

A CASE STUDY EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
AT SMALL, PRIVATE COLLEGES

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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by

William Danny Sullivan, Jr.

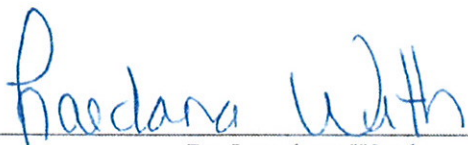
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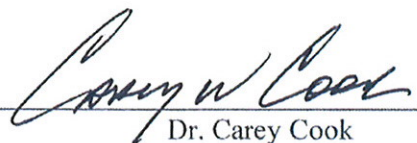
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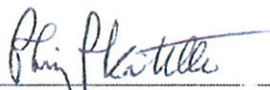
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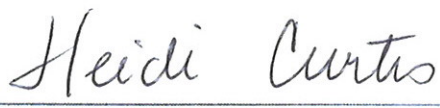
DISSERTATION

This dissertation of William Danny Sullivan, Jr., submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "A Case Study Exploring International Student Engagement at Small, Private Colleges" has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the many family, friends, and colleagues that have supported my educational pursuits. This has been a long labor of love, and it would not have been possible without the assistance of those many people. I offer a special dedication to my late father that valued education as the most valuable commodity a person could obtain. He helped me understand that once you have earned an education, nothing can take that away from you.

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions in the United States continue to face increased scrutiny to better monitor student persistence rates and to develop better strategies to retain more students through the attainment of a degree. Student retention work has become a major force among higher education professionals, and an entire industry has developed from the need to better create, monitor, and track retention efforts on campus. As federal and state regulations regarding funding and student aid continue to tighten, almost all the work toward retention study in higher education has been focused on domestic student populations. Retention studies on international students, one of the fastest growing populations of students, are limited and largely focused on large public universities. The purpose of this study was to better understand the persistence patterns of international students attending three small, private four-year colleges in the southeastern United States. Using a case-study approach, the researcher conducted individual interviews with students and international student officers and collected campus documents and resources at each institution. Themes from semi-structured interviews revealed the international students were formally and informally engaged in academic and social activities on campus. Further, engagement was promoted by formal campus-sponsored activities, international staff members' personal involvement, and through faculty and staff interaction. The students became aware of campus resources through college programming, faculty and staff interaction, and peer interaction with other international students. This study found that international students utilized programs and resources that were generalized for the entire campus but that there is also a need to develop specialized programs and resources to address the issues unique to these students on campus.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Over the last 50 years, higher education has become much more accessible to a broader student demographic, representing increased diversity on campuses across the United States. This increased access to higher education in America has seen larger numbers of international students studying abroad with greater numbers seeking educational opportunities in the United States. In the 2014–2015 academic year, more than 4.5 million international students studied abroad worldwide (OECD, 2015). With more than 974,000 international students, the United States experienced a 35-year high, representing a growth of more than 10% from the previous year's report (OECD, 2015). Although competition for these students has grown among higher education institutions in other nations, the United States still leads the world with more than double the number of students than Great Britain, the second largest national host country (OECD, 2015). With more than 50% of the total international student population studying in just four countries—France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States—competition to attract and recruit more international students has increased over the last decade (Andrade, 2006b; OECD, 2015).

The recruitment of international students at colleges and universities throughout the United States has continued to gain momentum as the financial advantages associated with these students have provided an infusion of resources for the institutions. During the 2004–2005 academic year, international students were reported to have contributed more than \$13 billion dollars to the U.S. economy. Just 10 years later, this figure had grown to more than \$30 billion during the 2014–1015 academic year (Chin & Bhandari, 2006; Institute of International Education [IIE], 2015; OECD, 2015; Wildavsky, 2010). International students are increasingly

seen as a new resource for campuses struggling to balance financial resources, especially as states across the United States have experienced reduced funding appropriations for higher education (Andrade, 2006a; Archibald & Feldman, 2008). These students have traditionally represented higher socioeconomic status families and have been able to pay higher out-of-state and private tuition expenses (Aw, 2012). This has been an important factor in the recruitment of these students as they do not qualify for state or federal aid and are largely reliant on personal funds to cover their educational expenses outside of any institutional grants and scholarships they may receive (Archibald & Feldman, 2008).

In addition to the perceived financial benefits, international students also provide an additional aspect of diversity on campus. However, even with the increased growth of international students studying in the United States, these students are mainly attending colleges and universities with large populations of international students (Aw, 2012). Diverse campuses and the experiences related to diverse student populations provide a number of benefits for the students, campuses, and communities in which they are located (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). Students attending colleges and universities that have successfully created more diverse student bodies have reported higher levels of engagement, greater civic activity participation, and overall favorable views of their educational experiences (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Braxton, 1996). Positive cultural and diverse campus experiences have also been related to higher levels of self-actualization, academic pursuits, and higher retention rates on campus (Chang, 1999; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

There are more than 974,000 international students studying in American universities and colleges, representing an increase of almost 6% from the previous year's report (IIE, 2015).

Representing just more than 4% of the total student population enrolled in higher education institutions in America, few of the persistence studies have included international student persistence rates (Andrade, 2009). As this population continues to rise, colleges and universities will need to track and better understand the enrollment and continuation patterns of international students. Understanding the many benefits of a more diverse student body, colleges and universities have increased institutional efforts to identify and recruit more international students on campus (Mamiseishvili, 2011).

Although most of the dominating retention theories have been shaped by domestic student populations (Astin, 1993; Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1993), few studies have specifically researched international students attending American institutions (Kitsos, 2012; Kontaxakis, 2011; Lee, 2012). Research relating to international student persistence at higher education institutions has been limited, and this is further complicated by the lack of national standards and reporting of these students in the United States. An additional impediment is the international student retention and persistence rates collected by individual institutions have not been reported by government agencies or other specialty groups that promote international education (Evans, Carlin, & Potts, 2009). The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, sponsored by the University of Oklahoma, is one of the only identified educational groups that collects and publishes retention statistics for international students attending one of the 475 participating schools. However, of the 402 colleges and universities that are members of the consortium, only 85 are identified as four-year private institutions (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2015).

The emerging research related to the persistence and retention of international students has largely been limited to studies at single institutions (Andrade, 2009; Andrade & Evans,

2009; Smith, 2015). Previous research has primarily focused on the international students' abilities to adjust to new environments, levels of engagement, homesickness, and social and academic adjustment (Andrade, 2009; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004). This earlier research has almost exclusively been conducted with international students attending large public universities or by using data collected from national survey instruments still relying heavily on the larger populations of students at larger institutions. This study sought to better identify and understand the variables related to persistence and retention issues of international students attending three small, private liberal arts colleges in the southeastern United States.

Background

Research on retention and persistence in higher education has consistently found that the students' level of engagement in campus activities significantly relates to their personal satisfaction and success toward completion of a four-year degree (Kuh, 2005; Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For more than 50 years, researchers have been working to identify the variables related to student engagement and how they influence students' ability to persist at the institution (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement (1985) created a theoretical foundation for the examination of the variables related to the persistence of students toward degree attainment. Relating the measurement of college student persistence in three areas—inputs, environment, and outcomes—Astin identified three variables that span from entrance through graduation for each student (Astin, 1985, 1993). Most importantly, Astin's theory of student involvement was the first to develop five assumptions about levels of involvement and commitment to the institution, resulting in measurable gains for students and their likelihood to persist through degree attainment.

Higher education institutions have been working to develop better strategies for assessing these engagement variables to direct campus resources and programming to retain these students on campus (Kuh, 2005; Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Colleges and universities understand that to protect and benefit from the large investments in attracting and recruiting students to campus, they must develop better strategies to retain them on campus for the long term (Hagedorn, 2005; Reason, 2009). In addition, regional accrediting organizations, along with state and federal governments, have pushed higher education institutions to become more accountable for students' success on campus (Andrade, 2009; Evans et al., 2009).

Although research relating to the adjustment issues of international students has been collected and analyzed for more than three decades, very little research studying the retention and persistence of these students was conducted prior to 2000 (Andrade, 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2011; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). This increased focus has become much more relevant to campus administrators as student populations have become more mobile with advancing educational delivery methods and the increase in international students studying in the United States (IIE, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2011). The research also has shown adjustment issues are much more complex among international students than among their domestic student counterparts. Smith, Bowman, and Hsu (2007) found that international students experience greater difficulty in transition to campus life, and this is often associated with their ethnic groups. Further, research has indicated international students may struggle with levels of engagement, as they must learn to balance a number of variables related to English language proficiency, cultural differences, and academic expectations (Andrade, 2009; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006).

Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) noted that with growing international student populations on campus, it is critical that higher education institutions do more to understand, intervene, and provide resources to help these students have a successful educational experience. Andrade (2009) found that more intentionality must be given to welcome these students to campus as the cultural integration activities and campus climate are critical toward their success. Small campuses are further challenged to create supportive climates for this subpopulation of students, and this remains a critical component of the international students' ability to successfully transition into a campus climate that is traditionally smaller and less diverse than that of larger colleges and universities (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Research Questions

Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that research questions should be linked to a problem, identifying the significance and need for study while forecasting the literature that will be reviewed. Creswell (2015) stated that the research questions are used as a signpost to establish the direction of the study by narrowing the scope of the identified research topics and focusing on a more specific research agenda. The following guiding questions will shape this study:

1. How are international students engaged at a small private college?
2. What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?
3. How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

Description of Terms

The need to assess and monitor student attendance patterns at higher education institutions has resulted in a number of resources for administrators. As institutions and private industries have developed these new resources and strategies for monitoring patterns among students, it is important to identify the terminology that will be used in this study. Identifying terms with clearly outlined meanings developed from the literature assists by adding clarity to the research (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The following are the research-based terms that will be utilized in this study.

Domestic student. Refers to a student classified as an American citizen or eligible for an extended stay through U.S. government action or classification.

Engagement. Degrees of involvement and activity requiring additional levels of feeling and sense-making (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Ethnographic interviews. A qualitative interview process that requires researchers to immerse themselves in a culture to better observe daily behaviors, patterns, and rituals (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2001).

Homogeneous population. A data set where all samples have similar traits to each other (Creswell, 2015).

International student. A student not classified as an American citizen or eligible for an extended stay through U.S. government action or classification.

Matriculation. Refers to the student enrollment in a college or university and student successfully advancing beyond the first year of study.

Persistence. Often used interchangeably with retention (Mamiseishvili, 2011); is used to represent students returning for at least one semester beyond their first semester up to completion of graduation requirements.

Self-actualization. Refers to the ability of an individual to establish personal goals and successfully fulfill these goals.

Sociolinguistic acculturation. Refers to the ability of an individual to adapt to the social conditions in a new environment.

Significance of the Study

This research is intended to add to the growing body of literature relating to the study of persistence and retention of international students studying in the United States. This study specifically evaluated the variables related to the persistence of international students at small private colleges where, to date, there has been little research conducted. There is a growing need for administrators and faculty members of small colleges to better understand these subpopulations on campuses that traditionally offer fewer diversity experiences than that of larger colleges and universities.

It will be critical to develop better administrative policies and programmatic efforts that are responsive to the needs of international students on campus. Considering that the persistence patterns of international students have largely been ignored, it is likely campuses lack a clear understanding of the educational and social needs of these students (Lee, 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In 2010, only 40% of higher education institutions reported having programs designed to retain international students, with only 7% of the students attending those institutions reporting success (Bista & Foster, 2011). Information gained from this study may provide additional areas of focus for campus administrators who are working to improve

retention strategies and for those responsible for student programming on campus. Better understanding the specific needs of this growing population may lead to a reevaluation of campus resources and strategies to both recruit and retain international students.

Overview of Research Methods

The researcher will use a case-study approach in conducting this study. A case-study approach allowed for a better examination of each small private college by supporting the collection of interviews, audio and video data, social and meeting observations, and documents from the research sites (Stake, 2005). For this study, the case-study approach was most appropriate because the contextual conditions examined were deemed relevant to the phenomenon studied and the lack of a need to modify behavior of the participants (Yin, 2013). A case-study approach was also most appropriate for this research as the international student population for each college was small, with no more than 40 students enrolled on each campus. To strengthen this study, the researcher selected three small, private colleges located in the southeastern United States. Using a maximum cap of 2,500 full time equivalent students, the campuses were selected based on their international student population, participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), residential campus, and international student officials.

Using an intensive case-study approach, the researcher identified a number of methods to collect data relating to the phenomenon of international student persistence at small private colleges. Using findings from previous studies at larger, higher education institutions, this study examined how engagement variables of international students contribute to their satisfaction on campus and long-term persistence at the college. Through examination of institutional documents such as NSSE results, the researcher evaluated campus climate and compared this

climate against the findings of international students attending institutions nationwide. This approach was needed based on the extremely small sample size of international student responses at each institution. Nationally, the survey receives a 29% survey response rate from all students (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2015). In addition, the researcher used student interviews and international student officer interviews on each campus. With the help of the international student officer, four international students were selected to participate in interviews on each campus. Finally, an interview was conducted with the primary international student officer on each campus.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Retention has been a researched topic for over 75 years, with significant progress in defining institutional importance only within the past 25 years (Braxton, 2000; Carini et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With institutions experiencing an unprecedented post-World War II enrollment boom, the focus on retention was not broadly recognized until the late 1950s, when campuses were ill equipped to manage rapidly growing student populations (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Individual campus efforts to monitor enrollment patterns initially emerged in the 1950s, with most research focusing on the psychological characteristics of students and institutional connectedness (Summerskill, 1962). Efforts were increased to better identify retention factors in the 1960s, and by the 1970s, colleges and universities increasingly focused on retention-related efforts as they tried to stabilize campus populations (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

With national statistics indicating a five-year graduation rate of 52.3% and attrition numbers reaching close to 50% (College Board Report, 2014), higher education institutions are increasingly focused on identifying the variables associated with a student's departure. As colleges and universities devote more resources to recruiting and retaining students, additional efforts are being taken to secure these investments and retain more students through degree completion. Institutions have a financial interest in retaining students, as the recruitment of prospective students requires significant financial resources (Kezar, 2004). This has become an additional motivator to retain students as higher education funding has seen reductions at the state and federal levels (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016).

In addition to increased funding pressures, colleges and universities have been forced to address student retention issues by their regional accrediting agencies (Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Greater calls for demonstrated accountability through evidence-based learning outcomes on campuses have become a necessity and have forced higher education institutions to demonstrate assessment for these goals on campus (Ewell, 2008). The increased demand for accountability has also led to a number of coalition-based initiatives that have driven regional and national efforts through reporting best practices and synthesizing student engagement data (Kuh, 2009).

Early student departure can have significant consequences for institutions as they try to balance the need to protect organizational stability through fiscally responsible planning in conjunction with developing institutional strategies created to assist the students to succeed in individual educational goals (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These two areas have required staff and faculty members to work together and initiate increased efforts to ensure organizational goals meet institutional needs in addressing student attrition. Kezar (2004) stated, “Retention is about developing a climate that is conducive to students as well as helping students to make appropriate choices that make them successful” (p. 1). With this increased response to evaluating a changing campus climate, faculty and staff are becoming more instrumental in the assessment of retention-related issues on campus.

Reviewing Retention Theory in Higher Education

The study of retention has attracted the interest of higher education administrators and scholars alike. Administrators focus on retention in an effort to manage institutional enrollment and to monitor the financial stability closely related to the numbers. Scholars have become increasingly interested in retention measurement in another effort to evaluate the complicated

variables that have developed, in addition to evaluating the college student experience (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Kuh, 2005, 2009).

The national focus on an increased need for additional retention research became more apparent with the work of Spady (1971) entitled *Dropouts From Higher Education: An Interdisciplinary Review and Synthesis*. This publication categorized previous retention-related studies into six descriptive areas: philosophical, census, autopsy, case, descriptive, and predictive (Spady, 1971). These classifications of previous research were pivotal in identifying the nature of retention study. Noting the bulk of these studies were conducted at the end of the 1950s, Spady's synthesis of limited research instigated the need for additional study. This work described the lack of analytical-exploratory studies to create empirically based data to better direct retention studies (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

Spady's work has been recognized as the first to develop a conceptual framework model for the study of retention. He utilized a sociological research approach to develop a conceptual model and called for additional studies (Braxton et al., 1997). It was through this model that Spady examined the student's experience on campus and stated that the propensity to remain enrolled was directly related to personal characteristics of the student and the campus environment (Spady, 1971). Specifically, the work first identified a connection exists between the individual student characteristics and campus environment-related variables (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

Extending Spady's work on the study of college student persistence, Tinto presented his interactionist theory of college student departure in 1975 (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's theory has been widely recognized as the foundational framework to evaluate student departures from higher education and, having been cited more than 775 times, it has served as the blueprint for research

(Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

Tinto (1975) theorized student departures were directly related to individual characteristics a student possessed upon entering college. These characteristics represented the basis upon which social and academic experiences at the institution would later develop. His work suggested that family background, individual characteristics, and precollege education have a major impact on the student's ability to succeed in college. This research also identified that the individual college or university's commitment to student integration, academic success models, and student resources combine with the preexisting individual student characteristics to affect student departure (Tinto, 1975, 1986, 1993).

Tinto (1986) illustrated that students used prior individual characteristics to form congruency with the institution's social and academic characteristics. The prior experiences directly affected the student's ability to integrate within the campus climate. Tinto found that integration in social and academic activities supported the student's ultimate goal to graduate (Kezar, 2004). Identified as a longitudinal process, Tinto believed retention could be evaluated by measuring the student's ability to use previously developed characteristics. He integrated those characteristics within the established academic and social contexts of an individual institution (Braxton et al., 1997; Tinto, 1986, 1993). His research also found that student connectivity to the academic and social integral levels of the institution was a critical indicator of persistence. Additionally, the student's social integration to the campus occurred on two levels: (a) a general institutional level and (b) a subcultural level (Tinto 1975).

In 1986 and 1993, Tinto updated his research on retention and modified his original interactionist theory to include more components that impacted the conditions for a student's longevity within an institution. Tinto's revised theory reexamined the characteristics of a

student's transition into higher education, and more emphasis was placed on individual characteristics as a student interacted with developmental factors within the institution (Tinto, 1993). This reexamination also forced a broader look at the composition of modern higher education. Emphasizing the importance of developing institutional-specific strategies to address retention, more development was needed to identify characteristics of smaller, more distinct, campus groups rather than a larger holistic population (Braxton et al., 1997; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Kuh, 2009). Developing campus-specific goals became a critical aspect of Tinto's revised work as a generalization of retention did not effectively address individual campus identities that created the student environments (Tinto, 1993).

In 1977, Astin published his initial work, *Four Critical Years*, on the theory of student involvement. Using data from one of the first national databases that collected institution-specific research, he found a student's level of involvement on campus was directly related to the ability of the institution to retain the student (Astin, 1977). This research showed the more involved students were, the more likely they were to remain enrolled at the institution (Astin, 1977; Berger & Lyon, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). His theory presented a more simplistic model connecting student involvement and persistence. This research was the first to demonstrate the importance of campus life and creating learning environments on campus that offered numerous opportunities for students to become involved (Astin, 1985).

Bean developed a model of student attrition in 1978 and continued to research this model, updating his original theory in 1982, 1983, and 1985. Bean's model of attrition uses an organization turnover model, relating worker turnover to college student attrition (Ishitani & DesJardins, 2002). This theory "emphasizes how a number of student and institutional factors affect two intervening variables...and intent to leave is the direct precursor to dropping out of

college” (Bean, 1980, p. 174). This theory suggests that the two variables, academic classes and participation in campus organizations, are critical components related to a student’s persistence at the institution. Bean (1980) related his attrition model to business terms and equated variables, such as good pay, with good grades. He also related the business concept with terms such as routinization, instrumental communication, participation, integration, and distributive justice using a more psychological perspective to identify behavior characteristics (Bean, 1980). He used each of these concepts to represent specific parts of the university and students’ transactions within their own academic career. His work utilized a parallel track to monitor the progress of students similar to that of an employee within a business structure.

Tinto’s and Bean’s works, once viewed as two very different conceptual theories, have been instrumental in developing more complementary theories (Ishitani & DesJardins, 2002). Although using these theories has been important, more recent research has related the complementary theories to how they address the existing structures of an institution. Both theories addressed the internal factors students face regarding existing institutional culture. With the increase in the scholarly participation of researching retention-related issues, new areas have been identified as significant contributors in the battle of higher education attrition.

