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Student Perceptions of Advising for Retention at a Midwestern Technical College

Joseph Mollner
joemollner@hotmail.com

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Joseph G. Mollner

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ABSTRACT

Student retention continues to be an issue across the United States, with only 69% of students remaining in their higher education institution until graduation. This number drops dramatically to 59.1% at two-year public schools, including technical schools. Past studies proved that proper advising is the cornerstone of improving student retention. In this phenomenological study, ten participants shared their experiences with advising at a technical college in the midwestern United States. Four common advisor-centered themes appeared from technical students' advising experiences: these themes were flexibility, compassion, helpfulness, and the ability to provide constructive feedback.

There were significant differences in advising experiences between traditional students (18-24 years old) and non-traditional (25 years and older) students. Traditional students prefer a combination of proactive and developmental advising approaches, and non-traditional students prefer a combination of prescriptive and developmental advising approaches. Tinto's Model of Student Departure indicates that quality student-advisor interactions can dramatically affect students' overall satisfaction, and ultimately affect students' decision to continue with the program until graduation.

Key words: Academic Advising, Technical College, Vocational College, Student Retention

DEDICATION

Although there are many to whom I could dedicate my dissertation, first and foremost, I must dedicate this work to God. Because of Him and the blessings that He has given me during my lifetime, I have had the opportunity and privilege of pursuing my doctorate degree. Second, I dedicate this to my intelligent and beautiful wife, Amanda. Without her help, I would still be working on my first paper. She spent an incredible and inequitable and unfair amount of time watching our daughters, which allowed me the time I needed to complete this study.

Thirdly, I dedicate my dissertation to my two daughters, Samantha and Nicole, who accepted the fact that doing this study meant I had less time to spend with them. I also wanted to do this degree to show them that they can do anything in this world they put their mind and effort into. I wanted to show them that even though I am not the smartest or most scholarly person, I was able to achieve my doctorate because I was willing to work at it. Fourth, I want to dedicate this to my parents, John and Susan, for bringing me into this world, and for all the time they spent raising me; my mother who spent countless hours proofreading papers, and acting as a sounding board; my father, who taught me never to give up, and how to look at difficult situations in different ways.

Lastly, there are so many more people who influenced and encouraged me during this journey. I dedicate this dissertation also to them. Thank you, all of you; I will never forget your help and support.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Over the past decade, many academic institutions have experienced a decrease in student

retention and are exploring methods to retain students (Ohrablo, 2017). The challenge of student

retention is an issue not only in colleges, universities, and technical colleges, but has numerous

impacts on students and businesses (ACT, 2018; Neumann, 2010; Ohrablo, 2017; Van Horn,

2015). Studies indicate that across the United States 69% of students remain in higher education

until graduation (ACT, 2018). The retention rate decreases to 59.1% at two-year public schools,

including technical schools (ACT, 2018).

Student satisfaction and confidence in their universities relate directly to student retention

(Davis, 2015; Tinto, 1993). Colleges need to continue to study and monitor student retention to

ensure that students receive a quality education and positive experience (Low, 2000; Whitmore,

2016). Studies show that colleges can positively change student retention through proactive

programs directed at improving students' educational experiences (Low, 2000; Whitmore, 2016).

Colleges can significantly influence retention rates based on the amount of energy, resources,

and effort put into students in orientations and proper student advisement (Armbrust, 2015;

Levitz et al., 1999). Colleges that consistently have higher than average retention rates center

their future decisions and policies around student satisfaction (Low, 2000; Whitmore, 2016).

Students today arrive at college with more demands on their time than previous

generations (Herget, 2017). Competing priorities such as work, family, children, and aging

parents require quality advising crucial for students' future success (Herget, 2017). Two main

reasons students do not stay at college are a lack of academic preparedness and a lack of

academic and personal support (Herget, 2017). Proper guidance can remediate many reasons

students decide not to stay at college (Hanover Research, 2016). Students who feel connected to a college understand how coursework fits into their educational and career goals. When students feel faculty care about the wellbeing of students, they have a considerably higher retention rate than students who do not feel cared about (Ohrablo, 2017). In addition to course instructors, effective academic advising improves student retention rates (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018; Oregon Tech, 2019; Rios, 2019; Smith, 2018; Whitmore, 2016). Ohrablo (2017) states the importance of advisors' roles is vital in student retention and success.

The key to quality academic advising is building personal relationships with students (Herget, 2017). Advisors can begin building a relationship the first day that the college admits students by introducing themselves during campus tours, sending a welcoming email, and initiating a single phone conversation (Herget, 2017). Successful advisors do three things. One, advisors contact students and congratulate them on good grades and other accomplishments. Two, successful advisors encourage students to achieve their goals by keeping them inspired and focused on progressing towards educational ambitions (Zegarra, 2019). Three, successful advisors guide students' integration into a new establishment, helping manage their expectations while strengthening academic associations between the teachers, students, staff, and administration (Oregon Tech, 2019). These positive interactions are essential to building student self-confidence and overall educational satisfaction (Herget, 2017).

Advisors do not need to wait until there is a problem, such as low grades, test scores, or attendance, to contact students. (Herget, 2017). If advisors are aware of student challenges, advisors can help students process options and possibly reverse a decision to withdraw from college. Students who meet with an advisor for more than 30 minutes per term have increased retention rates (Smith, 2018).

Colleges that adequately staff advisors relative to the total student population create quality advising experiences for students. Otherwise, student retention suffers when advising is not available or advisors are not attuned to student challenges (Petracca, 2019). For example, a college in central Michigan staffed one academic advisor for every 1200 students, three times the number of other colleges' staffing rates. This college showed graduation rates of just 20.6% within four years, and 48% within five years (Petracca, 2019). If the advisor has too many students to advise, the relationship-building that is critical to student academic success will surely fail.

Therefore, there is a connection between student satisfaction, strong academic advising, and student retention. Successful academic advising depends on a reasonable ratio of students to advisors so that advisors can establish authentic relationships. Building positive relationships from the beginning of the students' school experience only enhance that experience and increases student confidence in the institution and students' belief in their ability to graduate.

Background of Problem

Companies across the United States depend on technical colleges to train and teach students to fill high-demand, skilled-worker positions (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018). Beginning in 1983, technical colleges began to show a decline in student enrollment after the publication of recommendations from The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) that effectively undermined the importance of technical education; discouraged students from pursuing such studies; and strongly encouraged all students to attend university after high school, thereby reducing the number of people who might otherwise have immediately entered the workforce (Armbrust 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) report was one element that resulted in fewer students attending technical colleges or entering the workforce (Staff, 2018). Skilled workers decreased in number, resulting in a skills gap that has plagued many employers ever since (Staff, 2018). The skills gap is a workforce problem that challenges communities and the nation (Lovelace, 2020; Goltra, 2018). Seven in ten companies struggled to fill skilled-worker positions (Lovelace, 2020; Goltra, 2018). Sixty-two percent of businesses struggled to fill skilled trade positions, which, as recently as 2019, numbered 5,088,030 unfilled positions (Adecco, 2019).

Companies reported that the inability to fill skilled-worker positions resulted in an average annual loss in productivity of 45% (Lovelace, 2020). Moreover, 29% of companies reported that their businesses could not expand because they could not fill newly created job openings (Lovelace, 2020). Consequently, they began to recruit from their competitors, resulting in high turnover in employees; company overheads also increased due to the additional costs of recruiting and training these new employees (Lovelace, 2020). As a result of the skilled worker shortage, revenue loss caused a 26% loss in annual revenue, equating to $1 million per company per year (Lovelace, 2020).

Enrollment at technical colleges has been declining for almost 40 years. Further compounding this problem is the inability of technical colleges to retain students who enroll through graduation. Technical colleges are often two-year, open enrollment schools, and possess the lowest student retention rates compared to other more traditional colleges (ACT, 2018). Retention rates are dependent on two factors: student selectivity and educational level (ACT, 2018). Highly selective institutions typically retain 93.1% of their students, compared to only 57.7% for open enrollment colleges, including technical colleges (ACT, 2018). The relationship

between student retention and educational level refers to the program degree a student seeks;

two-year programs (such as technical colleges) retention is 58%, and Ph.D. programs retention is

79% (ACT, 2018).

The combination of low technical college student enrollment, low technical college

student retention, and few high school students entering the workforce increases the need for

skilled workers (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018). Since most in-demand skilled workers need the

training provided by technical colleges, and noting that technical colleges have low student

retention, this study is focused on technical college retention.

Statement of the Problem

Colleges and universities seek to ensure that every student who enrolls will graduate.

Roughly two million students will drop out of college every year (Hess, 2018), and at

universities, approximately two-thirds of students who begin their education at a particular

institution will complete their degree at that same institution (ACT, 2018). Forty percent of

students who register at four-year colleges will not receive a degree in six years, and 57% of

these students will drop out before the start of the spring semester of freshman year (Abelman &

Molina, 2002; Marthers et al., 2015).

Technical colleges are no exception to this trend (Fain, 2012). Technical colleges also

struggle with student retention, even more so now than in previous years (Fain, 2012). Technical

colleges trail all other colleges in student retention, further lowering student enrollment numbers

in these programs (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018). For example, at Technical College D, student

retention fluctuated around 52.5% from 2007 through 2014, depending on a student's field of

study (College of Study, 2017).

If colleges can increase retention rates, both students and universities stand to benefit. Experts recognize that there is a relationship between student satisfaction and student retention, and that low retention rates can be the result of low student satisfaction rates (Levitz et al., 1999; Tinto, 1993). A research study found a connection between student satisfaction and retention rates positively (Kelly, 2017). Fifty-three percent of students stated that they were content with the educational experience, a percentage close to the student retention rate of 57.4% for four-year colleges (Kelly, 2017; ACT, 2018). Student satisfaction correlates to how connected students are to their college (Kelly, 2018; Tinto, 1993).

Researchers who studied student retention focused predominately on four-year traditional colleges, with limited focus on technical colleges (Armbrust, 2015; Whitmore, 2016). Student retention is low at technical colleges, which magnifies the importance of studying student retention (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018; Rios, 2019; Whitmore, 2016). A better understanding of how technical colleges can improve student retention would undoubtedly help produce more skilled workers to fill the inordinate number of vacant positions (Armbrust, 2015; Lovelace, 2020; Whitmore, 2016).

Colleges possess the ability to improve student retention. Researchers know that student satisfaction and connectedness impact students' decisions to remain at educational institutions (Oregon Tech, 2019; Smith, 2018; Tinto, 1993). Limited research explores what contributes to student satisfaction, such as the role of effective advising (Oregon Tech, 2019; Smith, 2018; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, researchers suggest a need to explore further the actual influence of advising, especially at technical colleges (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018; Rios, 2019; Smith, 2018; Whitmore, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Student retention is not just a contemporary issue but is a problem that has afflicted colleges throughout the United States for decades (Armbrust, 2015; Oregon Tech, 2019; Smith, 2018; Whitmore, 2016). Researchers conducted numerous studies regarding how to improve student retention, but the issue remains unresolved (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018; Rios, 2019). Previous studies concluded there is a need for additional research on improving and understanding student retention, specifically relating to different strategies, student populations, and advising approaches (Rios, 2019; Smith, 2018; Whitmore, 2016). Therefore, this qualitative phenomenology study explored student perceptions of advising methods at a midwestern technical college in 2020.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this qualitative study:

RQ1: How do students perceive the experience of academic advising?

RQ2: How do students define satisfaction with their advising relationship?

RQ3: How do students' academic experience differ from their perceived expectation?

Significance of the Study

Student retention is an indicator of multiple areas of colleges' performance and relates to students' overall satisfaction and educational experiences (Levitz et al., 1999; Tinto, 1993). Since retention rates tie closely with enrollment rates, colleges that study and examine student retention can apply these methods of increasing student satisfaction and educational experiences to enrollment likewise (NSC Research Center, 2019). If students report an increase in overall satisfaction, this could raise student enrollment, increase colleges' profits, and even the school's reputation.

If technical colleges can increase student retention rates, it will positively impact local companies and businesses by providing skilled workers. Student enrollment and retention decreased in vocational/technical colleges (Gantt, 2020), resulting in the "skills gap" and unfilled job openings in technical fields (Armbrust, 2015; Goltra, 2018). If vocational colleges increase student retention, this may accelerate the numbers of skilled workers entering the workforce and similarly have a direct and significant impact on shrinking the national skills gap.

Definition of Terms

Advising/Advisement. There are many forms of advising, but all focus on offering suggestions on the best course of action to someone (Collins, 2019). In this study, advising is referring to educational, academic advising from an academic advisor. This advisement can come in the form of either a faculty member or a professional advisor, which are defined later.

Appreciative Advising. Appreciative Advising is an advising approach that uses a defined cyclical and student-centered process to advise students (Bloom, 2018). This approach stresses the importance of a positive student and advisor relationship, and exploration of students' dreams, goals, and potentials (Bloom, 2018).

Developmental Advising. Developmental Advising is a systematic advising approach based on a strong student/advisor relationship, and values this relationship (Crookston, 1972; Grites, 2013). Developmental Advising focuses on students' educational and career goals, and promotes positive attitudes and interactions through advising (Crookston, 1972; Grites, 2013).

Faculty Advisors. Faculty Advisors are faculty members whose job responsibilities include academic advising of students and student instruction (Kennemer & Hurt, 2013). Typically, colleges assign students to faculty advisors based on similar subject areas.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of human consciousness of an event or experience from a first-person point of view (Smith, 2018). Phenomenology is concerned with understanding how humans perceive an experience, and to gain better understanding of a "phenomenon" (Smith, 2018).

Prescriptive Advising. Prescriptive Advising is an advising approach that places most of the responsibility on the advisor, in which advisors direct students what classes to take and when, and students follow that direction (Missouri State, 2020). Prescriptive Advising allows advisors to have a larger student caseload (Missouri State, 2020).

Proactive/ Intrusive Advising. Proactive Advising, which was historically known as Intrusive Advising, is an advising approach that focuses on student retention and positive means for colleges to retain students (Ohrablo, 2017). In Proactive Advising, advisors help direct students around potential problems before they become issues, and guide students in overcoming current concerns (Ohrablo, 2017).

Professional Advisors. Professional Advisors are staff members whose sole career responsibilities are academic advising of students and assisting students' progression through school. Colleges usually assign these students alphabetically based on their last name, year entering the school, or other factors usually not related to the subject area (Bruens, 2020).

Student Retention. Student retention is the ability for educational institutions to keep students enrolled in classes (Gragg, 2017). Students who colleges do not "retain" are often considered as "dropouts" or "withdrawn" (Gragg, 2017). Student retention is often referred to either as a percentage of students or a total number of students who stay enrolled at an university per year (Gragg, 2017).

Technical College. Post-secondary educational institution specializing in careers such as information technology, applied engineering, and secretarial instruction, and often compared to vocational colleges, Technical Colleges focus on more digital skills (Collins, 2019). This study will use Technical, Vocational, or Vo-Tech term interchangeability.

Vocational College. A post-secondary educational institution specializing in specific professional instruction, such as mechanics, construction, healthcare, and skilled trades careers (My College Guide, 2019). Also called Vo-Tech. See Technical College for additional information.

Assumptions of the Study

This study makes multiple assumptions that the researcher perceived as self-evident as the basis of this study. Assumptions of this study include that participants provided honest and truthful answers during interviews; that phenomenology is an acceptable method to research this experience and research questions; and that student satisfaction influences student retention. This study considered these statements as true assertions for the purpose of this research.

Limitations of the Study

All research has unique limitations, usually based on the type of research method chosen (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Patton, 2002). Typically, qualitative research lacks other research methods' generalizability, meaning that it is usually specific to a particular event (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). This study focused on only one vocational college in the midwestern United States, automatically restricting potential subjects to the current college population's demographics. This study assumed that the participants were willing to share and answer truthfully about their experiences, and further assumed that data provided by Technical College D is accurate, and ethically obtained.

