

ABSTRACT

FIELDS III, FRANK THURSTON. Examining the Transfer Policies and Procedures at a Four-year University: Impacts on Community College Student Success. (Under the direction of Dr. James Bartlett).

The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina. The study also examined the institution's community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and practices that may create barriers to success for community college transfers within the four-year institution. The study also identified "best practices" that the institution had undertaken to embolden academic success for community college transfers. Finally, the study determined future practices that should be put in place to streamline and propel transfer success at four-year level universities. The following research questions (devised from the aforementioned problems/issues) guided this study: 1) What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion? 2) What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion? Family University's success with community college transfers was no different than national rates. In fact, of the 10,364 community college transfer students from Family University's state system—only 59 of them went to Family University. When controlled for population, as Family University is much smaller than its in-state university counterparts, Family University still had 10% less than the second lowest rate in the university system.

The study employed a single, intrinsic case study. This study provides an examination of data gathered through interviews and document analysis. Three groups of interviews were conducted: (a) students, (b) admissions staff, and (c) administrative staff. The university website was observed for document analysis.

This study highlighted some positive qualities of Family University. Students and staff, alike, reported that Family University is dedicated to providing high-quality faculty and instruction. It was also noted several times that the campus environment, athletics and student organizations provided were positive qualities enjoyed by all. However, Family University showed glaring weaknesses in advising, transfer credit processes, communication (both intra-staff and to the students) and in resource allocation for community college transfers. By the *Transfer Playbook's* standards, Family University needs improvement in several key areas in order to optimize their community college transfer experience. Moving forward, Family University should increase advisors specifically for transfer students and also provide "special population transfer" advising; this includes but it is not limited to a) student athletes b) out-of-state community college transfers and c) students who attended more than one community college previously. Family University could also employ virtual advising so that they can serve more students and not have to do face-to-face advising- which would stagnate the advising process. They should create a "transfer-only" website or social media forum, email, newsletter and calendar to communicate important dates and processes with transfers or prospective transfers. Family University should create a professional development series that familiarizes staff with other areas of the university so that they can better assist students. This research should also implore Family University to create a more visible transfer credit "worksheet" that helps prospective students visualize what classes may or may not transfer from their respective community college. Family University should also

improve their transfer credit cap process by allowing qualifying students to transfer over more than the allotted 64 credits hours to Family University. Overall, this research should implore Family University leadership to apply more resources to community college transfer students as to foster an environment of support and inclusion of the community college transfer student.

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Examining the Transfer Policies and Procedures at a Four-year University: Impacts on
Community College Student Success.

by
Frank Thurston Fields III

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. James Bartlett
Committee Chair

Dr. Carol Warren

Dr. Reynaldo Garcia

Dr. Michelle Bartlett

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Belva, whom I lost this year. I never forgot all that she taught me about the importance of education, professionalism and preparation. I would not be where I am, or have what I have, if it wasn't for her.

BIOGRAPHY

Frank is a native North Carolinian with his formative years being in Raleigh. Frank's initial intent, post-high school, as an undergraduate of North Carolina State University was to obtain a B.S. in Animal Science, attend the College of Veterinary Medicine, and become a veterinarian. Those goals were sometimes left on the backburner as he also was a Varsity Football player for the University. However, in his latter semesters of course-work he grasped the discipline, assertiveness and responsibility required to complete his degree with over a 3.00 GPA in his final, and most challenging, year of the program. He, subsequently, entered the work force in 2010 and fulfilled an open vacancy for the position of Health and Wellness Coordinator at a local community college. His athletic background, certification in Personal Training, Bachelor's degree and tenured service in community outreach (YMCA) allowed him to do so. His natural passion for education, program implementation, leadership and leadership development complemented his respective role at the college and led him to apply for and finish a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. The Master's program instilled theories of leadership, change, development and innovation at the Organizational level while teaching how to adapt to the ever-changing workforce. He also gathered strong tutelage in diversity management, human resources, teambuilding and managerial innovation. Wanting to further his education even more, Frank pursued his PhD in Educational Leadership, Policy and Human Development. He feels that his concentration in Adult and Community College Education curriculum will not only enhance his skills in his current roles but it will also allow him to embolden his skills as it relates to creating leaders, fostering education and innovation, and facilitating policy change relative to the ever-changing landscape of our community college system.