Theoretical Framework

Astin’s (1985) theory of student involvement was used as the framework that guided the theoretical foundation of this study. This theory postulates that successful student retention is directly related to the individual student’s experience in both academic and extracurricular activities on campus. The core concept of this theory is based on three variables that greatly impact the student’s ability to persist through graduation. The inputs, environment, and outcomes combine to create the model that Astin designed to describe how each aspect of the student’s

experience on campus and demonstrates the critical nature of student involvement. Astin (1985) identified the inputs as the student's demographics, background, and previous educational experiences.

This first element, inputs, demonstrates that what students bring with them into their educational experience is at least as important as what the students will gain from their experiences on campus. The second element, environment, suggests the experience students have on campus is also a critical factor to be considered in the long-term persistence of students at the institution. The third element, outcomes, describes the attributes students would embody beyond the educational experience. These attributes encompass their preexisting characteristics and those skills and characteristics learned during their educational experiences on campus. The theory suggests the three variables of the model work in tandem to describe the educational journey of a student from entrance, attendance, and through graduation (Astin, 1985, 1993; Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1986).

Astin (1985, 1993) further developed five basic assumptions that guide the evaluation and assessment within his theory of student involvement. The first assumption is involvement requires measurement by the "amount of physical and psychological energy the student devotes to academic experience" (Astin, 1985, p. 518). Second, the level of student involvement occurs continuously and at different levels and intervals throughout the activity. Next, involvement can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively, depending on the activity in which the student has been engaged. Fourth, student learning and development associated with campus programming are directly related to the quantity and quality of the student's participation and engagement in that program. Finally, the effectiveness of an institution's policies and practice directly impacts the student's level of involvement (Astin, 1993).

Using the five basic assumptions that created a practical application of Astin's (1985, 1993) theory in the development of higher education policy and procedure, this researcher used a case-study approach to examine the tenets of these assumptions and how they are all connected at each level of the student's experience on campus. Astin's (1985, 1993) student involvement theory has also served as a foundation for many studies related to student retention and retention theory (Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1986). To date, Astin's theory has not been thoroughly examined in the context of evaluating international student involvement on campus and the students' subsequent ability to persist through degree attainment. Using the original construct of the student development theory, this case study examined international students' experiences and how involvement on campus may affect their persistence.

Domestic Student Retention in American Colleges and Universities

To date, the retention of domestic students on U.S. campuses has been extensively examined with research that has evaluated almost every type of higher education institution in America (Smith, 2015). In the early 1990s, colleges and universities began to formalize enrollment management efforts that were integrated into the organizational structure of the institution (Dixon, 1995; Kuh, 2005, 2009). The enrollment management groups were identified by various names and housed in multiple units but had a common goal that was quickly integrated into the campus strategy. Often operating as a departmental cooperation between the academic dean and the admissions office, enrollment management became a more centralized theme spurring the development of institutional models to recruit stronger students, better monitor their academic progress, and implement additional strategies to support their academic needs (Dixon, 1995). This increased focus on student success resulted in the expansion of resources on campus, increased targeted participation of faculty and staff, and the need to work

collaboratively (Kuh, 2009). Recent reports, however, have indicated that while more than 70% of campuses have identified retention coordinators, 50% of these administrators lack the ability to fund new initiatives or designate additional staffing and resources toward these efforts (Hossler, 2005).

The identification of critical needs for meaningful student engagement presents significant challenges for student affairs professionals; students and institutions share the responsibility for creating engagement opportunities on campus (Kuh, 2009). Colleges and universities identified as exhibiting the best practices in this area have demonstrated an ability to collaborate effectively, routinely review and assess policy, and develop programming opportunities (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). Campus organizational structures must be developed using a top-down approach to demonstrate student engagement and persistence remain key priorities that can only exist in collaborative educational communities (Hossler, 2005).

A 2005 study presented by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities found that focused retention initiatives were seldom reported and an alarming trend developed among those with retention responsibilities (Hossler, 2005). This report indicated campus retention administrators had little time to devote to the efforts, due to few institutional resources and a lack of dedicated administrative personnel; because of this, training was not provided, and there was little effort to evaluate the retention-strategy programming efforts (Hossler, 2005). These findings indicate an increased need for administrators to develop sound policies and programs to further address student retention issues on campus.

Dumbrigue, Moxley, and Najor-Durack (2013) found that campus-retention strategies should focus on the creation of strategic partnerships between administrators, students, and the community. Further, they highlighted the importance of meeting student needs through the

establishment of personal relationships on campus and the necessity of personal student success plans. The entire institution must understand the importance of retaining students and the overall effect that attrition has on budgets, programs, and overall student success rates. Lost students are often replaced by new recruits and higher admissions goals, costing colleges significantly more than if they had retained the student (Carter, Wright, Thatcher, & Klein, 2014). Student departure also significantly affects institutional stability, educational goals, and institutional reputations with all levels of constituency (Braxton et al., 2004).

Although campuses have been increasing the monitoring and implementing of additional retention strategies for more than 50 years, six-year retention rates have only registered moderate increases (Noel-Levitz, 2015). With all of the efforts made to address retention and student engagement on campus, almost 30% of first-year college students will not return for a second year of study (Braxton et al., 2013). Further, with boosted levels of accountability from state and federal government agencies, institutions are increasingly searching for additional variables to predict and prevent higher student attrition levels (Shulman, 2007).

An Overview of International Student Retention

Although international students have long attended U.S. colleges and universities, it was not until after World War II that these students started enrolling in greater numbers. The Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded in 1919 to promote international exchange between the United States and foreign nations. Prior to this time, there was little effort to monitor these educational exchanges in the United States. In 1921, the IIE presented its first report, detailing that more than 6,700 international students were studying in the United States. These numbers remained consistent throughout the subsequent two decades until just after the cessation of World War II. Significant spikes in international students studying in American institutions

became evident in 1946, where the population bloomed to more than 25,000 students (Chin & Bhandari, 2006; Knowles, 1977). The trend of international students attending American higher education institutions continued to grow significantly, with the IIE reporting that more than 75,000 students attended in 1964, a number that soared to more than 575,000 by 2003.

According to the 2015 report issued by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), 1.13 million international students were registered in the United States with an academic visa, studying at more than 8,979 U.S. schools. These reported data mark a more than 14% increase in enrolled international students studying in the United States from the previous 2014 SEVP report. The 2015 report also indicated that higher education institutions applying for certification to host international students increased by almost 100 schools, representing a rise of just more than 1% from the previous report (Student and Exchange Visitor Program [SEVP], 2015). With more than one million international students, it is estimated that more than \$24 billion is infused into the U.S. economy, with a significant portion benefiting higher education institutions and their communities (IIE, 2015).

Although the number of international students studying in the United States has remained strong over the last decade, the number of those studying at individual institutions is small, with approximately 76% of the schools hosting between zero and 50 international students (SEVP, 2015). These numbers suggest the need for an additional focus on the persistence patterns of international students; this trend also presents a larger issue related to the small numbers of students attending many of the individual institutions. This is especially true for small private colleges and universities as they continue to monitor and evaluate retention patterns on their campuses (ACT, 2014). Although the persistence rates for international students are similar to the rates for domestic students, little research has been conducted to evaluate population-specific

variables (Andrade, 2006b; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Although international students in America have increased and have remained a significant population, there are a limited number of studies on these variables, which have been narrow in scope and have presented conflicting findings (Smith, 2015).

As the number of international students increase, higher education institutions will be challenged to better serve this population with campus resources to recruit and maintain their enrollment. The enrollment of these students has increased revenue sources for colleges and universities during a time of declining state financial support for higher education, which has created increased competition among institutions in both the United States and foreign nations. Although the United States has dominated the global market for recruiting these students, the Asia-Pacific and European institutions have mounted a direct challenge with aggressive marketing strategies, relaxed immigration policies, and discounted pricing (Andrade, 2009; Aw, 2012).

Adapting to an American Culture

International students often face a more difficult adjustment period than that of their American counterparts, adding to the stressors first-time college students experience (Mori, 2000; Yin, 2013). Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) found that 226 international students from 67 countries studying at Kansas State University displayed higher levels of self-esteem and a sense of personal adjustment after continuing beyond their first semester of study. The researchers found that after their initial semester on campus, higher levels of self-esteem and confidence allowed for greater connections with the American students at the university. This increase in immersion with the American students created more opportunities for the international students to adjust to the culture and seek additional resources on campus. Consistent with that finding,

Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) found that among 195 male international students attending a midsized university, social interaction among host nation students was a critical variable in the level of culture shock experienced. The study further found that managing social interactions between international students and host nation students was a critical resource for managing the transitions of these students.

Misra, Crist, and Burant (2003) conducted a quantitative study that surveyed 143 international students attending two midwestern universities. The majority of the students were enrolled in undergraduate level studies and were from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The researchers worked with the two universities' international student offices to identify the students and to assist in mailing out the surveys to the students to keep their personal information confidential. The researchers combined three surveys—Index of Life Stress Survey, Student Life Stress Inventory, and Index of Social Support Scale—to collect the data for this study.

The study found the international students “have academic stressors and consequently higher reactions to stressors when they are faced with the difficulty of adapting and adjusting in American universities” (Misra et al., 2003, p. 151). Further, the researchers found that variables related to frustration, lack of resources, failure to meet personal goals, and feeling less acclimated to the social scene on campus had a significant impact on international students' level of stress (Misra et al., 2003). The study found that the support systems for the international students, including orientation, campus life, and academic resources, were all critical to the long-term success of these students as they navigated the academic rigors of the university.

Klomegah (2006) conducted a study using a three-part questionnaire at a small, historically minority-serving college in the eastern United States. Using a sample of 94 students, the researcher administered a questionnaire measuring responses related to demographic and

background items, three scale measures of social contact, and a modified University Alienation Scale Survey. The researcher identified three limitations in the study sample: a homogenous population, small sample size, and the majority of participants being unmarried students (Klomegah, 2006).

The study found that there were no significant demonstrated levels of alienation between the international students and American students. The results indicated length of stay in the United States did have a significant impact on the international students' level of alienation. Further, the study found that the college students who were enrolled for less than 12 months demonstrated a higher level of alienation versus those who had been enrolled for more than 24 months. Another factor identified international students who spent a lot of time with students from similar geographical regions demonstrated a significantly higher level of alienation versus those who spent little time with students from similar regions (Klomegah, 2006). Finally, the researcher found the relationship between social interaction and alienation was significant. The students who made more social connections demonstrated much lower levels of alienation on campus.

Sherry, Thomas, and Wing Hong (2010) conducted a qualitative study that administered an online survey with open-ended and close-ended questions to 121 international students at the University of Toledo. The researchers found that, consistent with previous findings, the international students identified the importance of language barriers, cultural norms, financial problems, friendships, and social supports as variables related to their adaptation to the American university (Sherry, Thomas, & Wing Hong, 2010). The researchers found in this study, the international students identified more issues related to spoken rather than written language barriers on campus. In addition, the study identified "receptiveness of the University community

in particular to international students” (Sherry et al., 2010, p. 37) as a primary issue in the research. Related to that finding, the students identified the host nation’s students’ lack of understanding or wanting to learn more about their native cultures. The researchers found students identified the need for additional campus resources, such as spoken English language classes, and more inclusive programming, such as international festivals or appreciation periods (Sherry et al., 2010).

Moore and Popadiuk (2011) conducted a study with seven international students at a western Canadian university, collecting data related to their reporting of critical incidents on campus. These researchers found that social experiences were held in higher regard by the students than that of their academic experiences on campus. In addition, these students found as their social connections grew, they were better able to navigate the campus. The students reported that assistance from faculty advisors and counselors was important in the identification of campus resources and the need for social interaction with the other students on campus.

The process of successful international student adjustment on campus is associated with the relationships developed outside of the students’ own ethnic groups or other international student groups on campus (Andrade & Evans, 2009; Olivas & Lee, 2006; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2008). International students often face difficulties in their adjustment to campus life as geographic, cultural, social, and language barriers can provide additional obstacles to their integration into the campus community. During their first months on campus, international students often experience feelings of isolation as they adjust to the absence of familiar home environments consisting of supportive family and social networks (Yin, 2013). A study by Sawir, Marginson, Deument, Nyland, and Ramia (2008) found that separation from the students’ native culture and adjustment to language barriers also contributed to feelings of loneliness and

isolation on campus. The study found that students with greater degrees of cultural differences between the host country and home country are more likely to demonstrate greater challenges with cultural adjustment.

Korobova and Starobin (2015) produced a quantitative study that used a 20% random sample of all international students completing the NSSE survey while attending an American college or university, and the same size sample for domestic students. The study evaluated five benchmarks identified as (a) level of academic challenge, (b) student–faculty interaction, (c) enriching educational experiences, (d) supportive campus environment—quality of relationships, and (e) supportive campus environment—institutional emphasis.

The study found that “the predictors of satisfaction with the entire experience at the institution and academic success measured by grades were the five benchmarks” (Korobova & Starobin, 2015, p. 83). The findings suggest there is a significant difference between the levels of engagement of international students versus American students during their senior year. They also found there was a significant difference between the international students and American students during their first year but not during the senior year as it related to student satisfaction levels. Finally, the researchers found there was a significant difference in international students’ grades versus American students’ grades during their first year but not during their senior year.

English Language Proficiency

A Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, and Al-Timimi (2004) quantitative study administered three surveys: demographic questionnaire, Personal Resource Questionnaire 2000, and the Acculturative Stress Scale Survey to a sample of 141 international students attending four American universities. The researchers initially identified eight college campuses with a large population of international students on campus. Four campuses agreed to participate, and the

international students at these universities were randomly selected to participate. The overall participation rate of the mailed surveys was 24% (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

The researchers identified two large groups from the sample, Asians and Europeans, to analyze results of the administered surveys. They found that the students' proficiency in the English language "did not mediate the effect of social support on the level of acculturative stress" (Poyrazli et al., 2004, p. 79). Further, the findings suggest that, of all the variables analyzed, both an increased level of English proficiency and higher level of social support are most likely to indicate lower levels of acculturative stress levels among international students. One noted drawback to this study was the lack of students from additional regions (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

Young (2011) discussed a mixed-methods study that utilizes student documents, such as GPA, Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, and the Suinn-Lew Self-Identity Acculturation survey, to assess changes in the international students' learning style over the course of one academic year. The study included 86 international student participants from Korea, Japan, and China. Finding that learning styles can be affected and even encouraged to adapt, the study indicated these factors can impact the students' anxiety level, thus affecting the learning process.

The study found the international students' experience was impacted by their country of origin, and students from Asia demonstrated the most positive response to a changing classroom learning environment. Young (2011) wrote that precollege preparation, such as improved English language skills, could have a significant impact on the ability of the students to be more adaptive to the new environment and demonstrate a diminished anxiety level. Study

recommendations included the addition of classroom study skills more tailored to the international specific learning styles of the students.

Ya-Hui (2011) presented the findings of a qualitative study that was administered to 152 international graduate students attending a university in Alabama. The survey was e-mailed by the Office of International Education for the students to complete open-ended and close-ended questions online. The researcher found that listening comprehension and oral proficiency were variables closely associated with English language challenges for the international students. The findings suggest the international students might have experienced more challenges with the comprehension of English language because of the presence of a southern accent being much different from what was learned and practiced at home (Ya-Hui, 2011).

This research also suggested that the challenges related to English language comprehension also added to the stressors of adjustment and the international students' ability to acclimate to social situations at the university. Students surveyed identified that the language challenges made them feel less independent and prohibited their self-confidence levels from excelling. In addition, the findings suggest higher TOEFL, IELTS, and GRE test scores did not guarantee or necessarily translate to higher abilities of adjusting to the university.

Literature has indicated that one of the major hurdles for international students is developing a proficient level of the English language. Developing proficient English language skills has consistently been found to rank among the highest rated variables contributing to the success and retention of international students in America (Andrade, 2009; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Young (2011) found it is important for international students to arrive on campus with sufficient levels of mastery of the English language to avoid immediately falling behind their peer students and compounding the problem with a reluctance to participate in class activities. Failure to

establish a confident level of English speaking has been found to adversely affect students' academic, social, and psychological adjustment levels in their new campus environment (Mori, 2000; Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008).

Studies have consistently found that the students' self-reported level of English proficiency prior to entering the institution remains a strong predictor for their ability to adjust to the campus culture and the levels of acculturative stress they may endure in the process (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Further, the research has found that students reporting lower levels of language proficiency are more likely to experience additional complications with social integration among peers; higher levels of isolation, anxiety, and depression; and their overall experience on campus (Kwon, 2009; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sumer et al., 2008). Lack of English language proficiency among these students has also been found to create additional barriers in academic achievement. Abel (2002) found that not only is a level of language proficiency necessary for these students, their academic success is dependent upon it. Further, research has indicated that low levels of English language proficiency among international students can lead to culture shock, resulting in emotional distress, isolationist behavior, and self-segregation among other native language-speaking students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Chen, 1999; Trice, 2004).

Campus Resources for International Students

Hwang, Bennett, and Beauchemin (2014) studied the utilization of counseling services among 834 international students attending a midwestern university. In this study, the students were found to have been consistently referred to university counseling services by faculty and staff, but cultural differences, personal stigma, and difficulty understanding university protocols inhibited their ability to successfully utilize this service on campus. Kwon (2009) suggested

more emphasis and campus resources need to be directed toward the specific needs of international students. These students are likely to demonstrate a combination of problems related to relationships, homesickness, academics, finances, and residential adjustment on campus (Bradley, 2000; Kwon, 2009; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Additionally, international students are often reluctant to initiate conversations with staff, faculty, or other students, thus creating additional communication barriers on campus (Andrade, 2008; Bradley, 2000; Kwon, 2009). Campuses must find additional ways to actively implement resources to ease these communication barriers.

Mamiseishvili (2011) used a data set from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study to observe the characteristics of international students in their first year of college and examine factors that may influence persistence. With a sample size of 200 students, he found that GPA, degree plans, and academic integration were positive variables in the persistence of students beyond the first year of study. Further, the study found language remediation and social integration corresponded negatively with persistence outcomes. His findings suggest that better collaboration between international student services offices, academic advisors, and other student support services on campus are critical in the retention of international students beyond the first year of study (Mamiseishvili, 2011).

Although research on international student persistence at small private colleges remains limited, the most extensive work was conducted by Andrade and Evans at the same private, religiously affiliated western university between 2001 and 2008. Evans (2001) conducted a qualitative study with 89 Polynesian international students from 1994 through 1996. The researcher chose the Polynesian student cohort as the study sample based on their proportionally high attrition rate at the university. The university had a student population of approximately

2,600 with approximately 45% of the student body representing international students. Using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, Evans sought to evaluate Tinto's interactional model for student departure against the attrition patterns of the Polynesian students. Evans' research suggests that newfound freedom was the biggest factor for student attrition. Findings also suggest that lack of academic goals and preparation for classes at the university level contributed to the attrition levels of these students. Those students identifying strong family support and language skills were most likely to persist at the university (Evans, 2001).

Andrade (2006b) conducted a qualitative study of 12 international students from Asia and South Pacific countries in their senior year. Using ethnographic interviews and focus groups, the researcher asked students about their academic and social experiences and interactions on campus and examined the student responses to determine the level of change needed, or perceived to be needed, to adapt or be successful on the college campus. The researcher found that the transitional issues for international students were different from those experienced by domestic students on campus. The results demonstrate the international students struggled to balance academic requirements, work, and social interaction. The findings also suggest the international students struggled with language barriers, and this element was prevalent in each of the previously identified variables. The study identified they were able to overcome these obstacles and persist on campus by increasing their interaction with faculty, staff, and other students, establishing academic plans and goals, and thereby increasing self-confidence. The research has suggested utilization of campus services in academic and social areas assists the students in this transition and more utilization of these services results in better acclimation to the campus environment (Andrade, 2006b).

Andrade (2008) continued her research at the same private, religiously affiliated western university in 2006–2007, using 17 international senior students from Asia and South Pacific countries. At the time of her second study, international students consisted of more than 47% of the 2,400-student body population. Using qualitative research methods, Andrade conducted face-to-face interviews with each student, using grand tour interviews followed by open-ended questions in three areas: background, environment, and personal attributes. Through the interview process, the study identified six major themes: “vision of future, home and educational background, spirituality, validation, attitudes and abilities, and institutional engagement” (Andrade, 2008, p. 439). These themes were closely related to variables that had been identified as crucial to the engagement and success of students on campus. Noting Astin’s 2004 research, the study identified the need for the international students to be engaged in meaningful ways, to have validation from family and friends, and to have institutional support in creating avenues for student engagement on campus. The researcher found international student persistence could be improved by increasing vision, personal validation, and spiritual engagement (Andrade, 2008).