When a study utilizes one researcher, the study must account for the researcher's bias and subjectivity (Patton, 2002, 2015). The purpose of explaining and listing aspects that might limit the study's internal or external factors is to improve the validity of the study's data collection and analysis procedures. The researcher used open-ended semi-structured interviews to account for the possibility of subjectivity (Patton, 2002, 2015). The research timeline focused on less than one year of active data collection. Although this research study aimed to advance the knowledge of student perceptions of advising approaches as they related to student retention, there was the possibility of a null study, or an inability to arrive at a definite conclusion.

Delimitations

This study was limited to one vocational college in the midwestern United States. The researcher selected the population sample solely from the student population of the vocational college. The researcher also selected students to participate in the research study, chose the interview questions, and was ultimately responsible for determining the data criteria to include and exclude. This study used an exclusively qualitative phenomenology method of approach and viewed it through the theoretical framework lens.

Theoretical Framework

This study explored student retention regarding students' satisfaction with their academic advising. Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (Tinto, 1993) was the foundational theory pivotal in studying student satisfaction. Figure 1 describes Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (Tinto, 1993).

Figure 1

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure
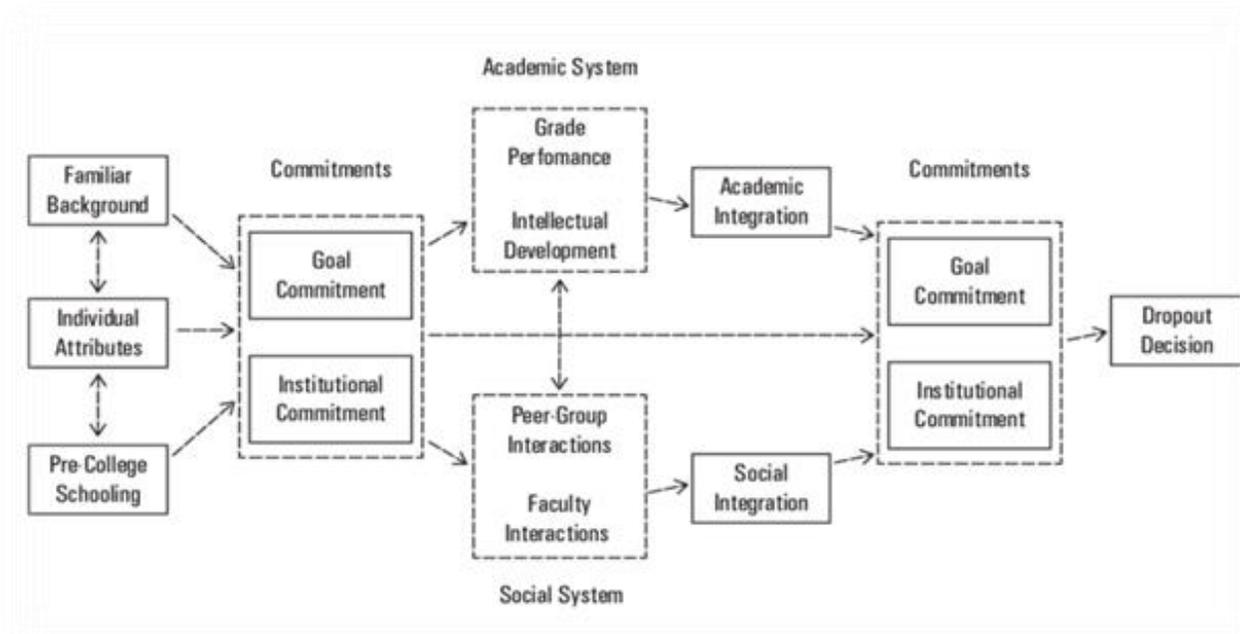
Note. From Determinant Factors for Undergraduate Student's Dropout in an Accounting Studies Department of a Brazilian Public University. Durso, J., & Cunha, J. (2018). *Brazilian Education Journal.* 34. 10.1590/0102-4698186332.

Organization of the Study

Five chapters comprise this dissertation. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, potential learning outcomes, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, research questions, definitions, and significance. This chapter exemplifies the principal phenomenon obtained from students' perspectives of advisors regarding student retention. Chapter 2 provides a review of interrelated literature that focuses on advising methods that impact student retention at the vocational college level. Chapter 3 presents the research design and research methodology guiding the study. Chapter 4 displays the results of the study. Chapter 5 offers suggestions based on the findings and concludes the study.

Conclusion

  Colleges have studied student retention for decades as an indicator of student satisfaction and enrollment projections. Employing specific academic advising methods have a significant influence on improving student retention. The goal of conducting this research is to explore advising methods that improve student retention at vocational colleges. Developmental, prescriptive, appreciative, and intrusive/proactive advising are significantly different approaches, and therefore students have different perspectives on them. Researchers need further research to describe and explore student experiences in the advising relationship.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Students' first interactions at a new college most likely will be with their advisors (Fosnacht et al., 2017). During these interactions, students receive guidance about future courses students need to meet academic and career ambitions, specific university opportunities, and general academic questions (Fosnacht et al., 2017). Studies show that first-year college students only meet with their academic advisors three times during students' first year, and often only before semester course registration (Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), 2018; Fosnacht et al., 2017). Sixty-two percent of students who do not return for a second year reported they did not meet with an adviser the previous year (Smith, 2018). Students require increased advising during their college experience (CCCSE, 2018; Varney, 2012).

CCCSE (2018) reported that 78% of the student population met with an advisor after the initial appointment to register for students' first semester classes. Of that 78%, 47% stated they were *very satisfied* with their academic advising experience, with the remaining students reporting that they were either *somewhat satisfied* or *not at all satisfied* (CCCSE, 2018). Combining the percentage of students who did not meet with an advisor with the percentage of students who reported that their experiences were *somewhat satisfied* or *not at all satisfied,* meaning that over half of the overall student population are not receiving adequate advising services (CCCSE, 2018). Students reported they are not satisfied with the advising they are receiving, and the advising received is not sufficient (CCCSE, 2018).

Colleges that decide to increase student advising services require an increased investment in academic advisors. Colleges can recoup these advising investments through improved student

retention (CCCSE, 2018). Georgia State University (GSU) hired 42 additional advisors, costing the college $2 million, but more than made up this cost by increasing student retention and graduation rates, which increased by more than 20% (CCCSE, 2018). Not only did GSU's investment in increasing student advising services influence increasing student retention, this change also raised graduation rates for Students of Color (CCCSE, 2018). The increased graduation rates have been significantly impressive with GSU's Students of Color to the point where their graduation rates are now comparable to that of GSU's White Student population (CCCSE, 2018).

GSU is an exceptional example of the ability of advisors to influence the quality and outcomes of students' education. The role of advising in colleges and universities has shifted (CCCSE, 2018). For decades, advisors' primary responsibility was to help students choose a program of study (CCCSE, 2018). Even though advisors' leading role continues to be helping students determine a field of study, advisors' roles are evolving (CCCSE, 2018; Varney, 2012). Advisors' responsibilities are expanding beyond outlining students' course sequences, and now include creating a personalized student plan comprised of information on colleges' resources and services, and periodically checking in on students' progress (CCCSE, 2018). Universities expect advisors to help students by taking on these additional duties while simultaneously building positive relationships with students (CCCSE, 2018). Relationships between advisors and students are paramount to students' success and satisfaction with the college (CCCSE, 2018; Fosnacht et al., 2017).

The advisor-student relationship is even more significant at technical colleges (CCCSE, 2018; Fosnacht et al., 2017). Before technical college students even begin their educational journeys, they already are at risk of not staying in college, which means an even lower chance of

graduation (McArthur, 2005). Research shows that students in Vocational colleges have a lower student retention rate than other college types (ACT, 2018; McArthur 2005). Additional factors further exasperate the already low retention rate for this group of students, such as poor study habits, family-work life challenges, and tuition costs (Sherwin, 2012; Pargett, 2011). Therefore, proper academic advisement is one of the most effective solutions to increase student retention, especially at technical colleges (Sherwin, 2012; Pargett, 2011).

Advising Theories

There is not one single advising theory that undergirds or encompasses all advising. Instead, advising uses a combination of several different theories from multiple disciplines (Creamer, 2000; Williams, 2007). Advising uses theories from education, psychology, philology, and sociology (Van Den Wijngaard, 2019). Influential advisers utilize concepts from all four of these disciplines to help students navigate and be successful at college (McLoughlin, 2012).

The effect of academic advising is especially apparent in college technical and engineering programs (McLoughlin, 2012). Technical and engineering programs typically require intense advising (McLoughlin, 2012). The primary reasons for this are the intensity of courses and the demands on students' schedules, such as labs and projects (McLoughlin, 2012). Advisors can support students through these courses and help students create a time management plan to handle their studying, work schedules, and other things that demand their time and energy (McLoughlin, 2012).

Additionally, advisors can create positive and encouraging interactions when a student receives a low grade, reassuring them and encouraging them to continue interactions with their professors, and recommending options including the possibility of retaking a course

(McLoughlin, 2012). Advisors fill a role that students need; advisors provide positive interactions with a person who can help and encourage students when dealing with challenging issues (McLoughlin, 2012).

Additionally, advisors can help students navigate other difficult situations encountered during students' educational journeys (McLoughlin, 2012). To do this effectively, advisors need to be preemptive in scheduling appointments, that is, advisors need to schedule future appointments at the time of a current appointment, in anticipation of when students might need additional support before students become overwhelmed. Studies show that colleges will likely retain students who meet with an advisor more than three times during the school year (Albecker, 2017; Pargett, 2011).

There are currently four predominant advising approaches that colleges have found to be beneficial in helping students navigate their educational experiences (McLoughlin, 2012; Woods et al., 2017). These approaches are prescriptive, developmental, appreciative, and intrusive/proactive (Howard, 2018; Kelly, 2018; Stockwell, 2015). Each of these approaches has a distinct style, and advisors use them for different purposes.

Prescriptive Advising

When people think of academic advising, they usually think of prescriptive advising (Missouri State, 2020). People picture an advisor behind a desk with a line of students who are looking for advice and direction on which classes they need to graduate (Missouri State, 2020). Prescriptive advising is the most common type of advising approach because it takes the least amount of time commitment (Whitmore, 2016). Since advisors usually have a large caseload, they need to use their time effectively and efficiently. It does not mean they would prefer to spend less time meeting with students (CCCSE, 2018; Fosnacht et al., 2017).

Advisors usually choose to utilize a prescriptive advising approach because of time constraints, but this also prevents them from forming relationships with students, which other advising approaches might more easily accommodate (Missouri State, 2020). The prescriptive advising approach focuses on instructing or directing students in class selection relating to their educational goals (Missouri State, 2020). Experts consider prescriptive advising linear, meaning it mainly removes students from the decision-making process and places the decision-making responsibility on advisers (Missouri State, 2020). Prescriptive advising's primary focus is on student graduation, and not on students' wellbeing (Missouri State, 2020). This statement does not mean that prescriptive advisors do not care about students' wellbeing, but it is not the advisors' prominent role (Missouri State, 2020). Therefore, experts consider prescriptive advising as a non-holistic approach to student advising (Missouri State, 2020).

Although experts consider prescriptive advising a non-holistic approach to students advising; many first-year students prefer prescriptive advising (Missouri State, 2020; Robbins, 2013). These freshman prefer to simply have an advisor tell them what courses to take, suggest majors that fit students' interests and capabilities, and give them a few ideas on how to succeed in their educational goals (Missouri State, 2020). However, studies show that as students continue their educational journey, they prefer and require different advising approaches (Missouri State, 2020; Robbins, 2013).

Developmental Advising

Developmental advising is the opposite of prescriptive advising (Missouri State, 2020; University of Richmond, 2020). Developmental advising centers around the student-advisor relationship and students share responsibility for their own success and failure (University of Richmond, 2020). Developmental advisors see students holistically, and students see their

advisors as mentors and confidantes (University of Richmond, 2020). The developmental

advisors' role is to help students explore better choices or options in different situations

(University of Richmond, 2020).

Developmental advisors strive to help students identify issues or challenges, and then

create a plan for overcoming these issues or challenges, including educational program choices,

understanding the educational system, career exploration, healthy life choices, and spiritual life

(University of Richmond, 2020). Developmental advising allows students to be an integral part

of the decision-making process (Crookston, 1972). Included in developmental advising is

helping students learn about different courses and explaining how each would fit into students'

career and life choices (University of Richmond, 2020).

Effective developmental advisors help students find additional opportunities beyond

standard college courses (Crookston, 1972; Harris, 2018). Developmental advisors usually

inform advisees about off-campus opportunities, such as workshops and conferences (Crookston,

1972; Harris, 2018). A mentor-mentee relationship develops from the time students and advisors

spend together (Crookston, 1972; Harris, 2018). This relationship allows students to collaborate

with their advisors to make decisions concerning students' educational and career choices

(Crookston, 1972; Harris, 2018). These mentorships may continue after graduation (Crookston,

1972; Harris, 2018).

Developmental advising's emphasis is on the positive connections formed between

students and their school, peers, and other faculty (Ohrablo, 2017). Such advisors can use these

relationships to give students the incentives needed to finish their educational programs

(Ohrablo, 2017). Having students share the responsibility for their own success increases student

confidence and satisfaction in their educational institution, which should, in turn, increase student retention (Missouri State University, 2015; Tinto, 1993).

Appreciative Advising

Appreciative advising is comparable to developmental advising in emphasizing the student and advisor relationship (Bloom et al., 2008). The difference between appreciative advising and developmental advising is that appreciative advising follows a circular path and developmental advising follows a linear one (Bloom et al., 2008). The circular format involved in appreciative advising includes the following processes: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and do-not-settle (Bloom et al., 2008). Each of these steps is meant to improve advising and build positive relationships between students and advisors (Bloom et al., 2008).

During the disarm stage, from the initial meeting on, advisors help students relax while building rapport (Bloom et al., 2008). During the discovery stage, advisors unearth students' expectations and goals by asking questions (Bloom et al., 2008). During the dream step, while working together, advisors and students consider ways of accomplishing the goals that revealed themselves during the discovery step (Bloom et al., 2008). The revealed goals do not need to be practical or achievable but can be simply students' dreams (Bloom et al., 2008).

During the design step, advisors and students whittle down the options to decide which goals are high-ranking and achievable, developing a plan to accomplish these goals (Bloom et al., 2008). During the delivery step, advisors and students finalize their plans for accomplishing these goals and start working on achieving these goals (Bloom et al., 2008). During the do-not-settle step, advisors check in with students to review the students' progress, and, if needed, start the cycle over at the disarm stage (Bloom et al., 2008).

Intrusive/Proactive Advising

Colleges that have employed an intrusive/proactive advisement approach increased their graduation rates by 14% (Smith, 2018). Intrusive or proactive advising is an approach where the purpose is to recognize problems students have before they become "at-risk", or in jeopardy of failing a class or multiple classes (Kalinowski Ohrt, 2016; Varney, 2007). Proactive advising is synonymous with intrusive advising, but since the word "intrusive" has a negative connotation, intrusive advising is commonly known as proactive advising (Cannon, 2012; Kalinowski Ohrt, 2016; Varney, 2007). Since all students at some point during their educational process will have difficulties, proactive advising is a way to help students through these difficulties before they become significant issues, adversely affecting students' educational performance, and possibly negatively affecting the colleges' retention rate (Kalinowski Ohrt, 2016; Varney, 2007).

In the mid-1970s, Robert Glennen developed the concept of intrusive advising by combining academic advising and counseling into one discipline (Varney, 2012). Glennen's primary purpose was to allow students and advisors to create constructive relationships as well as to continue providing academic guidance (Varney, 2012). Glennen (1975) took a small group of advisors and trained them in pre-admission counseling, matriculation, scheduling, and mental health counseling (Varney, 2012). Glennen also taught the group of advisors on how to detect signs of potential anxiety and shifts in students' attitudes along with strategies on how to help students navigate a path through these difficulties (Varney, 2012). Glennen proved, through positive relationships and proactive counseling, that it was possible to increase the retention rate of the test group.

