

## **Student perceptions of the value of academic advising at a Hispanic serving institution of higher education in South Texas**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perception of the value of academic advising to second-year students at a Hispanic Serving Institution in south Texas. This study surveyed second-year students during the 2016-2017 year to examine whether academic advising enhanced the retention. The theoretical foundation of this study relied on the Tinto's model of institutional departure Table 1 (Appendix) to explain the role of academic advisors as the advising pattern was designed within this specific model which is widely accepted by the postsecondary academic community. The survey results indicated that students appreciate the dissemination of knowledge from the advisor the most.

The survey results indicated that the focus on the student as an individual was the least needed. No significant relationship was found among advisor availability, advisor time with student, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor dissemination of knowledge, and advisor assistance of educational planning and the criterion variable of perceived value of the advisor among students. No significant difference was found between males and female students and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor. However, after a multilinear regression correlation coefficient was analyzed, advisor v dissemination of knowledge was significant to the student perception of the advisor.

This suggested more frequent advisor-student interactions influenced student success. It was recommended that the HSI provide ongoing professional development and training for academic advisors to build a stronger relationship between advisors and students.

**Keywords:** Academic advising, Advisor, Culture, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Sociocultural.

## INTRODUCTION

The role of academic advising for second-year students concerning their experiences during the first year with advising in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) of higher education in south Texas has indicated that academic advisors have the ability to advise, connect, and mentor students toward success and persistence to graduation (Miller & Erisman, 2011). Academic advising seeks to develop relationships with students and identify situations where students become disconnected from academics or the university, and assist them to get reconnected (Roll, 2015). It revealed the strong effect that out-of-class contact with a faculty member and advisors can have on student persistence (Drake, 2011). The day-to-day communications between students and other colleagues in college, formal and informal, the academic and social domains of the college and the person's perception or evaluation of the character of those interactions clarify decisions that students make in staying or leaving the institution (Drake, 2011).

Advisors educate students to (1) navigate the higher education confusion, (2) create choices about their futures, (3) modify their life talents to the modern academic world, and (4) encourage the academic abilities and awareness needed to succeed (Drake, 2011, p. 11). Academic advising delivers an opportunity by which universities can improve student satisfaction and retention and help students in choosing and completing a major. Advising impacts students' determination and influences grades, purpose, and gratification with roles and reasons that lead indirectly to student retention (Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012). In the end, strong academic advising programs indicate an institution's commitment to the success of its students and should never be left to the notion of chance or left sitting uncertainly on the cutting block (Drake, 2011).

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) indicated a cultural breakdown between students and universities. Universities rely on Tinto's (1975) model of institutional departure to set expectations for an incoming freshman's academic experience. Tinto's (1975) model of institutional departure as indicated in Table 1 (Appendix) is universal, and does not take any one culture into consideration. To date, no model of institutional departure examines the specific needs of Hispanic students in south Texas or how to specifically prepare these students for the freshman year. The HSI in south Texas has a predominately Hispanic population of students (Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2014). The ethnic diversity chart for this HSI indicated that 67.4% of the population is Hispanic (Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2014).

The connection between the HACU and the identification of HSIs is expected to accommodate the cultural and sociocultural needs of the Hispanic students served (Calderón Galdeano, Flores, & Moder, 2012; Drake, 2011; Montag et al., 2012; Tinto, 1975; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). There is a need for Hispanics, who are experiencing demographic growth and related magnitude of representation in the American workforce, to close educational success gaps and become more competitive for higher level jobs within society (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012). Hispanics are on the rise and are the youngest cultural demographic in the postsecondary discussion (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012). More than half of the expansion in the U.S. workforce between 2005 and 2009 was comprised of Hispanics (Costa, Cooper, & Shierholz, 2014).