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First and foremost, I would like to state that none of this, or anything, would be possible without the strength, help and guidance from God above. I am truly thankful for all of the trials, tribulations, rewards, blessings and mercy that got me to and through this point. I would also like to thank my classmates and NC State constituents who helped me through coursework and the dissertation process. Their guidance, work on projects, kind words, good time shared, and laughter helped propel me to this point.

I want to thank my committee members Dr. Garcia, Dr. Michelle Bartlett and Dr. Warren. They came in on this process when I had, or knew, nothing and they were here for the entire ride.

I want to thank my family and friends who constantly encouraged me and cheered me on. Their everlasting faith in me, through good and bad times, gave me the fuel to move forward. It is my hope that I make each and every one of them proud.

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I lastly want to thank Dr. Bartlett for his patience and helpfulness throughout all of this. I am thankful that all of my texts, e-mails and questions never went unanswered. He was extremely helpful, thoughtful and awesome from day one. I could not have asked for a better committee chair. I am eternally grateful for his guidance and efforts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

By the year 2020, 65% of all jobs in the American economy will require post-secondary education (Carnvale, Smith and Strohl, 2013). Also, Carnvale et al add, in regard to educational attainment, 35% of the job openings will require at least a bachelor's degree. The notion that education increases chances of employment hasn't fallen on deaf ears for potential college students because the United States is more educated than ever based on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS suggests that about 34 % of Americans have a bachelor's degree, compared to the 2000 rate of 26 % (2015). Carnvale et al (2013) adds that in 1973, workers with postsecondary education held only 28 % of jobs; by comparison, they held 59% of jobs in 2010 and will hold 65 % of jobs in 2020.

Even though the average earnings for people without a high school education grew 21% between 2010 and 2016, their average of \$27,800 was considerably less than that for workers with a high school diploma, \$36,700, and those with a bachelor's degree, \$67,300. As for advanced degree holders, the average earning was \$95,200 (CPS, 2015). With US citizens recognizing the aforementioned ties between post-secondary education and salary, America has seen a boom in college applications. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), almost three-quarters of American schools have seen increases in 10 of the last 15 years (2017). NACAC also reports that the spike in college applications decrease acceptance rates to 4-year universities overall. NACAC reports that colleges recognize that students are applying to more schools, and that their expected yield from those students that they accept must thusly decrease. Even highly selective institutions such as Harvard and Stanford are feeling the effects of high application volume. The US News' World

Report on college acceptance rates reports that the factor that is driving the plummeting acceptance rates is the number of applicants; a figure which has swelled enormously in recent decades. They go on to say that 10 years ago, less than 20,000 students applied to Harvard. In 2016, that figure basically doubled to 39,041 students. As the number admitted remains about the same, but the numbers who apply continues to multiply, acceptance rates shrink (2016).

With university application numbers skyrocketing and acceptance rates plummeting, prospective students have to find alternate means of post-secondary education; the most popular of which being community-college education. In fall 2014, 42% of all undergraduate students and 25% of all full-time undergraduate students were enrolled in community colleges (Baum & Ma, 2016). As mentioned earlier, the bulk of future jobs will be in the educational attainment range of the baccalaureate degree level so it is safe to note that most students attend community colleges to create an opportunity to later obtain a baccalaureate degree and, thusly, their desired job opportunity.