In 1987, Walter Earl (1998), building on Glennen's research, conceived, and titled "The Intrusive Advising Model." Continuing to expand on Glennen's research, Earl combined the

positive aspects of prescriptive and developmental advising methods (Albecker, 2017). Earl (1988) encouraged students to seek help when necessary, as soon as an issue arose, instead of waiting for an advisor to reach out to students. Earl (1988) was able to prove that Intrusive Advising increased student retention and students' satisfaction with their institution, but also that the college had to hire more advisors to keep up with the increased workload required from this method (Albecker, 2017).

One of the principal disadvantages of proactive advising is the cost (Smith, 2018). Colleges typically must hire more advisers because of the amount of time each advisor spends with students (Smith, 2018). What colleges save from increased student retention and satisfaction typically offsets the cost of hiring additional advisors (Smith, 2018). Therefore, colleges should not perceive the additional staff as an increased expense, but as an investment into increasing overall tuition (Smith, 2018).

Proactive advising is a concept that states that the more advising and guidance colleges offer, the more students will be engaged (Smith, 2018). This engagement usually results in higher student satisfaction with the university and higher retention rates (Smith, 2018). Research shows a direct correlation between the length of time of and frequency of student advisement sessions, and student engagement and retention (Smith, 2018). Colleges that switched to proactive advising showed an increase in student retention (Smith, 2018). After switching to proactive advising, a Philadelphia community college increased student retention rates by 6%, from 45% in 2015 to 51% in 2016 (Smith, 2018). Another college in Florida reported retaining an additional 500 students than the year before, after beginning proactive advising (Smith, 2018).

Proactive Advising is an advancement of Developmental Advising (Cannon, 2012; Varney, 2012). The foundation of proactive advisement is the blending of traditional academic

advising and therapeutic counseling into one role (Varney, 2012). In Proactive Advising, advisors strive to inform and help students before students request information or help (Varney, 2012). The ability to help students before they request assistance requires training (Varney, 2012). Proactive Advising teaches advisors to look for potential student distress through knowledge of their interests, goals, and abilities, which advisors gained through intentional relationship building (Glennen, 1975).

Proactive Advising is a strategy that deliberately engages students through similar interests; and the development of positive relationships that help raise student motivation (Varney, 2012). Using a proactive advising approach helps students navigate difficult situations before the problems become obstacles to students' probability of success (Varney, 2012). Research shows that the more students engage in all facets of college life, the better are the chances to retain those students (Earl, 1988).

Applying Advising Approaches

In the application of any advising approach, there is a fine line between being helpful or being intrusive and overbearing (Cannon, 2012). An easy first step when implementing an advising approach is to build professional relationships and establish open communication lines between students and advisors (Varney, 2012; Cannon, 2012). Advisors can schedule appointments around specific school events where students require additional support (Varney, 2012; Cannon, 2012). Scheduling appointments a few weeks before the end of a semester to inquire about additional support students might need studying for final exams, or before course registration gives students time to create a plan for the semester (Cannon, 2012).

Student advisement becomes increasingly valuable when advisors discover more information about their advisees (Cannon, 2012). Advisors need to ask detailed and challenging

questions to discover the issues that confront students to effectively recommend programs and resources that are available to support those students (Cannon, 2012). Advisors need to be truthful with students about potential barriers students might encounter because there might be resources or programs that the college offers to support students; and help them overcome these challenges and thrive (Cannon, 2012). For example, if a student is a single parent, the advisor can determine if that will be an obstacle to the student's academic success and suggest available childcare programs or financial assistance for such programs.

Making initial student contact is critical to student success, and advisors need to become an integral part of students' academic by periodically checking in with students (Cannon, 2012). A significant and often overlooked part of advising is following up with students throughout the academic year (Smith, 2018). Sixty-five percent of students report that their advisor did not discuss when their next meeting would be before leaving their current meetings (Smith, 2018). Advisors need to make recommendations for future appointments or sessions during meetings, which is especially crucial for students who have additional hardships (Cannon, 2012).

It is paramount that advisors maintain contact with advisees throughout the whole school term (Cannon, 2012). Effective advisors use initial contact information to continue developing these relationships (Cannon, 2012; Smith, 2018). Cannon (2012) suggests personalized emails about upcoming events or additional resources that can benefit the student. Emails can even be reminders about essential dates, such as mid-terms and finals (Cannon, 2012; Smith, 2018). A central principle that all the advising approaches share is a focus on students' needs and helping students find potential resources and services that can help (Cannon, 2012).

Three overarching strategies are integral to effective advising: a general communication strategy, intentional communications for first-year students, and an individual communication

strategy for transfer students (Varney, 2012). The general communication strategy aims to create a communication channel between students and advisors (Cannon, 2012; Varney, 2012). Advisors can schedule meeting times throughout the school year as opposed to simply meeting to register for future semesters, or requiring students to meet with their advisors twice every semester (Albecker, 2017).

First-year students and transfer students require specific and distinct communication because of unique situations (Albecker, 2017). Both groups should receive a welcoming message and introduction from their assigned advisors (Albecker, 2017). Shortly before or right after the beginning of a term, students need to meet with their advisors to identify potential hazards students might encounter (Albecker, 2017). After identifying the individual hazards, advisors can help students create specific plans to overcome these challenges (Albecker, 2017).

Mandatory advising meetings permit advisors to monitor student educational progress regularly (Ohrablo, 2017). Only by forcing students to meet with advisors, can advisors influence the hard-to-reach students who do not see the benefit of advisement, could be losing motivation, or lack a relationship with an advisor (Ohrablo, 2017). Mandatory advising ensures that all students participate in students' own education and career planning, and establish a professional relationship with an advisor (Ohrablo, 2017).

Active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenges, student-faculty interactions, and support for learners are linked to student engagement (Smith, 2018). Effective advising needs to start on if not before, the first day of classes (Cannon, 2012). There are several techniques that advisors can use to optimize opportunities to make the first contact with students. Advisors must be available during the beginning weeks of all terms, which allows students the

best access possible for answering questions they might have (Cannon, 2012). Advisors must get

to know and socialize with students outside of the advising office (Cannon, 2012).

Making that first connection is critical if the advisor wants to be effective (Cannon,

2012). Besides social events, advisors have opportunities to make the initial contact through

convivial email, which should include an introduction from the assigned advisor, as well as

advising expectations and responsibilities so students can become acquainted with students' own

roles in the advising process (Cannon, 2012). Advisors should encourage students to respond to

the email with a self-introduction (Cannon, 2012). Not all students will respond, but the

invitation allows the advisor to start a relationship with the students who do respond (Cannon,

2012).

Student Retention

There is no better indicator of students' educational satisfaction than student retention

(Levitz et al., 1999; Nowell, 2017). Colleges gain a vast amount of invaluable information by

studying student retention. Researchers receive an understanding of students' success, financial

impacts on students and the institution, student satisfaction, and accurate depiction of the

institution. It is also an academic performance indicator (Levitz et al., 1999; Nowell, 2017).

Student retention gauges students' growth and scholarship, and students' perceptions are valuable

resources for educational intuitions (Levitz et al., 1999; Nowell, 2017).

Colleges spend significant amounts of money yearly trying to attract new students (Levitz

et al., 1999; Nowell, 2017). Colleges spend anywhere from $578 per new student at public

institutions to $2,232 per new student at private institutions (Ruffalo et al., 2018). When

colleges cannot retain students, it necessitates spending valuable funds to attract new students.

Smaller colleges feel an increased burden because they spend two to three times more money attracting new students than larger universities (Ruffalo et al., 2018).

Students also suffer monetarily when colleges cannot retain students (Whistle, 2019). Fifty-Seven percent of students who enroll in college will graduate within eight years (Whistle, 2019). College tuition is at an all-time high, reaching $9,410 per year for public four-year colleges and $32,410 for private four-year colleges (College Board, 2019). As a result, students are accumulating massive amounts of debt. In 2019, United States student debt reached an all-time high of 1.4 trillion dollars (U.S. Debt, 2019).

Student retention reflects the number of first-year students who remain enrolled beyond the first year in college (Nowell, 2017; Levitz et al., 1999). Students typically enter college with anxiety and trepidation (DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999). Students also bring additional and often complex educational and personal issues that can compromise students' learning and experiences (DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999). Students' study habits, academic confidence, confidence in graduation, institutional connectedness, and academic support significantly contribute to the retention rate (DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999).

Colleges experience student attrition, but can also improve student retention (ACT, 2018). According to ACT (2018), there is a significate difference in student retention between the different institutional types. As seen in Table 1 and Table 2, a Two-Year Public college has a retention rate of 58.1%, and a Ph.D. program at a Private College has a retention rate of 81.3% (ACT, 2018). That is a difference of 23.2% between Two-Year Public colleges and Ph.D. students at a Private College (ACT, 2018). Table 2 shows that even the most selective colleges can improve student retention (ACT, 2018). Average student retention rates vary depending on

whether the college is public or private, the degree student is trying to obtain, and how selective

student admissions criteria are (ACT, 2018).

Table 1

National first-to-second-year retention rates by institutional type

Degree Level/Control	N	Mean (%)	Standard Devation
Two-Year Public	724	58.1	10.1
Two-Year Private	42	64.1	19.6
BA/BS Public	90	65.4	14.4
BA/BS Private	243	71.7	19.1
MA/MS/MBA Public	170	70.3	10.8
MA/MS/MBA Private	415	75.5	13.0
PhD Public	241	79.0	10.9
PhD Private	274	69.0	10.8
Total	2199	69.0	NA

Note: From ACT Institutional Data File ((2018).

Table 2

First-to-second-year retention rates: two-year institutions by admission selectivity

	Two-Year Private			Two-Year Public			All Reporting		
Adminsion Selectivity	N	Mean	SD*	N	Mean	SD*	N	Mean	SD*
Highly Selective	2	93.0	-	1	62.0	-	3	82.7	17.9
Selective	5	85.0	24.0	2	53.0	5.7	7	75.9	25.1
Traditional	8	71.5	18.0	12	57.1	12.2	20	62.9	16.1
Liberal	3	68.7	16.0	5	62.0	10.1	8	64.5	12.0
Open	27	56.3	19.1	693	57.4	10.5	720	57.4	10.9
Total	45	64.6	216	713	57.4	10.5	758	57.9	11.6

Note: Source ACT Instituional Data File (2017).
* Standard Deviation

Highly selective colleges retain 82.7% of students (ACT, 2018). Student retention

numbers decrease to 57.4% at institutions with open admissions (ACT, 2018). Another notable

difference in retention rates relates to the degree level. Students in a doctoral program have a

higher retention rate than students in an associate program (ACT, 2018). The difference in

retention rates shows to what extent colleges can control retention rates based on the type of

college and how colleges select students (DeLaRosby, 2015; Levitz et al., 1999).

Colleges that provide personal and academic support during first-year student orientation and continue that support through advising and introductory courses show a significant increase in student retention (DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999). Colleges typically focus on first-year students because first-year students have the lowest percentage of student retention (ACT, 2018; DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999). After the first year, rates usually increase by half each subsequent year (ACT, 2018; DeLaRosby, 2015; Forrest, 1982; Levitz et al., 1999). In colleges that have a 68% first-year retention rate, the second year would be 84%, the third year would be 92%, and the fourth year would be 96%.

Colleges that invest time and resources in their first-year students have increased student retention rates (DeLaRosby, 2015; Levitz et al., 1999). Effective colleges invest in student personal support, orientations, advising, career planning, and pay special attention to introductory courses (DeLaRosby, 2015; Levitz et al., 1999). When colleges intentionally have resources available in these specific areas, they show an increase in retention and an improvement in students' attitudes towards their education and educational establishment (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Levitz et al., 1999).

Colleges lose thousands of dollars of potential revenue for each student colleges cannot retain (Levitz et al., 1999; Marthers et al., 2015). There are abundant ways that colleges can improve student retention. Research shows that when students acquire a negative attitude, colleges' chance of retaining students drops dramatically (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Nowell, 2017). Through student advising is a way that colleges can gauge students' attitudes and satisfaction, while also helping students navigate challenges to promote better experiences (Hanover Research, 2016).

Aarkrog et al. (2018) findings show that students' negative attitudes are the main reason colleges do not retain students. Students who had the highest increase in negative attitudes attributed this change to trivial outside matters (Aarkrog et al., 2018). Aarkrog et al. (2018) suggestion colleges address the effect that positive and negative attitudes have on students' educational performances. Aarkrog et al. (2018) also suggest that schools teach incoming students skills to self-manage their attitudes. The change in student attitude does not have to be based on their educational experiences but could include outside influences.

Aarkrog et al. (2018) concluded that students' attitude is a significant factor in whether students continue their education. Although outside influences also affect student retention rates and some of these factors are outside the institution's control, many of these detriments colleges can mitigate by implementing different plans and procedures (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Nowell, 2017). Colleges can influence retention rates through student satisfaction and ensure that students have positive experiences with their institution, including teachers and peer interactions.

It is important that colleges understand students' experience, which is why this study is conducting a qualitative phenomenological study focusing on students' advising experiences. All qualitative research shares seven similar characteristics: objectivity, precision, verification, parsimonious explanation, empiricism, logical reasoning, and skepticism (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Each of these characteristics needs exploration to understand the qualitive study better, and to increases the reliability and validity of this study.

Research objectivity means that research should strive to be unbiased and non-subjective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Precision is an exhaustive and detailed description of related studies to ensure the replication of other valid studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Verification ensures that studies confirm and authenticate other research studies (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2014). Parsimonious explanation reduces research studies into simple rules and procedures that other future researchers can follow (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Empiricism confirms that evidence is the primary guide for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Logical reasoning is a set of rules that govern all research and researchers should lay these out systematically (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Skepticism states that all research needs to go through a constructive review to reveal potential weaknesses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Utilizing each of these seven characteristics strengthens qualitative studies, and is equally important in phenomenological studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). This study focused on how students perceive advising experience and how advising influences student satisfaction. Student satisfaction is of the utmost importance in student retention rates, which is why institutions study and improve students' overall experiences and confidence (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Nowell, 2017). Student retention relates directly to students' overall satisfaction and educational experiences (Levitz et al., 1999; Tinto, 1993).

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

Tinto (1993) developed the Model of Institutional Departure specifically to explore and better understand the reasons why students withdraw from college before graduating. Tinto's (1993) main principle was that student retention is the central measure of student satisfaction with college experiences. The primary factor that determines student satisfaction is based on integrating students into the school, whether this integration is academic or social (Draper, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Whitmore, 2016). Students define academic integration as grades, enjoyment of academic subjects, and intellectual development (Tinto, 1993). Academic integration is how well students identify in their role as scholars and are intellectually involved in their education

(Draper, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Whitmore, 2016). Social integration is the foundation of students' friendships; how connected students feel to other students and faculty, and students' involvement with student organizations (Draper, 2008). Students' associations do not need to be just with students from the same institution, but can be with another college if the students share similar educational goals (Draper, 2008).

Tinto's main reason why colleges do not retain students is that the educational establishment does not fulfill students' social or academic expectations (Kinsey, 2017). Every interaction that students have will either strengthen or weaken students' hopes of continuing their education (Draper, 2008; Kinsey, 2017; Tinto, 1993). Tinto uses a cyclical process of interactions relating to student departure decisions, and two distinctly different reasons for student departure: involuntary and voluntary (Draper, 2008; Kinsey, 2017). Involuntary reasons are decisions not made by students, such as failing due to low grades or inability to pay tuition. Voluntary reasons link student decisions to direct experiences with the institution. These include a lack of connectedness to the establishment or a perceived inability to reach their preset educational and occupational goals (Draper, 2008; Kinsey, 2017).