Hispanic Serving Institutions are at the forefront of attempting to create strong approaches aimed at improved achievement among Hispanic students engaged in college education (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012). Among the factors HSIs have to contend with are

students who are unprepared for postsecondary coursework because of the differences between what high schools teach and what colleges expect (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). A disparity between high schools forces a focus on specific educational gaps and deficiencies stemming from a population of students who demonstrate weaknesses created by socioeconomic and other factors (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Venezia and Jaeger (2013) noted the significance of noncurricular variables, such as peer influences, parental expectations, and situations that encourage academic study. Initiatives to promote college readiness suggest that services, beginning with academic preparation and facts about college and financial aid, and extending to psychosocial, behavioral assistance, and the development of habits of mind including organizational skills, anticipation, persistence, and resiliency should allow first-year students to be prepared for a more successful academic experience (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Even with the coalition of HACU and HSIs the achievement gaps in education and in socioeconomic status continue to be issues that cause disparity among Americans. The nation has not found a clear path of outreach to the Hispanic communities, which prove successful in enabling them to complete a postsecondary education (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009; Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). Hispanic Serving Institutions attempt to create a distinctive opportunity to educate and graduate Hispanic students through well-organized approaches that concentrate on the achievement gaps which exist in education and in the 21st century job market which require postsecondary education skills (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012; Ortman & Guarneri, 2009; Passel et al., 2011).

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities originated in 1986 when a group of 18 universities united to examine the issues concerning Hispanic students in postsecondary environments because institutions nationwide had been forced to reject Hispanic students because these students lacked preparedness and persistence (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012; Tinto, 1975). Since 1986, HACU has established methods for consideration, dedicated resources, and developed creative interventions devoted to Hispanics in higher education. Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities indicated that Hispanics raised in California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Chicago, or any other region of the country each have distinctive needs and provided an understanding that Hispanics from geographical, demographic, and socioeconomic regions have needs as they enter a postsecondary environment (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012). In 1985, the Chronicle of Higher Education shared a list of institutions with ratios of ethnic and racial minority students, showing that 50 to 60 colleges and universities in the United States had Hispanic undergraduate enrollments of at least 25% (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012).

Former President George H. W. Bush endorsed a law in 1992 to amend the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, which under Title III defined HSIs as accredited, degree-granting, public or private, nonprofit colleges or universities with 25% or more Hispanic enrollment (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012). While HSIs were officially codified in 1992, funding was distributed to HSIs until the 1995 fiscal year (Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012).

More than 54% of Hispanic students in U.S. higher education are registered at HSIs (HACU, 2011). This constitutes an impressive demographic growth of the Hispanic populace in the U.S. Institutions that meet the HSI enrollment verge has developed from approximately 137 institutions in 1990 to 311 in 2010 (HACU, 2011). According to HACU (2011), 49% of Hispanic college students attend two-year institutions, compared to 37% of Hispanic college students who attend other institutions. It is not surprising that of the 311 HSIs identified in 2010, 152 (49%)

are public, two-year institutions, 65 are public, four-year institutions, 82 are private, four-year institutions, and 12 are private, two-year institutions (HACU, 2011).

The concept of college readiness is recognized as academic planning a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college setting (certificate, associate degree, or baccalaureate) without needing remediation (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Popular assessments utilized to verify college readiness are the American College Test (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). These exams are offered to high school juniors and seniors. In 2012, 25% of ACT-tested high school graduates met the college readiness benchmarks in four subjects (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). The ACT reported that 52% of high school graduates met the reading benchmark, 46% met the mathematics benchmark, and 67% met the English benchmark. Only 31% met the benchmark in science (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Examining the SAT data of the high school graduating class of 2012, 43% of SAT takers met the SAT college career readiness benchmark (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). The college board, which manages the advance placement (AP) courses, reports that 30% of public high school graduates in 2011 participated in AP courses and 18.1% succeeded in scoring a passing three or higher, qualifying these students to receive college credit or placement into advanced courses on at least one AP exam (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Academic advisors may not be aware of their potential role including: (1) within an HSI of higher education in south Texas, (2) establishing either retention for first-year students, (3) in the need to evaluate the current strategies for advising, (4) in assisting the underserved Hispanic population, (5) in creating an environment of higher student retention and graduation rates, (6) in current research on the use of technology, and (7) in examining the existing Tinto (1975) model.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of students who completed the first year within an HSI of higher education in south Texas to determine the student perception of the value of the academic advisor during the 2016-2017 academic year. The independent variables are advisor availability, advisor time with student, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor dissemination of knowledge, and advisor assistance of educational planning. The dependent variables are gender and prior college hours.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Quantitative methodology was used to test the hypotheses that were grounded on the literature review. This MLR and two-way ANOVA analysis discovered which of the variables of academic advising impact student retention. This chapter reviewed the following topics: research questions, hypotheses, research methodology, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, reliability and validity, and the summary of the methodology (Creswell, 2013).