Historically, one-half of community college students with the intentions of transferring to a four-year institute and obtaining a baccalaureates degree will do so –with or without an associate’s degree (American Council on Education, 1991). According to Jenkins and Fink 81% of community college students start their career with the intent on transferring to a four-year school while only 33% actually do within the first six years (2016). Jenkins & Fink also report that of the 33% that transfer to four-year institutions, 42% graduate within the six years (of starting their community college career). This means that 14% of the community college cohort graduate within six years of initial enrollment.

Students who successfully complete community college and thusly enroll into four year institutions are very important to the enrollment rates, financial outcomes and student outcomes

of the four-year institutions. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) reports that practically one-half (46%) of all students who finished a degree at a four-year institution in 2013-14 had enrolled at a two-year institution at some point in the previous 10 years. Furthermore, it is even more important for public, four-year institutions to be focused on community-college transfers as they (public, four-year institutions) hold 73% of all community college transfers (Fink & Jenkins, 2016). Additionally, Fink & Jenkins report also that community college transfer students tend to do better at public institutions, academically, as well. They go on to say that Bachelor's completion rates were somewhat higher on average for students who transferred to public institutions (42 %) than for those who transferred to private nonprofit institutions (31 %), and much higher than for those who transferred to for-profit institutions (eight percent). All things accounted for, it is very important for the four-year, public institution to create and/or continue to foster initiatives to most optimally facilitate the onboarding and matriculation of community-college transfer students as the transfer students look to embolden the American workforce after the attainment of baccalaureate degrees. This provides evidence of the importance of two and four year schools to collaborate to ensure student success.

The remaining segments of this chapter provide an explanation of the problem and the purpose of this research followed by a presentation of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the approach to the research purpose. Next, the chapter provides the research questions and describes the significance of the study. The remainder of the chapter discusses limitations, delimitations, and definitions of the study.

Statement of Problem

Preceding research shows that the vast majority of students who enter higher education through community colleges each year indicate that they intend to earn a bachelor's degree but

only a relatively small percentage transfer and earn a bachelor's degree (Jenkins and Fink, 2016). Often times, the blame of the lack of baccalaureate receipt are aimed at the student or the community-college that sends the student and not the "receiving institution". Jenkins and Fink also found that while outcomes varied substantially among individual four-year institutions, on average, the type of four-year institution that students transferred to was more important than the type of community college they transferred from (2016).

On a much more narrow scale, The University of North Carolina system mirrors the conclusions of Jenkins and Fink's research. According to the UNC system's Transfer Enrollment report (2017), North Carolina Community College junior transfers are graduating from UNC school systems schools (51.2%) at a much lower rate than Native (traditional, non-transferred) UNC school system students of the same classification (75.2%). There is an ever-increasing amount of community college transfer students who are suffering academically because their "receiving" institution's poor transfer intake procedures (Shugart, 2008).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina. The study also examined the institution's community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and methods that may create barriers to success for community college transfers within the four-year institution. The study also identified "best practices" that the institution had undertaken to embolden academic success for community college transfers. Finally, the study determined future practices that should be put in place to streamline and propel transfer success at four-year level.

Theoretical Framework

The selected theoretical framework is derived from International Society for Performance Improvement's (ISPI) Performance Improvement/HPT Model as described by Van Tiem, Moseley and Dessinger. The model is described by ISPI as:

The performance improvement process begins with a comparison of the present and the desired levels of individual and organizational performance to identify the performance gap. A cause analysis is then done to determine what impact the work environment (information, resources, and incentives) and the people (motives, individual capacity, and skills) are having on performance. Once the performance gap and the causes have been determined, the appropriate interventions are designed and developed. These may include measurement and feedback systems, new tools and equipment, compensation and reward systems, selection and placement of employees, and training and development. The interventions are then implemented and the change process managed. Evaluation is done after each phase of the process. Initially, formative evaluation assesses the performance analysis, cause analysis, intervention selection and design, and intervention and change phases. Then evaluation focuses on the immediate response of employees and their ability and willingness to do the desired behaviors. The final evaluations are centered on improvement of business outcomes (such as quality, productivity, sales, customer-retention, profitability, and market share) as well as determining return on investment for the intervention.