The connectedness between faculty and students is probably one of the most significant determinants of a student's decision to stay at college (Pargett, 2011). Pargett (2011) grouped students into three categories: students who connected with their assigned advisor, students who connected with another advisor other than their assigned one, and students who did not connect with any advisor. Students in the first category had the highest retention rate, while students in the last had the lowest. In other words, retention rates decreased across the three categories.

Now more than ever before, students are bringing numerous social, emotional, and personal issues to colleges (Hanover Research, 2016; Rauch, 2018). Some of these issues

include social alienation, social anxiety, general anxiety, test anxiety, panic attacks, increased family expectations, family problems, isolation, an inability to make connections with peers and faculty, and other mental health issues (Hanover Research, 2016; Rauch, 2018). When colleges gain a better understanding of students' issues, universities can help students through these issues and increase students' satisfaction with the institution (Rauch, 2018).

Students often arrive at colleges with unreal expectations and personal issues, and are unsure how to come to terms with these issues (Cannon, 2012; Hanover Research, 2016; Varney, 2012). These various personal concerns include stress, inability to "grasp" or "buy into" the innovative ideas and experiences that colleges offer, lack of motivation, and impractical expectations, including unrealistic expectations about college life (Hanover Research, 2016). Many colleges look to advising to help students navigate through these challenges and obstacles (Rauch, 2018; Wu et al., 2015).

Technical and Vocational Education

Vocational college students bring different challenges to their advisors than do students at traditional four-year colleges. To better understand how the variety of advising approaches can influence student retention at vocational colleges, there are three unique challenges that need examination: students' educational issues, personal issues, and career issues. For years, people studied student retention in traditional four-year settings, but few focused on two-year programs. Since advising practices are a significant motivator for student retention, methods that address the specific needs of vocational students require closer inspection. Careful consideration of these unique challenges can positively affect student retention in these institutions.

Technical and vocational, or Vo-Tech education, has been a part of human culture since medieval times, beginning roughly in 500 AD. For centuries, masters have passed on technical

skills and knowledge to the next generation using an apprenticeship approach. In this scenario, there was at least one master craftsman who taught new apprentices' skills they needed to continue to succeed in that craft or career. The hands-on apprenticeship approach varied from master to master and did not rely on a traditional classroom model. With the rise of the industrial revolution, the craftsman-apprentice model declined and, as industries developed and incorporated more technology, a more formal method of education evolved. This was the Vocational Technical Education model.

The initial purpose of the Vo-Tech model was to address training needs resulting from rapid changes in technology to meet demand for skilled labor in industry, while simultaneously developing and improving students' education by convincing them to attend institutions of higher education. In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Act which made it possible for states to establish colleges that emphasized agriculture and mechanical arts (Doty & Weissman, 1984). In 1906, Congress passed the Smith Hughes Act, which was the first legislation allowing schools to teach vocational and technical education at the secondary level, where it remained until 1977, when Thurow (1977) wrote that vocational and technical training should not be part of students' formal education. After that, vocational and technical education slowly declined across the United States (Gordon, 2014).

This decline continued until 1999, when Doolittle and Camp (1999) reintroduced the importance of vocational and technical education (Gordon, 2014). Since technology changed dramatically between the years of 1977 and 1999, Doolittle and Camp (1999) realized that previous vocational and technical education theories were no longer current or relevant. Technological advancements during those years required an updated version of the Vocational

and Technical Education theory, one that emphasized the importance of learning through experience—not unlike learning had been, many centuries earlier (Gordon, 2014).

As previously discussed, research shows that first-year college students have the lowest retention rates. Since vocational colleges usually offer exclusively one and two-year programs, this makes student retention a matter of utmost importance (Hanover Research, 2016). Vocational students, more than other college bound students, face a majority of those academic and non-academic challenges outlined earlier. Therefore, it is even more essential for technical college students to establish relationships with advisors. (McArthur, 2005). In fact, McArthur's (2005) study shows that student-advisor relationships have a significant greater impact on retention than student-teacher relationships in all colleges, and are significantly more important at vocational colleges (McArthur, 2005). Therefore, in vocational colleges, proper academic advisement is one of the most effective methods to increase student retention (Pargett, 2011).

Transfer and Non-Traditional Students

Transfer and non-traditional students bring unique challenges to colleges, and comprise a significant portion of the student population, especially at community colleges where studies show that they make up more than a third (37.2%) of the student body (Albecker, 2017; Reindl, 2017; Lederman, 2017; Fain 2015). At Technical College D, the percentage trends even higher, from 38% in 2014 to 47% in 2018 (College of Study, 2017).

The increased enrollment of transfer and non-traditional students across the nation is tasking advisors with helping these students acclimate to their new college programs (Fretwell, 2013; Handel, 2011). Transfer and non-traditional students struggle with making connections at new colleges, so having activities and events specifically for them potentially makes these students feel welcome, thus helping them bond with their college (Fretwell, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

Fretwell (2013) goes so far as to suggest that universities should deliberately implement policies that specifically target transfer students. Other studies also recommend posting materials to their websites especially for transfer students and having advisors who exclusively work with the transfer and non-traditional population (Fretwell, 2013; Handel, 2011).

Conclusion

Colleges that experience high rates of student retention understand that retention directly relates to student satisfaction with the quality of service they receive from the institution (Hanover Research, 2016). As seen in this literature review, students who develop strong, supportive relationships with their advisors are significantly more satisfied with their educational experience, and inclined to maintain their enrollment, thus increasing the retention rate of the college. Colleges and universities that actively support and encourage student advising programs that promote building positive, authentic relationships between advisors and students will benefit from stable enrollment, as well as from higher student retention rates, as students persevere toward graduation (Varney, 2012).

The goal of this study is to explore student retention using Tinto's Model of Student Departure, and how student advising influences student satisfaction. Tinto's Model of Student Departure states that students' satisfaction through their social and academic experiences influence student satisfaction. Students who have positive social and academic experiences are more satisfied with their college, and therefore decide to stay at that school. Studies showed that students who have positive advising, have increased satisfaction with the college, and are more probable for the school to retain them.

The topics covered in this literature review explore a variety of student advising methods that contribute to student retention in a variety of higher educational program models, including

technical colleges. There is scant research on student perceptions of these advising approaches,

and how those perceptions contribute to student retention at a Midwestern technical college in

2020. This study is an opportunity to bridge that gap by studying and analyzing what advising

methods contribute most to student retention and serve this unique student population the best.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the qualitative research method and phenomenological

approach used by the researcher. Using Tinto's Model of Student Departure, this study used

triangulation through interviews to determine students' social satisfaction, transcripts to

determine academic satisfaction, and observation to determine student perception. Utilizing

these three data collection methods to illustrate students' perceptions of advising approaches and

how students' advising experience influence student retention.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this qualitative phenomenology study explores student perceptions of advising approaches that contribute to student retention at a midwestern technical college in 2020. Utilizing this approach gives a better understanding of human experience in the natural environment (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The research methodology, description of the participants, data collection, analysis methods, and ethical concerns are primary elements of this chapter.

By utilizing a qualitative approach and employing a phenomenology method, it is possible to study impressions and human experiences of student advising and students' perspectives regarding retention. An essential part of this study is ensuring that the problem statement determines the method, instead of forcing a specific method because of familiarity (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Based on the research problem statement, each study has a research method that it should naturally gravitate towards; using it should result in an overall higher quality of the study (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

Phenomenology studies investigate the human philosophical perspective of an occurrence, analyze a specific experience, and describe how the event is universally experienced (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The phenomenology method differs from other qualitative methods because it focuses on describing a human experience, instead of merely documenting it (Grand Canyon University, 2019). Phenomenology is exclusively concerned with describing and studying participants' experiences (Grand Canyon University, 2019).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this qualitative study:

RQ1: How do students perceive the experience of academic advising?

RQ2: How do students define satisfaction with their advising relationship?

RQ3: How do students' academic experience differ from their perceived expectation?

Rationale for the Selection of Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative approach and employed a phenomenology method to study student experiences and perceptions of advising methods that contribute to student retention at a midwestern technical college in 2020. Qualitative research is an in-depth method than uses observations and communication to collect data in the research samples' natural environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Qualitative research is typically proactive, comprehensive, and mutable, which means researchers typically become active members in the research method (Patton, 2002, 2015).

Since the goal of this study was to explore student perceptions of advising approaches that contribute to student retention, the researcher chose to use a qualitive approach. As with all qualitative studies, the problem statement determines the method of approach, and it is imperative to use the correct method based on the problem statement (Patton & Cochran, 2002). There are several different research methods that are acceptable in studying participants' perception (Patton, 2002, 2015), but the researcher chose phenomenology because this study focused on the participants' experiences of the event.

Phenomenology research aims to provide an inclusive and collective description of human experience from the perceptions of the people who experience it (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology research differs from most methodologies in that, instead of justifying or

qualifying a lived experience, it describes that occurrence (Grand Canyon University, 2019; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Design

Qualitative research intends to better understand the human experience in the natural environment (Creswell, 2013; Lochmiller, & Lester, 2017). Qualitative inquiry strives to answer the "what," "how," and "why" of an incident instead of the "how many" or "how much" in quantitative research (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Qualitative research covers numerous types of research methods, but all share similar traits: the samples are moderately small; findings lack accuracy compared to quantitative studies; and there is difficulty in determining how bias has affected the study (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

Phenomenology is a qualitative study method investigating an occurrence from a human philosophical perspective and brings this experience into context (Creswell, 2013; Lochmiller, & Lester, 2017). The purpose of phenomenology research is to analyze the happening of an individual event and expand on it to describe how this event is universally experienced (Lochmiller, & Lester, 2017).

Research Setting

The researcher conducted this study at a 2-year vocational college in County A. County A is 560 square miles in area, located in the midwestern United States (U.S. Census Report, 2017). Approximately 422,000 people populate County A, and a median age of 37.8 years, and most residents living in small suburban towns south of a metropolitan area (Data USA, 2018; U.S. Census Report, 2017). County A could qualify as a "bedroom" community since the average person drives 23.7 minutes to work, implying that most County A residents do not work relatively close to where they live (Data USA, 2018; U.S. Census Report, 2017).

County A is relatively affluent, with the socio-economic median of household income in 2017 approximately $80,000, compared to the state's median household income of $65,000 (Data USA, 2018; State of Study, 2016; U.S. Census Report, 2017). Similarly, the median home property value was $260,000, while the state's average property value was $238,000 (Data USA, 2018; Zillow, 2019; U.S. Census Report, 2017). Based on the yearly household income and property value, the social-economic classification of County A is middle to upper-middle-class.

The racial demographics of County A are not incredibly diverse; 78.4% of residents are Caucasian, followed by 7.09% African American, and 6.3% Asian (Data USA, 2018; U.S. Census Report, 2017). The ethnic diversity of Technical College D is 69% Caucasian, 11% African American, and 5% Asian, mirroring the county closely (College of Study, 2017). At Technical College D, 62% are traditional students (18-24 years of age), and 36% are non-traditional students (25 years of age and older), and 38% of students participate in online courses (College of Study, 2017).

The 2017 United States Census Report indicated that residents 25 years of age or older living in County A with a high school degree or higher was 93.8%, which is on par compared to the state's average, but is 5% higher than the United States average of 88% (U.S. Census Report, 2017). Forty-one percent of residents had a bachelor's degree or higher, which is 5% higher than the average for the state, and approximately 10% higher than the United States average (U.S. Census Report, 2017).

Technical College D partners with another local community college, Community College I, the only other college in County A (College of Study Partnership, 2018; Data USA, 2018). This partnership allows Technical College D and Community College I to offer additional programs and a comprehensive range of educational opportunities (College of Study Partnership,

2018). The increased opportunities and support offered by this partnership placed Technical College D on the Forbes Top 25 Vocational Colleges List, as well as national recognition of Community College I (College of Study Partnership, 2018).

Instrumentation

A phenomenology study has four distinct steps: bracketing, intuition, analysis, and description (Patton, 2002). Bracketing aims to identify any preconceived bias, beliefs, options, notions, or conclusions of research participants (Grand Canyon University, 2019). During Intuition, researchers engross themselves in the study's phenomenon and try to experience it through the participants (Grand Canyon University, 2019). Researchers' immersion in the study phenomenon produces rich and in-depth data in the Analysis step (Patton, 2002). The Analysis step allows researchers to gather data and viewpoints of the participants, and find similarities in this information (Patton, 2002). The last step, description, elucidates, describes, and communicates the phenomenon to others (Patton, 2002).

This study began with a bracketing interview, where the researcher articulated his own experiences and opinions on the study. The purpose of bracketing is to identify the researcher's biases and prejudgment to experience the phenomenon through the participants' experience (Laverty, 2003; Valle et al., 1989). In phenomenological research, the bracketing process is essential as it forms a state of reflection, where the researcher needs to preconceived notations to allow for a less-bias study (Laverty, 2003).

Sampling Method

This study used purposeful sampling, which the researcher implemented when gathering in-depth and information-rich data (Patton, 2002, 2015). Purposeful sampling intends to choose participants who can provide a deep and rich description of the study (Patton, 2002). Because

qualitative research typically results in a high level of ambiguity and interpretation (Patton, 2002, 2015). The nature of the qualitative research method limits sample sizes, which means fewer participants and allows greater exploration into participants' experience (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that researchers select a sample size that allows collection of data to the point of repetition, excessiveness, or saturation. Creswell (2013) elaborates that qualitative phenomenological studies should use a sample size between 3 to 10.

In purposeful sampling, researchers select participants based on a specific criterion (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). A subcategory of purposeful sampling is purposeful random sampling, where researchers randomly select subjects from a list of acceptable participants (Patton, 2002). Purposeful random sampling tends to increase the credibility of the study (Patton, 2002). The researcher selected criteria based on previous studies of similar interest (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The researcher selected Purposeful Stratified Random sampling because it was the only option to guarantee that the participants' demographics were similar to Technical College D's student population.

Selection of Participants

This study used purposeful sampling to gather data, where ten Technical College D students participated. The power of purposeful sampling is in gathering deep and abundant information (Patton, 2002). The importance of gathering deep and abundant information illuminates the research experience that it reveals (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling has an implicit and incorporated bias because researchers can choose participants (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 2002). When using purposeful sampling, it is essential to note the study's purpose and rationale, not the sampling sample size (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002, 2015).

Using purposeful stratified random sampling removes bias and increases credibility (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 2002). Utilizing a small random sample reduces suspicion about the judicious nature of participants' selection, which allows the researcher to base participant selection on the set criteria, not a prejudgment of participates responses (Patton, 2002). The reason researchers select purposeful stratified sampling over purposeful random sampling is to ensure that the sample group is comparable to the general population under study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 2002).

The researcher used three criteria for selection and grouping of students to determine if there were similarities in each group. These groups were traditional and non-traditional, with the assumption that traditional students are 18-24 years of age, and non-traditional students were 25 years of age and older. The other two criteria were sex and race, the groups were Male and Female, and White and Students of Color. Table 3 shows Technical College D's and this study's percentages of traditional versus non-traditional students, male versus females, and white students versus students of color. Since this study is utilizing purposeful stratified random sampling, these percentages should be similar.

Table 3

Demographic percentages

	Technical College D	Study
Traditional/Non-traditional	62%/38%	60%/40%
Male/Female	58%/42%	60%/40%
White/Students of Color	71%/29%	70%/30%

Note: This table shows the similarities of demographics between Technical College D's and this study's demographics. Technical College D's demographics retrieved from The College of Study (2017).

Rationale for Selection

The researcher chose purposeful random sampling to ensure that the study's sample's demographics are a good representation of Technical College D's student body. The goal was to replicate the population of Technical College D, where approximately 20% of students are students of color, with 45% being female. Patton (2002, 2015) suggests that purposeful random sampling is useful when a rich and plentiful information description of an event is necessary. Purposeful random sampling also aims to gather data about the phenomenon of study, and participants' experiences (Patton, 2002, 2015). The researcher used purposeful random sampling with a smaller sample size, prevalent in qualitative studies, to guarantee that the selection of participants matched the demographics of Technical College D (Patton, 2002, 2015).