Hwang et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study over five consecutive years evaluating the patterns of utilization of counseling services by international students. The study included 834 international students who visited the counseling services center at a midwestern university over a five-year period. Using digitized intake forms, the center collected international student demographic information along with reports from the clinicians reporting the students’ presenting concerns.

The study found counseling services visits, programs, and resources were underutilized by international students as compared to that of domestic student usage (Hwang, Bennett, & Beauchemin, 2014). The researchers proposed that reasons for the underutilization included a

counseling stigma, lack of knowledge, and lack of culturally appropriate counseling resources for the international students. Specific to the findings of the study, the researchers found that students' top concern was related to relationship issues. They further stated this factor could be attributed to a lack of understanding and assimilation to American cultural norms and the development of peer relationships and communication on campus (Hwang et al., 2014). The researchers found the international female students used counseling services at a rate consistent to that of domestic students: 1.7:1 as compared to a 2:1 rate. The study also demonstrated the majority of the international students were referred to counseling most frequently by faculty or staff members at the university. Hwang et al.'s study was relevant to the research described in this dissertation as it demonstrated additional areas international students may have difficulty with in their transition to the American higher education system. Although not specifically addressing a first-year seminar class, the issues presented in the Hwang et al.'s research were directly related to many of the resources a first-year seminar class would provide to students as they work through their first-semester transition issues.

Ho (2017) studied the perceptions of services and resources of 103 international students attending a mid-sized university. The study found most of the students were aware of campus resources and the role of the international office in providing these resources to students. The students reported university resources, such as advising, campus social activities, transportation, and the international student club, were helpful for their acculturation to the campus. The students also reported that in addition to these services, there were other services not currently provided but needed, such as assistance with internships and career planning.

Role of Student Engagement

Senyshyn, Warford, and Zhan (2000) developed a mixed-methods study that administered a general characteristics survey, scale question survey for social and academic adjustment, and open-ended survey on campus experience. The survey included 30 international undergraduate students attending the University of Tennessee, representing four categorized regions of the world. The researchers sought to identify what academic and social issues existed for international students on campus.

The study found that the international students reported to be mostly satisfied with their academic experiences and to feel accepted by their American peers on campus (Senyshyn, Warford, & Zhan, 2000). Further, the researchers found the students' ethnic and national origin was a significant variable that may have affected their experience when attempting to adjust to the American culture on campus. In addition, the international men were found to have an easier time adjusting than the women. One of the most important findings suggests the students' English-speaking ability was a significant variable related to the ability to adjust to the campus environment. However, those students with native speaking ability were not necessarily at an advantage over those students lacking a stronger English-speaking proficiency (Senyshyn et al., 2000). Finally, the findings suggest academic status was a significant factor for adjustment on campus.

Hu and Kuh (2003) suggested that students attending private colleges and universities in the United States reported more frequent interaction with faculty, staff, and students than that of their counterparts attending larger research institutions. Further, their research also suggested that students attending a liberal arts institution reported more interactive diversity experiences than students attending all other types of colleges (Hu & Kuh, 2003). This research is consistent

with similar findings that suggest small, liberal arts colleges have integrated meaningful diversity experiences on campus into their overall missions. When measured against what students attending larger research institutions have self-reported, the small, liberal arts institutions have continuously shown similar exposure to diverse experiences, even with much smaller student bodies and often in much less diverse locations (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

A quantitative study by Zhao et al. (2005) analyzed the survey results of the NSSE from 317 four-year colleges and universities in the United States. With a sample size of 175,000, the researchers attempted to create a larger sample size of international students that has traditionally represented a small number of the survey respondents. The researchers found international students were more engaged in some areas of the university in their first-year of study as compared to the levels of engagement of the American students (Zhao et al., 2005). The international students also reported higher levels of personal, social, and technological levels of engagement. The increased level of technological engagement among the international students was identified by the researchers as an area that may contribute to more social isolation long-term for the international students. The researchers found international students may be more likely to use technology tools and resources to problem-solve rather than talking directly to student peers or instructors (Zhao et al., 2005). Reliance on technology was also identified as a variable related to potential language barriers and the international students' ability to assimilate with the American students' culture. The researchers found the engagement factors of the international students need to be strategically managed by the hosting college and university.

Umbach and Kuh (2006) conducted a quantitative study that used the results of the NSSE from 98,744 undergraduate students attending 349 four-year colleges and universities. The

researchers created a subset of this larger sample size to create a sample of 17,640 undergraduates enrolled at 68 baccalaureate college–liberal arts institutions. This study found that students at the liberal arts institutions experienced more distinctive learning environments in relation to diversity on campus. Specifically, they found, “Students at liberal arts colleges are significantly more likely than are their counterparts at other types of institutions to engage in diversity related activities” (Umbach & Kuh, 2006, p. 183). The study also found that in addition to participating in these activities, the students were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of personal engagement with students from diverse backgrounds. The findings suggest the students attending the liberal arts institutions were also more likely to engage in collaborative learning, campus activities, and the promotion of more supportive campus environments for the students with diverse backgrounds (Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

A Kezar and Kinzie (2006) case study included 20 higher education institutions consisting of nine private and 11 public colleges and universities. With undergraduate enrollments ranging from 700 to over 20,000 students, the researchers sought to include a wide range of institution types to better represent the “diversity of American higher education institutions” (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006, p. 155). With a 24-member research team, the study sought to use the DEEP data-collection approach developed by Kuh in 2005. Using the NSSE’s five benchmarks, the researchers collected and evaluated individual institution documents, including mission statements, institutional documents, and campus observations.

Focused on understanding the relationship between the institution’s mission and student engagement, the researchers found the mission was a better tool for evaluating engagement practices and strategies than institution type (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006). The campuses with missions that specifically addressed benchmarks measured in the NSSE survey were found to be

better at addressing issues related to student engagement. The researchers suggested there are meaningful differences in the approaches of individual institutions that have direct impacts on the mission and practices designed to increase student engagement on campus (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006).

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) conducted a qualitative study that involved four focus groups with 15 international students attending a research university at a semiurban location. The researchers used the international student office to e-mail all 80 international students, inviting them to participate in the study. The researchers held four small focus groups, two with undergraduate-level students and two with graduate-level students, to assess their adjustment-related issues and needs from the time they arrived on campus through graduation (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

The study found that the international students identified several areas that were seen as barriers to participation in the academic and social communities on campus. Specifically, the international students had added variables of adjustment related to adaptation to American culture and effective communication. Students from non-European countries also registered concerns with discrimination experienced at off-campus locations in town. A number of the students indicated the underutilization of campus services contributed to additional barriers on campus, and much of that was specifically related to the students not knowing about resources such as counseling services (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). The researchers identified a need for additional communication and training on campus to help faculty and staff better understand the needs of the international students. The study suggested communication was seen as the largest barrier, often existing from the first day on campus and continuing to exist through graduation.

A Moores and Popadiuk (2011) study was conducted at a mid-sized university in western Canada. Interviewing seven international students, using the critical incident technique, accompanied by a collection of student experiences, using positive psychological scientific study, the researchers collected 134 critical incidents for the study. The critical incidents were structured into eight categories with an additional nine subcategories for the study. Identifying categories related to growth or change, social support, navigating host culture, enjoyable activities, previous experiences, supportive faculty, perseverance, and sense of belonging, the researchers found many of the same variables identified in previous research (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011).

The researchers found that for these international students, academic-related experiences were featured much less prominently than those related to social experiences. Finding the prominence of positive experiences related to social interaction, the researchers indicated social support was critical in assisting the students' development of cross-cultural transition (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). The researchers further noted the importance of working with advisors and counselors who closely work with international students to educate them about the importance of creating host environments that foster constructive social interaction for the international students. Developing institutional programs would be a positive step in creating a positive transitional experience for the students (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011).

Social Engagement

A Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) quantitative study utilized responses to a social interaction scale survey that was administered to 195 international male, graduate-level students at a mid-sized western Canadian university in 2003. The researchers developed the survey to "expand and test Furnham and Bochner's 1982 model of culture shock" (Chapdelaine &

Alexitch, 2004, p. 167). Testing cross-cultural differences in social interaction, size of conational group, family status, previous cross-cultural experience, social interaction scale, and culture shock, the study evaluated the variables related to the students' ability to integrate socially at the university.

The study found these international students experienced high levels of culture shock at the university, which led to higher levels of self-reporting social difficulty in Canada than in their home country. The study also stated that as the number of conational students increased, the degree of interaction among the host nation's student population significantly decreased. Most importantly, the researchers found that when the international students' interaction with the host country's students decreased, the international students' level of culture shock increased. These findings supported the continued need for managed and intentional social interactions between international students and host country students at the institution.

Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) conducted a study that included 60 international graduate students attending a large mid-Atlantic research university. Using one-hour interviews with each student, a social interaction chart logging weeklong interaction, and a small focus group, the researchers evaluated the international students' social interaction patterns. The findings suggest the majority of the international students created social networks among other international students that mostly excluded Americans (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). International students who identified with more integration among American students limited their interaction to mostly work, academic, and professional experiences, with little interaction identified as social networking. Of the 60 participants, only four international students listed American (host students) as their primary social contacts (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

A Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong, and Pace (2014) study conducted at a public, midwestern university involved interviews with seven international students. Using international students who had studied in America for at least two years, the students were self-identified as fluent in English and pursuing degrees in undergraduate-level (two participants) and graduate-level (five participants) degrees. The study was designed to evaluate the factors that attribute to acculturative stress and adjustments issues experienced by the international students. Using semi-structured interviews, the seven students were asked open-ended questions allowing for probative follow-up by the researchers.

Using an inductive approach, the researchers found there were three themes consistent through the interviews: “places that facilitated social interaction, places experienced in congruence with the self, and places that allowed expression of individual emotional experiences” (Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong, & Pace, 2014, p. 702). When evaluating these themes, the researchers found that acclimation to the region, school, and other social interactions were critical to their improved levels of comfort at the university. In addition, all but one of the students identified a feature on campus that was considered a safe place to help them to develop a sense of inner self-evaluation (Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014).

Gómez, Urzúa, and Glass (2014) presented the findings of a quantitative study that administered an online questionnaire to 346 international students attending a midsized university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The questionnaire consisting of six subareas measuring the international students’ level of engagement in the adjustment to college life, social networking, leisure constraint, leisure participation, and sociolinguistic acculturation. Using quantitative analysis, the researchers found structural constraints were not associated with other variables, interpersonal constraints were related to acculturation and adjustment, and

participation in leisure activities was found to have an association with student adjustment (Gómez, Urzúa, & Glass, 2014). Additionally, the study stated that “on-campus sports, on-campus events, on-campus socialization, and off-campus socialization were all significantly related to social adjustment” (Gómez et al., 2014, p. 19).

Academic Engagement

Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, and Kommers (2012) presented a study conducted at a large Dutch university that surveyed 958 first-year, undergraduate-level students. The study surveyed students who had attended the university for at least six months and were enrolled in undergraduate-level course work. The researchers used the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, modeled after Tinto’s student persistence model, and a social integration questionnaire that was created by the researchers. Identifying 15 items, the self-designed survey sought to measure the students’ level of academic support, social satisfaction, and financial support (Rienties, Beusaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012).

The researchers found the academic performance of international students was positively affected by academic integration. Also, the study indicated that international students from Western cultures scored significantly higher in the integration of academic and social themes than did the Dutch national students. The third result discussed indicated that increased integration between social and academic themes related negatively to academic performance (Rienties et al., 2012). This final finding was not consistent with engagement model theorists, and the researchers identified this as an item for additional study.

Kwai (2009) conducted a quantitative study that collected institutional data from two large, public universities in the Midwest. The study only used new and transfer international students in their first year of study enrolled in a degree-seeking program. The researcher used the

data maintained on internal operating systems to collect responses to develop the retention or persistence model of international students (Kwai, 2009). This model was based on the original persistence models developed by Tinto (1975) and Astin (1977). Ultimately, the study found only two factors, spring semester GPA and cumulative hours attempted, that significantly affected the retention and persistence rates from the first year to the second year.

Mamiseishvili (2011) found that international students were significantly more academically engaged and demonstrated higher levels of academic challenge than American college students. Additional research indicated that international students persisting from their first to second year of study were more likely to show more dedication to their academic experience and to be more engaged in academically purposeful behaviors on campus (Zhao et al., 2005). Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) discovered that self-efficacy and individual academic expectations were significant indicators of the student's academic success. Korobova and Starobin (2015) found that the best predictors of student satisfaction and academic success were related to five benchmarks that include the institution's level of academic challenge, the relationship and interaction between faculty and students, and enriching experiences on campus.

Adjustment to the campus environment has been identified as a critical variable in the long-term academic success and persistence of international students. Ying (2005) found that stress related to adjustment on campus and academic challenges were highly rated variables affecting their academic performance. Maintaining academic stress levels and individually perceived control over academic conditions was also found to have significantly affected the student's adjustment on campus (Frazier et al., 2011). International students face a number of challenges in their adjustment to the campus. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) reported that integrating and learning the institution's academic culture, interacting with the faculty, and

adjusting to new teaching styles remain critical challenges for the students' ability to adapt to their new academic environment.

Hsu and Huang (2017) conducted a study with 121 international students attending a small western university in the United States that evaluated the apprehension and willingness of students to talk in the classroom. Their research found the students were recognized for the diversity they brought to the campus and classroom, but there were obstacles to their participation in the classes. The international students' social isolation and their lack of confidence in English language proficiency contributed to a reduced role in classroom participation. The study found that feeling welcomed and accepted from the professor and other students was an important factor contributing toward better classroom interaction and participation (Hsu & Huang, 2017).

Conclusion

International students have been attending higher education institutions in the United States in increasingly large numbers over the last two decades. Although the federal government, regional accreditation agencies, and even individual colleges and universities have increased accountability measures for the persistence of students, little attention has been focused on the growing international student populations. Currently, there are no formal federal requirements for reporting the retention rates of international students (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2015; Evans et al., 2009). Much research has been focused on the variables that affect the levels of engagement, campus acclimation, and interaction of domestic students on campus.

As campuses continue to evaluate academic success measures and the persistence of students, it will become increasingly important to evaluate the unique variables related to the experiences of international students. As this student population grows, it will have a much more

significant impact on six-year graduation rates, campus resources, and the institution's financial planning and solvency. Further research is needed to evaluate how international students engage on small private campuses and how this variable may affect long-term persistence rates. For the international student population, engagement variables expand beyond that of their domestic student counterparts. To more thoroughly examine attrition-related issues, additional consideration must be given to the levels of engagement related to acclimation to a new environment, language barriers, academic experiences, and social integration on campus. Understanding the complex nature of this population on campuses is a critical component to understanding what resources are needed to create support structures to better enable integration and academic success.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Higher education institutions have been pressured to better analyze and manage student populations and their ability to persist through graduation (Andrade & Evans, 2009; Astin, 1993; Braxton et al., 2004; Ewell, 2008; Kezar, 2004; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Nationally, the federal government has increased reporting standards for domestic students at colleges and universities but has largely ignored international students outside of the visa monitoring system. As the international student population in the United States has grown significantly, higher education institutions have seen increasing value in attracting these students to their campuses (IIE, 2015). As this population of students grows, larger portions of campus budgets, programming efforts, and student satisfaction will need to be better monitored at the institutional level (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Dumbrigue, Moxley, & Najor-Durack, 2013; Gómez et al., 2014; Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2001).

While much research during the last 50 years has been focused on the retention of traditional domestic students in the United States, little attention has been directed at the retention of international students on private campuses. International students attend private schools at much lower numbers than domestic students, but with tightening budgets and the need to provide higher levels of student services on campus, additional support will need to be shifted to international students. If colleges and universities want to increase retention rates for these students, they will need to develop institutional plans to be much more responsive to this nontraditional population of students.

Research Design

A case study was the most appropriate research methodology for this current study. In accordance with Yin's (2014) definition of a case study, the evaluation of this contemporary phenomenon within the context of three small, campus settings provided technically distinctive situations, provided multiple sources of evidence, and benefited from the prior research collected in the field. Incorporating a case study's twofold design, this study incorporated an "all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approach to the data analysis" (p. 17). Given the small populations and unique circumstances of international student attendance at small private colleges, a case-study approach better allowed for the researcher to capture individual perspectives and provide for better evaluation and analysis of different meanings within this subpopulation of students (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014).

This case study examined three small, private colleges located in the southeastern United States. The three campuses were selected using the following criteria:

- Total student body had less than 2,500 undergraduate students.
- International student population had a minimum of 30 students.
- Institution administered the 2015 NSSE.
- Institution provided on-campus housing facilities for undergraduate students.
- Institution employed a full-time administrator who served as the international student officer.

The purpose of this study was to explore the levels of engagement and the impact of campus resources and environment on the persistence of international students attending a small private college. In order to study this campus phenomenon, the researcher selected a qualitative case-study design allowing for an intensive study approach using a small sample size. This

approach allowed for the selection of three private college campuses with over 50 international students attending each. After selection of the research sites, the researcher then used multiple methods to collect the research data. Allowing for the researcher to focus on context and dynamic interaction provides the ability to collect data through empirical inquiry (Yin, 2014). A case-study approach also allows for the flexibility to incorporate “multiple perspectives, data collection tools, and interpretive strategies” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 19). This research study aimed to answer three central research questions:

1. How are international students engaged at a small private college?
2. What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?
3. How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

The research questions were designed to address the need for additional research relating the experiences of international students attending a small private college. The current literature almost exclusively evaluates the persistence and retention of international students attending larger, public universities. The focus on small private colleges will create smaller sample sizes that are representative of the smaller campus communities with international student populations representing a small subpopulation of the overall student body.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected from the international students attending each of the three small, private colleges located in the southeastern United States. Each campus had an international student population of between 50 and 200 students, and students were invited to complete a survey about their experiences on campus. From those responding to the

invitations, four international students were selected from each campus, representing each academic class standing to complete an in-person interview with the researcher. These students were selected with the help of the international student officer at each campus and by student responses to an e-mail from the researcher inviting them to participate in the study. The participating students provided the following demographic descriptions: age, gender, passport country, academic year in school, residency status, athletic participation, and confirmation of first institution attended. A summary of the 12 international student participants is listed in (Table 1).

Table 1

Participants Overview

South College	Malcolm	Marcela	Mario	Mya
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age	19	21	25	22
Passport Country	Palestine	Bolivia	Timor Leste	Nepal
Residency	On-Campus	On-Campus	On-Campus	On-Campus
Academic Year	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Junior
Athlete	Yes	No	No	No
First Institution Attended	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
East College	Camila	Cecil	Charlotte	Chester
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	18	20	19	22
Passport Country	Bahamas	Nigeria	Germany	Brazil
Residency	On-Campus	Off-Campus	On-Campus	On-Campus
Academic Year	Sophomore	Senior	Junior	Junior
Athlete	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First Institution Attended	Yes	No	No	Yes
West College	Selah	Sergio	Simon	Sophia
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female
Age	21	20	24	22
Passport Country	Guadeloupe	Spain	Italy	Nigeria
Residency	On-Campus	On-Campus	On-Campus	On-Campus
Academic Year	Junior	Freshman	Senior	Sophomore
Athlete	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
First Institution Attended	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

In addition to the international students selected at each of the three colleges, the international student officers were interviewed about their work and experiences with this population of students on campus. These officers were selected because of their daily work with this student population, the intimate knowledge they have about campus practices, and their knowledge of industry standards and the federal law regulating the acceptance and administrative management of these students. A summary of the three participating colleges and their total student population and international student population is listed in Table 2. A pseudonym was assigned to each to protect the anonymity of the institutions.

Table 2

College Campus Overview

	Total Undergraduate Population	Total International Population
South College	2,200	200
East College	1,500	50
West College	700	60

South College. This private, not-for-profit, religiously affiliated university was founded more than 50 years earlier. Located in an urban city within the southeastern United States, this campus had a population of approximately 2,200 undergraduate students. The campus hosted 200 international students from more than 69 countries, representing approximately 9% of the overall undergraduate student body. This campus had more than 1,100 students residing in on-campus housing with a three-year residency requirement for all undergraduate students.

East College. This private, not-for-profit, religiously affiliated college was founded more than 150 years earlier. Located in a rural community within the southeastern United States, the campus had a population of approximately 1,500 undergraduate students. The

campus had 50 international students from 16 countries, representing approximately 3% of the overall undergraduate student body. This campus had more than 1,000 students residing in on-campus housing with a four-year residence requirement for full-time undergraduate students.