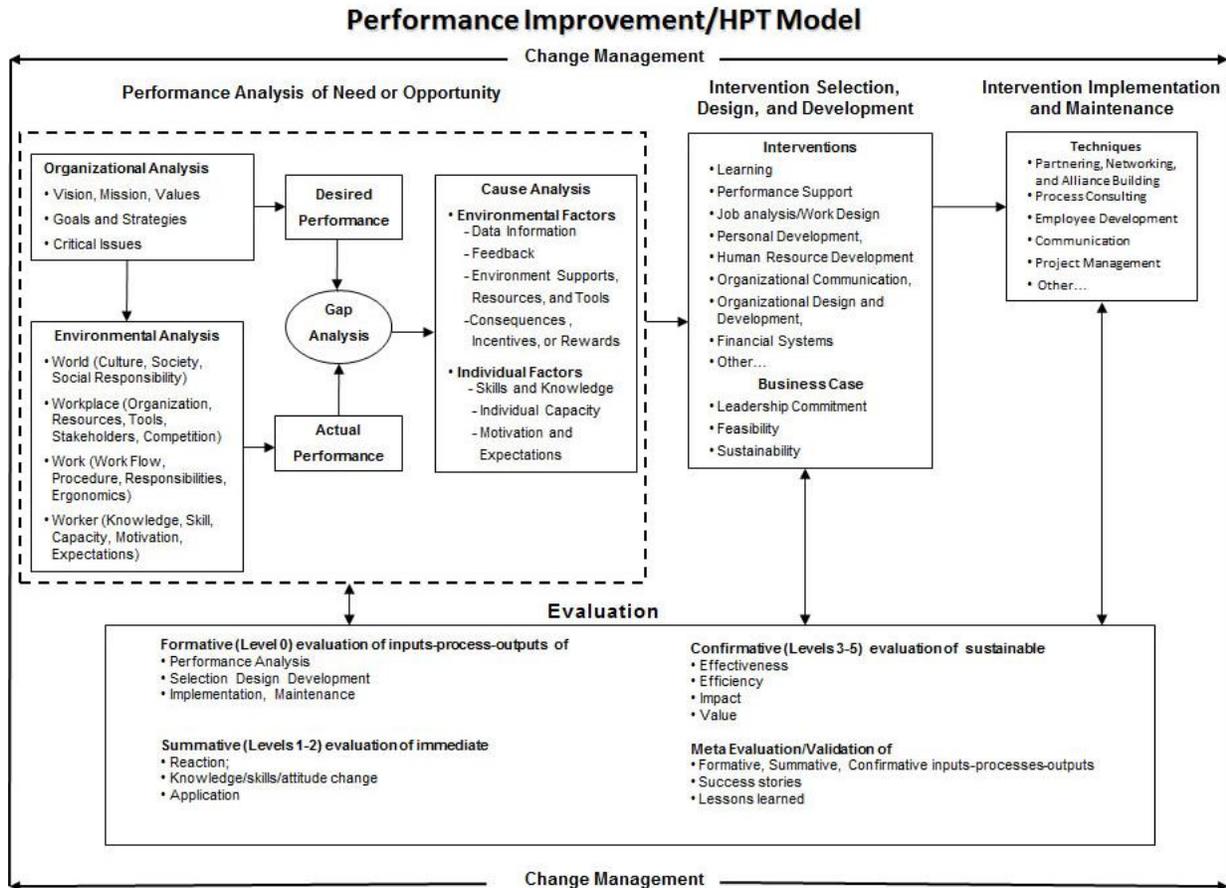


Figure 1. Performance Improvement/HPT Model. Reprinted from Dessinger, J., Moseley, J.L., & Van Tiem, D.M. (2012). Fundamentals of Performance Improvement: Optimizing results through people, processes, and organizations. Copyright 2017 by the International Society of Performance Improvement.