Recruitment Strategies

Receiving approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of Technical College D and Winona State University (WSU) was necessary before continuing with this study. WSU granted approval on October 2, 2020, project number 1659705-2, (appendix A). Upon receiving approval from both IRBs, the researcher selected students to match the student population's demographics. The researcher contacted participants through a letter containing the goal of this study and an invitation to participate. This letter included the researcher's phone number and email in case participants had any questions or reservations. Also, this letter included contact information for both IRBs. Participation was entirely voluntary.

Relationship with Participants

The researcher is a professor at Technical College D and might be acquainted with some of the participants. Since this study is utilizing purposeful random sampling, there is a chance that participants might know the researcher. For transparency, if the researcher knew the

participants, the researcher made notations in Chapter 4 and did not affect this study's outcomes. There is a possibility for bias because of the randomness of choosing participants, but implementing measures such as bracketing reduced bias.

Data Collection

Qualitative research typically breaks data collection into three approaches: document review, interviews, and observations (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). All data collection methods have their strengths and weaknesses, but utilizing multiple methods of gathering data strengthens the study (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). An essential part of qualitative research is forming a connection with the participants (Creswell, 2013). By building rapport and trust with the participants, the researcher had a better chance of having an open and honest dialogue, and more accurate and authentic data collection.

Procedure

The researcher used three different methods of data collection. First, the researcher collected and reviewed the participants' academic records. Reviewing the records allowed the researcher to understand the participants' past academic performance, and created a baseline for each participant. The researcher used the participants' academic records to determine students' academic integration, which is the first essential factor of Tinto's Model of Student Departure. This review also allowed grouping of participants according to GPA and attendance to determine if these influenced student satisfaction.

After reviewing participants' academic records, the researcher then interviewed each participant individually in a setting of their choosing, using open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow for a better understanding of the world as seen through the participants' eyes, and allowed the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify participants' statements (Patton,

2002, 2015). By discerning the participants' viewpoints, the researcher was better able to comprehend and encapsulate the students' social integration, which is the second essential factor of Tinto's Model of Student Departure (Patton, 2002, 2015).

Finally, the researcher observed participants at the institution in their natural environment. Since the researcher taught at the research study site, the researcher was able to take field notes that helped fill in any missing gaps from reviewing academic records and the interview process. Being able to observe students in their natural environment also allowed the researcher to verify participants' academic and social integration at Technical College D. The researcher used observations, which allowed participants to share their viewpoints (Creswell, 2018).

Using three different methods of collecting data allowed the researcher to better understand students' perceptions of advising approaches related to student retention. Each of these methods permitted exploration of both of Tinto's Model of Student Departure key factors, which are positive student academic and social experiences. Reviewing students' academic records allowed for collecting data regarding students' academic satisfaction. Interviews allowed for collecting data regarding students' social satisfaction. Observations allowed for confirmation of data collection.

Studying the human experience of student academic advising experiences at a vocational college helped develop and guide this study towards its implications, findings, and conclusions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). This study followed six steps when approaching research (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). These steps were: formulating a research problem, developing research questions, identifying a conceptual or theoretical framework, selecting a research

methodology, selecting research methods, and determining an approach to data analysis (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Data Verification

A vital step in any research study is to ensure that the data collected are valid, through triangulation until saturation and redundancy occurs with the collecting of data (Creswell, 2018). There are eight strategies to verify that the data collected are valid. The first strategy is to triangulate different data sources by examining past documented evidence, and using them to build a clear and comprehensible justification for the research methodology (Creswell, 2018). The second strategy is to allow participants to verify the collected data to guarantee that the researcher's interpretation was what participants expressed (Creswell, 2018). The second strategy is essential to verify the third strategy, which the researcher conveys a thick and rich description of the data (Creswell, 2018).

The fourth strategy is to elucidate any biases that researchers bring to a study (Creswell, 2018). The fifth strategy is to render a description of any unforeseen issues or discrepancies while conducting the study (Creswell, 2018). The sixth strategy is for researchers to spend a substantial amount of time in the field of study (Creswell, 2018). The seventh strategy is for researchers to use peer debriefing or bracketing to enhance the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2018). The eighth and final strategy is that studies should utilize an external auditor to examine the study in its entirety (Creswell, 2018). All successful research studies need to incorporate and account for all eight strategies (Creswell, 2018).

As mentioned above, triangulation of the data is a crucial part of any successful research study (Creswell, 2013, 2018; Patton, 2002, 2015). Triangulation also decreases researchers' subjectivity and judgment, which can adversely affect a study's validity (Creswell, 2013, 2018;

Patton 2002, 2015). Triangulation uses two or more data collection methods in a study,

increasing the credibility, accuracy, and validity of the findings (Creswell, 2013, 2018; Patton,

2002, 2015). To use triangulation successfully, researchers must follow four techniques (Patton,

2002, 2015).

The first technique is source triangulation, in which researchers need to use as many

sources as possible to accurately describe the data to the readers (Patton, 2002, 2015). The

second technique involves investigator triangulation, which suggests that studies use more than

one researcher in data collection (Patton 2002, 2015). However, Patton (2002, 2015)

recommends studies with only one researcher employ an external reviewer instead of an

additional researcher, so an outside and impartial person can review the study for bias. The third

technique is methodological triangulation, which promotes using more than one research method

in a study (Patton, 2002, 2015). The fourth and final technique is theoretical triangulation, which

supports using more than one hypothesis or theory in a study (Patton, 2002, 2015). Researchers

typically use as many triangulation techniques as possible to increase a study's data validity

(Patton, 2002, 2015). This study used triangulation for analysis of the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

The researcher gathered and analyzed three data points to identify the qualitative data

findings: documentation review, interviews, and observations. Reviewing students' academic

records before conducting interviews allowed the researcher to modify interview questions for

each student. This study first collected students' academic records, permitting enhanced and

more in-depth exploratory interviews in the research. The researcher then conducted interviews

employing the semi-structured method, then used Open Coding, where the researcher looks for

any similarities, to better understand the participants' trends. The researcher then categorized the results from the interviews manually.

Finally, the researcher utilized the semi-structured method to observe students, which allowed the researcher to fill in gaps in the data collected by the other means. Coding prevented the researcher from exaggerating the importance of one aspect over another based on preconceived bias, which ensured a more reliable analysis of the findings. Studying the human experience in a vocational college helped develop and guide this study toward its implications, findings, and conclusions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the research methods used to answer this study's research questions. It includes a detailed description of the research procedures, the study's participants, data collection methods, and how the researcher analyzed the data. The researcher used a phenomenological methodology to explore student perceptions of advising methods that contributed to student retention at a midwestern technical college in 2020. The participants contributed to this study by sharing how their academic advising experiences helped them stay in school. Chapter 4 will provide the study's results following the methodology described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study was to explore student perceptions of advising methods at a midwestern technical college in 2020. This chapter comprises the results of the conducted phenomenological answers the following research questions:

RQ1: How do students perceive the experience of academic advising?

RQ2: How do students define satisfaction with their advising relationship?

RQ3: How do students' academic experiences differ from their perceived expectations?

This chapter includes a description of the sample population, discussions on the study's data analysis, a description of emerging themes, and discussions of research questions.

This study utilized triangulation according to Patton's (2002, 2015) four techniques for reliability, and Creswell's (2018) eight strategies for validity described in Chapter 3. Patton (2002, 2005) suggests that researchers strive to match four techniques for triangulation, but only need one of the four techniques to effectively apply triangulation. Studies that incorporate more of these techniques increase the study's reliability, but Patton (2002, 2015) does not require studies to use all four techniques. This study was able to employ three of the four.

First, this study used students' academic records to analyze students' academic satisfaction, interviews to record students' social satisfaction, and observations to determine student perception of their advising experiences. Second, since this study did not use multiple researchers, this study used an impartial and external reviewer to verify findings. This reviewer was a co-worker of the researcher, and has a Ph.D. in education; the reviewer asked to remain anonymous.

Third, the researcher was not able to meet the third techniques of Patton's (2002, 2015) techniques because this study was limited to the qualitative phenomenological research method, and utilized the practices associated with this method. Patton (2002, 2015) suggests using multiple research methods when possible but, because of time constraints, the researcher could not apply the technique of using multiple research methods to this study. Fourth, this study utilized the three theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 2, with Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure being the primary theory. Multiple Student Advising Theories, and Vocational Educational Theory (Doty, 1984) were the supplemental theories. Table 4 summarizes the researcher's actions to meet the requirements of Patton's four techniques for triangulation, and improved validity.

Table 4

Techniques for triangulation and reliability

Suggested Technique	Researcher's Action
(1) Use Multiple forms of Data Collection	Used Document Review, Interviews, and Observations
(2) Use Multiple Researchers, or an external and independent reviewer	Was not able to use multiple researchers, but used an external and independent reviewer
(3) Use Multiple Research Methods	Was not able to use multiple research methods, but focused on Phenomenology Research
(4) Use Multiple Theoretical Frameworks	Used Tinto's Model of Student Departure, Theories of Advising Approaches, and Technical and Vocational Education

Note: This table shows how the researcher met Patton's (2002, 2005) suggestions of effective techniques of triangulation described in Chapter 3.

Creswell (2018) suggests eight strategies for improving a study's validity, as described in Chapter 3. This study was able to meet all of Creswell's (2018) suggested strategies. Table 5 illustrates how this study was able to attain each of these strategies.

Table 5

Strategies for validity

Suggested Strategies	Researcher's Action
(1) Triangulate different data sources	Researcher used three collection sources, see Table 4 for further information
(2) Allow participants to verify the collected data	Researcher verified all selected quotes with participants before using
(3) Convey a thick and rich description from data	Researcher used direct quotes and descriptions from participants
(4) Elucidate any biases that researchers bring to a study	Researcher performed a bracketing interview before conducting research
(5) Render a description of any unforeseen issues or discrepancies	See research limitations and delimitation for further information
(6) Spend a substantial amount of time in the field of study	Researcher teaches in the field of study
(7) Use peer debriefing or bracketing	Researcher performed a bracketing interview before conducting research
(8) Utilize an external auditor	Utilized an external Auditor, see Table 4

Note: How the researcher met Creswell's (2018) eight strategies for validity.

Sample Description

Ten students from Technical College D participated in this study. As described in Chapter 3, the researcher selected participants employing systematic random sampling to ensure that the sample size was comparable to Technical College D's population demographics. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 39 years old. Six of the participants were traditional

students, ages 24 years old and younger, composing 60% of the sample population, as compared to 62% of Technical College D's population demographics. Four participants were non-traditional students, ages 25 years old and older, composing 40% of the sample population, as compared to 38% of Technical College D's population demographics.

Six participants (60%) were male, and four participants (40%) were female, which is comparable to Technical College D's population demographic of 58% male and 42% female. Seven participants (70%) are White/Caucasian, and three participants (30%) are Students of Color. This statistic correlates to 71% of the population of Technical College D that is White/Caucasian, and 29% of Technical College D's population being Students of Color. These ratios are as close to the general population percentages of Technical College D as the researcher could achieve with ten participants. Additionally, one participant is married, and two participants have children.

Six of the ten students are currently employed full-time, one is employed part-time, two are displaced workers, and one is unemployed. All ten participants were previously employed full-time, and all were full-time students at Technical College D during the 2020-21 school year. Two participants had previous college experience. The participants' GPAs ranged from 2.0 to 4.0, with an average GPA of 3.036. Table 6 illustrates the participants' demographics based on the criteria of whether they were traditional or non-traditional students, male or female, White or Students of Color, and their GPAs.

Table 6

Participants' demographics

Participant Number	Status, 1	Sex/Gender, 2	Race, 3	GPA
1	T	M	W	3.46
2	N	M	S	4.00
3	T	F	W	4.00
4	T	M	S	2.00
5	N	M	W	2.40
6	N	M	W	3.67
7	T	M	W	2.35
8	T	F	W	2.53
9	N	F	S	2.84
10	T	F	W	3.11

Note: This table shows participants' demographics based on traditional/non-traditional, sex/gender, race, and GPA. 1-represents traditional (T) / non-traditional (N) student status; 2-represents the student's sex based on male (M) or female (F); 3-represents the student's race using 1 of 2 categories: White (W) or Student of Color (S).

Data Collection

The researcher conducted interviews with the ten participants, which served as the primary research data source, with academic records and participant observations serving as supplementary research data. The researcher collected participants' academic records, which allowed the researcher to categorize the participants into two groups based on GPAs. The first group consisted of five students with GPAs ranging from 2.0 to 2.84. The second group also

comprised of five students, but these students' GPAs ranged from 3.11 to 4.00. Using Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure, the researcher specifically chose to use a participants' GPA as a categorization tool to measure students' academic integration and satisfaction. Grouping students by GPA allowed the researcher to determine if there was a correlation of comparable experiences between students who had comparable GPAs.

Other contributing factors toward students' perception of advising that this study examined included sex, race, and age. After splitting participants into two groups, the researcher collected data by interviewing each participant individually.   The researcher interviewed each participant individually in an office or an empty meeting room at Technical College D. The researcher recorded the audio of each interview, and took copious notes as participants spoke. This semi-structured interviewing method allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions, permitting participants to expand on their comments.

The researcher observed participants' interactions during lessons, between lessons, and class breaks. The purpose of these observations was to verify students' social satisfaction and college integration. Using the interview notes, the researcher observed students to determine if the data collected during interviews were correct. For example, if a participant stated during their interview that they feel connected to their peers, but then ate lunch in the cafeteria by themselves. One way to determine social satisfaction was to examine whether students had positive interactions with their peers and faculty.

Observing participants allowed the researcher to ask questions about these specific interactions. Using the previous example again, if the researcher noticed the student sitting by themselves numerous times, it gave the researcher the opportunity to follow up with additional questions, because their actions were not the same as they described during the interview. By

allowing additional questions, one might find that the participant did indeed feel integrated into the college, but could be using lunch time for study, while socializing at another time. Observations allowed verification, and provided a better understanding of the previous data.

Data and Analysis

The researcher used open coding to analyze similarities among the ten participants' interviews. Open coding analyzes data into clusters that share similarities. Open coding further examines any connections or common themes that emerge from the data. Analyzing these relationships determines if any trends developed among multiple participants. This study used the themes that emerged to answer the research questions. The researcher also used theoretical coding, which is comparable to open coding, but focuses on resemblances that appear based on the theoretical framework theories. As stated in Chapter 2, these theories composed of Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure, Student Advising Theories, and Vocational Educational Theory (Doty & Weissman, 1984).

During each interview, the researcher took notes and manually transcribed participants' interviews, while paying attention to remove any identifying factors from participants' comments. After conducting all interviews, the researcher coded and analyzed the notes and transcripts for resemblances in open coding. The notes assisted the researcher in categorizing similarities, and the transcripts allowed to verify that selecting comments were correctly quoted. After the researcher applied open coding to identify emerging themes, the researcher used theoretical coding to link trends, and noted any relationships between trends.

Emerging Themes

Through open and theoretical coding, numerous themes of students' perceptions regarding advising emerged. These emerging themes included flexibility in advisors' schedule; a

sense that advisors care about the participants; helpfulness from advisors; traditional students versus non-traditional students; and advisor feedback. There were additional themes that appeared through data analysis, and further helped to answer the three research questions regarding technical students' perceptions of their advising experiences.

Flexibility

All students have challenges with work, life, and school balance. All ten participants indicated that it is essential that advisors are willing to recognize and accommodate their time commitments beyond school obligations, such as jobs and families. One student who has children with medical conditions stated that "when advisors are willing to work with [the student's] schedule, this allows [the student] to care for [the student's] children and bring them to medical appointments. Without this flexibility, [the student] would not have been able to continue [the student's] education and would have had to drop out of college."