West College. This private, not-for-profit, religiously affiliated university was founded more than 45 years earlier. Located in a rural community within the southeastern United States, this campus had a population of approximately 700 undergraduate students. The campus had 60 international students from more than 26 countries, representing approximately 10% of the overall undergraduate student body. This campus had more than 575 students residing in on-campus housing with a four-year residence requirement for full-time undergraduate students.

Using a group of 12 international student participants from the three small, private colleges, 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted on each campus. Each student participated in two face-to-face interviews that were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. With the help of the international officer on each campus, the students were selected to represent a diverse representation of the student body with special consideration for gender, passport country, and academic year (see Table 1). The researcher selected four international student participants from each school and was able to interview two males and two females per institution, all representing a different passport country. Pseudonyms were provided for each student to offer a level of anonymity in accordance with best research practices (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Table 1 provides an overview of the participants at each location including age, campus residency, academic year, athletic participation, and original institution attendance. The selected students represent a variety of ages from 18 to 25 years of age. The researcher was also able to get representation from 12 different countries representing five

continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. Three of the student participants indicated they had previously attended another higher education institution.

Table 3

Research Timeline

Activity	Dates
Data Organization	August 1, 2016
Individual Campus IRB Final Approvals	August 1, 2016–September 1, 2016
Data Collection	September 1, 2016–December 15, 2016
Pilot Interview Questions	September 1, 2016
College Observational Visits	September 1, 2016–October 31, 2016
College Materials Collection Process	September 1, 2016–October 31, 2016
Interview International Student Officers	September 1, 2016–November 30, 2016
Interview Student Officer at Each Institution	
Interview Individual International Students	September 1, 2016–November 30, 2016
Interview Four Students at Each Institution	
Validation and Transcribing of Interview Data	October 1, 2016–December 31, 2016
Members Checking Interview Data	November 30, 2016–December 15, 2016
Analysis of the Data	January 2017
Review and Analysis of Comparative Data	January 2017
Explanation of Methods and Results	February 2017
Dissertation Defense	April 3, 2017 at 2:30 p.m. MST

Data Collection

Using an e-mail list of all undergraduate international students provided by the Office of Institutional Research at each college, the students were e-mailed using their college-provided e-mail address (see Appendix A). In this e-mail, the researcher asked students to consider participation in the individual student interviews. Also, the researcher worked with each

international services officer to identify potential students who would work well for the study. Using the e-mail responses, the researcher conducted a follow-up call to each of the responding students to ask a series of questions (see Appendix B. Each student was asked about his or her class standing, passport country, if the current college was the only one attended, level of English language proficiency, and level of participation in campus activities. Using the information from the follow-up phone call, the researcher identified four students to interview individually at each college.

The semi-structured, individual student interviews were scheduled for the fall 2016 semester. The researcher chose a location on each campus to interview each student at a convenient time, and the location was chosen based on a private, informal, more comfortable setting where the students would be able to communicate with the researcher in a less formal manner. During this interview, the researcher used a digital audio recorder to capture all responses, constructed a diagram of the room including participant locations, and took handwritten notes. At each college, the four international students selected signed consent forms (see Appendix C) for two face-to-face interviews, an audio recording, and use of quotations from the interviews in the research. The four students were selected to represent each of the four class levels and to integrate gender diversity in the interviews. During the first interviews, the students were asked about their passport countries, how they were recruited to the campus, residential status, athletic participation, social involvement on campus, academic rigor, use of campus resources, and information about their experiences as an international student on campus. Also, each student was asked to create a list of activities and events they had participated in on campus and to bring the list to the second interview.

Each of these students were interviewed a second time for a follow-up interview after the initial interview. For the interview, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at a mutually agreed-upon convenient time. Each semi-structured interview session was audio recorded, and the researcher took handwritten notes. During this interview, the students were asked about peer interaction and faculty and staff interaction on campus, interaction with the international services office, plans to graduate from the institution, campus involvement, transition issues, need for additional resources, and advice for other international students. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes, and the students were also able to tell the researcher about other experiences unique to their international student experience on the campus.

The international student officer at each college was also interviewed by the researcher. These interviews allowed the researcher an opportunity to gather additional data and themes related to the daily activity of the international students, in addition to the institutional processes and policies that governed the college. In addition, because this staff member was the primary resource officer for the international students, the researcher was able to collect data relating to the adjustment and engagement of these students on campus. Each staff member signed a consent form (see Appendix D) that allowed for participation in the research, an audio recording, and use of quotations in the final report.

The researcher also collected institutional documents related to the process for admissions, campus resources, and engagement activities for the international students. These documents allowed the researcher to evaluate the matriculation process, orientation activities, and long-term strategies of each college to engage and retain their international students on campus. These documents also provided better institutional context for communication processes and resources available to the international students.

Validation of National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The NSSE is designed to assess college students' level of engagement in practices determined to be successful in the work toward an undergraduate degree (Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010). This student engagement survey has been used by more than 500 colleges and universities annually in the United States. Using self-reported student results, the survey is designed to measure five benchmarks: (a) level of academic challenge, (b) active and collaborative learning, (c) student–faculty interaction, (d) enriching educational experiences, and (e) supportive campus environment. The questions are designed to measure the students' exposure to effective campus practices that are implemented to increase exposure to more meaningful experiences, all practices long associated with more complex student personal development in college (Pascarella et al., 2010).

The NSSE instrument allows institutions to assess the level of student engagement in relation to the intentional programming created to provide resources and opportunities for student success on campus (Chambers & Chiang, 2011). The NSSE engagement indicators for the 2015 survey have a consistently high reliability rating with Cronbach's Alpha scores, ranging from .776 to .907 (NSSE, 2015). One suggested limitation of the NSSE results is that the overall student data represent a more heterogeneous group of respondents based on generalized college student demographics (NSSE, 2015). The predictive validity of the NSSE instrument is linked to successful measures of institutional practices and that of self-reported student academic, personal, and social gains on campus (Pascarella et al., 2010).

Analytical Methods

Two interviews were conducted with each of the four international students at each college for a total of 24 individual interviews. Two interviews were conducted with each international student officer at each location for a total of six interviews. For each of the interviews, the researcher used field notes, constructed room diagrams of participants, and made audio recordings to aid in the collection of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). At the conclusion of each interview session, initial thoughts, notes, and other observations were used to supplement the audio recordings. All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and reviewed for clarifications by the researcher. After all interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were reviewed by the researcher, categorized by interview type, and reviewed multiple times for the identification of common themes (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). Using the audio recordings and printed transcripts, the researcher used notations, underlining, symbols, and highlighting for the coding process. Finally, Microsoft Excel was used to organize and categorize the themes identified in the interviews.

The institutional results for international student responses to 2015 NSSE were collected from each college's institutional research office. Also, the national result from the 2015 NSSE was collected from the NSSE website. These two data sets were used to compare the results of each college and against the national results. Quantitative computations were not conducted on this data, given the limitations of small sample sizes, low participation rates of international students, and the inability to differentiate international versus domestic student responses in the national report.

Finally, the researcher used the activity participation responses received from the students at the second individual interview, pamphlets, handbooks, and other documents

received from each college's international student office to create an outline of resources and activities available at each institution. The researcher used this material to compare against the student and staff interview transcripts to identify the additional connections between perceived resources and actual resources offered on each campus.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to survey instrument design, evaluation of data, and sample sizes at each research site. The international student population size of each campus represented one of the smallest subpopulation groups at each institution. The use of the NSSE instrument for this study had two major limitations. First, the survey was not designed with consideration for international students. However, the survey was administered nationally with responses from these students. Second, the researcher did not use a quantitative-based analysis for the survey data. The data were used as additional resources for this case study to better identify institutional culture and student engagement among the campus climate.

This study included three small, private colleges located in the southeastern United States. Small private colleges are often unique in campus climate and culture. Additionally, consideration would also have to be given to the nature of the institution based on location, academic focus, admission requirements, and so forth. Researcher bias is also a limitation of this research. Researcher bias can influence the interviews, the identification of themes, and the interaction of the researcher at the research site. The role of the researcher can impact the interaction with participants, quality of disclosure, and the dimension of intensiveness in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

Research is limited in the evaluation of persistence rates for international students attending small private colleges and universities in the United States (Andrade, 2009; Evans et al., 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2011). To date, most research related to international student persistence rates has focused on those attending large public universities with larger sample sizes (Andrade & Evans, 2009; Aw, 2012; OECD, 2015). Tracking retention rates for international students has proved difficult as there are currently few standardized measures and no overall government accountability regulations designed to specifically monitor this population (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2015; Zhao et al., 2005). Identified as one of the fastest growing populations of students in higher education in America, a research gap exists in the evaluation of these students and what individual campuses are doing to retain them (Andrade, 2006a; IIE, 2015; OECD, 2015).

Astin's (1985) theory of student involvement was used as the theoretical framework guiding this study, postulating that student retention was directly related to the student's level of engagement and quality of experience in academic and extracurricular activities. Creating the inputs, environment, and outcomes model, Astin found that inputs, environment, and outcomes combine to guide the level of students' engagement and their ability to persist through graduation. His identification that the students' demographic, background, and previous educational experiences define the levels of input is a critical factor for the consideration of diverse student bodies, including international populations. Further, the theory describes the role the campus environment will contribute toward each student's experience on campus. Finally,

the outcomes are described as the attributes the students would adopt beyond their educational experiences.

This theoretical framework was developed using the findings of studies working exclusively with domestic student populations. With the understanding that each student, regardless of origin, will have a campus experience and educational journey, it is appropriate to examine these characteristics of international students. Their experiences are likely to be more robust and unique than that of their American counterparts on campus. Understanding the role of the experience from entrance, attendance, participation, through graduation, the previously identified variables on the student experience continuum are important to evaluate for international students (Astin, 1985, 1993; Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The questions guiding this study were the following:

1. How are international students engaged at a small private college?
2. What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?
3. How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

Chapter IV summarizes the data related to each research question, using data collected from a series of in-depth interviews with students and staff members, along with student-submitted documents and institutional materials collected at each of the three small, private southeastern universities.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This study included data collected from interviews with 12 students and three international student officers at three small, private colleges located in the southeastern United

States. The researcher developed a two-step interview process for the students and the staff members interviewed. The initial student interview questions were used in a pilot study with three international students attending a small, private southeastern college not included in this study. During the pilot phase of this research study, the three student participants were asked interview questions for both interviews, first and second rounds, and provided feedback on the questions along with information relating to their clarity and usefulness. These interviews were recorded and timed, and the researcher evaluated the responses for usefulness and ability to answer the three established research questions.

The second phase of the interview process was to travel to each campus to interview the students and staff members twice. Each student signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C), and each staff member signed an informed consent form (see Appendix D). The student interviews at East College were conducted in a coffee shop conveniently located beside the campus. At South College, the student interviews were conducted in staff offices, the on-campus coffee shop, and library study rooms. Finally, the student interviews at West College were all completed in the international staff member's office. All staff interviews were conducted in each of their respective offices on the campuses. The researcher recorded the interviews, and each lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. The semi-structured interviews were open ended and allowed for the participants to provide information based on their experiences on each campus. Chapter IV provides an overview of the data collection methods, data collected, participant demographics (see Table 1), thematic coding, and connections between common themes and the research questions.

Participants

The researcher conducted a total of 12 in-depth interviews with four international students at three small, private colleges (see Appendix E). At each school, two males and two females were selected and interviewed for a total of six males and six females. The students were all undergraduates, with two freshmen, three sophomores, five juniors, and two seniors, ranging from ages 18 to 25, participating in this study. Each student's passport country was unique, allowing the researcher to have representation for 12 countries and four continents. Four of the students did not indicate athletic participation while eight students did self-identify participation in at least one NCAA-level athletic team. Additionally, nine of the students reported having attended only one college while the remaining three indicated this was their second college attended. Finally, 11 of the international students reported living on campus, while only one was reported to live off campus. In addition to the interviews, all students submitted a list of the campus activities they regularly participated in at the conclusion of the second interview.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with the primary international student officer at each of the three colleges (see Appendix E). The staff members were identified for selection based on having primary responsibilities for international student administrative and programmatic responsibilities on each campus. Although there were other administrative officers who often supplemented the recruitment and enrollment processes, these officers were selected because of their primary day-to-day responsibilities beyond admission to each college. Each officer had varying levels of administrative responsibility for programming on campus, depending on the overall size of the international student population on campus and robustness of the program.

The officer at South College directed a program with one part-time and two full-time employees overseeing campus operations. This college program was the largest of the three with 200 international students enrolled. Operating under the Student Affairs administrative organization, this office administered all of the international student recruitment, enrollment, government documentation, and programming on campus. The officer at East College was primarily employed as a faculty member with an additional assigned administrative responsibility for all international students on campus. This college recruited and admitted the students through the admissions office, while the international officer administered all postadmissions programming. She was the only administrator on campus with programmatic responsibilities for the international students on campus. The final officer at West College was a full-time employed staff member with primary administrative responsibilities for the daily organization and implementation of all international student programming on campus. She administered all postadmissions programming efforts for the campus. Operating under the Student Affairs organization, she also maintained an office in that department.

Transcript Evaluation

Each of the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and reviewed by the researcher for accurateness and clarity. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F). The transcriptions were then evaluated for common themes and topics identified for further evaluation. Using the audio recordings and printed transcripts and a system of highlighting, notes, and numbers, the researcher reviewed each transcript for emerging common themes in relation to the three research questions (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The themes identified in each transcript were then synthesized in a table for the students and staff members, identifying the top themes that emerged from each group's

interviews. Table 5 provides a synthesis of the top 12 themes identified by the 12 students interviewed. Table 6 provides a synthesis of the top nine themes identified by the staff members interviewed.

Research question 1. Growing numbers of international students and an increased focus on retaining these students over the last 20 years has forced institutions to examine more carefully this population and the variables related to their persistence on campus (Andrade, 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2011; Zhao et al., 2005). This effort to focus retention strategies on campus has forced administrators to evaluate administrative and programmatic efforts for effectiveness in retaining students (Hossler, 2005; Kuh, 2009). Further, these efforts are complicated by the additional variables that may affect international students and their ability to adjust to the new campus culture (Andrade, 2009; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). The first research question in this study was derived to evaluate how the level of engagement factors into the students' persistence in college.

How is the level of international student engagement on campus a predictor for student persistence at a small private college?

Astin (1985, 1993) first identified the theory of student involvement, which postulated the success of students is directly related to academic and extracurricular activities on campus. Demonstrating the critical need for students to become involved on campus, this theory served as the foundational basis for the additional study and retention theory highlighting the importance of student involvement on campus (Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Research has also demonstrated that students attending small, liberal arts colleges consistently experience more meaningful diverse activities on campus than those students attending larger campuses (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Kuh et al., 1991; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

For the scope of research question 1, 12 international students attending three small, private colleges were interviewed (see Appendix E) and asked to submit a list of activities they had participated in on campus. Additionally, the international student officer at each college was interviewed (see Appendix E). Using the lists of activities submitted by each student, a comprehensive table was created to illustrate the areas of involvement (see Table 4).

Table 4

Responses to Student Involvement List

International Students	Number of Responses
Leadership Positions	12
Student Activities	12
Student Clubs and Organizations	12
Academic Clubs and Organizations	10
Community Service	8
Tutoring	8
Athletics	8
Gym/Wellness Center	7
Honor Societies	5
Intramurals	4
Religious Activities	4

Each of the 12 international students reported he or she was involved in a leadership position on campus, participated in student activities, and was involved in a club or organization on campus. Chester's level of participation on campus demonstrated a high level of social engagement on campus. As a junior at East College, he demonstrated the ability to balance athletics, academics, and social activity on the campus. He described he was from Sao Paulo, "a city with more than

12 million people, so there's always something to do. Here is not the same." Further describing his campus experience he recalled,

The intimacy with people, it's better...[W]e get to know people better, but I'm very involved. I got into every honor society I could have gotten into so far. I'm very involved in the international club; I love it. We do a lot of stuff, a lot of events. We have our fashion week...so everybody dresses with your traditional clothes, and then we walk for the whole school to see. All the money we get we donate to Relay for Life.

The students consistently reported the campuses provided many opportunities to participate in social activities on campus. Mya, a student at South College, found, "There are tons of activities that the campus offers, and it's just a matter of going and looking for them." She confirmed these activities were sponsored by a number of offices on the campus by stating,

[W]e have lots of activities organized by the RAs, by the SAC, international student association, and all different other...student organizations we have on campus. For me, I have been very involved just because of the Rotoract Club...since my freshman year. I was president last year, and now I'm the director...so that always keeps me going with my social life.

Additionally, 10 of the students reported involvement in an academic club or organization on campus. These results suggest the international students value participation in campus organizations. Further, each student reported they were involved with the international club on campus and their involvement in this organization accounted for additional involvement in organized group activities, facilitated travel opportunities, and provided peer-to-peer experiences allowing for shared cultural experiences and campus acculturation experiences. Simon, a student at West College, described he was initially more reserved when arriving on

campus, keeping mostly to himself and teammates. However, he found when he started making more friends, “They would invite me to do something from a party somewhere, back to a sports event, to a culture event.” This was important for Simon because it allowed him to be less isolated on campus. Sophia, a Nigerian student from West College, recalled the international office provided a number of trips throughout the semester. She had participated in a number of these trips, citing sponsored outings to the fair, concerts, and shows. Selah, a student at West College, described how the international office often provided trips to larger cities for the students. She reported, “I don’t have a car, so I went to Charlotte. Last semester was my first time, so it’s really cool.” The students also reported that the college providing these events at free or reduced costs was also important. Malcolm, a student from Palestine, recalled the importance of these events:

It’s really nice that the school is trying to do...community engagements here. South College is one of the colleges that invests a lot, actually, in activities. We usually get e-mails, and you can just sign up; it’s free most of the time....In the freshman year, we don’t have a lot of connections, and it’s hard to make friends....So I think it’s good to have them on campus.

Results indicated the importance of clubs and organizations in the experience of each of these students. Much of the self-reported activities were often overlapping, depending on the group or organization with which the students were working. For example, student involvement in the international club could provide each student with the opportunity to be involved in an organization, serve in a leadership position, participate in a community service event, and play on an intramurals team together. Further evaluation of these activities through the student interviews provided additional context to the importance of the international students’

engagement in campus activities, clubs, and organizations, and other campus resources providing opportunities for involvement.

Interviews with the international student officers found that each office emphasized encouraging students to get involved in campus organizations and activities upon arrival on campus. Laurica, international officer at East College, described the importance of her role in relation to the students:

My role is to work with them throughout every aspect of their lives as they come here.

That involves classroom, outside of classroom, social communitywide, every aspect of that. Teaching them how to be global citizens....Giving back to their community. Their education is number one.

Nicole, international officer at South College, talked about the robust international club on campus and the importance of the programming they planned for the entire campus community. “They’re getting ready to perform...start and practice for a big event called Pangea.” She described the event as one of the largest on campus showcasing the international students’ culture through song and dance performances.

Laurica reported the international club was an important resource for international students and provided opportunities for engagement from the first day on campus through graduation. Utilizing peer-to-peer connections and mentoring, the students worked together to welcome new students to the campus and to provide resources to better acclimate them to their new environment. The club also served as a programming mechanism for the entire campus by implementing international cultural events. Laurica recalled,

They actually began taking pride. At first, I noticed that some of the students...don't want anyone to know that they are from another country, which may be looked down upon....But right now, they have weeks that they dress up in their attire.

Under the direction of Laurica, also serving as the club advisor, the international club maintained a resource closet consisting of bedding, toiletries, and winter clothing that were made available to students as they arrived on campus. Maria, the international officer from West College, stressed the importance of the international peer-to-peer relationships on campus. She talked about the international buddy system, suggesting,

We try and buddy them up with other people to get them out and so they can see other things. So that's why those trips are really important for them, so they can get their mind off of the fact that they just sit in their room.

Maria also talked about the importance of planning activities as early as the second week of school and continuing these activities at least every two weeks to provide multiple opportunities for international students to stay involved throughout the semester.

