASAP model from six colleges across two states. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *44*(2), 210-233. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737211036726

Miranda, R. J., Hermann, R. S., Hurley, K. P., & Moore, J. (2021). Motivations for pursuing and challenges to completing geoscience majors at a public university. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, *69*(3), 300-312. https://doi.org/10.1080/10899995.2020.1852847

Mosher, G. (2017). Professional advisers in engineering and technology undergraduate programs: Opportunities and challenges. *The Journal of Technology Studies*, *43*(1), 26-34. https://doi.org/10.21061/jots.v43i1.a.3

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Mucci-Ferris, M., Grabsch, D. K., & Bobo, A. (2021). Positives, negatives, and opportunities arising in the undergraduate experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of College Student Development*, *62*(2), 203-218. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2021.0017

Myers, B. E., & Dyer, J. E. (2005). Attitudes, value, and preparation of university faculty and administrators for advising. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *46*(3), 35-46. https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2005.03035

Nielsen, K. (2015). "Fake it 'til you make it": Why community college students' aspirations "hold steady". *Sociology of Education*, *88*(4), 265-283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040715601889

Nitecki, E. M. (2011). The power of the program: How the academic program can improve community college student success. *Community College Review*, *39*(2), 98-120. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552111404926

Nix, A. N., Jones, T. B., & Hu, S. (2021). Advising academically underprepared students in the “college for all” era. *Review of Higher Education*, *45*(2), 211-238. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2021.0021

Nuseir, M. T., & El Refae, G. A. (2021). Factors influencing the choice of studying at UAE universities: An empirical research on the adoption of educational marketing strategies. Jou*rnal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print)*, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2020.1852467

Oripova, M. (2022). The impact of intrusive college academic advising on high school students' college degree attainment commitment levels: A quantitative quasi-experimental study. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 6*(1), 100315. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100315

Paape, J. E., Miller, M. T., Grover, K. S., & Morris, A. A. (2021). Department chair training: Priorities, needs, and preferences. *The Community College Enterprise*, *27*(1), 38-53.

Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *49*(1), 345-375. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.345

Pardee, C. (2004). *Organizational models for advising*. NACADA Clearinghouse. https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Organizational-Models-for-Advising.aspx

Parks, R., & Taylor, A. (2019). The emerging role of the registrar in enrollment management. *College and University*, *94*(2), 25-30. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1216945

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.

Pechac, S., & Slantcheva-Durst, S. (2021). Coaching toward completion: Academic coaching factors influencing community college student success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 23*(3), 722-746. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119869849

Peterson, S. (2016). Community college student-parents: Priorities for persistence. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 40*(5), 370-384. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1065210

Petrucci, C., & Rivera-Figueroa, A. (2022). STEM faculty mentoring and advising at an urban hispanic-serving community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print),* 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2022.2056549

Phillips, C. H. (2020). Ten techniques to increase collaboration between admissions and marketing offices. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 8*(3), 29-37.

Picton, C., & Kahu, E. R. (2021). 'I knew I had the support from them': Understanding student support through a student engagement lens. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *41*(6), 2034-2047. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1968353

Pitts, S., & Myers, S. A. (2022). Academic advising as teaching: Undergraduate student perceptions of advisor confirmation. *Communication Education, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print),* 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2022.2131856

Postholm, M. B., & Skrøvset, S. (2013). The researcher reflecting on her own role during action research. *Educational Action Research, 21*(4), 506-518. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2013.833798

Price, D. V., Valentine, J. L., & Leader, A. (2021). Success coaching impact on retention for community college students. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 9*(3), 3-10. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fsuccess-coaching-impact-on-retention-community%2Fdocview%2F2614643494%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085

Pringle Barnes, G., & Cheng, M. (2019). Working independently on the dissertation proposal: Experiences of international master's students. *Journal of further and Higher Education, 43*(8), 1120-1132. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1450965