The ISPI Performance Improvement Plan gives a holistic option of program evaluation that can move across many organizational genres—higher education included. It provides a very detailed, multi-faceted construct of a) needs assessment/analysis b) causation of needs and areas of improvements as it relates to the environment and other factors c) intervention and implementation needed to correct deficiencies d) formative, summative and intermittent evaluation that serve as “checks and balances” of the process in its incubation and final periods. According to Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004), program implementation evaluation focuses on whether or not a program is operating as intended, reaching targeted audiences, and delivering the advertised services to the target audiences. Rossi et al’s idea of programmatic evaluation mirror that of ISPI’s model (Figure 1) and the more commonly used model that the Kellogg Institute (Figure 2) likes to elucidate.

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT- & LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT
<i>In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:</i>	<i>In order to address our problem or asset we will accomplish the following activities:</i>	<i>We expect that once accomplished these activities will produce the following evidence or service delivery:</i>	<i>We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in 1–3 then 4–6 years:</i>	<i>We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in 7–10 years:</i>

Figure 2. Logic Framework: Logic Model. Reprinted from: Kellogg Foundation (2001) Logic model development guide. Logic model development guide: Logic models to bring together planning, evaluation & action. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

According to the Social Innovation Fund's (SIF) *Evaluation Plan Guide* (2016) Logic models, which are grounded in a theory of change, use words and graphics to describe the sequence of activities thought to bring about change and how these activities are linked to the results the program is expected to achieve. This process includes sequentially thinking through and aligning the following areas:

Resources/Inputs: Include resources that are available and directly used for the program activities. This might include human, financial, organizational, and community resources;

Intervention/Activities: Include program activities (i.e., what constitutes the program intervention) with the resources you listed previously that lead to the intended program results/outcomes; and

Outcomes/Results: Include changes that occur because of the program intervention previously described, using the resources previously described. These can be any of the following:

- a) Short-term outcomes (outputs) may include the amount of intervention (i.e., the quantity and type(s) of program activities a participant actually takes part in) an individual receives or specific changes in knowledge or skills;
- b) Intermediate outcomes may include changes in individuals' behaviors or attitudes; and
- c) Long-term outcomes (impacts) may include the changes occurring in communities or systems as a result of program interventions.

Kellogg's depiction of the commonly used logic model (Figure 2) can be used within this study as a more conceptualized and less sophisticated model of the Performance Improvement/HPT model (Figure 1). Essentially, both frameworks can be used as an over-arching theme within this study that basically looks to define problems (or areas on improvement) via a needs analysis and then construct activities (policy/procedure and/or environmental change). The hope is that these activities create immediate outputs as well as impactful outcomes to help address issues or problems with respect to optimizing transfer success. Both frameworks can be used as a backdrop for analyzing community college preparation and facilitation of successful transfers in the four-year institution that we are investigating.

Conceptual Framework

The Aspen Institute has created "*Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two-and Four-Year Colleges*" that creates a framework of best practices for community colleges and

universities alike that can further optimize transfer success and can be used as a backdrop for analyzing community college preparation and facilitation of successful transfers. Like myself, authors of the *Transfer Playbook* were concerned with the inefficiency of the transfer process and created a framework that allows two-year and four-year institutions to work together improve transfer outcomes (Dean, Fink, Jenkins and & Wyner, 2016). The work frames three broad empirically-based strategies, each have several sub-sets of practices, as the guide to bolster the transfer process on both sides (outputting and receiving institutions).

Make Transfer Student Success a priority	Create clear programmatic pathways with aligned High-Quality Instruction	Four-year College Advising Practices	
Communicate transfer as a key component of the institution's mission.	Work collaboratively with colleagues from partner institutions to create major-specific program maps.	Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students.	
Share data to increase understanding of the need to improve transfer student outcomes—and the benefits of doing so.	Provide rigorous instruction and other high-quality academic experiences to prepare students for four-year programs.	Assign advisors and clearly communicate essential information to prospective transfer students.	
Dedicate significant resources to support student transfer services	Establish regular, reliable processes for updating and improving program maps.	Strongly encourage transfer students to choose a major prior to transfer.	
	Design unconventional pathways, as necessary.	Replicate elements of the first-year experience for transfer students.	Exercise fairness in financial aid allocation.