Advisors' ability to be flexible about scheduling is equally vital to the success of technical college students. Students indicated that when advisors are flexible with scheduling, it allowed them to focus on their classes as well as reducing their overall stress levels. Advisors also need to understand that many technical students are not like traditional four-year college students, and need to be able to adapt to multiple situations. Many technical students attend a technical college because they need to find a stable and better-paying career than the previous fields in which they were employed. While other students are exploring alternative education options, because they did not have success with previous attempts at traditional four-year colleges.

Technical college students have a variety of different learning styles. Advisors need to be able to adapt to and work with these varying learning styles. This study's participants were

no exception to this statement. Nine of ten participants indicated that they learn best through "doing," "hands-on," or kinesthetic learning styles. Many also benefited from supplemental styles such as visual, audio, and lecture-based lessons. Advisors need to have the knowledge and skills to suggest programs and professors who will match students' learning styles. Also, advisors can support students advocating for themselves with their professors if they feel that different approaches to the material would benefit them.

Influential advisors can help manage and possibly even alleviate students' stress. By accommodating their personal, work, and educational and learning concerns, students can stay focused on their education and trust that advisors understand time constraints. When advisors are willing to accommodate schedules and commitments, it allows students to keep their personal and academic lives balanced. This flexibility helps students to reduce daily stressors that can affect their academic performance.

Compassionate and Helpful

Often, students' first interaction with a staff member is with their advisor. Advisors need to be welcoming, and understand that many students will have feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about attending college. Many technical students arrived at Technical College D with unfavorable feelings from previous educational experiences. A non-traditional student stated that "before attending [Technical College D], [the student] tried college before and did not have good experiences with school. Because of these, [the student] was extremely unsure of trying college again." A traditional participant stated that "[the student] did not like school, and had a hard time making friends during high school." Most participants started at Technical College D with no connections to either staff members or other Technical College D students, and felt

unsure and nervous about attending Technical College D. All ten participants indicated, at some level, the importance of advisors being compassionate and helpful.

Advisors play a significant role in helping students feel welcome, and lowering students' anxiety about starting college. At Technical College D, participants went through a short orientation directed by their advisors before starting their programs. Since Technical College D assigns advisors to students based on students' programs, students attended this training with other students from their programs. Part of this instruction was to help students meet other students and develop positive friendships that would persist through graduation.

Seven participants mentioned how helpful this training was in assisting them in building friendships with other students, making them feel welcomed, and acquiring the confidence they would need to succeed at Technical College D. One student stated, "making a friend through the class that advisors held, helped me stay focused on my education… and increased [the student's] overall satisfaction with Technical College D." Another participant said that because of the willingness of advisors to do "get to know you" activities, the participant began identifying with the program, which helped the student stay in school.

"The activities allowed me to find a friend in my program who lived close to me so that we could carpool daily. If it were not for that, [the student] would not have been able to continue at Technical College D." Two other participants stated, "[they] formed a study group, which allowed them to enhance our education." Advisors offer these opportunities because they want students to succeed in their education, and by giving their students every instrument possible to meet their potential.

Advisors taught students successful study habits and the importance of building skills that employers require from employees, including "soft-skills" such as confidence, time

management, communication, teamwork, and positive personal attitude. One participant

remembered that an advisor stated, "In [the advisor's] years in education, [the advisor] has never

met an unintelligent student. Student success does not have to do with intelligence, it has to do

with the amount of time students are willing to put into their studying." Many technical college

students have never heard that they can be successful in college. Advisors need to help students

change their philosophy about school and their chances of success.

Advisors need to use all available resources to help students develop the skills necessary

to be successful in their educational journey. Many colleges have support systems available to

students to help overcome challenges they encounter. Advisors introduced students to Technical

College D's student support systems. The two main services that Technical College D offers are

mathematics and writing tutoring, and tutoring in general education courses. Whatever program

or class students are enrolled, if a student requests help, Technical College D will make

accommodations to help that student.

Advisors are vital to technical students beyond helping students make connections with

peers, and pairing them with faculty who can best accommodate their learning styles. They also

play an essential role in connecting students to local businesses. Technical college programs

partner with local companies, which benefits both parties. Technical college programs stay

current with changing trends in the different employment fields, and local businesses employ

many graduates to fill vital positions. A participant specified, "[that they feel] …cared about as

an individual and student when advisors would suggest and share specific employment

opportunities." "[When the advisors shared employment opportunities] it helped me form a

positive relationship with my advisor."

Another function of advisors is to accompany students on factory tours. Factory tours are an essential part of Technical College D students' education because students gain the ability to directly observe the industries that they might eventually be employed. Sometimes advisors schedule and accompany students on factory tours. A student mentioned that "it means a lot when [students] see an advisor with us on our tours, because it shows that [advisors] care about our education beyond school." Technical College D do not require advisors to attend these field trips, but many do so to show support and answer student questions. Influential advisors understand the importance of being compassionate and helpful to students, and help students prepare themselves for success.

Traditional Students

The way that students perceive the student-advisor relationship determines what advising approach is most effective. Traditional students in technical-community college settings are students between the ages of 18 and 24, who are typically attending college for the first time. As such, the researcher wanted to see if their advising needs differed from the non-traditional students, ages 25 and above. Five of six traditional participants commented that "[students] look at advisors in a parental role." It appears that the way traditional students look at the student-advisor relationship in more of a protective and sheltering way, with hopes that advisors will encourage them throughout their education journey. If students know that advisors have the students' best interests in mind and want them to succeed, students are more likely to follow advisors' directions and guidance.

Interviews with the six traditional students revealed a preference for a combination of developmental and proactive advising. These students indicated that they want an advisor to take the time to develop a positive relationship with them. One said, "It is extremely important for an

advisor to take the time to get to know [the student] and [the student's] career goals." This statement implies a partiality towards the developmental advisory approach.

That traditional students' partiality toward a proactive advisory approach was reflected through comments that indicated that they had not yet gained the knowledge needed to balance academic and personal life, and needed someone to help them "stay on course." A participant stated, "… [the student is] sometimes forgetful, and needs someone to keep me focused on what needs to get done so [the student] can graduate." One participant mentioned that "at times, [the student] can be lazy, and it is nice to have someone checking in to make sure that [the student] stays on track." These quotes show a preference for the proactive advisory approach. The researcher therefore concluded that traditional students prefer a combination of developmental and proactive advising.

Prescriptive advising is the "traditional" way of advising, where advisors give students a list of courses, and it was the responsibility of students to guide themselves through college. Usually, proactive advising is described as the opposite of prescriptive advising because it places advisors in a critical role to assist students through their educational journey. Proactive advising focuses on the student-advisor relationship, and places students and advisors is an equal partnership.

To measure the students' preference for prescriptive advising, the researcher asked the six traditional students if they would "…prefer an advisor who simply gives students a list of courses needed to graduate, and then provides them space to accomplish these tasks." All six traditional students indicated that they "…would not like an advisor to do that. [The student] would like someone who would look at [the student] as an individual instead of part of [the

advisors'] workload." Traditional students appear to need more guidance and personal connection than prescriptive advising provides.

Non-Traditional Students

Interviews with non-traditional students (ages 25 and up) revealed that they prefer a combination of developmental and prescriptive advising. When participants described how they would prefer an advisor to interact with them, three of four non-traditional participants indicated that they "want an advisor to get to know them and to make sure that [the student's] program matches up with [the student's] career goals." Another student said "that [the student] also liked it when the advisor simply gives [the student] a list of courses needed for graduation, and lets [the student] pick out when to take them." Non-traditional students require support "as needed" by advisors, but they also need to feel that advisors have their best interests inside.

All four non-traditional participants mentioned that "it is important to feel that the advisor has your best interests in mind, and will not steer you in the wrong direction just to fill an opening in a program or to get you enrolled." Three of four non-traditional participants indicated "that a little direction is okay, but too much would be off-putting." "[The student] does not need to have step-by-step directions or someone holding [the student's] hand to make decisions. [The student] knows what [the student] wants; having someone there to answer [the student's] questions are all that is needed."

Three of four non-traditional students commented that "[students] look at advisors more as peers and look for suggestions from [advisors]." It appears that the way non-traditional students look at the student or advisor role is more of a relationship between equals. Students want advisors around to "answer questions and direct students as to what classes they need to take and the order they need to take them in order to graduate." They also appreciate having

someone to answer other questions they might have but want to direct that themselves. Non-traditional students appear to take more responsibility for their education and want to be an equal partner in the decision-making process.

When looked at separately, there did not appear to be any differences between males and females, White students and Students of Color, and student GPA within this non-traditional group. Three of the four non-traditional participants would rather have an advisor use a combination of development and prescriptive advising. The participants' experiences and preferences varied about why they preferred developmental and prescriptive advising, because each participant had different experiences. Three of the four non-traditional participants indicated that they would prefer less contact with advisors and wanted an advisor who had their best interests in mind. They identified a preference towards developmental and prescriptive advising and an aversion towards proactive advising.

The non-traditional participants appeared to possess more internal guidance and did not require as much counseling and direction as traditional students. Even though there are similarities between traditional and non-traditional students, in that both groups want the advisor to "treat [them] as individuals instead of a number," the main difference is that non-traditional students want minimal guidance and the "freedom to do [the student's] education [the student's] way," while traditional students need more supervision and instruction. Compared to traditional students, it appears that forming positive relationships with advisors is still vital with non-traditional students, but not to the degree that traditional students require.

There only appeared to be a difference in advising expectations and approaches between traditional or non-traditional students. There did not appear to be any differences between male or female, White students and or Students of Color, and GPA. All traditional participants would

rather have an advisor use a combination of developmental and proactive advising. Students'
experiences and opinions varied about why they preferred developmental and proactive advising,
but all six traditional participants identified a preference towards developmental and proactive
advising and an aversion towards prescriptive advising.

Advisor Feedback

The concept of constructive feedback was a theme consistently shared by the participants
in the study. All ten participants stated that they wanted "feedback from [students'] advisors in
areas that [students] can grow and develop." "The most important feedback that [students] can
receive is constructive negative feedback." Students mentioned that the words "negative
feedback" have a pessimistic connotation because it points out flaws. However, students did not
relate negative feedback itself with flaws or weaknesses, but as areas in which they could grow
and become more proficient.

When asked, students were not especially interested in positive feedback. Again, the
students were more interested in knowing their areas of weakness and how to improve. Even
though students mentioned that "it is nice to know what [students] did correctly, …[students]
want to know areas of weakness and how [students] can improve." Students understand that
future employers will require them to know how to perform the tasks for which they are hired.
One student stated, "studying to pass is different from passing to know." This statement suggests
that students understand the importance of truly knowing the information they are studying
rather than having a high grade in a course.

This philosophy is essential because students enroll at a technical college as a pathway
into a career and not just to acquire knowledge. The specific programs taught at technical
colleges require a high amount of practical knowledge and skill. Advisors need to realize that

students enroll at technical colleges to acquire practical employment skills and knowledge, and are not attending merely to receive a grade or diploma. Although a diploma is nice to have and is helpful in some circumstances, "the skills and a future career is[sic] the end goal of their education."

Research Questions Discussion

Research Question 1 How do students perceive the experience of academic advising?

At Technical College D, the college assigns two advisors to each student to help guide them through their educational journeys: a professional academic advisor and a full-time faculty advisor. Professional academic advisors are general academic advisors trained in academic advising approaches. Faculty advisors are professors in the student's study program, and are usually not trained in advising approaches. Of the ten students who participated in this study, each had a different academic advising experience, but one consistent theme emerged.

Overwhelmingly, students tended to prefer their faculty advisor over their professional academic advisor. Eight of ten participants stated that "[the student] was not impressed with the advice [the student] received from the academic advisor." The same participants revealed that professional academic advisors predominantly used prescriptive advising, and mainly provided students with a list of courses needed to graduate. Students also asserted that they met with their professional academic advisor only once to register for courses during their first semester. Some participants revealed that they never even met their professional academic advisors until midway through the first semester. When these students signed up for courses, they either registered with another advisor or online without any guidance.

One student mentioned that the difference between professional academic advisors and faculty advisors is "…a day and night difference." Nine of ten participants mentioned that their

faculty advisor "took time to get to know [the student] and [the student's] career goals." A student reported, "many [faculty advisors] would have lunch with students and talk to them about outside interests. It is common to see [faculty advisors] sitting and talking with students outside of the classroom."

Participants reported "poor experiences" and "were underwhelmed" with their professional academic advisors. Students expanded on this statement and explained that they felt "disconnected from [students' professional academic advisor]." Participants felt "like a number and a job," and those professional academic advisors simply wanted to get students signed up for courses so advisors could move on to other students.

The only apparent difference between student advising experiences was with whom the student had the experience. There did not appear to be any distinct correlations when comparing participants' sex, race, or age. All the participants had the same overall experience, differing only with their professional academic advisor and their faculty advisor. A significant concern that continued to recur was students' negative experiences with their professional academic advisors. How professional academic advisors interact with students is an area that needs further exploration for improvement.

Research Question 2 How do students define satisfaction with their advising relationship?

Comparable to the findings in Research Question 1, participants' experiences varied dramatically regarding their interactions with faculty advisors and professional academic advisors. Participants indicated that they were "satisfied with faculty advisors," and "not satisfied with professional academic advisors." "[Faculty advisors] made [the student] interested and excited in [the program of study] and made [the student] feel that [the student's] choice as a

good match with [the student's] interests and career goals." Faculty advisors appeared to play a significant role in students' satisfaction, by helping students feel welcome, caring about students' welfare, and engaging students.

"The faculty advisor took time to get to know [the student] and [the student's] unique learning style. This really helped [the student] feel welcome and succeed at Technical College D." "The advisor (faculty advisor) made [the student] feel comfortable, and [the student] am enjoying [the student's] time at [Technical College D]." Student satisfaction increases if students make connections with an advisor. Advisors can additionally enhance student satisfaction if advisors can assist students with making connections with peers.

As previously mentioned, advisors at Technical College D conduct a student orientation during the first week of the school year. The purpose of this orientation is to refresh students' knowledge on constructive study habits and living a balanced student life, but a significant purpose is for students to connect with their peers. Students who have connections with other students are proven to perform better because students have a more extensive support system and have higher student satisfaction with their educational experiences.

Another participant commented that they "were able to joke around with [the student's advisor], which helped [the student] be more comfortable with [the advisor]." As stated earlier, making a student feel comfortable is an essential step in Developmental Advising because it allows advisors and students to explore students' future goals to create a plan of action for completing college.

Even though all participants, ten of ten students, preferred their faculty advisors over their professional academic advisors, some students, seven of ten students, commented that it was nice to have professional academic advisors when students "needed someone to ask

questions about classes and registration." Then again, some students commented that it was difficult to "find or schedule an appointment with [the student's professional academic advisors]." With students expressing a mixed experience with professional academic advisors as "not good" and "absent," as well as "helpful" and "organized," it is difficult to determine how professional academic advisors influenced student satisfaction.

Students must have a positive experience with their faculty advisor because this experience links directly to student satisfaction. As stated previously, students who had positive experience are more likely to continue with their education. One student stated, "because of [the student's] experience with [the student's faculty] advisors during [the student's] first year, influenced [the student's] decision to take a second year." Advisors have a significant influence on students' choices and satisfaction with their educational experience.

At a technical college, advisors must associate possible careers with students' educational interests and program selections. Many technical college students are primarily interested in their education because it can lead to a career. Professional academic advisors "help find job openings and show [students] how to search for jobs." In addition to assisting students in searching for job openings, many advisors will proactively email students about openings that students might have interest. "[The student's] advisor will send job openings that [the advisor] finds that [the student] might be interested in applying for."

Research Question 3 How do students' academic experiences differ from their perceived expectations?

A student mentioned that an advising appointment should resemble a doctor's appointment. "An advisor should treat a student similar to how a doctor treats a patient." "Advisors should start by asking students questions about how they are doing, and what are the student's career

goals." Students indicated that they were "not sure what program" fits the students' interests. This step is where advisors need to "prescribe" programs to students based on information that advisors gathered from students.