Puckett, H. (2021). Using process mapping and the "communication marathon" to increase faculty involvement in graduate student recruitment efforts. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 8*(4), 33-45. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fusing-process-mapping-communication-marathon%2Fdocview%2F2606939782%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085

Queen, A. E. (2022). Improving transfer through changes in advising. New Directions for Community Colleges, 2022(198), 121-134. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20515

Rabiee, F. (2004). Focus-group interview and data analysis. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, 63(4), 655-660. https://doi.org/10.1079/PNS2004399

Ranney, M. L., Meisel, Z. F., Choo, E. K., Garro, A. C., Sasson, C., Morrow Guthrie, K., & Newgard, C. (2015). Interview-based qualitative research in emergency care part II: Data collection, analysis and results reporting. *Academic Emergency Medicine, 22*(9), 1103-1112. https://doi.org/10.1111/acem.12735

Reimers, B. M. (2022). Academic advising delivered differently: Building an advising capability for regional Australian universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *44*(5), 498-512. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2022.2109556

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 253-255. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040000600207

Robertson, W. B. (2018). *Community college faculty advising: Testing a model of student interaction and satisfaction*. [Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(1), 25-41. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543

Roessger, K. M., Eisentrout, K., & Hevel, M. S. (2019). Age and academic advising in community colleges: Examining the assumption of self-directed learning. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*(6), 441-454. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1490669

Ryan, M. G. (2013). Improving retention and academic achievement for first-time students at a two-year college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 37*(2), 131-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2012.715266

Saloner, B., Gollust, S. E., Planalp, C., & Blewett, L. A. (2020). Access and enrollment in safety net programs in the wake of COVID-19: A national cross-sectional survey. *PloS One, 15*(10), e0240080-e0240080. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240080

Sapir, A. (2022). What student support practitioners know about non-traditional students: A practice-based approach. *Higher Education Research and Development, 41*(6), 2064-2078. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1946015

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity, 52*(4), 1893-1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Savin-Baden, M., & Howell-Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.

Schneider, H. A. (2019). The undecided college student: An academic and career advising challenge, 4th edition ed. by Virginia N. Gordon and George E. Steele (review). *Review of Higher Education*, *42*(2), E-5-E-7. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0018

Setterbo, K., Akers, C., Tarpley, T., & Kennedy, L. (2017). Going against the grain: Recruiting atypical students into a college of agriculture. *NACTA Journal*, *61*(1), 46-51. https://www.jstor.org/stable/90004104

Sepulveda, A., & Birnbaum, M. (2022). Perceptions, reality and semantics: Exploring perceptions of coaching and academic advising as distinct roles. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, *11*(1), 119-133. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-10-2020-0063

Sim, J., & Waterfield, J. (2019). Focus group methodology: Some ethical challenges. *Quality & Quantity*, *53*(6), 3003-3022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-019-00914-5

Smith, C., & Harris, L. (2021). Faculty involvement in strategic enrollment management at north American postsecondary educational institutions. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, *8*(4), 23-32. https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/educationpub/49

Smith, J. S. (2007). Using data to inform decisions: Intrusive faculty advising at a community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *31*(10), 813-831. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668920701375918

Somerville, M., & Green, M. (2012). Mapping sustainability initiatives across a region: An innovative survey approach. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, *28*(2), 65-77. https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2013.1

Spearing, A. J. S., Zhang, J., Hall, S., & Ma, L. (2021). Mining engineering education pre and post the COVID pandemic and some ideas for the future. *E3S Web of Conferences*, *278*(2021), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202127801003

Stewart, K., & Williams, M. (2005). Researching online populations: The use of online focus groups for social research. *Qualitative Research*, *5*(4), 395-416. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794105056916

Stratton, T. P., Janetski, B. K., Ray, M. E., Higginbotham, M. C., Lebovitz, L., & Martin, B. A. (2022). Detection of academic early warning signs and effective intervention "takes a village". *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *86*(7), 801-805.