RQ1: (1) Among students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education, which of the following contribute to student perceptions of the value of the advisor: (a) availability, (b) time with student, (c) focus on student as an individual, (d) dissemination of knowledge, and (e) assistance of educational planning.

*H*<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship among the composite predictor variables of advisor availability, advisor time with student, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor dissemination of knowledge, and advisor assistance of educational planning and the criterion variable of perceived value of the advisor among students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education.

RQ2: Between female and male students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education, is there a difference on student perceptions of the value of the advisor?

*H*<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between males and female students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor.

RQ3: Among students with and without college hours prior to attending a HSI of higher education is there a difference on student perceptions of the value of the advisor?

*H*<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference between students with no college hours and students with college hours prior to attending the HSI and who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor.

RQ4: Are there interactions between gender and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor for students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education?

*H*<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant interaction between gender and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor for students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH**

A cross-sectional survey design was used based on a quasi-experimental alternative treatment posttest only with nonequivalent groups. The observations took place on nonequivalent groups at one time (Creswell, 2013). The participants were second-year students and completed a one-time survey. The data for this study were collected from second-year students enrolled in fall 2016. The participants were asked to respond to an 18-item survey Table 2 (Appendix). The focus was on second-year undergraduate students.

In this study, the survey instrument student survey about advising (Cuseo, 2005) was prepared during the period of February 2016 to March 2016, Table 2 (Appendix). The survey was modified and new questions were added with written consent of the original author (Cuseo, 2005; Table 2 Appendix). The survey questions pertaining to the factors: advisor availability, advisor time with student, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor dissemination of knowledge, and advisor assistance with educational planning were presented in the survey instrument. The survey questions determined if academic advising had an effect on student perceptions of the value of the advisor.

The questions determined the effects of gender, if any, and prior college hours, if any, of each participant before entering an HSI of higher education on the perception of the value of the advisor.

The survey consisted of quantitative data (5-point Likert scale) and questions regarding demographic information Table 3 (Appendix). The instrument was revised and reviewed in March 2016 by an expert panel to ensure content and construct validity and the study was completed by August 2016. The quantitative survey captured the demographic characteristics of the respondents; as well or and opinions gave an understanding about first-year experiences. Together, the demographic information and respondents' opinions gave an understanding of the factors regarding first-year students, student retention, and academic advising on how academic advisors play a vital role on the perception of student of the value of the advisor. Data from the sample were entered in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as a data matrix for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v23 loading. The range of the Likert scale scores were 0 = neutral, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree.

## **SETTING AND SAMPLE**

Survey data were collected from second-year students who completed the first year. To collect the survey data, the researcher received permission of the university professors teaching sophomore English, literature courses, focusing on the second-year students. The researcher used approximately 10 minutes of class time to complete the survey for this study. Therefore, the survey was available to students from major colleges at the HSI of higher education in south Texas. The collected data were used for the purpose of this research. The surveys did not contain identifying information regarding the students; thus, they were anonymous.

The participants were from a purposeful sample who completed a survey one time. Students who took the survey were chosen using purposeful sampling, which is an approach of recognizing participants who are chosen based on extreme cases, typical cases, or convenience sampling, with a goal of collecting quality rather than quantity (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Purposive sampling indicates that sampling is completed with an end objective or focal point, in this case, second-year undergraduate students (Erlandson et al., 1993). The purposive sampling in this study was intended to capture students who experienced time with an academic advisor in the first year of their college experience (Erlandson et al., 1993).

The data for this study were collected from second-year students who completed the first-year with an advisor during the 2016-2017 academic year. This university had an approximate first-year retention rate of 63.6% in fall 2013 and 69% in fall 2014 and an enrollment of 67.4% Hispanic undergraduate students (Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 2014).

## **RESULTS**

This chapter includes the results of the data analysis regarding student perceptions of the value of the academic advisor. The purpose of this research was to determine the student perception of the advisor in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in south Texas. A quantitative approach was used in this research and the sample for this study was collected from second-year students who completed the first year with an academic advisor at the institution during the 2016-2017 academic year.