Research question 2. Academic and social activities on small, private college campuses have long been considered a hallmark experience of these institutions. Established to create additional opportunities for students to be engaged in the campus life culture and to complement academic learning outside of the classroom, academic and social engagement has become an integral tool for administrators seeking to improve retention statistics. These areas of engagement are seen as exponentially more important for international students, as they are likely to experience extra hurdles related to language barriers, culture shock, homesickness, and classroom integration issues (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Rienties et al., 2012; Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014). Campus programs have been established to assist with student adjustment

issues, but there is a gap in the research relating to how these programs are utilized by international students and their ability to participate in and adjust to the established existing campus culture (Gómez et al., 2014). The second research question for this study examined how international students viewed engagement activities and how these activities impacted their experience on campus.

What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?

Using two rounds of face-to-face interviews, 12 international students were interviewed at three small, private colleges. The students were selected to include a representation of diverse passport countries, gender, year, and age. The interviews included questions that surveyed the students on their campus experiences with admission to the college, interaction with faculty and staff, campus involvement, housing status, language barriers, and cultural experiences. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for common themes, resulting in the top 12 themes identified in Table 5.

Table 5

Top Frequent Codes From Student Interviews

International Students	Number of Responses
Academic Resources	42
Academic Rigor	40
Relationship With Professors	39
International Office Resources	38
International Office Programs	32
Transportation and Location Issues	29
Financial Issues	28
Language Barriers	27
Student Activities	26
Campus Housing	25
Food and Cultural Issues	25
Athletic Resources	18

Responses from participants during the interviews produced three themes related to the academic resources on campus. Categorized as (a) academic resources (42), (b) academic rigor (40), and (c) relationship with professors (39), the students clearly identified the academic resources on campus were critical variables for their success on campus. Each of the international students interviewed identified at least one academic resource used frequently since arriving on campus. Many identified the library as the most critical academic resource for reasons such as a quiet place to study, the host facility for learning commons, and access to computing resources. At each of the three schools, the library hosted a learning commons resource center that often included academic resources, such as the writing center, computer lab, and tutoring center. Of these identified academic resources, the writing center was also a

frequently noted resource used by the students. The writing center helped many of the students work through language conversion issues and helped them better understand the requirements for college-level writing assignments. Mario, a South College student from Timor Leste, identified the writing center was an important resource for him early in his college tenure. He struggled with his writing skills and found he really struggled “writing stuff in English.” Marcela, a South College student from Bolivia, expressed that the writing center resources were important for her academic success because she could speak English better than writing English. The writing center was an extra academic resource that helped her strengthen those skills. Tutoring was also identified as an important academic resource for eight of the students. Charlotte, an East College student from Germany, described she had struggled with her language and grammar since arriving on campus. She said,

International students have the disadvantage of, like, not having the perfect grammar.

And we have the possibility on campus that there are people and tutors that help us.

Cecil, an East College student from Nigeria, described that the library was a critical resource for him and his academic adjustment on campus. The library served as a hub for him because it contained multiple academic support resources, including tutoring for students. He also noted additional consideration needed to be given for the library’s hours to better accommodate student schedules that favored late-night usage. Simon, a West College student from Italy, recalled how he relied on another international student in his advanced calculus class to help tutor him throughout the semester. He related they spoke the same language and they were the only two international students in the class; he thought that helped his academic progress. Initially, the tutoring helped supplement the class sessions as the students adjusted to language issues, but later many of the international students served as tutors. Chester, an East

College student from Brazil, described he served as a math tutor on campus, and tutoring was an important resource for international students. He did not utilize the service but had great appreciation for its importance:

I'm a tutor at the tutoring center; I work there....I see a lot of people coming and, for example, especially with mathematics, every day I help someone....[A]nd if they don't necessarily go to the tutoring center, they send an e-mail to another international student that loves to tutor, and they go help each other.

Academic rigor was also identified as a strong, frequent theme in the student interviews. A few of the students expressed frustration with having to take a liberal arts curriculum that required them to take courses they did not view as connected to their academic majors. Students also indicated they felt well prepared for their classes and often found repeated materials in their first and second year of classes. They contributed this to excellent high school preparation and suggested their international high school experiences may have prepared them better than that of their American classmates.

A common theme identified with academic resources was the initial difficulty with English language proficiency. Camila, an East College student from the Bahamas, experienced difficulty with language on campus and found the writing center, labs, professors, and disability services all helped strengthen her language proficiency skills. Charlotte identified her professors were especially helpful as she worked to strengthen her English language skills. She found faculty members were willing to help international students in class and outside of class in ways that did not make them feel singled out for their language challenges. Sergio, a West College student from Spain, discussed how difficult it was to understand English in the classroom when he first arrived on campus. He described,

I think it's different because in class, for example, sometimes I have this problem. It's like you have to be more concentrated than others... You can speak something and I have to be so concentrated with you, and I can't think about other things because it's not in my language, you know? I think for them... it's easier in this case because it's their language. And in my case, it's... a little bit difficult because it's not my language... I have to see you because I have to see your mouth when it's moving.

The students also indicated a high level of satisfaction with their relationship with professors. A number of the students indicated they had selected a small college for the small classroom size, and their experiences reflected positively on this expectation. Many of the students indicated meeting their professors was a high priority and aided in their transition to the college. They consistently reported faculty members were personally interested in their experiences and invited conversations that allowed the students to talk about their home countries, families, personal experiences, and transition at the college. The students reported high levels of engagement with their faculty, actively asking questions in class, and being encouraged to participate in academic conversations. Malcolm, a South College student from Palestine, reported the faculty members were personally invested in him beyond his classroom experiences. He identified that through a casual conversation, one of his faculty members discovered his passion for cycling. Citing the professor, Malcolm recalled, "She gave me a bike, basically to ride, and I'm using it at school now." The interviews found that faculty members often attended the students' athletic competitions, ate with them both on campus and in town, and invited students to their homes. Selah, a West College student from Guadeloupe, said she had experienced excellent interactions with her faculty members. She shared,

I think the professor[s] are really good...for international people here because they ask if you are doing good...in class, if they can improve [about]. Or maybe also ask about the outside, like how I feel if I need something, how is my game. Sometimes they go to your game. So,...the relationship with the professor is more new and it's not like they're our parents, but kind of.

Cecil indicated his relationship with the professors was critical to his experience in both the current class and for future goals. He wanted to establish strong personal relationships so he could rely on them to write letters of recommendations for jobs, honor organizations, and graduate school.

Social activities were also found to be a significant variable in the lives of international students at the three colleges. This was found consistently reported through the themes categorized as international office programs (32), transportation and location issues (29), student activities (26), campus housing (25), and food and cultural issues (25). The most common theme reported in the interviews was the importance of the international office and the programs they provided for the international students. The students at each college reported the office provided programs that allowed them to socialize with other international students, creating cohorts with similar experiences. All of the students indicated this programming was available early in their college experience, and early intervention was vital to their adjustment to the campus.

One of the most important themes highlighted by all of the students' experiences was the more rural location of each of the campuses. Two of the colleges (East College and West College) were located in small rural towns with few businesses, restaurants, or other entertainment venues in the town. Although South College was located in a larger rural area, the students reported safety issues and a lack of entertainment venues. The town size played a major

impact in their campus experiences as the students all reported difficulty in adjusting to transportation issues. Most international students reported the absence of vehicles due to financial constraints and the inability to obtain a driver's license due to government regulations. Because the three college towns were small, the students often had to travel at least an hour to other towns for entertainment and shopping trips. Additionally, because the towns were rural, they lacked accessible public transportation that was convenient or that ran hours suitable to the students' schedules. The students at all three colleges reported the difficulty in accomplishing daily tasks, such as grocery shopping, because of the businesses' distance from the college. The students also identified the constraints of being able to travel home. Most of the students reported they often had to stay in the United States for multiple years at a time because they could not afford a plane ticket to travel home. Mya, a South College student from Nepal, reported she was only able to go home for one summer because she received a research grant. Without the grant, she indicated she could not have afforded to go home. During breaks and holidays, Mya indicated she went home with other American students. Charlotte indicated she had been able to travel home, but because of the distance, she was limited to the winter and summer breaks. Cecil described the challenge of not being able to afford trips to go home with a more personal story. He had not traveled home since he had arrived four years earlier, and during that time two of his grandmothers had passed away. For him, the inability to afford travel also affected his ability to visit with family and participate in important family events.

The issues related to transportation highlighted the importance for student activities on campus. The international students at all three colleges reported high levels of attendance at planned campus social events, such as movie nights, dances, concerts, and other programming. These campus events were reported to be very important for each of the students, because the

local communities did not offer many opportunities for social activity off campus. The students reported they were often more aware of campus events than that of their American peers, and they were more likely to attend these events because they had less opportunities to go home for the weekend or leave campus for the night.

Campus housing was also found to have a significant impact in the social experiences of the international students interviewed. The students indicated campus housing provided additional social opportunities through both residence hall programs and through the roommate and hall-mate activities they planned together. Simon found that living on campus helped his transition by forcing him to meet other people living in the residence halls. He created relationships with other students because they were older and he related to them because he was

24. Marcela described her residential experience:

Some of the international students, they live outside the campus. But in my case, I think that I'm going to stay the four years. In general, most of the people do this...the lobby is a nice place. They try to make a lot of events there. So, like, we can see...all types of people over there.”

Malcolm indicated his residential experience had been an important part of his college life. The experiences he had faced helped him better adjust to American cultural issues and to develop friendships on campus. He described his residential experience by stating,

When I first came,...everyone told me that's not the best hall and it's full of footballers and it's sweaty and smells and stuff like that. But I think you just adapt to it. You have this atmosphere later on, and I think it's nice to see how the culture is changing....I've been living in diverse communities most of my time in the last six years, at least, and I

just...like very American housing, more or less. You know, rap music everywhere, people dancing and stuff. I found it very inspiring.

The three colleges had varying practices associated with roommate placement, and the students expressed different views on the importance of living with another international student or an American student. There was agreement from the students that living with an American student their first year on campus helped them practice their English proficiency skills and adapt more quickly to the campus culture. The students expressed mixed opinions about living with international students beyond the first year of college. Those indicating they preferred living with international students beyond the first year found it was easier because they shared common experiences on campus. Also, because most of the students were athletes, the interviews found they often lived with teammates who were also international students. Of the 12 students interviewed, only one student, Cecil, at East College, reported living off campus. Cecil said,

When I was staying on campus,...I was paying a lot in my tuition, which I have to take loans; I try to take loans to pay for my school. So moving off campus actually helped me a lot in getting a job, working 40 hours a week and still going to class. That's how my college life is doing.

Further, Cecil reported it was more convenient to live off campus because he worked two jobs and was an athlete. He also stated that living off campus with two other students allowed him to save money. Overall, most of the students indicated that lack of transportation, budget constraints, and the need for social interaction on campus were factors that enforced the need for international students to live on campus. Chester reported that although living off campus may have been cheaper, he faced difficulties of not having transportation to campus and needing a

monthly income to pay the rent. He stated that by living on campus, he had everything he needed, including utilities and academic resources.

Food and cultural issues was also a frequent and strongly discussed theme for the international students. The largest item of discontentment was related to the quality and variety of food available on campus. The students indicated the small campuses offered little or no choice for food selections. Only one campus, South College, was large enough to provide additional food vendors outside of the traditional cafeteria. The students consistently reported the food options were not as healthy, very different, and less appealing than that of their home countries. Camila shared there was only one restaurant on campus and “there’s a lot of fried food and there isn’t much choice and the food becomes repetitive.” Camila also found the cafeteria tried to incorporate international cuisines into the regular meal rotation. She suggested the most popular meals were often those that reached across international borders and were more common cuisines, such as Mexican or Chinese foods. The difficulty in adjusting to food on campus was reported by each student interviewed. Mya reported international students living in apartments on campus often shared their kitchens and had potluck dinners. That provided opportunities for them to eat meals from their own cultures and to experience food from other cultures. She indicated that would be a more frequent practice, but the international students have limited financial means, making these more infrequent special events. The students voiced further frustration due to the rural nature of their campuses and the inability to easily find restaurants serving international cuisine in their respective towns. Selah described she found American food to be mainly fast-food and often did not offer healthy options. She recalled,

I feel like they only have fast-food here, and in Guadeloupe, there are a little more traditional food. Even for sport men in Guadeloupe, you cannot eat fast-food or eat bad

things when you have a game. And here it's, like, normal to eat fast-food even if you are an athletic student.

Research question 3. Campus resources have been identified as a critical component of the international student experience and the student's ability to become a successful student (Kwon, 2009; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Because of their diverse experiences, international students may need to utilize campus resources designed to offer support for emotional issues, homesickness, academics, finances, and cultural adjustment in the campus community (Bradley, 2000; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). These students are often less likely to utilize these services because of communication barriers and perceived social stigmas on campus (Andrade, 2008; Kwon, 2009). Mamiseishvili (2011) identified the important role of international offices, academic advisors, and other support organizations on campus to work collaboratively with international students to assist in the transition process to retain these students from the first to second year. International students were found to have overcome perceived obstacles related to academic work balance, work, and social interactions by increasing their interaction with faculty, staff, and students on campus (Andrade, 2006b). Although research has shown positive retention results when students utilize campus resources, studies have also shown these services are also underutilized by international students (Hwang et al., 2014). The final research question driving this study is the following:

How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

For this research question, it will be necessary to evaluate the data obtained from both the 12 students interviewed and the three international student officers interviewed at each college. The staff interviews included questions about professional experience, scope of the staff's

administrative roles on campus, international student resources, interaction with the students, and the role of the international student officer on campus. The transcripts were evaluated and coded with the top nine themes summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Top Frequent Codes From International Officer Interviews

International Officer	Number of Responses
Need for Additional Financial Resources	18
Academic Resources	17
Athletic Resources	17
International Office Resources	15
Administrative Bureaucracy	14
Student Financial Issues	14
Preparation for College	10
Transportation Issues	10
Cultural Issues	9

Results from the student interviews (see Table 5) and staff interviews (see Table 6) identify a number of themes that allowed the researcher to evaluate in relation to research question 3. From the staff interviews, there were four themes—(a) need for additional financial resources (18), (b) academic resources (17), (c) athletics resources (17), and (d) international office resources (15)—that provided data to answer the research question. The staff member responses largely supported that the campus provided resources to help the international students be successful and that the students knew about these resources. The services each of these staff members provided also largely contributed to the student knowledge that these resources existed and where they needed to go on campus to utilize these services. The staff member interviews

and the student interviews were consistent in identifying the academic resources available, such as the library, writing center, and tutoring services on campus. The themes also provided data suggesting that the international students become aware of these services from the international student officers, faculty members, peer students, and other staff members on campus. Each of the international officers identified the critical need for daily interaction with other offices on campus that contributed to the effectiveness of resource identification and usage among the students. Laurica, the international officer at East College, stated she often had daily interactions with the athletic department because so many of the international students were athletes, and that prevented her from providing rides. This interaction was important as she tried to provide rides to and from the airport located more than an hour from the campus. She stated,

And now what I do,...unless they are operated under the international club, if they are athletes, I can't pick them up. Because right now, you are on your own....Last semester,...I didn't drive anyone to the airport because I was called to the clearance office, and I was told that it would be a violation.

The only way Laurica knew what students were eligible for a ride was to communicate frequently with the athletics office.

Nicole, international officer at South College, discussed the importance of working with the Religious Life office on campus. She reported a number of resources were offered through church support and the support extended into the community. She described this work:

When we talk to students,...sometimes I do get that question: is it only Methodist?...and I get a little pushback. But we're basically...based on the Methodist Church back in the sixties, but we're basically nondenominational. We have over 50, I think, representations among religions, and so we're very diversified. But I do think we have a good host family

program that's sponsored by a church that really helps make that connection for our students. And we do have certain populations of students that come here because.

Maria, international officer at West College, described her daily interaction with faculty members, other academic resource offices, and resources in town as a critical part of her work. She described that many of the faculty take an interest in the international students and have personal relationships with them outside of the classroom. Also, she indicated key personnel, such as the director of the writing center, were important to attracting the international students to use the resources, and "that would probably be the biggest draw for them because the writing is really hard for them." Maria further described the importance of establishing resources off campus such as medical care. She described her role:

I try to assist them as much as possible. So if they're going to the doctor, I try and stay with them until they're checked in. If they're filling a prescription, I go with them to make sure it's correct. But they eventually figure it out. At first it's hard, but eventually they figure it out.

Much of what the three international officers reported was related to how many ways they could provide transitional support for the international students to get access to resources on and off the campus.

The themes that emerged also produced findings that suggest in addition to academic resources, there are a host of resources unique to international students that are critical to their adaptation to the campus environment and overall long-term success. Financial issues ranked highest among the concerns identified and often guided the resources provided by the colleges and utilized by the students. The rural location of the three campuses emphasized the need for additional supportive resources for international students. Most importantly, the students lacked

transportation resources as all three campuses were located at least an hour from airports that hosted international flights. This forced a critical need for transportation to be provided by each campus, and that resource was often provided by the international student officer.

Another common theme identified in the student and staff interviews was the participation level of the students in athletics on each campus. The interviews identified eight of the students participated in athletics, and this often created additional burdens that could be addressed by the resources provided on campus. Camila, an East College student, reported she participated in two sports: women's golf and bowling. Her interviews revealed that participating in athletics allowed her to "get into the school more; it's a portal for more interactions." Although participation in two sports created extra responsibility for her as a student, Camila indicated the additional athletic scholarship made it worthwhile. Mario reported he participated in athletics his first year but was no longer an athlete because it took away from the focus on his academics. He stated, "I realized it was too much because we have to travel a lot, and I don't want to miss all of the classes because that's not my priority here." Sergio, a West College student, talked about how playing soccer on campus helped him meet other people and adjust to the campus. He also talked about the important role his coach played in his acculturation to the college. He recalled,

I think it's better for us if I have a family problem or something like that, and I need support with that. Maybe I can tell you and you can help me with this problem....[F]or example, one day maybe I come and play bad, and the reason is not because I don't want to play. The reason may be because I had a brawl with my father.

The staff and students indicated coaches played a major role in the identification of resources and often took the lead in referring students to college-provided resources. Maria described the

coaches were familiar with each of their students and knew what was going on with them. She stated,

I guess because the students are with them so much that, you know, they'll go to their coach....[T]hen whatever the issue might be,...the coach will either come to me and say, you know, we need to get this kid to the airport or this kid needs to go to the doctor, or the other people, like trainers, deal with them.

The international officers all indicated a relationship with the athletic departments and the importance of cooperative efforts to provide support for the students. The interviews provided consistent feedback that NCAA regulations limited the amount of support the college could provide and often at the increased expense of the students.

One of the unexpected themes associated with resources on campus was the identification of more informal resources available at each college. It was clear from the interviews that faculty and staff played a large role in providing more informal resources to international services, such as one-to-one personal support, invitations to visit homes, provision of rides, support of athletic and other leadership experiences by attending events, and by taking a personal interest in their personal lives. The interviews found the students had largely chosen small private colleges for the small class experience, and each student noted the college had met these expectations.

The international student officers consistently identified one continuing challenge was finding administrative and financial support to provide additional resources for the students. This ranged from the need to provide college vehicles for transportation, additional financial support for programming, meals for the break periods while the college was closed, resources for underprepared students, and better communication and orientation programs for the students. Maria and Laurica both reported they often used their own personal vehicle when transporting a

student to airports, doctor offices, social security offices, and other locations. Maria described she had to reserve larger vehicles at the only auto rental office in town before the athletic teams rented them. Laurica described she had to give very specific instructions to students flying to campus because of how far the airports were from the campus. The closest airport was over an hour away, and it was not always the cheapest for the students. One officer noted that often when students arrived on campus, they did not have bedding, toiletries, or proper clothing to adjust to the climate. Cecil, an East College student, described when he arrived on campus, Laurica had provided toiletries, linens, and even clothes to help the students adjust to the campus. He stated he didn't even own a coat, sweater, or other winter clothes when he arrived, and she helped provide those resources. That was a critical resource for him because he indicated he would not have been able to afford them on his own.

