



WINONA

STATE UNIVERSITY

Student Perceptions of Advising for Retention at a

Midwestern Technical College

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Student Retention
ACT Institutional Data File 2017

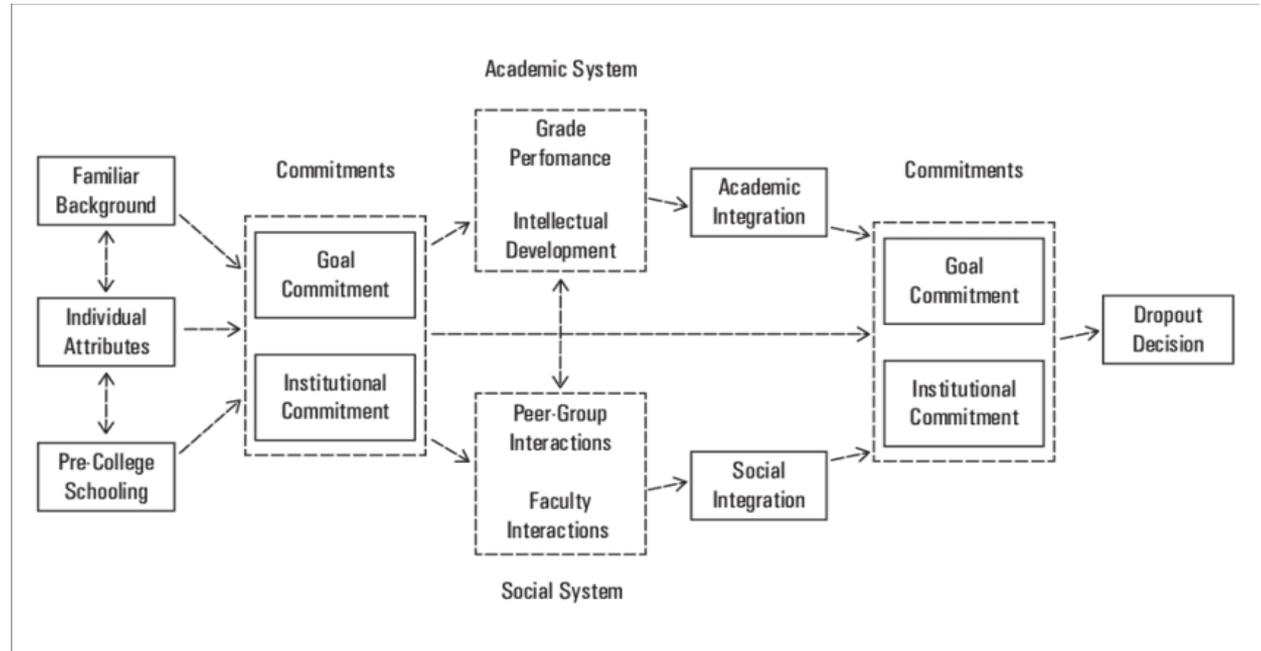


Degree Level/Control	N	Mean (%)	Standard Deviation
Two-Year Public	724	58.1	10.1
Two-Year Private	42	64.1	19.6
BA/BS Public	90	65.4	14.4
BA/BS Private	243	71.7	19.1
MA/MS/MBA Public	170	70.3	10.8
MA/MS/MBA Private	415	75.5	13.0
PhD Public	241	79.0	10.9
PhD Private	274	69.0	10.8
Total	2199	69.0	NA

	Two-Year Private			Two-Year Public			All Reporting		
Admission 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

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

Primary Framework



Unique Factors

Technical and Vocational Education

- Around since 1862 with the Morrill Act
- In 1977, Thurow wrote *Education for Careers*, which decrease enrollment and interest.
- In 1999, Doolittle and Camp realized that previous vocational and technical education theories were no longer current or relevant.
- Technical Colleges struggle to stay current with new technology used in industries.

Transfer and Non-Traditional Students

- Make up more than a third (37.2%) of the student body at community colleges
- Strain with making connections at new colleges
- Many activities and events are not focused on them potentially
- Struggle in helping them bond with the college

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?