This study grouped participants into categories based on GPA, sex, race, and age. There appeared to be a correlation only when analyzing students' age (traditional (18-24 years old) and non-traditional (older than 24 years old)). Traditional and non-traditional students like to "interact with advisors," but there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding how students want advisors to interact with them. Both traditional students require "more guidance and direction" whereas non-traditional students desire more "independence to choose the direction that [the student] wants to pursue."

Traditional students realize that it "is important for advisors to check in with students…to make sure students stay on track with their classes." As for frequency of contact, a student commented that, "once or twice a week would be beneficial." As mentioned previously in this chapter under Emerging Themes, it appears that traditional participants require advisors to support students through college challenges. Advisors also may assist traditional students through academic difficulties and serve to remind students of upcoming dates, such as deadlines for course registration, withdrawals, and special activities.

Interviewing participants revealed a traditional student who had some academic struggles early in a semester, who wished that the advisor had contacted the student as soon as there was a decline in the student's grade instead of waiting until later in the semester when it was too late to address the problem. "If the advisor would have pushed earlier, it would have allowed [the student] to fix the issue sooner." "Advisors can assist students in identifying concerns before the

issues become overwhelming to the student." Advisors who help students learn self-monitoring skills contribute to students' increasing their "problem-solving ability."

Non-traditional students appear not to need the extra assistance required by traditional students. Students want an advisor who will "help [students] find answers to a problem instead of giving [students] an answer." Non-traditional students want to have the option of "asking questions when needed, but [the student] does not need the reminders younger students might need." As with traditional students, non-traditional students like having an advisor available, and having a positive relationship with that advisor is essential.

Advisors need to be willing to share their educational and life journey with students. When advisors share their journey, it helps students learn skills they could use in their own lives. "Having advisors explain why advisors made specific choices in their journey will help with [the student's] decision making." One student considered joining the military, and shared how understanding the advisors' life choices helped the student decipher [the student's] choices. The advisor's choices were not necessarily the same, but realizing that they each had something similar they cared about is what mattered most.

Conclusion

This chapter contains the findings and emerging themes in the research, connects these findings to the research questions, and displays consistency associated with phenomenological research. Ten participants engaged in this study to understand technical college students' advising experiences. The researcher selected participants employing systematic random sampling to ensure that the sample size was comparable to Technical College D's population demographics. Six of the participants were traditional students, and four participants were non-

traditional students. Six participants were male, and four participants were female, seven

participants were White/Caucasian, and three participants were Students of Color.

Consistent with phenomenology, the researcher collected data to the point of saturation,

and used triangulation to analyze the collected data. Although there were a few differences

between what traditional and non-traditional students need from their advisors, four consistent

themes emerged from analyzing the data: advisors need to be flexible, compassionate, helpful,

and need to provide constructive feedback.

When advisors understand the demands placed on students both in and out of school, and

care about their success, they can help students balance their external and educational

commitments, which reduces students' stress levels. Students look at advisors not only for help

with academic suggestions, but also for personal and professional advice. Traditional students

need more guidance and direction, and perceive advisors to have more of a parental role. Non-

traditional students perceive advisors more as peers, and benefit if they know that advisors are

available to answer questions and offer suggestions.

This research project shows that advisors significantly influence their students, and that

an effective advisor can positively impact student satisfaction, as well as students' future

decisions. There did not appear to be any significant difference in trends when examining sex,

race, and GPA separately. Although all participants had varying experiences with their advisors,

each participant shared a similar expectation that advisors will help guide them through college

challenges. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, discussions of the research questions,

suggestions for application, and future research suggestions.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This qualitative phenomenology study aimed to explore student perceptions of advising methods at a midwestern technical college in 2020. This chapter is comprised of a discussion of themes that emerged from the findings, individual and institutional implementation, and future research possibilities to help answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do students perceive the experience of academic advising?

RQ2: How do students define satisfaction with their advising relationship?

RQ3: How do students' academic experiences differ from their perceived expectations?

As discussed in Chapter 2, students remain enrolled in colleges for multiple reasons. Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure state students who integrate socially and academically into their college have higher retention rates than students who do not integrate with their college. Effective advising is a pivotal way to help students feel that they are part of the college, as well as increasing student satisfaction with their educational experiences. NSC Research Center (2019) closely ties student retention rates to student satisfaction. Colleges that prioritize student satisfaction have higher student enrollment and retention.

Technical College D is a technical college located in the midwestern United States, and struggles with student retention (College of Study, 2017). This situation is not unique to Technical College D. In fact, it is common among all technical colleges in the United States. As discussed in Chapter 2, technical college student retention is lower than any other college type, such as community and traditional four-year colleges. Effective student advising is a technique proven to boost student satisfaction, thereby increasing student retention.

This study focused on students' perspectives of their advising experiences, and searched for common themes that surfaced from the collected data. Four common themes emerged from technical students' advising experiences. These themes were advisor-centered, relating directly to the desired advisor qualities of flexibility, compassion, helpfulness, and the ability to provide constructive feedback. All students benefited from advisors, but there were significant differences in advising experiences between traditional students (18-24 years old) and non-traditional (25 years old and older) students. These interactions influenced how students viewed advisors, affected their overall satisfaction, and ultimately affected their willingness to stay in the program.

Implication of the Findings

Flexibility

Advisors must be flexible, whether they are at a four-year, two-year, or technical college. As stated previously, all students have demands on their time beyond their educational commitments. Technical college students usually have additional non-educational obligations such as work, family, and other time-consuming activities that intensify the need for advisors to have the ability to adjust their schedules to accommodate these needs.

At Technical College D, 38% of students are non-traditional students, which is typical for non-traditional students to comprise a large amount of colleges' student populations. As stated previously, all technical college students have numerous demands on their time, but it is the non-traditional technical student who has amplified issues with out-of-school time commitments. Many non-traditional students have families and are working while also trying to complete their education. These extra demands on their time are especially evident when compared to students in non-technical institutions.

It is common for technical students to work while being full-time students in college. To illustrate this, consider the fact that in this study, 90% of participants worked in addition to going to school, with one participant quitting a full-time, paid position to accept a non-paid internship in the student's industry. Advisors must understand that students have priorities outside of education, and need to schedule appointments around students' timetables, not advisors' particular set work hours. If students request to change appointments, advisors need to accommodate them, without assuming that the students are indolent, and without holding it against them in the future. When students reschedule or miss appointments, it is usually because of other commitments, not laziness.

Flexibility regarding appointment scheduling is critical, but it is only a fraction of what it means for advisors to be flexible. Advisors need to be cognizant of different learning styles because technical students arrive at college with numerous learning modalities. Advisors need the capability to help students connect their learning styles with different programs based on their distinct learning style. For example, if a student does not learn well through hands-on experiences, or they are not textual learners, a mechanical-based program might not fit that student, but another program might be a better match. Advisors need to guide students through their complete educational journey, from choosing a program to graduation.

Compassionate and Helpful

Technical students often struggle to balance their work, school, and social lives. As stated in Chapter 2, it is also common for technical students to be "weary" and "unsure" about attending any college. Most students suffer from a lack of confidence and do not believe that they can be successful academically. Advisors need to be aware that students are entering with these deficits and beliefs, and further need to be willing to assist students in navigating these

issues. Many of these concerns arise during the beginning months of attending a new college. Assisting students' educational integration is essential for student achievement, and needs to be a key responsibility for advisors. Advisors should be compassionate about these emotional needs to ensure student success.

Technical students often arrive at college with a deficit of skills necessary to be successful in higher education. As discussed in Chapter 2, the skills students are most deficient in include effective study habits and time management. Advisors can help students learn successful academic aptitudes through group or individual lessons. Advisors may also help students become aware of existing college tutoring services, and how to access them. Along with not possessing the developed skills needed before college, many technical students previously had poor experiences with education.

Whether students previously tried traditional two-year or four-year colleges, technical students tend to drop out of those programs for multiple reasons including poor grades, numerous external time constraints, and a lack of effective study habits. As discussed in Chapter 2, compared to four-year college students, technical college students need more assistance in learning applicable study habits and using their time effectively. Advisors should be compassionate and understanding of these additional needs of technical students. Technical college advisors should instruct students on applicable skills that will allow them to be successful in higher education. If advisors support students through the first few months of their enrollment by focusing on these academic skills, it will dramatically improve student accomplishment, and thus improving student satisfaction and retention.

In addition to advisors helping students learn academic habits during the beginning of the school year, advisors are usually the first line of defense if students begin to struggle during the

school year. Technical students need someone to "watch over" them and alert them if their

grades start to decline. Being informed of declining GPAs early on is more critical for technical

students than for four-year college students because technical students tend to lose focus and

give up if their grades start to drop. In addition to having a tendency to self-destruct, these

students have a difficult time recovering once they feel defeated.

Advisors can play a significant role in alerting students once they start to slip

academically. As discussed in Chapter 2, more than just acting as an as an early warning system,

advisors should be present throughout their entire educational journey, not just at the beginning

or end of the semester, when helping students register for classes. Once students begin to lose

self-confidence, it is hard for them to regain it. Influential advisors have a considerable impact

on student success, and if students are successful, colleges usually will exhibit correspondingly

higher student retention rates.

Advisor Feedback

Technical students require constant feedback from advisors throughout their educational

journey. Advisors should be aware of students' academic progress or lack there-of, but not for

the same reason. The feedback referred here does not pertain to improving and maintaining

students' self-confidence. Feedback in this context represents apprising the students of areas

they can further develop, while offering suggestions on how to best accomplish this

improvement. This form of feedback does not always have to be strictly positive.

Since this type of feedback focuses on areas in which students need improvement, the

feedback can be described as negative feedback, and is the type that students desire. Negative

feedback is not necessarily bad if instructors and professors communicate the advice in such a

manner that students can accept it and improve. A better way to describe this type of feedback is

constructive feedback, because it focuses on student development. Many technical students demand this type of constructive negative feedback because they want to know how they can develop their skills to succeed in their careers. Students understand that constructive feedback is necessary for developing their competencies.

This feedback appears to be significantly different from advice appreciated by four-year college students. Four-year students either do not require advisor feedback, or appear only to want positive feedback without the negative feedback. Technical students are the opposite in that they would prefer negative feedback over positive feedback. This difference may be related to technical students who are attending college to learn a profession, and who know that employers will require students to be proficient in certain skill sets.

Technical colleges prepare students for careers that usually require specialized skills or unique knowledge. This factor could be the reason that technical students want more constructive feedback than their four-year college peers. As discussed in Chapter 2, employers expect the graduates they hire to have the skills they need and may not be willing to give new employees the time they need to hone those skills. Technical students are aware that even though they might not have the skills to master some parts of the curriculum, they need to become as proficient as possible before being employed.

For faculty advisors to be influential with their students, they need to communicate with professional academic advisors and benefit from them. Both types of advisors have a role in student feedback at technical colleges. Technical colleges' professional academic advisors need to communicate with the instructors to ensure that students understand how students can grow academically. At traditional universities, it is not typical for professional academic advisors to provide student feedback. Most professional academic advisors cannot provide this service or

invest so much time in their students, but technical students need this additional investment to succeed in their academics. Professional academic advisors who are willing to spend the time delivering exceptional academic counseling by offering constructive feedback will be more influential and rewarded with satisfied students.

Traditional Students

Traditional technical college students (18-24 years old) arrive at college still possessing numerous insufficient and ineffective habits, practices, and attitudes learned in high school or possibility even earlier. As discussed in Chapter 2, these habits include underdeveloped study habits, time management skills, and communication skills. It has yet to be determined whether this is common only to technical colleges or common throughout all higher education institutions, but it is a significant issue with traditional students at technical colleges. Many of these issues arise from students having unreal expectations of the workload in college. Advisors can help students become aware of the actual amount of effort needed in college, and techniques required to succeed at this level.

Many students arrive at college with the unrealistic idea that, other than attending classes, there will be a minimum of study time required to pass courses. Students do not understand that higher education institutions require two to three hours of study per class or lecture hour. Technical colleges typically reduce the amount of outside study time because of required in-class labs, but the additional study time far exceeds what high schools expect from students. Many students apply the same effort they used in high school, and often struggle due to the increased workload. From the beginning of the semester or in orientations, advisors should make students aware of the amount of work required to pass their courses, allowing students to prepare themselves and not be "overwhelmed" by the workload.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many students also arrive at college with subpar general education skills, especially in mathematics and writing. Some students never mastered in high school the appropriate writing skills to succeed at the college level; they use inappropriate slang and phrases used in shorthand or texting. Students' mathematical knowledge is also often lacking. This issue is problematic when students cannot apply basic mathematical skills to problem-solving situations in technical classes. This issue is enhanced because most technical programs require students to have strong mathematical and problem-solving knowledge because of the nature of the career. Students should have learned these skills in high school or earlier and, no matter how hard students try, many of them do not have the ability or means to improve upon their educational deficits on their own.

Advisors need to assist students in obtaining available resources to help them overcome these deficiencies and barriers. Colleges have a variety of tutoring services available to students, including in mathematics, writing, and other subjects. Many students are not even aware these services exist, and fewer are informed about how to access these services. Advisors must assist students who would benefit from these services. This knowledge includes being aware of all the available services, as well as when tutors are available. Regardless of whether students are challenged by underdeveloped academic skills, poor study habits, time constraints, or personal problems, most technical college students need some assistance and support at some point during their college career.

Advisors also need to consider the significant ways traditional students perceive the role of the advisor and how it differs from the perceptions held by non-traditional students. Traditional students look at advisors in a "parental role"; therefore, the advising they require differs from non-traditional students who look at advisors more as a peer or for guidance. Using

a scale where prescriptive advising is on one end, proactive advising is on the other, and developmental advising is in the middle, traditional students seem to prefer an advising method somewhere between developmental and proactive, with very little interest in the prescriptive method. In other words, they prefer to receive a combination of developmental and proactive methods.

Developmental advising is the approach of creating student and advisor relationships, where both parties are active participants and share responsibility for students' educational decisions. As discussed in Chapter 2, traditional students need the direction and continual reminding provided by proactive advising, but they also want the attention and partnership afforded with developmental advising. In prescriptive advising, advisors take a majority of the responsibility for students' decisions and direct what courses students are required to take to graduate. With proactive advising, advisors play more significant roles in students' education by reminding them of important dates or deadlines and act as an "early warning system."

Both traditional and non-traditional technical students are partial to developmental advising because they want to be active participants in their education. Where they differ is whether they lean towards proactive or prescriptive advising as a different approach within the developmental advising method. Traditional students appear not to be attracted to prescriptive advising because they need more direction and guidance than just course lists or other specific requirements necessary to attain a degree. Traditional students favor proactive advising because they require someone to "watch over them" and to be there to warn them when their grades start to slip. They want someone who understands and cares for them, and someone who is aware of their other commitments, and can guide them through difficulties. They want someone they can join as an active participant in their educational journey.

Non-Traditional Students

Non-traditional students have unique perspectives on advisors, especially when compared to traditional students. This difference in perspective stems from how students view the student-advisor relationship and their expectations of the types of services that are possible for them to receive. Like traditional students, non-traditional students tend to arrive at college with negative past educational experiences. Many non-traditional students tried traditional four-year colleges, but either did not enjoy it, were unprepared for the workload, or received unsatisfactory grades, and therefore did not continue.

Since non-traditional students are often older and more experienced than traditional students, they view the student-advisor relationship differently. Non-traditional students perceive advisors more in the role of a peer or a friend than substitute parents. As discussed in Chapter 2, non-traditional students often need help acclimatizing to a new educational environment, but unlike their traditional counterparts, usually prefer the prescriptive advising approach where advisors explicitly tell students what courses colleges require them to pass to graduate.