Conclusion

Chapter IV presented summary findings from qualitative research methods related to the persistence of international students at three small, private colleges. Themes from the semi-structured interviews with 12 international students and three international officers found these students presented unique challenges to colleges. Understanding these challenges and identifying additional resources to assist in the diversity and success of these students will help with the recruitment of new students (Mamiseishvili, 2011). The students reported to have been aware of campus resources and utilized both formal and informal resources. The rural location of each college was found to have significantly increased the need for additional resources and planning for these students. The findings from the interviews support the critical need for traditional academic resources but also reinforce that colleges need to provide extra resources to accommodate for challenges these students will face on campus. Beyond the traditional

classroom activities, extracurricular activities and the campus environment were found to be critical factors in the overall satisfaction of these students and their ability to adapt to the campus culture. The overall satisfaction of international students was related to positive cultural and diverse campus experiences and the resulting higher levels of self-actualization, academic pursuit, and retention rates on campus (Chang, 1999; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Results from this study in this chapter will be used to expand on the analysis of the established themes and provide a more in-depth analysis of how each theme contributes to the ability for international students to be successful, remain satisfied, and ultimately persist at small, private college campuses. The findings of this study are increasingly relevant because this research has largely been limited to larger, public institutions and single colleges (Andrade, 2009; Andrade & Evans, 2009) and to growing international student populations (Evans et al., 2009).

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Enrollment of international students studying at higher education institutions has reached a historical high with more than 974,000 in the United States (OECD, 2015). This number has grown steadily over the last 35 years with an increase of more than 10% between 2014 and 2015 (OECD, 2015). With more than 50% of the total international student population studying in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, there has been an increase in competition to attract these students over the last 10 years (Andrade, 2006a; OECD, 2015). Although representing only approximately 4% of the total college student population in the United States, international students are estimated to contribute more than \$30 billion to the economy during the 2014–2015 academic year (Andrade, 2009; Chin & Bhandari, 2006; IIE, 2015; Wildavsky, 2010). The influx of this new recruitment pipeline has been a promising development for higher colleges looking for additional funding resources, as many have experienced reduced state and federal funding (Andrade, 2006a; Archibald & Feldman, 2008).

In addition to the financial benefits, international students have been strong instruments of change in further diversifying colleges that in turn provide additional benefits for the campus culture, student experience, and overlapping communities (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). Scholars have found students attending colleges that have successfully sponsored more diverse campus cultures have reported higher levels of engagement and favorable experiences (Pascarella et al., 1996). Further, campuses that have been able to create more diverse experiences have reported success with higher levels of self-actualization, academic achievement, and retention rates (Chang, 1999; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). With a better understanding of the benefits these students

can bring to the institution, colleges have increased efforts to identify and recruit international students (Mamiseishvili, 2011). However, to date retention efforts have largely ignored international student populations with few retention studies including these rates (Andrade, 2009). Although much of the foundational retention theory was based on domestic student persistence, few studies have focused on international student retention in the United States (Kitsos, 2012; Kontaxakis, 2011; Lee, 2012).

Research in the retention of international students is increasing but has largely been focused on large public campuses. With larger student populations, multiple studies have examined these students on the bigger campuses and have been used to make generalizations about their attrition and persistence behaviors in the United States (Aw, 2012; Bista & Foster, 2011; Evans et al., 2009; Gómez et al., 2014; Hwang et al., 2014; Kitsos, 2012; Klomegah, 2006; Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Kwai, 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2011; Smith, 2015; Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2014). There is also a growing body of research related to the services provided to international students attending large public institutions (Abel, 2002; Bradley, 2000; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Chen, 1999; Evans, 2001; Hwang et al., 2014; Kwon, 2009; Lee, 2012; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). With increasing populations, the efforts to attract, recruit, recruit, and retain international students at smaller, higher education institutions must become more of a research focus. Small campuses are growing their international populations, and these increases, while not on the same scale as larger institutions, still comprise significant portions of the student bodies at these institutions (Andrade, 2009).

There is a need to continue international student retention research nationally, but there is also an emerging need to study the retention of these students on small, private college campuses that better reflects the uniqueness of these higher education institutions. Previous research has

focused on international students' ability to adapt to campus cultures, self-actualization, and social and academic engagement (Andrade, 2009; Misra et al., 2003; Poyrazli et al., 2004). This prior research has primarily focused on students attending large public institutions. Although studies have investigated international student retention on larger campuses, the research is nearly silent on the retention of these students at small private colleges.

The research questions for this case study were the following:

1. How are international students engaged at a small private college?
2. What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?
3. How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

Chapter V analyzes the results of this study and offers implications for future study.

Summary of the Results

This study investigated the variables that affect the ability of international students to persist at a small private college. Because there were a number of variables identified, a small sample size, and a need to evaluate this phenomenon in a contextual examination, a case-study approach was used (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). With the small student populations and unique circumstances related to their attendance at small private colleges, the case-study approach allowed for individual perspective and better evaluation of the analysis of meanings within the campus community (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). In this study, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with four international students and one international student officer at each of three small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. The interviews were audio

recorded and then transcribed to determine perceptions regarding the experiences of international students attending the small colleges.

This study examined international students attending three small, private colleges in the southeastern United States: East College, South College, and West College (pseudonyms). The three colleges were selected based on the following criteria:

- Total student body had less than 2,500 undergraduate students.
- International student population had a minimum of 30 students.
- Institution administered the 2015 NSSE.
- Institution provided on-campus housing facilities for undergraduate students.
- Institution employed a full-time administrator who served as the international student officer.

Permission was obtained to conduct research on each campus by the college president at each location (see Appendices G, H, and I). The primary international student officer from each college was interviewed to examine the officer's perceptions of institutional practice and policies related to the retention of these students. To solicit volunteers, the primary officer at each college was contacted and then agreed to participate and be interviewed by the researcher for this study. Additionally, the international student officer at each college assisted the researcher with obtaining volunteers by e-mailing the students (see Appendix E). The researcher then used the e-mail responses to contact the students to obtain additional information to select the participants (see Appendix B). This allowed the researcher to select a diverse group of participants representing both genders, varied class standings, and multiple passport countries. The selected student participants were then scheduled for two face-to-face interviews on each college campus (see Appendix E). The international staff members also participated in two face-to-face

interviews on each campus (see Appendix E). Qualitative data were collected and analyzed and shaped the findings of this study.

Qualitative Data

For this study, the international student officer ($n = 3$) and four international students ($n = 12$) were interviewed twice in semi-structured face-to-face interviews that were conducted at each college's campus and audio recorded. After completing six staff interviews and 24 student interviews ranging from 15 to 75 minutes in length, the audio recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Once returned to the researcher, each transcript was reviewed for accuracy and coded for emerging themes. The transcripts remained divided into two groups: one with the student interviews and the second with the staff interviews. The top 12 common themes were identified from the student interviews (see Table 5), and the top nine themes were identified from the staff interviews (see Table 6). At the second face-to-face interview with each student, the researcher collected a list of self-identified student involvement activities. These lists were evaluated for similar experiences, and a table was created listing the 11 common grouped experiences (see Table 4).

Student Themes

The top 12 common themes identified by the students ranged from responses of 42 for academic resources to 18 for athletic resources. Each of these themes was important for analysis in this study in relation with the academic and social activities on campus. Together, the 12 themes spanned the many areas that encompassed the students' experiences on campus that were vital to their success and persistence on campus.

Academic resources. The students consistently reported ($n = 42$) academic resources were an important part of their campus experience and critical to their academic success. The

library was identified by all of the students as one of the most important academic resources on campus. For the three colleges, each of the libraries operated as a hub for academic resource services. They contained the tutoring offices, writing centers, labs, and space for the students to meet in groups or to have quiet study areas. Each of these resources was noted to be critical in the success of the students and was identified early in their college experience.

Tutoring was a recurring theme among all of the students interviewed. Marcela, a student from South College, discussed the importance of tutoring in her adjustment to the campus and how there were ancillary benefits from attending the tutoring sessions on campus. She described her experience:

It was a requirement. Yes, but I really don't think I need it, but I think that it's good because it's a way to socialize too, because it's between students....I saw it a lot and I've been in the tutoring center a lot just to help with my friends, but I really didn't go for tutoring....I can see that actually they help you but personal experience too."

Marcela's experience reemphasized the importance of social interaction even in the academic resource areas. Cecil, an East College student, noted, "Number one, I would say my faculties. They make me; they are the number one reason for me being successful." This experience was commonly viewed by the students, and the faculty were cited as a valuable academic resource.

Academic rigor. All of the students were asked about the academic rigor of the college, and this presented comments ($n = 40$) that demonstrated each student had unique individual experiences based on their circumstances. There was a wide range of responses that indicated the student generally felt well prepared for the academic experiences in the classroom related to the course content. Three of the students reported they thought they were better prepared than their American counterparts, while the other nine expressed thoughts that they were adequately

prepared. Three of the students also expressed frustration with a liberal arts curriculum, not understanding why they needed to take courses that were not directly related to their intended majors.

Relationship with professors. All 12 of the international students had overwhelming positive responses ($n = 39$) about their experiences and relationships with professors. Each of the students commented they understood the importance of having a relationship with the professors and that relationship had to be established early in the semester. Eight of the students had specific examples of how the professor would take time in and out of class to answer questions, clarify lectures, and show an interest in their academic success. Seven of the students also had experienced a relationship with the professor outside of the classroom. One student talked about a relationship he had formed over cycling, and the professor had lent him a bike. Three of the students had experienced the professors inviting them to their home or to dinner in the community to share a meal together. All of the student athletes reported the professors were interested in their athletic success and attended athletic competitions on campus. Cecil also identified he understood the importance of having a relationship with his professors to help establish professional resources related to references needed for future endeavors.

International office resources. In this theme, the students identified ($n = 38$) the importance of the role the international office provided in their welcome, transition, and overall campus experience. All 12 of the students interviewed identified the importance of the international student officer in their experience and stability on campus. At West College, all four of the students identified that the staff member provided a closet of resources that helped welcome them to the campus and get them acclimated to their new environment. Each of these students was provided a basic toiletry kit, linens, and in some cases winter clothes. Cecil

identified he was provided with long pants, sweaters, and a coat that helped him adapt to the winter, a scenario he was not accustomed to in his native country. The students indicated these resources were important because they did not have the necessary funds for the adequate resources necessary to start the semester.

All 12 of the students identified the importance of the relationship to the international office for maintaining their visa status and campus policies related to international students. The students reported the importance of the international office resources was reinforced for their international student peers. The international office often served as a clearinghouse for many of the resources on and off each campus. Airport rides ($n = 12$), doctor visits ($n = 7$), retail store visits ($n = 7$), and government office visits ($n = 3$) were all identified as resources the international office helped to provide. The international officers were identified ($n = 8$) often as substituting for a family figure, such as a mother, while at the college. The students often referred to the staff members as their surrogate mothers on the campus.

Malcom, a South College student, identified the international office was a helpful resource in his transition to the college. He reported,

It first of all introduce[s] you with the facilities of the college, it introduces you to the chapel, it introduces you to the way of doing...academic research. So this is something really nice that we have. I also like the events that they organize frequently. Like sometimes they speak about leadership; they bring speakers from all over.

This description of his interaction with the international office is similar to those expressed by the other students. The office functioned as a gateway to service and found ways to make the students aware of these resources.

International office programs. The programming that was developed in the international offices was identified ($n = 32$) as an important part of the campus experience for the students. This programming was reported ($n = 12$) by the students to be primarily sponsored by the international student clubs at each of the colleges. At South College, the international club was identified as a major student activity programmer on the campus, and the students produced a major show each year that showcased international talent to the entire campus and local community. The peer-to-peer interaction within the international clubs was identified ($n = 6$) as an immediate opportunity for involvement on campus, and the transition was eased by spending time with students who shared common experiences.

Each of the colleges reported that the international office programs for the international students supplemented those activities programmed by the larger student activity programming boards on campus. The students identified ($n = 7$) these international programs often provided experiences that were responsive to their unique needs and transitional issues on the campus. These programmatic resources were important because they provided targeted supplemental goals to specifically help the students with transitional and cultural adjustment issues on each campus.

Chester, an East College student from Brazil, cited the importance of participating in the international club on campus. He emphasized the club was a valuable resource for international and American students. He said,

Some people...come from different backgrounds, different families, and then different financial, but most of us...yeah, we love it...Even sometimes you have an American who is always very involved with international students versus international...[T]hat's one thing I like about International Club: we call [it] International Students Club, but it

really doesn't matter where you're from. Even if you're American and you're involved in the club, we're going to treat you as a big family.

Transportation and location issues. This theme was identified ($n = 29$) as a critical component of the campus experience by the students ($n = 12$). All three of the colleges were located in rural areas that were not well equipped to provide public transportation, close retail shopping experiences, restaurant varieties, or ease of walking with established safe sidewalks. The issues related to this identified theme reinforced the importance of campus resources for the international students. The students ($n = 12$) discussed the role that not having a personal car or other reliable transportation played in their ability to navigate the community to take care of personal business, such as doctor appointments, or simply to visit local retail shops to buy needed personal items. At West College, the students ($n = 4$) identified there were only a handful of restaurant choices within walking distance of the campus, and the large retail chain was two miles from the campus. They expressed frustration about the lack of access and transportation played in their daily lives by adding an extra layer of needed planning. Sergio stated,

If you don't have a car, like, for example, if you want to go to Walmart, it's from here, I think by car, five minutes. But if you want to go...by foot, it's like 30 minutes...and later you go back again with your bags, you know...it's not easy.

The students consistently ($n = 12$) described the extra difficulty and expenses involved in planning flights to school because of the distance from campus. At East College and West College, the closest airport was more than an hour away from the campus. The students ($n = 12$) also discussed that travel to home was limited, and at best they could only go home two times a year. Mario, from Timor Leste, commented,

The last time I went home was...May 2015. It was two summers ago. It's very expensive...for where I'm from it's actually really expensive...[A] student from Asia, most of the time they go; some of them, they didn't go at all. They just wait until they get out and they go home once.

Financial issues. One of the most important identified variables ($n = 28$) for the students ($n = 12$) was how their finances impacted every part of their college experience. All of the students discussed that without financial aid from the college, they would not be able to attend the institution. Funding from home countries assisted the students ($n = 4$), and one student reported that during her tenure at the college, a change in government policy cut off her funding from home and left her with an outstanding bill that must be reconciled before she was able to graduate. Mya, a student at South College, stressed the importance of organizing and planning her finances. She indicated that because international students were only allowed to work on campus, her annual work-study assignment comprised her entire year of funds. She indicated that restricted her from traveling home during her entire four years, forced her to eat in the cafeteria for most meals, and placed a hardship on her during break periods when she had to pay for supplemental housing costs. Mya reported,

So for me right now, financially, like I try to make sure that I use what I need. And I know definitely...having only \$1,800 a year, that's what our financial aid work-study is, that's the only amount I can earn. So I try to make sure my budget is not more than that. I'm not spending more than that.

The students ($n = 5$) indicated expenses related to finding supplemental housing during breaks caused a hardship on their finances.

A common finding ($n = 12$) indicated financial decisions impacted almost every part of the international students' college experience. The colleges had tuitions ranging from \$24,000 to \$30,000 annually without including housing, books, and other fees associated with attendance. Students indicated ($n = 7$) their parents were unable to help with expenses, and one student indicated he sent any extra money home to help his family with their expenses. The lack of disposable incomes left the students more reliant on campus resources, such as campus housing, meal plans, student activities, college-provided transportation, and financial aid. Finances was identified ($n = 12$) as the variable most often related to the students' ability to persist on each of their current college campuses.

Language barriers. The interviews found ($n = 27$) language was one of the major issues each of the students ($n = 12$) had to deal with when adjusting to all aspects of the campus. They experienced initial difficulty in classes, social situations, and when seeking resources on campus. There was an initial period of transition that was reported ($n = 12$) to last for most of the first year on campus. The complexity and severity of this variable were dependent on their level of English language proficiency and context of the conversations. The students ($n = 12$) expressed there was a difference between their ability to speak the language versus writing the language. Mario expressed he really struggled with "writing the stuff in English." There was also indication ($n = 9$) of the extra level of difficulty the southern dialect created for their ability to understand conversations. Additionally, there was an adjustment period ($n = 6$) for adjusting to slang terms, humor ($n = 3$), and the situational context of conversations ($n = 3$). Simon, a West College student from Italy, commented,

One slang word was turd. I thought...it actually meant idiot or jerk. Then,...I looked it up in a dictionary, and I was like, oh, okay, it's not actually that. And so...I didn't use it because when I hear a word that I don't know, I wouldn't use it right away.

The students ($n = 8$) expressed their professors were helpful in the classroom with repeating terms and further explaining confusing concepts related to language gaps. Cecil, an East College student from Nigeria, reported,

My professors have been helping me a lot with the language issues and everything because I speak, I speak English back from, my first language is English. But the problem was my accent was deep. That was the problem; my accent was deep, and it took them some time just to understand me. So I have to speak slowly, correct myself and, like, just try to subdivide my voice.

Students who had peers who spoke their language ($n = 8$) reported that speaking their native language eased the transition on campus by allowing them to be more comfortable initially.

Those students without language peers ($n = 4$) reported that although it initially affected their level of comfort, it forced them to practice English and become more proficient at a faster rate.

Student activities. This theme was found ($n = 26$) to be one of the most important variables related to the students' experiences on campus. The students ($n = 12$) identified the importance the campus-provided activities played in their experiences and ability to meet and associate with peers on campus. For these students, there were two layers of activities that impacted their experiences. First, the planned student activity events supplemented those planned by the international offices. The activities provided by the campus activity boards were identified ($n = 12$) as a primary resource for introducing the international students to American students

and helping them learn more about American and campus culture. Mya, a South College student, commented,

I have friends who go to huge universities...like 50,000 students, and then my friends are not so involved on campus. So yeah, that shows...how going to a small university can be very helpful in developing your skills not only in academics but social life as well.

These experiences were consistently identified as critical to the campus experience because the international students had limited finances or transportation that would allow for opportunities outside of the campus.

Second, the students indicated ($n = 12$) college-provided student activities were their primary resource for entertainment. Mario, a student at South College, talked about his experience with the campus recreation and intramurals office. He commented, "They actually provide some outings, not only for sports, but they do some outings to the beach, to the barn, like, camping and stuff." The students were also able to better integrate with the culture of other students ($n = 4$) by learning popular songs from dances, watching movies ($n = 12$), and attending cultural events that educated the entire campus ($n = 6$). Student activities were identified ($n = 11$) as the main attraction to bring the students out of their residence hall rooms to socialize with the American students on campus. The students also indicated ($n = 7$) participation in student activities also provided leadership opportunities for them on campus that enhanced their campus experiences. These opportunities helped them have more opportunities for engagement in planning these events and in socializing with students on campus. Chester, a student at East College, commented,

So sometimes they don't understand or know a lot from our culture. So one thing we like about the international club, that I personally like, is receiving the American people to

our club and interacting with us. And then they get to know something new about our culture.

The students ($n = 7$) also identified their college made intentional efforts to integrate cultural programs in their regular student activity schedules and encouraged participation from the international students.

Campus housing. The students ($n = 12$) identified they had lived in campus housing for at least one year. At the time of the interviews, most of the students ($n = 11$) reported they continued to live on the campus. Campus housing was another critical resource for the students at each of the colleges. As identified in other themes, the students' finances, lack of transportation, location, and language barriers all contributed to the importance of living on campus. Sophia, a student attending West College, commented,

There are a lot of factors that go into the transition. It's not as easy as people think and, well, it could be easy for some people if you quickly adapt, but it depends on how quickly you can...adapt to the culture. I've never been used to living in a confined space, but coming here, that was something that they offered, and I couldn't afford to stay off campus as an international. So I had to adapt to the culture, and it wasn't easy.

There were no formal policies regarding the placement of international students with American students, but those students ($n = 6$) who had experienced this type of rooming assignment experienced a variety of issues related to language, culture, and cleanliness. Overall, they found the experiences assisted their adjustment to the campus and English language proficiency.

Campus housing was a necessity for the students ($n = 12$) when they first arrived on campus because of issues related to small towns, lack of cash to rent an apartment, lack of documentation to complete an apartment rental, and campus policies prohibiting students from

living off campus. Access to campus housing also provided access to the cafeteria and guaranteed daily meals for the students. All three of the colleges had developed flexible policies that provided some opportunities for students to remain on campus during campus breaks. However, the students were charged additional fees for the periods during semester breaks. Mya reported she often traveled or went home with American friends because she could not afford to pay the fees over the break. She commented, “That’s why when it’s vacations and stuff, I go to...people I know in the U.S....[T]hey have houses so I don’t have to pay for housing at least.” The students identified ($n = 4$) they stayed with local American students, traveled ($n = 3$), returned home ($n = 5$), and remained on campus during at least one of the breaks ($n = 10$). The students ($n = 7$) expressed frustration that they did not have access to apartments with kitchens during their first year on campus to be able to cook their own meals. However, it provided additional opportunity for these students to meet other international students on campus with kitchens and allowed them social experiences over meals cooked in campus housing.