Strawn, R. M. (2019). Rural community colleges as a student choice. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2019*(187), 73-81. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20371

Suárez, E., & Beatty, C. C. (2022). Advising in science education: Critiquing where we have been, moving toward an equitable and holistic advising approach. *Science Education, 106*(5), 1299-1317. https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.21745

Sullivan, K., Yoon, K., & Stephens, R. (2022). Framing of student veterans in higher education institutions' marketing messages. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print)*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2022.2110828

Sutton, K. L., & Sankar, C. S. (2011). Student satisfaction with information provided by academic advisors. *Journal of STEM Education, 12*(7-8), 71-85. https://www.jstem.org/jstem/index.php/JSTEM/article/view/1734/1404

Thomas, E., & Magilvy, J. K. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *16*(2), 151-155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x

Tian, W., & Singhasiri, W. (2016). Learning opportunities in PhD supervisory talks: A social constructionist perspective. *Issues in Educational Research, 26*(4), 653-672. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.510467324815244

Tippetts, M. M., Brandley, A. T., Metro, J., King, M., Ogren, C., & Zick, C. D. (2020). Promoting persistence: The role of academic advisors. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 24*(2), 526-547. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025120924804

Tippetts, M. M., Davis, B., Nalbone, S., & Zick, C. D. (2022). Thx 4 the msg: Assessing the impact of texting on student engagement and persistence. *Research in Higher Education, 63*(6), 1073-1093. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-022-09678-8

Townsend, B. K., & Wilson, K. (2006). "A hand hold for a little bit": Factors facilitating the success of community college transfer students to a large research university. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(4), 439-456. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2006.0052

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837-851. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121

Troxel, W. G. (2018). Faculty advising: Roles, rewards, and requisites. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2018*(184), 83-96. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20305

Tudor, T. R. (2018). Fully integrating academic advising with career coaching to increase student retention, graduation rates and future job satisfaction: An industry approach. *Industry & Higher Education, 32*(2), 73-79. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422218759928 van Rijnsoever, F. J., Dynamics of Innovation Systems, & Studies, I. (2017). (I can't get no) saturation: A simulation and guidelines for sample sizes in qualitative research. *PloS One*, *12*(7), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181689

Verdinelli, S., & Scagnoli, N. I. (2013). Data display in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *12*(1), 359-381. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691301200117

Vianden, J., & Barlow, P. J. (2015). Strengthen the bond: Relationships between academic advising quality and undergraduate student loyalty. *NACADA Journal*, *35*(2), 15-27. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-15-026

Vijjapu, S. V. B. L. (2019). Machine learning based recommendations to aid educational planning and academic advising through the virtual academic advisor system (Doctoral dissertation). http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fmachine-learning-based-recommendations-aid%2Fdocview%2F2288107716%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085

Vygotskiĭ, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Waldner, L., McDaniel, D., & Widener, M. E-advising excellence: The new frontier in faculty advising. (2011). *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *7*(4), 1-11. https://jolt.merlot.org/vol7no4/waldner_1211.htm

Walsh, B. A., Woodliff, T. A., Lucero, J., Harvey, S., Burnham, M. M., Bowser, T. L., Aguirre, M., & Zeh, D. W. (2021). Historically underrepresented graduate students' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Family Relations, 70*(4), 955-972. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12574

Wao, H. O., Dedrick, R. F., & Ferron, J. M. (2011). Quantitizing text: Using theme frequency and theme intensity to describe factors influencing time-to-doctorate. *Quality & Quantity, 45*(4), 923-934. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-010-9404-y

Wild, L., & Ebbers, L. (2002). Rethinking student retention in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 26*(6), 503-519. https://doi.org/10.1080/2776770290041864

Williamson, L. V., Goosen, R. A., & Gonzalez, G. F. (2014). Faculty advising to support student learning. *Journal of Developmental Education, 38*(1), 20-24. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24614010

Woods, C. S., Park, T., Hu, S., & Betrand Jones, T. (2018). How high school coursework predicts introductory college-level course success. *Community College Review, 46*(2), 176-196. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552118759419