The researcher analyzed data from second-year students who completed the survey one time. The researcher requested permission via email from faculty members teaching sophomore English literature courses to allow second-year students to participate in a survey. The data collected from the survey were utilized to determine the student's perception of the value of the advisor in a HSI. The presentation of the data was divided in five sections that included data preparation and collection, data analysis, results, descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and summary.

### **Results for Research Question 1**

Question 1. Among students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education, which of the following contribute to student perceptions of the value of the advisor: (a) availability, (b) time with student, (c) focus on student as an individual, (d) dissemination of knowledge, and (e) assistance of educational planning.

#### **Factors which contribute to student perceptions of the value of the advisor among students who completed the first year at a HSI.**

There was no significant relationship among the composite predictor variables of advisor availability, advisor time with student, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor dissemination of knowledge, and advisor assistance of educational planning and the criterion 63 variable of perceived value of the advisor among students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education. The MLR showed high multicollinearity. Each of the individual variables, advisor availability, advisor dissemination of knowledge, advisor focus on student as an individual, advisor assistance with educational planning, and advisor time with student, were significantly correlated with the perceived value of the advisor. Nevertheless the standardized coefficient was reviewed.

The results of the data analyses included:  $Z$  perceived value of the advisor =  $.17z$  advisor availability +  $.35z$  advisor dissemination of knowledge +  $.12z$  advisor focus on student as an individual +  $.27z$  advisor assistance with educational planning +  $.20z$  advisor time with student on the perceived value of the advisor ( $p < .001$ ) presented in Table 4 (Appendix).

### **Results for Research Question 2**

Question 2. Between female and male students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education, is there a difference on student perceptions of the value of the advisor?

### **Female and male students on the perceptions of the value of the advisor results.**

There was no significant difference between males and female students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor. As indicated in Table 5 (Appendix), the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, there was no significant difference  $F(1, 84) = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.86$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.00$ , between males and female students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor. The effect size is considered negligible.

### **Results for Research Question 3**

Question 3. Among students with and without college hours prior to attending a HSI of higher education is there a difference on student perceptions of the value of the advisor?

#### **Students with and without prior college hours.**

There was no significant difference between students with no college hours and students with college hours prior to attending the HSI and who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor. As indicated in Table 5 (Appendix), the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, there was no significant difference  $F(1, 84) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .29$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ , among students with and without college hours prior to attending a HSI of higher education on the perceived value of the advisor. The effect size for prior or no prior college hours was small at 0.01.

### **Results for Research Question 4**

Question 4. Are there interactions between gender and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor for students who have completed the first year at a HSI of higher education?

#### **Interaction between gender and prior college hours**

There was no significant interaction between gender and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor for students who completed the first year at a HSI of higher education. 66 Results. As indicated in Table 5 (Appendix), the null hypothesis failed to be rejected, there was no significant interaction,  $F(1.84)$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.00$ , between gender and prior college hours on the perceived value of the advisor for students who have completed the first year at an HSI of higher education. The effect size for the interaction of males and females with or without prior college hours was negligible at 0.00. The effect size of the interaction was 0.00.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the significance between gender and prior college hours on the perceived values of the academic advisor. The research study used a cross-sectional survey design using a multiple linear regression (MLR) and a two-way analysis



of variance (ANOVA) to test the null hypotheses. The student survey (Table 2; Cuseo, 2005) was modified to fit the current study. New questions were added with the written consent of the original author. Second-year students in English literature classes participated in the survey.

Even though there were no significant differences between gender and college hours on the perceived value of the advisor. Factor analysis data showed that the academic advisor plays a significant role in a student's academic career. When the MLR correlation coefficient was analyzed (Table 5), the coefficient alpha on student perception of the academic advisor (Table 5) using advisor dissemination of knowledge ( $p < .000$ ) added the most to the equation and was 0.35. The high score in this equation, advisor dissemination of knowledge, suggested more frequent advisor-student interactions, as well as favorable perceptions of interactions between advisors and students, influenced student success. Although the equation stated advisor dissemination of knowledge added most to the equation, student perceived dissemination of knowledge the lowest factor where they had prior or no prior college hours.