Food and cultural issues. One of the most important identified issues on campus ($n = 25$) related to adjustment and overall satisfaction was food and the difficulty adjusting to American-style food. The students ($n = 12$) indicated it was the most consistent issue they experienced from the first day on campus though their senior year on campus. The difficulty in adjusting to the meals on campus was complicated by the small colleges’ inability to offer multiple restaurants on the campus. For East College and West College, they had one primary cafeteria that served traditional meal plans. At South College, the campus was large enough to offer a few campus alternatives. However, the students indicated ($n = 9$) American-style food was not as healthy as they were accustomed to in their home countries. Simon, a West College

student, commented that meal selections and times were all issues he had to learn to adapt to. He commented,

You get through it because it's just food and you eat it, but like, the time...like lunch at 11, dinner at five, and what do you have to eat? That's something that for us is almost totally off the wall...At home we have lunch at two and dinner at nine and we eat different things. So that's something you have to live, understand how to deal with.

The students indicated ($n = 8$) the campuses tried to offer some cultural options, but these efforts were not sufficient. The most positive feedback on campus meals was related to days when common international cuisine, such as Mexican or Chinese, was offered.

The difficulty adjusting to American cuisine had implications in other areas of the students' lives, such as residential assignments, finances, and student activities. Residential assignments ($n = 6$) were identified as important for spaces that provided kitchens on campus, allowing them to prepare their own meals. Also, it allowed for additional socialization and acculturation by sharing those experiences with other students. Yet, the necessity to cook meals in apartment kitchens or seek food off campus contributed to the financial strain of these students. Finally, the students indicated ($n = 4$) campus activities often provided popular food, such as pizza and subs, which provided extra incentive to attend the events.

Athletic resources. Because of participation in athletics on campus ($n = 8$), the students reported coaches were often an additional resource on campus. The coaches were identified to have provided rides to the airport, referrals to academic resources, international officers, and other campus resources. Sergio, a student at West College, reported his coach was a valuable campus resource for him and often assisted him with campus resources. He said, "If you know them more, you will...feel more comfortable with them and...you can be open...[W]e are going

to work together during four years.” The students responded favorably to their athletic experiences and indicated that athletic scholarships ($n = 8$) were critical for their continued enrollment at the college. The student athletes ($n = 8$) indicated participation in athletics placed an additional amount of stress on their experiences as students. Charlotte, an East College student, reported,

I think what keeps me here is the tennis team, my friends, and especially my coach because he is amazing. He’s really nice. He also helps us with everything, and he’s just there. If you have, for example, trouble in a class with teacher or with grades, I talk to him, and he always tries to take care about it. Like, he e-mails the teacher to ask what’s happening and things like that.

Students expressed the need to have a more structured planner ($n = 3$) and that participation often left less free time ($n = 5$) to attend campus activities and other events on campus. The students identified participation in campus athletics provided them positive experiences related to travel, team comradery, and familiarity with a sport they grew up playing.

International Student Officer Themes

The eight most common themes identified by the international officers ranged from a response of 18 for need for additional financial resources to nine for cultural issues. Each of these identified themes were important for analyzing the usefulness of social and academic resources in retaining students and student awareness of academic resources on campus.

Together, the eight themes identified areas that overlapped with information obtained from the student interviews.

Need for additional financial resources. The importance of an adequately funded office to support student programming was a commonly reported theme ($n = 18$). East College and

West College reported the international student offices were managed by one professional with limited budget funds. Laurica reported she was the primary international student officer, but that responsibility was on top of her full-time duties as a faculty member at the college. Maria indicated she was the only officer, and her full-time responsibilities were associated with the operation of international student services on campus. Both of these officers indicated they were operating with limited budget funding. At West College, the funds covered a few trips, holiday meals, and other services annually. However, Maria indicated the current budget was a fraction of what could be used to better provide services more consistently throughout the year. Maria reported,

We've been working a lot this year with trying to get more things going on and getting more money to do things so that kids aren't bored and want to stay and don't have too many complications. So previously, the resources have been difficult; they've told me no to things. But this year, I haven't had that issue yet.

At East College, Laurica reported she had supplemented international program funds with support from local churches. This support had come from donations, dinners, and church events. South College also reported local churches had assisted international students by providing meals and other events in the community, such as sponsor families for the students. Laurica commented, "One church helped me pay for the students. And then they, power bills and everything...we paid the students to split that and then paid it." West College also reported extra support had been provided by community members who had expressed an interest in assisting with the international students on campus.

South College had the most robust office operations with multiple staff members and funding for all stages from recruitment to programming on campus. This office supplied students

with printed materials, such as brochures and a handbook, and hosted a digital presence on the college's website. West College did not provide any printed materials for the students or website presence specifically dedicated to international student services. Maria often had to use her personal vehicle to transport students due to no campus-owned vehicles. She also reported she had access to funds to assist with providing meals for the holidays and breaks. At East College, there were few college-dedicated funds for international student programming. Laurica reported using her personal vehicle to transport students and used her house to host meals for the students.

Campus financing of international programs on campus is a critical issue for the long-term sustainability of programs. Lack of resources for transportation and limited staff support at East College and West College demonstrated the budget constraints of a program at a small private campus. These programs were contingent on the administration of the programs by one staff member serving a student population with unique circumstances and needs on campus.

Academic resources. The staff member interviews ($n = 17$) supported the overall positive views shared by the students about academic resources on the campus. The staff members indicated the library was an important resource on the campus and described the availability of a writing center, labs, tutoring, and study space in those areas. Nicole commented that South College had implemented academic programs to help the students better transition into the college. She stated every international student was given a test for English class placement. She further commented, "If they don't score as well on oral or written, then we have oral communication...and writing ESL programs to help." The staff reported ($n = 3$) international students often used these resources, and often at higher rates than those of the American students. These resources were discovered through campus promotions, international officer referrals, faculty referrals, and peer recommendations. Laurica reported students often

learned about resources from “word of mouth, through me sometimes...or sometimes through their own peers, their friends, and other internationals.”

The academic resources provided on campus were reported to be one of the strongest aspects of the campus efforts to assist international students on campus. The staff members indicated there were no special services specifically for internationals but rather existing services designated to serve the entire campus community. The officers also reported faculty members were very responsive to the students’ needs in and out of the classroom. They commented on the faculty members who ate with the students in the cafeteria, at local restaurants, and in their homes. They also suggested that faculty members supported the students at athletic events, performances, and other activities on campus.

Athletic resources. Resources provided through the students’ participation in athletics was another commonly identified theme ($n = 17$) among the staff members ($n = 3$). Each of the officers reported a continued relationship with coaches and other athletic staff members. The relationship was often formed when the students were making plans to arrive on campus. At West College, the officer helped pick up students from the airport, provide them with keys to their room, and help them get adjusted to the campus. At East College, the officer picked up the students from the airport, provided toiletries and linens, and helped them get established on campus. Both of these campuses had the largest number of international students participating in athletics ($n = 7$), as their students were most dependent on athletic scholarships. Each of these officers reported having significant professional relationships with the coaches to assist the students with campus needs.

International office resources. This theme emerged with responses ($n = 15$) related to the need to provide resources through the office to help students adjust to the campus. All three

of the offices reported the need to assist students with visa documents and other government forms, such as obtaining social security cards so the students could work in the United States.

Laurica reported,

I do a workshop on SEVIS to tell them what it means to be on status, out of status, what it means. Right now, I have one kid that most likely would have been out of status because he has just 12 hours. He's failing one class, and I had to call him and tell him...he has no cushion.

There were also consistent findings demonstrating these students relied heavily on campus-sponsored transportation. All three colleges reported that providing weekly trips to retail stores, doctor offices, entertainment venues, and other areas was a critical resource needed by the students. The interviews confirmed the limited ability for these students to live off campus, own cars, or have access to local resources without some access to transportation. For East College and West College, the majority of all resources were provided and managed by one staff member to plan, organize, and administer to the students.

Administrative bureaucracy. One of the minor themes that emerged from the interviews ($n = 14$) was related to some of the difficulties the staff experienced in administering the international student programs. The interviews demonstrated the overall communication and administration of international student services were inconsistent and varied greatly between the three colleges. At East College, the officer expressed frustration about the lack of communication between the admitting office and her office. Laurica struggled to get accurate lists of new arriving international students in a timely fashion that allowed her to be prepared for their arrival on campus. She reported there were circumstances every semester when she found out about a new student from a coach or another student. She indicated she had been working to

streamline the process so that admissions, athletics, and the international office could more effectively communicate to prepare for the students' arrival on campus. This communication may have been more disconnected because her office was located in an academic building and away from other student service offices.

At South College, the international student office was more robust and worked in cooperation with the Student Affairs office. Because this office was responsible for every aspect of recruiting the students to management and programming, it was a more seamless operation. The office was conveniently located in the student center that operated as a hub for student involvement on campus. The structure of this office supported collaborative programming with Student Affairs, which provided most of the student service resources on the campus.

At East College, the international student office was located within the Student Affairs department. This organization provided for more cooperation between other student service areas. Maria identified additional strides could be made in the communication between her office and other campus offices to better serve the students. The rural location of the college was also identified as a contributor in the difficulties to provide student services. She described there was only one car rental agency in town, and because the college did not own any vehicles, she competed with other offices to rent vehicles.

Student financial issues. Like the student interviews, the staff interviews produced a theme ($n = 14$) related to the financial issues students experienced on campus. All three of the officers identified the importance financial aid played in the ability of the students to attend and stay enrolled at the college. The interviews produced overlapping themes with the students about their ability to work only on campus due to government regulations. Those students without additional family financial support were then limited to whatever funds the students could earn

through campus employment. The officers from East College and West College reported financial constraints were especially tough on international student athletes who did not have much support from their families. Due to the nature of their sports, practice times and competitions severely limited their ability to maintain meaningful campus employment hours.

The South College officer reported there were not as many international student athletes on her campus, as compared to other private schools, because they had a partnership with a large grant organization that provided most of the financial assistance for their students. This financial assistance ranged from partial to complete coverage of all student expenses and allowed the students to have less of a time commitment to an extracurricular activity. This grant organization was the primary driver in allowing the college to have 200 international students on campus.

Preparation for college. The interviews produced a theme ($n = 10$) that discussed the college preparedness for each of the international students. The officers ($n = 3$) confirmed the students were often not completely prepared to be a college student, and the level or preparedness varied between students, passport countries, and family resources. The most common response ($n = 4$) indicated that much of the students' preconceived notions of college were based on American television or movies. This was further confirmed in the student interviews ($n = 6$) and had a large impact on what the students expected versus what they found when they arrived on campus. This is significant because the international students did not visit the campus prior to enrolling and arriving for the fall semester. The students were reported ($n = 4$) to have relied on media and Web sources to plan for their college experiences, and the reality of the college did not always meet the conceived expectations. This disconnect was highlighted by the rural location of the campuses and a less active social component than they had imagined prior to arriving.

Laurica commented that another issue related to preparedness was the student's ability to get the needed supplies and sundries to be a residential student. She reported they often traveled with only one or two pieces of luggage and limited financial resources. That often meant they were not prepared to have linens for their room or other basic toiletries to establish the basic on-campus necessities. For East College, this need was supplemented by the international office and donations from the campus community and local churches. The officers ($n = 3$) also reported communication played a factor in the students' preparedness for college. Insecurity with their English language proficiency and other cultural norms inhibited their ability to obtain the resources needed.

Transportation issues. This theme was the most prevalent among both the student ($n = 29$) and staff ($n = 10$) interviews. Like the financial theme, this was a theme that permeated much of the students' experiences on campus. The officers ($n = 3$) reported government regulations related to obtaining a driver's license, inability to afford insurance, and other costs associated with owning a car prohibited almost all of the international students from having reliable self-transportation. These increased the international students' need for and reliance on college-sponsored transportation. All three of the colleges reported that during the initial check-in and orientation process, resources were made available to transport students to local retail stores to purchase items. East College and West College reported they continued this resource throughout the semester to allow these students to have access to shopping.

The rural location of the three campuses was found to have contributed to the problems associated with transportation for the students. At East College and West College, there was no public transportation in town available to the students. At South College, there was local public transportation, but the staff ($n = 3$) and students ($n = 4$) reported the hours were structured

around traditional business hours and not supportive of student schedules. Additionally, South College was noted ($n = 6$) to be prohibitive of pedestrian traffic near the campus because of safety concerns. All of the staff ($n = 3$) reported international students were reliant on other students who owned cars to provide daily transportation opportunities and additional opportunities to travel away from the campus.

Cultural issues. This theme was reported by each of the international student officers ($n = 3$) and the students interviewed ($n = 12$). Cultural issues were closely identified with the norms associated with their passport countries and the students' ability to adapt to American culture on campus. Laurica noted for her African students, communication was often impaired early in their experiences because the cultural norm for Africans was not to look someone in the eyes when speaking with them. American students found the tilted head and indirect eye contact to be disrespectful. Maria reported the international students often struggled with the use of slang terms and humor.

All three of the colleges reported it was important for the international office, student activities, and other campus resources to provide cultural programming opportunities to allow the students to share their cultural heritage with the campus. At South College, the sharing of cultural experiences had become a more formal, large annual event on campus to supplement the efforts made throughout the semester. At East College and West College, the staff described ($n = 3$) efforts by the international clubs, campus dining services, and academic offices to introduce cultural-sharing opportunities on the campus. All three of the officers stressed the importance of these cultural-sharing activities for the international students and also for the entire campus community. It provided additional out-of-classroom opportunities for the international student to bridge efforts between the faculty, staff, and student on the campus.

Student Involvement Results

Each student was asked to submit a list of activities and organizations they had participated in on the campus. With the number of organizations and activities listed, a group of common activities was created to display the results (see Table 4). The findings show the students ($n = 12$) all reported to have been involved in at least one club or organization, with many ($n = 8$) reporting membership in multiple social organizations. Additionally, the students all reported ($n = 12$) to have regularly participated in at least one student activity program on the campus. A number of the students ($n = 10$) reported an involvement in an academic club or organization, and another group ($n = 8$) reported participation in academic tutoring and listed that as a campus activity. The students also reported athletic participation ($n = 8$) as one of their primary activities on campus. Other activities, such as community service experiences ($n = 8$), gym or wellness center participation ($n = 7$), honor societies ($n = 5$), intramurals ($n = 4$), and religious activities ($n = 4$), were listed as frequent areas of participation among the international students on campus. One of the more interesting findings was related to the level of engagement the students reported in this list of activities. All of the students ($n = 12$) reported to be involved in a leadership capacity in at least one of their on-campus commitments.

Conclusions

The questions examined in this case study were the following:

1. How are international students engaged at a small private college?
2. What academic and social activity resources on campus are effective in the retention of international students at a small private college?
3. How do international students become aware of and utilize the campus resources designed to retain them?

There are a number of variables that affect a college's ability to retain international students through graduation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the international staff member and four international students at three small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. The students described experiences on each of the campuses that demonstrated formal and informal resources were critical to their overall success and contentment at the colleges. Researchers and the students concurred that meaningful student engagement is a critical component in the success of students in both the academic and social settings on campus (Andrade, 2009; Astin, 1993; Chang, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). The students understood the importance of participating in campus events, and this understanding extended in both the social and academic areas of college experiences. The experiences of the students represented active involvement in groups organized by international student peers and offices, formal and informal relationships in and out of the classroom, and attendance of campus-sponsored events. The on-campus experiences were critical gateways for the international students to become more proficient in English, foster relationships that assisted with cultural integration, and utilize campus resources that provided critical student services.

The staff participants in this study expressed a sincere personal commitment to the international students, which often extended beyond the expected job descriptions. The staff indicated the international students were a unique and valuable population on the college's campus. The interviews revealed the staff members were often a large factor in providing student services and resources, making the students aware of these resources, and using campus networking with faculty, staff, and students to identify those in need of extra assistance. The staff appreciated their important role as family surrogate for many of the students and had a firm

understanding that culture, language, and other variables, such as finances and transportation, factored largely into the acculturation of students into the campus community.

Although each college demonstrated a strong commitment to one-to-one attention for these students, there was a large gap in the overall institutional assessment of these services and student satisfaction inventories designed specifically for measuring international student experiences on the campus. Each of the colleges was identified as participants in the 2015 NSSE survey, but none of the colleges reported using the survey to analyze the segregated international student responses for assessment purposes. Although the NSSE survey has been widely used on a national level to measure levels of student engagement in academic and social experiences on the campus, the survey was not used as a measure of assessment in regards to the international student experiences on these three college campuses. The staff indicated that although there were efforts to monitor the overall student retention numbers on campus, little effort or focus had been dedicated to monitoring the retention of international student subpopulations on the campus. The officers demonstrated extensive knowledge of their students, personal situations, and examples of how the campus faculty and staff had worked to assist these students with their experiences. However, there was a lack of demonstrated focused efforts to coordinate retention strategies among these same constituencies.

The staff and students confirmed the importance of participation in campus academic and social activities. The students demonstrated a high level of personal interaction with faculty members that established foundational relationships to assist their overall performance and satisfaction in the classroom. The international students understood the importance of establishing relationships with their professors and often chose the small college experience because of those personal opportunities. The nature of the small college classroom size and

faculty-to-student ratio likely contributed to the ease in creating these relationships. The students identified the importance of having faculty support for their participation in athletic competitions, student activities, and other personal interests outside of the academic arena. The staff and students identified the critical role the international club played in the life of students on campus in relation to academic resource referrals, social programming, and acculturation for the students. Further, the international students participated in campus activities at a high rate, demonstrating the important role of these social activities in their college careers.

The staff and students reported that international students were aware of and utilized campus resources designed to retain students at the institution. At each of the colleges, the academic resources were generally designed and designated for use among the entire student population on campus. There were not specialty academic services designed for the exclusive use of international students, but the students confirmed the academic resources provided did meet their expectations and were useful. The library was identified as the primary academic resource hub at each of the colleges. The centralization of services, such as the writing center, labs, tutoring, and study space, all made the library a critical resource for the students on campus. The students identified awareness of the resources was largely due to informal communication between faculty, staff, and other students. None of the students identified a formal advertisement or online location for service identification. Rather, their awareness of these resources often resulted from casual conversations with peers, international officers, and faculty members.

This study failed to confirm or deny if student engagement was a predictor for student retention in small public colleges. The staff confirmed the importance of integrating into the campus community through academic and social engagement. The students also confirmed the importance of engaging in academic and social activities on the campus. Additionally, the

students were found to be engaged at high levels through both informal and formal interactions, academic and social activity attendance, and leadership activities within those same experiences. This study highlighted the need for small colleges to design assessment measures to evaluate international student experiences on campus and their roles in retaining the students.

Recommendations for Further Research

It will be important to continue to focus research efforts on the retention of international students on small, private college campuses as this population continues to grow across the nation (Andrade, 2009; Archibald & Feldman, 2008; IIE, 2015). This study focused on semi-structured interviews with international students and international office staff members and their perceptions of experiences related to this subpopulation on campus. Additional research will be critical to better identify the campus resources and administrative roles in retaining these students through graduation. Specifically, more research needs to be conducted to evaluate the formal and informal administrative processes that govern retention strategies for international students on campus. A closer examination of how small colleges evaluate and implement programs to retain international students will be critical for future research efforts.

Due to the nature of the sample selections, the students were all well known and easily identified by the international officers who assisted with the selection. This was identified as a limitation in the study as international students comprised one of the smallest subpopulations on each campus. A recommendation for future study would be to identify a larger population of the international students to participate in a study. This study used four students on each campus, but there is an opportunity for larger sample sizes to be included in the future. Further, there is a need to identify an assessment tool designed to measure the engagement levels within the context of international student experiences. The current most widely used tool is the NSSE survey, and

that instrument was not designed to accommodate the unique experiences of international students.

Another area that would be ideal for further research is the role the faculty play in retaining international students on campus. The staff and students identified the importance of these relationships in this study, but future research could focus on the perceptions from the faculty point of view. It would be interesting to determine what specific roles the faculty are taking in the student experiences and to evaluate what measures are being taken to specifically assist the students' experiences on campus.

Implications for Professional Practice

There is little research dedicated to the retention of international students at small private colleges (Andrade, 2009; Andrade & Evans, 2009; Evans et al., 2009; Mamiseishvili, 2011; Misra et al., 2003). The results of this study are especially applicable for small colleges that host international students on their campuses. Understanding the role of student engagement opportunities and academic resources will provide better context and analysis for assessment measures to be developed on campus. Recommendations for more administrative focus on increasing financial resources, strengthening communicative structures, and developing assessment strategies will assist campus administrators seeking to increase retention rates.