Woolf, B., & Edwards, P. (2021). Does advance contact with research participants increase response to questionnaires: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 21*(1), 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-021-01435-2

Zambito, M. (2015, June 9). *Keeping students on track*. West Liberty University, Student Life. https://westliberty.edu/student-life/news/keeping-students-on-track/

Zhang, Y. (2016). An overlooked population in community college: International students' (in)validation experiences with academic advising. *Community College Review, 44*(2), 153-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552116633293

Zhang, X., Gossett, C., Simpson, J., & Davis, R. (2019). Advising students for success in higher education: An all-out effort. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 21*(1), 53-77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025116689097

Zick, C. D., Tippetts, M., & Davis, B. (2022). Money well spent? The cost-effectiveness of a texting intervention targeting college persistence. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 15*(2), 394-412. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2021.1992813

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 5, 2023

Theresa Strong
Christian Raby

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-888 A Phenomenological Study of Faculty Involvement in the Retention and Recruitment of Students at a Two-Year College: A Progressive Approach

Dear Theresa Strong, Christian Raby,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Questionnaire & Interview: Recruitment Letter & Consent Form to Participants

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration: Educational Leadership. The purpose of my research is to understand the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges, specifically those used by faculty who are involved in student advising, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be faculty or academic chairs at a two-year institution in the lower Southeastern states with at least one academic or calendar year of experience in student advising. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in a confidential audio-recorded individual interview with the sole researcher of the study. The questionnaire consists of twenty-nine questions, should take approximately thirty minutes or less to complete, and the interview should take approximately sixty minutes or less to complete. Participants may also be asked to participate in an audio-recorded focus group that should take approximately sixty minutes or less to complete. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential, and pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant.

To participate, please click here to fill out the Google Form and proceed to the survey.

A consent document is provided in the above link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document by typing your name and the date on the Google form click the purple submit button.

The second section of the above-listed Google Form includes a direct link to the online questionnaire delivered via SurveyMonkey.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Strong
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix C

Focus Group: Recruitment Letter & Consent Form to Participants

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration: Educational Leadership. The purpose of my research is to understand the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges, specifically those used by faculty who are involved in student advising, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be faculty or academic chairs at a two-year institution in the lower Southeastern states with at least one academic or calendar year of experience in student advising. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded focus group with other willing participants led by the sole researcher of the study. It should take approximately sixty minutes or less to complete the focus group. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential, and pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant.

To participate, please click here to fill out the Google Form or contact me at [redacted] for more information.

A consent document is provided in the above Google Form link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent form by typing your name and the date and click the purple submit button.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Strong
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix D

Preliminary Interview Demographic Questionnaire

Dear Recipient:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative research study. The purpose of my research is to understand the strategies used by faculty to increase recruitment and retention at two-year colleges, specifically those used by faculty who are involved in student advising.

To begin the process, please answer the following demographic and informational questions. Once submitted, you will automatically receive a copy via the email address you enter below. Formal individual interviews will be arranged and scheduled via email after this preliminary questionnaire has been completed. Please remember that all information will remain private and confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of individuals and institutions.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Strong

Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Email: ________________________

What is your full name?

What is your title/position?

What department do you work in?

What institution do you work for?

How large is your institution enrollment wise (full and part-time students)?

- Less than 1,000 students
- 1,001-2,500 students
- 2,501-4,000 students
- 4,001-5,500 students
- More than 5,500 students

How long have you worked in higher education?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years

- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 20+ years

How long have you been a faculty advisor or assisted with faculty advising?