Phenomenology research aims to provide an inclusive and collective description of human experience from the perceptions of the people who experience it (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Setting

- County D is 560 square miles in area, located in Minnesota, in the Midwestern United States
- Approximately 422,000 people populate County D, with a median age of 37.8 years, with most residents living in small suburban towns south of Minneapolis and St. Paul
- Median household income in 2017 was approximately \$80,000, compared to Minnesota's median household income of \$65,000

Technical College D

- The ethnic diversity of Technical College D
- is 69% Caucasian, 11% African American, and 5% Asian, mirroring the County closely
- 62% are traditional students (18-24 years of age), and 36% are non-traditional students (25 years of age and older)

- Was the only option to guarantee that the participants demographics were similar to Technical College D's student population.
- Study used three criteria for grouping

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%

Purposeful Stratified

Random Sampling



Data Collection Methods

Document Review

- Understand the participants' past academic performance
- Create a baseline for each participant
- Used the participants' academic records to determine students' academic integration
- This review also allowed grouping of participants according to students' GPA and attendance to determine if this influenced student satisfaction

Interviews

- Used open-ended questions because it allowed for a better understanding of the world, as seen through the participants' viewpoints, and allowed for the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify participants' statements
- Used to comprehend and encapsulate the students' social integration

Data Collection Methods

Observations

- Observed participants at the institution in their natural environment.
- Able to take field notes that helped fill in any missing gaps from reviewing academic records and the interview process.
- Able to observe students in their natural environment also allowed the researcher to verify participants' academic and social integration

Each of these methods permitted exploration of both of Tinto's Model of Student Departure key factors

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

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)

Emerging Themes

- Flexibility in Advisors' Schedule
- Sense of being Cared about from Advisors
- Helpfulness from Advisors
- Advisor Feedback
- Traditional Students versus Non-traditional Students

Flexibility in Advisors' Schedule



- All students have challenges with work, life, and school balance.
- The ability of advisors to be flexible about scheduling is equally vital to the success of technical college students.
- All ten participants indicated that it is essential that advisors are willing to recognize and accommodate their additional time commitments beyond school obligations, such as jobs and families.
- “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.”

Sense of being Cared about from Advisors & Helpfulness from Advisors



- Often, students' first interaction with a staff member is with their advisor. Technical students arrived at Technical College D with unfavorable feelings from previous educational experiences.
- Advisors play a significant role in helping students feel welcome and lowering students' anxiety about starting college.
- 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.”

Advisor Feedback



- 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.”
- “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 the employer is hiring them to perform. One student stated, “studying to pass is different from passing to know.”

Advising Methods



- **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 issues before it becomes an issue, and guide students in overcoming current concerns (Ohrablo, 2017).
- **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).
- **Prescriptive Advising.** Prescriptive Advising is an advising approach that places most of the responsibility on the advisor, which the advisor direct the student 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

Developmental

Prescriptive

Traditional Students versus Non-traditional Students



Traditional Students

- Five of six traditional participants commented that “[students] look at advisors in a parental role.”
- Revealed a preference for a combination of developmental and proactive advising.
- Not yet gained the knowledge needed to balance academic and personal life and needed someone to help them “stay on course.”
- “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.”



Proactive

Developmental

Prescriptive

Traditional Students versus Non-traditional Students



Non-traditional Students

- Revealed that they prefer a combination of developmental and prescriptive advising
- “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.”
- “[The student] also liked it when the advisor would simply give [the student] a list of courses needed for graduation.”
- “freedom to do [the student’s] education [the student’s] way”



Interpretation of the Findings

- **Flexibility: Scheduling**
- **Compassionate and Helpful, and Understanding**
- **Advisor Feedback: Constructive Negative and Maintain Self-Confidence**
- **Traditional Students**
 - **Help students become aware of the amount of effort needed in college**
 - **Techniques required to succeed at this level**
- **Non-traditional Students**
 - **Reacquainted with school**
 - **Underdeveloped skills or past poor experiences**

Future Studies



- Increase the existing knowledge base on technical colleges, advising approaches, or student retention
- Different locations and with different demographics to determine if the same common themes emerge
- Asset Model of Advising
- 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

Questions???