Many non-traditional students have previous work experience, which may be the primary motivation behind their decision to attend a technical college. Many non-traditional students previously worked lower paying jobs or had multiple jobs in a short period of time. They elected to attend a technical college because they wanted to find a better paying, secure, and reliable career, instead of just a job. Whether non-traditional students arrive at college with previous college experience, work experience, or a combination, they already possess skills they can employ in their academics. When students couple these skills with proper and adequate guidance, they will more than likely succeed in this new educational endeavor. The non-

traditional students might not even be aware they possess these skills, but a skilled advisor can help these students discover them and their subsequent value.

Cognizant advisors may utilize the skills non-traditional students garnered from past experiences. Students who have previous work experience already understand the importance of time management. They are mindful that employers expect employees to arrive at work on time and be ready to work when their shift begins. Advisors can impress upon these students that college is comparable to having a job. Instructors expect that students attend classes on time and be eager to learn. If students display the same work ethic as they have in their previous employment, they will likely do well in college. Advisors who make students aware of this comparison may help students build their confidence because they already have skills they can utilize.

For students who did not do well at a four-year college, trained and caring advisors can utilize the knowledge gained from advisors' experience to assist students. Students and advisors should explore why students did poorly during their last college experience. It may have been because of substandard study habits, inadequate time-management ability, or uninformed workload expectations. Influential advisors can capitalize on lessons learned from those years and turn them into teachable moments by converting those failures into successes.

Advisors can direct students with poor study habits towards available academic services. For students who lack sufficient time-management skills, advisors can teach them how to create a schedule for classes and study time, along with methods to help prioritize the numerous tasks for which they are responsible. These unrealistic expectations of what technical colleges require for success may adversely affect some of these students. These situations also allow advisors to

help students review the college's and instructors' course expectations, so they know the requirements.

Non-traditional students usually have an agenda when scheduling an appointment, such as course registrations or exploring possible career opportunities, if the college offers that specific service. Since non-traditional students prefer prescriptive advising over proactive, they want advisors to give them a list of courses needed to graduate, and they expect to be able to ask advisors questions about graduation, financial aid, or specific course-related items. They may not appreciate the "overbearing" aspects of proactive advising, because they feel capable of self-monitoring, and taking responsibility for themselves.

Although non-traditional students view student-advisor relationships as a peer relationship, this does not mean that they do not want advisors to understand and care about them and their unique situations. Using the same scale described in the Traditional Student section, non-traditional students prefer a combination of prescriptive and developmental advising approaches. Both traditional and non-traditional students share a preference for developmental advising because all students want to be active participants in their educational journey. The difference between the two groups is that non-traditional students want to take more responsibility for their education and be allowed to make decisions independently.

Even though non-traditional students prefer prescriptive advising over proactive advising, it does not mean that advisors should not use some proactive measures if they feel it is warranted or beneficial. Advisors should still monitor the academic progress of non-traditional students and be aware of failing grades and other potential signs of trouble. Advisors are still influential and need to encourage the students they advise. Non-traditional students often have more clarity

about what programs they are interested in, but advisors can share current market trends and update students on possibilities for career advancement.

Advisors and advising departments of technical colleges play significant roles in both traditional and non-traditional students' educational and career success. Professional, competent, and caring advisors perform a significant role in student satisfaction. Providing exceptional advising services increases student retention rates, which is a massive factor in its success.

Implications of Theory and Research

This section focuses on college administration, and those who dictate policies and procedures. The purpose is to give suggestions and ideas to those policy makers in a way that will allow them to implement changes to improve student advising, satisfaction, and retention. These are purely suggestions, and every decision should consider colleges' demographics, current policies, future plans, and other unique factors. These suggestions are meant to start a conversation around improving students' academic experiences.

Upon analyzing this study's findings, it appears that there are numerous challenges that affect student success, especially for students at technical colleges. The most notable component colleges can provide to increase student satisfaction and success is to expand their advising services to all students.   When colleges support students and create an environment where students believe they can be successful, it increases student satisfaction, and thus increases student retention. Most of this study's participants indicated a need for "more advisors to achieve students' goals," and "more one-on-one support."

Technical college advisors do not appear to have the time, usually because of large caseloads, to spend sufficient amounts with students to completely understand their unique needs, goals, and situations. All technical students, whether they are traditional or non-

traditional, prefer a developmental advising approach, where students and advisors share in the decision-making process. As discussed in Chapter 2, developmental advising requires advisors to spend more time with students than a strictly prescriptive advising approach does. Participants requested additional advising services and desired more time with advisors. This suggests that advisors should schedule longer appointments with students and schedule follow-up appointments throughout the semester. Often advisory meetings happen at the end or beginning of semesters for class registration, and advisors do not have the time to "sit and talk with students," which many students' desire.

Many colleges utilize the prescriptive advising approach for all students because it is the most cost-effective approach and does not require colleges to hire more advisors. As stated in Chapter 2, when colleges expand their advising services to accommodate other advising approaches beyond prescriptive advising, and allow for the additional time advisors need with each student with these other advising approaches, leads to increased student retention rates. This increase in retention often covers the additional cost of hiring more advisors, as well as improving students' satisfaction.

Research supports the fact that technical students usually need additional academic guidance. This guidance comes in connecting students with colleges' available academic services, supporting students in ways that allow them to review or strengthen underdeveloped skills, and assisting students by acting as a warning system if students' grades start to decline. Assigning these additional tasks to advisors increases their workload, roles, and responsibilities, which requires advisors to seek additional training. This additional training improves advising quality, which means students will feel more supported and better prepared for success. These factors should positively impact student satisfaction and retention.

In addition to increasing roles, responsibilities, and tasks required by more in-depth advising, colleges should introduce a policy requiring all incoming students to attend classes designed to prepare them for academic success. Some of the requirements included in these lessons should be techniques for study habits and time management. Many students arrive at college with less than desirable study habits and inadequate time management knowledge. It usually takes students a semester or two to improve these skills to an acceptable level.

The problem is that many technical college programs are only one- or two-year programs. If students need one or two semesters to ascertain and then gain the skills needed to succeed academically, they will need to retake many earlier courses if they did not pass these courses the first time. If technical colleges can find a way to provide these lessons before students begin their programs, it will not take a semester or two to get acquainted with the techniques needed to succeed. To aid students further, and as part of student orientation, colleges could require that all students know where academic support is to be found in the college. Colleges and advisors should review and teach productive study habits to promote student future academic success during these orientations.

The purpose behind expanding advising services, and providing better services to improve student academic performance is to influence student success and satisfaction. Students need to feel that their college views them as individuals and cares about their achievement. If institutions can make sure that students begin their education in a strong position, it will give students confidence in their skills, enhance their satisfaction, and provide them with a better academic experience.

The purpose of technical education is to teach and train each student to be proficient in a particular type of career, while allowing the individual to lead a productive and satisfying life.

Any assistance colleges can give   students through effective advising programs will certainly contribute to their ability to achieve this essential goal. Technical schools must be aware of, and invest in, initiating the advising approach which most benefits their students. Satisfied and successful students mean happy and satisfied employers, which is one reason these schools exist. Retention rates are essential, but students and their successes should be the prime focus of any institution.

Implications for Practice

This section focuses on individuals working in an advisory role, and is not limited strictly to professional academic advisors, but anyone who plays a role as a student advisor, including professors, staff, and mentors. As discussed in the Implications of Theory and Research section, the purpose of these suggestions is to start a dialogue about how to improve advising services, a critical service that students rely on for their academic success. Turning technical college students into successful graduates is the heart of a strong academic advising program. Academic advising is a core element in a college's effort to retain students; is not merely an isolated service college provide for students. It fosters personal connections to an academic institution and remains vital to student retention and success.

Colleges should assign advisors the role of teaching strategies for success including time management, study skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills. These skills are critical to students in their future careers, they are also valuable to students and are worth the effort of learning before beginning their college education. Having a better handle on these skills at the beginning of their education helps avoid feelings of inadequacy and contributes to the self-confidence needed to ensure academic success. Also, advisors can make referrals if students need remedial academic help. Advisors working at technical colleges also act as mentors and a

bridge for connecting students to professional opportunities, including field trips to visit prospective employers.

Academic advisors are not just people who help with class schedules or alert students if their grades start slipping. Advisors frequently act as counselors or mentors by guiding students through school policies and procedures, offering advice, referring students to other support resources, and encouraging them, especially if students arrive at college with low academic self-esteem. Advisors can influence students' confidence, which allows them to succeed academically. This is especially true with technical students who often are attending college and begin low self-confidence with their academic skills. The key to the success of the advising process is for advisors to start working with students before the school year begins with time-management lessons, classes to build connections, and seminars on effective academic habits. Once technical students start to lose their confidence in their ability to succeed in their classes, it is hard for them to recover.

Unfortunately, many schools do not adequately fund their advising departments, and do not provide advising departments with enough funds to hire enough advisors to provide sufficient students' services. Many technical colleges maintain smaller departments to save money, which does not allow advisors to build the positive relationships that most students prefer. Technical colleges should look at their advising department as an investment because students are likely to stay enrolled and feel more positive about their experience if they have access to academic advisors that do more than just set up their class schedules.

Advising services can make a difference in helping students find careers that match their strengths, and there are interesting factors that play into this decision. Trained professional academic advisors can help students see the "big picture" regarding the commitments they need

to complete that will allow them to succeed in their chosen careers. Trained professional academic advisors also help identify potential issues that may prevent students from being successful in different programs, such as completing required courses and utilizing additional available resources.

The additional time that advisors spend forming relationships with students is not unproductive, is vital to students' success and retention. Effective advising requires time to understand students' unique goals and situations. All participants indicated that they prefer developmental advising because they wanted to feel understood and cared about during their educational journey.

There was also a significant difference between traditional and non-traditional students. Traditional students also preferred proactive above prescriptive advising, and non-traditional students favored prescriptive over proactive. Advisors can provide their best services based on whether students are traditional or non-traditional, as well as increasing student satisfaction. Another common theme that emerged was that participants also expressed that students wanted "more one-on-one support."

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout this study, it became apparent that future studies are required to either enhance these findings or increase the existing knowledge base on technical colleges, advising approaches, and student retention. A significant theme that emerged was the lack of information about academic advising at technical colleges. Researchers have performed numerous studies at four- and two-year colleges, but few studies included technical colleges. More in-depth studies are needed to explore advising in technical colleges because these institutions are vital to business and the local economy.

The different theories of advising typically focus on students' negative aspects, or in areas that need improving. Newer advising theories utilize the Asset Model of Advising, which has not been introduced in this study, are where advisors focus on students' strengths, as opposed to students' weaknesses. Many students suffer from low academic self-confidence, and this model could promote and improve student confidence. Conducting studies that concentrate on how the Asset Model of Advising effects students satisfaction would be helpful with understanding how colleges could improve student satisfaction and therefore retention.

Researchers should conduct additional studies similar to this study, but at different locations and demographics, to determine if the same common themes emerge. These investigations would add credibility to this study's findings. Additionally, research in advisors' perspectives at technical colleges would verify if their perception of student-advisor relationships resembles the students' viewpoint. This study could be either quantitative or mixed-methods, and could verify the findings of these study by sampling a larger population. Using a larger sample would show if these findings could be generalized or if these finding are specific to this population sample.

It also could prove valuable to perform experimental and long-term studies on the impact of requiring introductory lessons on essential skills needed for a successful academic career, including effective study habits, time-management, and communication techniques, before students begin classes. These studies should include statistics that would establish whether these introductory lessons impacted overall graduation rates and student success after graduation. A follow-up study could determine whether these were also useful to employment after college or impacted students' success in their chosen careers.

Effectiveness of Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure focuses on student satisfaction and how well students integrate with their college. Tinto measured this integration on students' social and academic experiences. Every encounter either adds to or subtracts from their satisfaction. Effective advising is an excellent way for colleges to create positive encounters for student, which will improve student satisfaction.

This study concentrated on describing technical college students' perceptions of their advising experiences. Most, if not all, participants indicated at some level that their advisors had influence on their retention. Most students revealed that they had positive experiences with their faculty advisor, and fair to poor experiences with their professional advisor. The biggest factor on students' satisfaction was the amount of time spent with each advisor. Even though students mainly had fair to poor experiences with their professional advisor, students had minimal contact with these advisors. Students spent the most time with their faculty advisors.

The participants mainly had positive experiences with their faculty advisors, which had significant influence on students' decision to continue at Technical College D. Since there is a direct link between students' encounters with their advisors and retention at the college, Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure is true. Tinto is correct that positive student experiences directly influence students' decisions to stay enrolled at a college. Effective advising is one of principal ways for colleges to ensure that students have a positive educational journey.

Conclusion

Student retention is a significant factor for colleges across the United States, and researchers have already conducted numerous studies on techniques to improve it. However, few studies have focused specifically on technical colleges. Since very little research has been

done on the impact of advising at the technical college level, this study explored technical college students' perspectives of advising approaching and how it influences student retention. This qualitative phenomenology study explored student perceptions of advising methods at a midwestern technical college in 2020, focusing on student retention and the effect of specific advising methods on whether students staying in their program of study. Specifically, this study revealed four emerging themes: advisors need to be flexible, compassionate, helpful, and provide constructive feedback. There were also significant differences in how traditional and non-traditional students experienced different advising approaches.

The research findings concluded that effective technical college advisors have significant influence on students' decisions and overall academic success. Advisors must be flexible and understand students' unique situations. This requires using advising approaches that accommodate both traditional and non-traditional students alike. Both traditional and non-traditional students prefer the positive relationships that are formed between advisors and students through developmental advising and guidance.

Regardless of the advising approach, it is important for advisors to help students build their student confidence, which ultimately results in student academic success. Students' perception of advising is that it is useful and relevant to a positive academic experience. Students want and deserve academic advisors who care about them and who can serve as a guiding light throughout their technical college experience. Building positive relationships between advisors and students is the heart of schools' ability to retain and graduate traditional and non-traditional students. Paying attention to this simple fact will have huge impacts on the success of students in technical colleges.

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Appendices

Appendix 1-IRB Approval

Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Human Protections Administrator
Maxwell 155
Winona, MN 55987
507.457.5519 or bayers@winona.edu

DATE: October 2, 2020

TO: Joseph Mollner
FROM: Winona State University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1659705-2] Student Perceptions of Advising for Retention at a
                              Midwestern Technical College
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research study. The Winona State
University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate
risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must
be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.
Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study
and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent
must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research
participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent
document.
For expedited studies, continuing review and annual reports are not required unless mandated by
the IRB. For full board review studies conducted longer than one year, continuing review is
required on an annual basis or at a period specified by the IRB. Use the report form in the
IRBNet Forms and Templates or Document Library and refer to the file reports (if required)
section in the "How To" document.
All serious and unexpected events, non-compliance issues, or complaints must also be reported
to this office. For all reports, please use the report form in IRBNet Forms and Templates or
Document Library and refer to the file reports (if required) section in the "How To" document.
Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years. Changes in
the study must be reported and any revisions to previously approved materials must be approved
by this office prior to initiation.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Protections Administrator at 507.457.5519 or bayers@winona.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the Winona State University IRB records.

Appendix 2-Interview Questions

1) Describe your overall experiences with your advisors?

2) How does your advisor help find educational experiences that developed skills and knowledge outside of the school environment?

3) Describe how your advisor has helped connect your career goals with your program of study?

4) How has your advisor helped you determine any possible future difficulties in your program of study? Possibly from past courses, habits, family, etc.?

5) Describe how your advisors have gotten to know you and your unique situations?

6) How has your advisor offered help, support, and guidance during your academic journey?

7) Describe how your "perfect" advisor would act?

   a. Would they tell you what classes to take, and that is all?

   b. Do you want them to get to know you as a scholar/student? Including outside potential obstacles.

   c. Would they offer guidance with difficult classes? Including congratulations on overcoming these difficult classes?

   d. Do you want them to contact you if you are missing classes, assignments, and to check on your wellbeing?

8) How has your advisor helped you with your decision to stay and continue at ****?

9) How has your advising experience influenced your overall satisfaction with ****?

10) Any additional information you would like to share?