- Less than one year
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 5-6 years
- 7+ years

Appendix E

Faculty Advisor Questionnaire

1. Please enter your contact information:
    a. Name
    b. Company
    c. Address
    d. City/Town
    e. State/Province
    f. ZIP/Postal Code
    g. Country
    h. Email Address
    i. Phone Number
2. How many advisees do you have
3. On average, how much time do you spend with each advisee?
    a. <5 minutes
    b. 5-10 minutes
    c. 11-20 minutes
    d. 21-30 minutes
    e. 31 minutes or more
4. Optional comments regarding time for advising appointments:

Please answer questions 5-27 based on the following Likert scale:

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Neither agree nor disagree

d. Disagree

e. Strongly disagree

5. The method of assigning faculty advisors to students at your institution is equitable.
6. Given my teaching assignment, my advising load is reasonable.
7. I have sufficient time in my schedule to meet with my advisees.
8. Students and faculty advisors should be required to meet each semester.
9. Advising students brings me satisfaction.
10. I collaborate with other faculty advisors regarding best practices when visiting with advisees.
11. While I have been a faculty coach at my institution, I have received professional development training to help me develop the skills necessary to effectively counsel and academically guide my advisees.
12. When my advisees come in with difficult problems, I am confident in referring them to the appropriate campus resources.
13. I collaborate with my advisees to identify reasonable academic goals based on what they share about themselves.
14. I suggest appropriate degree or certificate programs/pathways that my advisees might pursue.
15. I possess sufficient knowledge of my advisee’s degree program or pathway to help him/her select specific courses.
16. I use my advisee’s academic record (including test scores and grades) to help me

determine what courses are the most appropriate for him/her to take.

17. I assist my advisees when they are confronted with canceled courses or other scheduling problems.
18. When my advisee is faced with difficult academic decisions, I explain the alternatives and help them decide which one is the best choice.
19. I keep my advisees informed of their academic progress by discussing their academic records (including test scores and grades) with them.
20. I am knowledgeable about the academic requirements my advisees need to complete their degree program and graduate.
21. I feel comfortable discussing my advisees' difficult personal matters.
22. I help connect my advisees to campus resources when they have problems in and out of the classroom.
23. My advisees and I discuss their interests and plans outside of academics.
24. I have received enough training to use my institutional advising software proficiently (Ellucian Degree Works, Aviso Enterprise, etc.).
25. Faculty advising increases the retention of students.
26. Faculty advising increases the recruitment of new students.
27. There is a student benefit to the faculty advising model.
28. Describe your biggest challenge working as a faculty advisor.
29. Describe your biggest accomplishment working as a faculty advisor.

Appendix F

Faculty Advisor Questionnaire Email Approval

Strong, Theresa

From: Robertson, William B [B M S] [redacted]
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 5:48 PM
To: Strong, Theresa
Subject: RE: Dissertation Request

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING: This message was sent from outside Horry-Georgetown Technical College. Please **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon, Theresa.

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Faculty Advisor Survey I developed for my study. I am delighted you found my survey useful; please feel free to use it however you need. I hope it is helpful in the study you are developing.

Your dissertation title is compelling, and I am interested in reviewing the results and reading your conclusions. Please send me a link to your dissertation when it's published. Best of luck as you proceed.

Have a wonderful holiday!
Bill

William B. Robertson, M.S., Ph.D.
[redacted]

From: Strong, Theresa [redacted]
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 3:22 PM
To: Robertson, William B [B M S] [redacted]
Cc: Strong, Theresa [redacted]
Subject: Dissertation Request

Good afternoon,

My name is Theresa Strong, and I am in the dissertation phase of my PhD in Higher Education Administration: Educational Leadership at Liberty University. My dissertation title is as follows, "A Phenomenological Study of Faculty

Involvement in the Retention and Recruitment of Students at a Two-Year College: A Progressive Approach." I am incorporating individual interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire into my study in terms of data collection and with your permission, I would like to use the Faculty Advisor Survey (Appendix E) you incorporated into your study, with various edits to fit it to my specific group of participants.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to use this survey and I look forward to your response!

Thank you,

THERESA M. STRONG, MBA | Academic Chair & Professor, *Department of Business Administration*

[redacted]