Advisor focused on student as an individual added the least to the equation (0.121). A low score on this scale suggested when an advisor focused on a student as an individual that the student perceived the interaction as less favorable to his or her success. Based on the survey, students indicated personal relationships showed a low value, whereas educational showed a high value when it came to advisor and student relationships.

According to Grites (2013) and Frost (1991), research has shown that academic advising directly and indirectly impacts persistence in college, for example, contact with academic advisors or other faculty members about academic and professional concerns to improve academic obligation and determination. Identifying diversity and offering the necessary support and guidance to individual student needs are vital to including students in the academic advising process (Frost, 1991; Grites, 2013; Gordon, 2016). To find the reason behind the significance of the academic advisor's role, a qualitative study should be conducted. In addition, the researcher would like to utilize 193 surveys in the future to evaluate all students regardless of classification.

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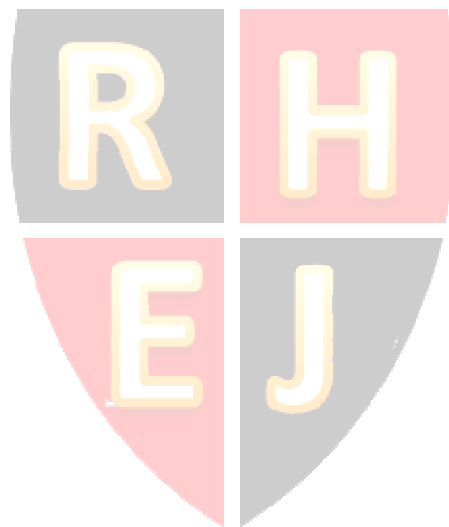
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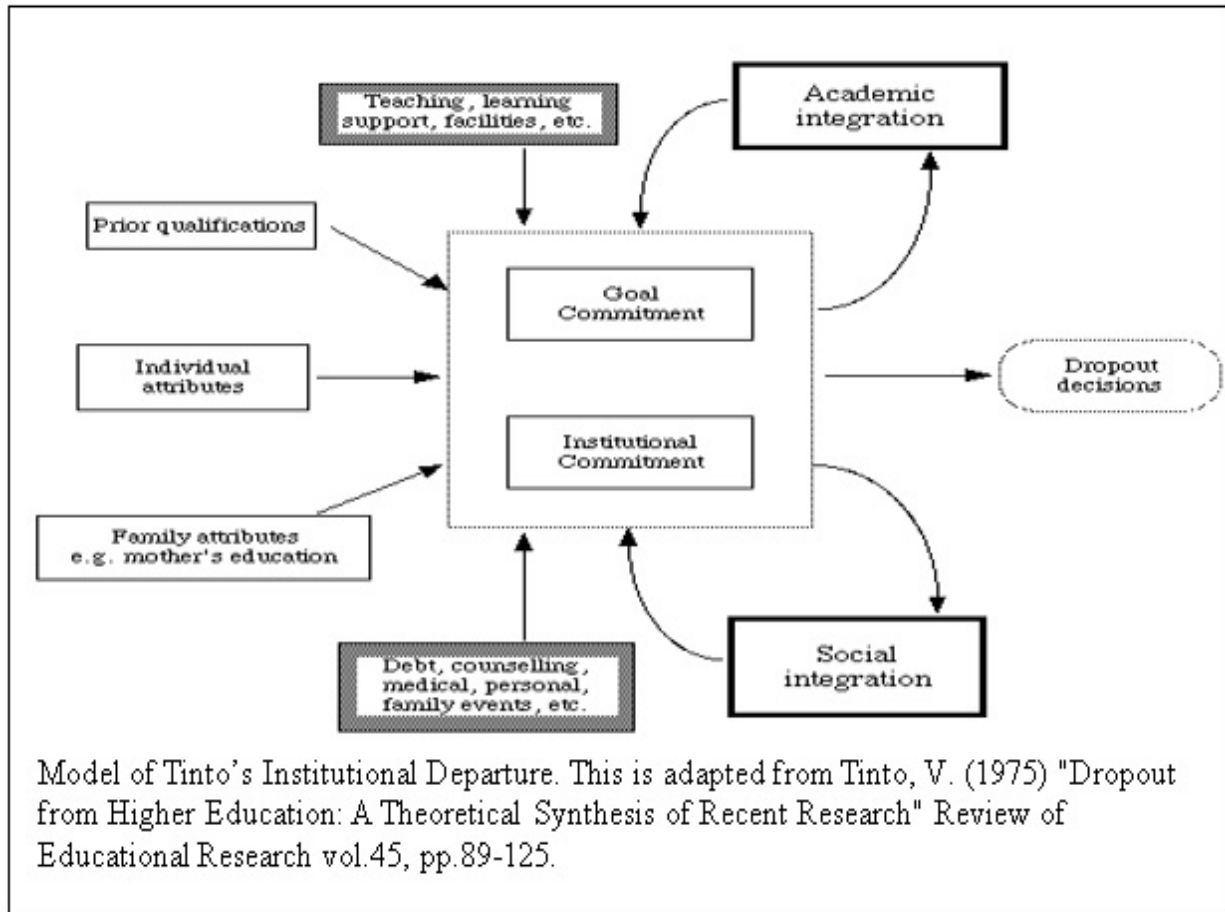
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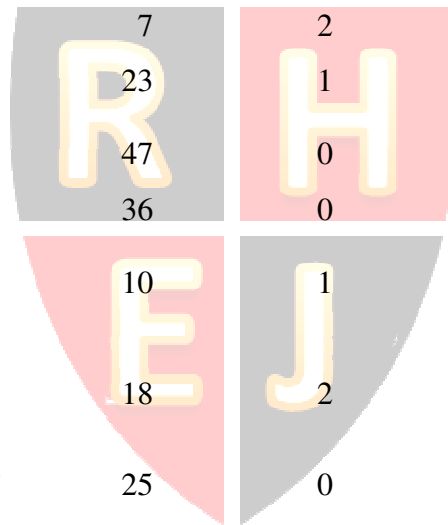
APPENDIX