The students in this study confirmed previous findings that although the three small colleges were proactive in campus programming and academic resource allocations, additional attention needs to be placed on the complicated variables relating to culture, finances, and social adjustment on the campus (Andrade, 2009; Aw, 2012; Misra et al., 2003; Poyrazli et al., 2004). It is necessary to understand that the characteristics that are often evaluated to help retain American students, such as small community locations, personal communication with staff and faculty, and

campus services, are all necessary but need a more critical evaluation for international students. Small college campuses located in rural locations provide additional challenges for administrators seeking to meet the needs of international students. The legal and financial limitations on these students often create additional hardships that are difficult to resolve and will require significant campus funding allocations to address.

This study also suggests programming on small, private college campuses remains a critical factor in meeting the academic and social needs of international students. This programming must be intentional and work collaboratively among all the offices and departments on campus to ensure funds are maximized and more comprehensive services are provided for the students. Additional research has confirmed international students are aware of and utilize campus resources, such as student activities and academic support services (Ho, 2017). This study confirms campus support services are critical to the success of international students for both formal and informal reasons. The students in this study relied on the academic resources to provide academic support but also social connections that strengthened acculturation to the college and their English language proficiency. Hsu and Huang (2017) confirmed that international students' interaction in the classroom and on campus is hindered by social isolation and a lack of confidence in their language skills. This study confirms that small private colleges provide excellent opportunities to provide formal and informal experiences to support the students. These experiences come from the more formal college-provided programs, one-on-one interaction with international student officers, and more informal interaction with faculty, staff, and students peers on campus.

It will also be necessary to focus efforts on how to assess and monitor international student trends on a national level. Currently, the lack of government requirements for reporting

international student statistics beyond government clearance and attendance inhibits a researched approach for monitoring the retention behaviors of these students (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2015; Zhao et al., 2005). The creation of a national consortium to report and monitor the persistence patterns of international students would be an asset to higher education administrators evaluating campus efforts to retain these students. Perhaps most important in understanding how small colleges can better manage and retain international students is by evaluating the institutional level of support for these students on campus. This study found many of the services international students utilize are often services and programs created for the general campus population. Further examination of these services and how individualized programs or learning communities can better serve international students will be critical for the long-term success of these students on campus. This is further evidenced in this study by recognizing that formal services often serve as gateways to more informal interactions that foster campus acculturation, allowing for these students to better adapt to their academic community and persist through graduation.

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Appendix A

Electronic Notice

Good morning-

My name is Dan Sullivan and I am a Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University, studying international student engagement on small private college campuses. You are receiving this survey because you have been identified as an undergraduate international student currently enrolled at ([REDACTED]) University.

I am looking for a group of international students to participate in either a small focus group of approximately six international students or a one on one interview. The questions will focus on your individual experience as an international student attending a small private college. I anticipate that the interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes long, schedules at a convenient time for you.

If you are willing to be considered for inclusion in this study, please respond by completing the personal information below.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this study.

First Name:

Last Name:

Phone Number:

Academic Year in School:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at dsullivanjr@nmu.edu or 919-265-8890.

Dan Sullivan

Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University

Appendix B

Follow-Up Phone Call Script

Good afternoon-

My name is Dan Sullivan and I am a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. I recently sent you an email with information about a research study to which you replied your willingness to discuss potential participation. Do you have about five minutes to discuss this study?

If yes, proceed

If no, is there a time that would be better that I can call again? Thank you for your time. I will call back at a more convenient time.

What is your academic year standing?

Is this the only college you have attended in the US?

What is your home country?

One a scale of 1-10, how well do you rate you English language conversational skills?

Are you involved in one or more club or activity on campus?

Will choose one of two options:

#1

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me on the phone. I really appreciate your time.

#2

Would you be willing to consider participation in my study about international student engagement on small private colleges? Your perspective could be very valuable to my research.

Verify contact information:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. Do you have questions for me? I will be in contact soon to find a mutual time for us to meet.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form for Student Interviews

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

W. Dan Sullivan Jr, M. Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the engagement of international students on small, private college campuses.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an international student at ([REDACTED]).

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will meet with Dan Sullivan, primary researcher, for two interviews, either face to face or via the Internet with audio/webcam technology.
3. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about your experiences on campus as an international student. These interviews will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.
4. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed at a convenient campus location and will take a total time of about 120 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFIT'S

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand how the level of engagement by international students on campus may contribute to their long term retention as a student.

E. PAYMENTS

Participants will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Dan Sullivan can be contacted via email at dsullivanjr@nnu.edu, via telephone at (919) 265-8890. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Loredana Werth, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at lwerth@nnu.edu, via telephone at (208) 467-8062, or by writing: 623 University Drive, Nampa, Idaho, 83686.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH
COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for International Student Officer

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

W. Dan Sullivan Jr, M. Ed., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the engagement of international students on small, private college campuses.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are the international student officer at ([REDACTED]).

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will meet with Dan Sullivan, primary researcher, for two interviews, either face to face or via the Internet with audio/webcam technology.
3. You will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about your experiences on campus working with international students. These interviews will be audio taped and it will last up to an hour.
4. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed at a convenient campus location and will take a total time of about 120 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes or files will be encrypted and password protected known only the primary researcher. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

D. BENEFIT'S

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand how the level of engagement by international students on campus may contribute to their long term retention as a student.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Dan Sullivan can be contacted via email at dsullivanjr@nnu.edu, via telephone at (919) 265-8890. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Loredana Werth, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at lwert@nnu.edu, via telephone at (208) 467-8062, or by writing: 623 University Drive, Nampa, Idaho, 83686.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for the interviews to be audio taped in this study.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH
COMMITTEE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

Appendix E

Interview Questions

First Individual Student Interview

1. What is your passport country?
2. How old are you?
3. How did you hear about this university?
4. How were you recruited and what made you want to attend this college/university?
5. Was this university your first choice?
6. Is this the first college/university you have attended? If no, where else have you attended and for how long?
7. Do you have family or close friends that live in the United States? If so, how does that impact your experience?
8. What is your major?
9. Do you live on campus? If on campus, please describe your residential assignment. If off campus, please describe your residence. How has your residential location affected your experience at college/university?
10. Are you an athlete? If yes, what sport and how has this affected your experience on campus?
11. Tell me about your experiences personal experiences communicating on campus? What kind of communication barriers/difficulties have you experienced on campus?
12. Tell me about your experience as an international student on campus? What is the social life aspect like? What is the academic aspect like?
13. How much interaction do you have with the campus' international student officer?
14. What are some of the difficulties you face on campus that are unique to international students?
15. Tell me about the academic rigor you have experienced at your school.
16. Talk about the campus resources you have been using to help you succeed in your academic program. Where have you gone on campus to identify these resources?
17. What do you miss from home?
18. How is your college experience similar or different from what you expected?
19. Do you plan to graduate from this university?
20. Between now and the time we meet again, reflect on your time on campus and create a list of some of the events/activities that you have participated in since arriving on campus. Please bring this list to our next meeting.

Second Individual Student Interview

1. What are some of the resources available to international students to help them succeed on- campus?
2. How are international students viewed on campus by your student peers? By faculty/staff members?
3. How important is it to you to attend activities/events on campus?

4. Tell me about some of the events/activities on campus that have helped your transition as an international student? How have these events helped your personal transition on campus?
5. How much interaction do you have with the campus' international student officer?
6. Do you plan to graduate from this college/university? If not, why?
7. What advice would you give future international students for being more successful on campus?
8. What resources that are not currently offered on campus would assist international students?
9. How hard was it for you to feel stable as a student? Is it harder for an international student?
10. What were your priorities when first arriving on campus?
11. What are your priorities now? Are they different? Why?
12. What are your plans after graduation?
13. How do you manage your finances?
14. How important is your interaction and relationship with faculty members? Give me some examples.
15. Do you feel like there are enough academic resources on campus for international students?
16. How important is it for international student to live on campus?
17. What helps make you a more successful student?
18. What has been your most difficult experience on campus?
19. What are you most proud of as an international student?
20. What kind of social media do you use?

First International Staff Interview

1. How long have you served as an international student services officer for the college/university?
2. What kind of training and professional development have you had to assist you with this position?
3. What is the primary role of the international student services officer?
4. How often do you have interaction international students?
5. How many staff/faculty assist with the coordination of international students on campus? Who assists with these students on campus?
6. Tell me about special programs or incentives that the college/university offers to recruit international students on campus?
7. What are the most frequent issues international students experience on campus?
8. What are some of the resources available on campus to help international students work through these issues?
9. What are some services the international students have requested? How does the college/university respond to these requests?
10. How does the college/university track the retention of international students? Are there special programs designed specifically for the retention of international students on campus? What is the retention rate for international students?

11. What role do international students play in the culture of the campus?
12. How international student friendly is the local community where college/university is located?
13. What kind of printed materials, websites, and/or other materials is provided by the college/university for international students?

Second International Staff Interview

1. What role do you play in the retention of international students on campus? Do you attend campus retention meetings?
2. When an international student leaves the campus, what reasons are usually given by the student for their departure?
3. How does the campus use institutional research surveys such as NSSE to develop retention programs for international students?
4. How well does the university advertise and make an effort to inform international students about resources on campus? What are some examples?
5. What other offices do you work with to monitor international student retention? How often do you discuss these efforts with other offices?
6. How many staff members on campus have direct responsibilities for the recruitment of international students? Who are they?
7. How many staff members on campus have direct responsibilities for the retention of international students? Who are they?
8. What are some resources that you feel could be added to retain international students?
9. How are international students valued on campus with faculty/staff? With other students?
10. In what activities do international students participate and become engaged in on campus? Are there certain activities that they do not participate in on campus, if so what are they?

Appendix F

Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Research Project: A Case Study Exploring International Student Engagement at Small, Private Colleges

Local Principal Investigator: William Danny Sullivan

As an assistant to the research team I understand that I may have access to confidential information about study sites and participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study sites or participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information, unless specifically authorized to do so by approved protocol or by the local principal investigator acting in response to applicable law or court order, or public health or clinical need.
- I understand that I am not to read information about study sites or participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- I agree to notify the local principal investigator immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or a situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

Signature

Date

Printed name

Signature of local principal investigator

Date

William Danny Sullivan
Printed name

Appendix G**Site Approval and Authorization to Conduct Research
South College**

March 25, 2016

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

Research Proposal Site Access for William Sullivan

Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that [REDACTED] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Sullivan has permission to conduct his research using institutional collected data, student surveys, and interviews with students and the international student director. The authorization dates for this research are July 2016 through May 2017.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] >

Date: August 30, 2016 at 5:42:16 AM EDT

To: <[REDACTED]>

Cc: [REDACTED] >

Subject: Re: Request for Assistance for my VPSA

[REDACTED], I have spoken with [REDACTED] as well, and he has agreed to assist Dan. We have some questions about the extent of information required, but I'm sure [REDACTED] and Dan can work that out.

I'll have my assistant print off the letter for my signature and we'll put it in the mail immediately.

Best wishes for the new year,

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 29, 2016, at 3:30 PM, [REDACTED] > wrote:
Dear [REDACTED]:

I trust that the new academic year has started well for [REDACTED]. I know that this is always an exciting time of the year for all of us.

My VP for Student Affairs, Dan Sullivan, is working to complete his doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University. For his dissertation research topic, he will be conducting a case study researching the engagement levels and persistence patterns of international students at small, private colleges/universities. In evaluating his experience at the [REDACTED] and through national published research, he has found that very little research has focused on this topic. International students are an amazing part of our campus culture, and he wants to evaluate their experiences on other small, private colleges/universities.

This research will entail interviewing international students about their campus experiences through individual interviews and through small focus groups. He also plans to interview the international student officer to gain additional information about the international student experience on campus. His research proposal has been conditionally approved by Northwest Nazarene's Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) pending permission from his research locations. He can also submit this proposal to your IRB approval if [REDACTED] requires that.

This is what he is seeking:

1. Permission to use [REDACTED] as one of the three sites he will be using for his research.
2. Approval to begin his research on September 1, 2016 or shortly thereafter
3. Access to the following:
 - List of international undergraduate students & emails of those attending [REDACTED]
 - Institutional results for international students that participated in your most recent NSSE survey (respondents will remain anonymous)
 - Permission to interview 4 students (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) in a one on one setting, and to interview the primary international student officer.

Dan spoken with [REDACTED], VPSA a number of times, and he has expressed a willingness to help. He also connected with [REDACTED], Director of International Programs and Study Abroad. [REDACTED] agreed to assist with his work and has offered some time in October. However, Dan still needs institutional approval to conduct his research at [REDACTED].

Dan would be happy to speak with you to provide additional details about his research and his plan to carry out his work. He understands that he will have to speak to a number of areas on campus to develop a strategy that is convenient and non-intrusive for their work. At this point, though, he is asking for permission to conduct his research at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I have

attached a draft letter to the HRRC approving access to Dan, which we would appreciate you sending it or whatever is more your style.

Dan is a valued member of my team, and I have been encouraging him to finish his doctorate. I do understand that all of us are often hit with requests for assistance in dissertation research, but I would appreciate any assistance that you and [REDACTED] could give Dan. I always want to respect protocols, which is why I am communicating with you.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

With best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix H
Site Approval and Authorization to Conduct Research
East College

March 25, 2016

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

Research Proposal Site Access for William Sullivan

Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that [REDACTED] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Sullivan has permission to conduct his research using institutional collected data, student surveys, and interviews with students and the international student director. The authorization dates for this research are July 2016 through May 2017.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Date: August 29, 2016 at 9:25:42 PM EDT
To: "[REDACTED]" >
Cc: [REDACTED] >
Subject: Re: Request for Assistance for my VPSA

We would be delighted to help Dan. I admire anyone who is willing to make the effort to finish a terminal degree. The supporting letter will be sent ASAP. Hope your new year is off to a good start.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 29, 2016, at 3:36 PM, [REDACTED] > wrote:
Dear [REDACTED]:

I trust that the new academic year has started well for [REDACTED]. I know that this is always an exciting time of the year for all of us.

My VP for Student Affairs, Dan Sullivan, is working to complete his doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University. For his dissertation research topic, he will be conducting a case study researching the engagement levels and persistence patterns of international students at small, private colleges/universities. In evaluating his experience at the [REDACTED] and through national published research, he has found that very little research has focused on this topic. International students are an amazing part of our campus culture, and he wants to evaluate their experiences on other small, private colleges/universities.

This research will entail interviewing international students about their campus experiences through individual interviews and through small focus groups. He also plans to interview the international student officer to gain additional information about the international student experience on campus. His research proposal has been conditionally approved by Northwest Nazarene's Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) pending permission from his research locations. He can also submit this proposal to your IRB approval if [REDACTED] requires that.

This is what he is seeking:

1. Permission to use [REDACTED] as one of the three sites he will be using for his research.
2. Approval to begin his research on September 1, 2016 or shortly thereafter
3. Access to the following:
 - List of international undergraduate students & emails of those attending [REDACTED]
 - Institutional results for international students that participated in your most recent NSSE survey (respondents will remain anonymous)
 - Permission to interview 4 students (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) in a one on one setting, and to interview the primary international student officer.

Dan spoken with your international student officer, [REDACTED], about his request, and she is agreeable to helping Dan. However, Dan still needs institutional approval to conduct his research at [REDACTED].

Dan would be happy to speak with you to provide additional details about his research and his plan to carry out his work. He understands that he will have to speak to a number of areas on campus to develop a strategy that is convenient and non-intrusive for their work. At this point, though, he is asking for permission to conduct his research at [REDACTED]. I have attached a draft letter to the HRRC approving access to Dan, which we would appreciate you sending it or whatever is more your style.

Dan is a valued member of my team, and I have been encouraging him to finish his doctorate. I do understand that all of us are often hit with requests for assistance in dissertation research, but I would appreciate any assistance that you and [REDACTED] could give Dan. I always want to respect protocols, which is why I am communicating with you.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

With best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix I
Site Approval and Authorization to Conduct Research
West College

March 25, 2016

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: HRRC Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

Research Proposal Site Access for William Sullivan

Dear HRRC Members:

This letter is to inform the HRRC that [REDACTED] has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, intervention, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Sullivan has permission to conduct his research using institutional collected data, student surveys, and interviews with students and the international student director. The authorization dates for this research are July 2016 through May 2017.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Date: May 31, 2016 at 11:19:42 AM EDT
To: "Dan Sullivan"

Subject: Re: Research

Not a problem! I forwarded your email to our president for official approval; it won't be a problem as he is the one who asked me to give you a call :). Once I have that, I will send back the agreement and gather our NSSE data for you as well.

Sincerely,

█

█
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 █

From: "Sullivan, Dan W." <DSullivan@umo.edu>
Date: Tuesday, May 31, 2016 at 11:17 AM
To: █ >
Cc: "Sullivan, Dan W." <DSullivan@umo.edu>
Subject: Research

█ -

Thank you so much for calling today, I really appreciate it.

The title of my research is: A case study exploring international student engagement at three small, private colleges.

I will need the following:

List of all international students and their email addresses.

2015 NSSE results for the international students (anonymous results, no personal identifiers attached)- I am not using this quantitatively, I will use it to compare against national results to use as a barometer.

Interview with an international student services officer (1 interview 1 – 2 hours long) In person, I will come there.

2 Interviews with 4 international students (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior). These students will be selected from my email to the students.

The students will be chosen with gender and nationality diversity taken into account.

I am happy to copy you on all my correspondence for approval, etc. I promise to be as nonintrusive as is possible and will respect the student's and your time.

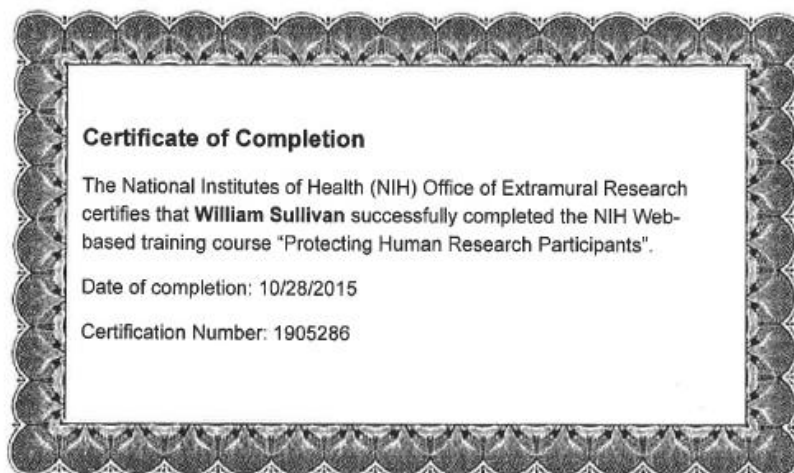
I am anticipating being able to start my research on September 1st, and will have until the end of November to complete my interviews. I have received conditional HRRC (IRB) approval pending approval of my research sites. Once I get the letter from my three sites, I will be granted full research approval.

Many thanks

Dan

Appendix D

NIH Certificate



Appendix H

Participant Debrief

Thank you for participating in this study about international student engagement at small private colleges/universities.

We will evaluate the information you have provided and be in contact again for you to have a chance to provide feedback about the results. At that time you will see a number of themes that have evolved and I will want to confirm these accurately represent our conversation. This study will conclude by March 31, 2017.

Questions

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, Dan Sullivan can be contacted via email at dsullivanjr@nnu.edu, via telephone at (919) 265-8890, or by writing: Dan Sullivan, 214 Crest Drive, Mount Olive, NC 28365.

Thank you for your participation!

Dan Sullivan
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
HRRC Application# TBA

Appendix I

Verbatim Instructions

Hello participant -

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Semi-Structured, Audio- Recorded Interviews

Two semi-structured, audio-recorded interview will be conducted with each participant. These interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time and occur in a mutually agreed upon, public location on campus.

This interview is voluntary and you can cease participation at any time. Also, you may skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you choose not to answer. If you need clarification for any of the questions, please feel free to ask.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix M**HRRC Approval**

Marked as completed by **Northwest Nazarene University**.

Email:

Dear William,

The HRRC has reviewed your protocol: Protocol #13042016 - A CASE STUDY EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT SMALL, PRIVATE COLLEGES. You received 'Full Approval'. Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Heidi Curtis
Northwest Nazarene University
HRRC Member
623 S University Blvd
Nampa, ID 83686