Table 1  
 Model of Tinto's Institutional Departure (1975)



**Table 2**  
**Results of the Survey for the Sophomores (n = 88)**

Question	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Q1. Was easy to get in touch with	5	3	1	59	32
Q2. Gave me as much time as I needed when we met	10	1	3	51	34
Q3. Encouraged me to come by for help	5	2	3	48	42
Q4. Took a personal interest in me	31	3	6	35	25
Q5. Offered time to express my thoughts	18	1	6	43	32
Q6. Offered time to express my feelings	24	0	9	43	24
Q7. Understood my cultural needs	40	0	6	33	22
Q8. Was good listener	7	2	1	47	43
Q9. Considered my personal abilities	23	1	5	41	31
Q10. Considered my family cultural issues	47	0	7	30	17
Q11. Considered my talents	36	0	7	32	25
Q12. Considered my interests when advising me about courses or programs of study	10	1	7	41	41
Q13. Assisted me in developing a long-term education plan	18	2	1	48	31
Q14. Helped me connect with campus resources on campus	25	0	10	39	26
Q15. Helped me connect with extracurricular social groups on campus	34	1	16	32	17
Q16. Helped me connect with learning center on campus	27	0	11	33	28
Q17. Helped me connect with counseling services on campus	31	0	11	33	25
Q18. Helped me make important educational decisions (selecting elective courses, exploring academic majors/minors, and balancing family, culture, and university)	8	1	8	44	36



**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Subpopulation of Surveyed Students (n = 88)**

	<i>n</i>	Percent
Classification		
Sophomore	88	
Race		
African American/Black	3	3
Caucasian/White (non-Hispanic)	17	19
Hispanic	61	69
Other	0	0
Gender		
Male	29	33
Female	59	67
College Hours		
No	34	39
Yes	54	61

**Table 4**  
**Coefficient on Student Perception of the Academic Advisor**

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Significance
Advisor Availability	.173	1.000
Advisor dissemination of knowledge	.349	.000
Advisor focus on student as an individual	.121	.000
Advisor assistance with educational planning	.270	.000
Advisor time with student	.199	.000

**Table 5**  
**Gender and College Hours Mean Square and Eta Square**

Source	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Square
Gender	1	5.33	.03	.86	.00
College Hours	1	201.016	1.15	.29	.01
Gender * College Hours	1	33.96	.19	.66	.00
Error	84	174.96			