Figure 3. Reprinted and Revised from *Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two-and Four Year Colleges*. Copyright 2016 by the Aspen Institute.

The study will use insights and best practices gleaned from the *Transfer Playbook* as a framework to analyze what this particular four-year institution is (or is not doing) to prepare students for successful completion at the university level. This coupled with the theoretical frameworks will lay empirical and conceptual parameters on which we can analyze the community college transfer policies, procedures and practices at the public, four-year institution.

Research Questions

A research question is an uncertainty about a problem that can be challenged, examined, and analyzed to provide useful information (Wood, 2006). Rossi et al (p. 70) say that stakeholders must identify performance dimensions that are relevant to expectations in order to properly evaluate performance (2004). Thusly, this study must be guided by a) defining the problem b) examining the problem and its parameters and dimensions to reach a reasonable, acceptable conclusion. The following research questions (devised from the aforementioned problems/issues) guided this study:

- 1) What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion?
- 2) What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion?

Significance of Study

This study lends to prior research relative to the graduation rate discrepancy between non-transfer (traditional) and community-college transfer students with respect to four-year institutions. However, this study is one of the few that aims its scope at the four-year institution, and not the community college, with respect to institutional policies, procedures, and practices that either enhance and/or obstruct community-college transfer success. This study is also one of the first to use the Aspen Institute's *Transfer Playbook* as a conceptual framework to gauge the

efficacy of practices, or lack thereof, at the four-year institution as it relates to transfer student success. This study is also one of the few that uses this particular rural, four-year, public institution as a case study in any realm relative to community-college transfer student success.

The findings in this study will help improve and/create institutional policies and procedures that optimize community-college transfer success at the respective four-year institution. The findings in this study will also pinpoint institutional methods, policies and procedures that create barriers to success for the community-college transfer at the four-year institution. With community college student transfer success impacting four-year university completion rates so strongly (Shapiro, Dudnar, Wakhungu, Yuan and Harrell, 2015), it is imperative to this particular four-year institution that they embolden academic success for community college transfers by way of enhancement of its community college transfer-intake policies, procedures and methods.

Limitations

The choice to study a singular, four-year institution limits the study and may not make its findings fully applicable to all four, year universities nationwide. With the case study format having a singular sample, it may not allow us to generalize across the entire population of institutions.

Delimitations

The choice of the studied population was restricted to community-college transfer students who had not otherwise been enrolled at a four-year institution. The barriers to success, or lack thereof, were evaluated from the four-year institutional level.

Definition of Terms

Case Study Research, according to Bromley (1990), it is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p. 302).

Community Colleges are two-year schools that provide affordable postsecondary education as a pathway to an associate’s degree or a four-year degree (Homeland Security, 2012).

Community College Transfer Student is a student who has completed one more academic community college credits prior to transferring to an institution to obtain a baccalaureates degree

Four-year institution is a postsecondary institution that offers programs of at least 4 years duration or one that offers programs at or above the baccalaureate level (NCES, 2015).

Junior College. See Community College.

Non-Traditional Student the National Center for Education Statistics defines nontraditional students as meeting one of seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; attends college part-time; works full time; is financially independent for financial aid purposes; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent; or does not have a high school diploma.

Student Success is the attainment of an applied diploma or degree or the completion of coursework required to transfer to a four-year college or university (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin and Vigdor, 2012).

Traditional Student is typically 18- to 22-years-old, financially dependent on parents, in college full time, living on campus student (Stamats, 2016).

Two-year College. See Community College.

Summary

This chapter gave insight on issues relative to community colleges and four-year institutions. This chapter gave some introductory information to the problem of the skewed four-year institution's graduation rate between community college transfers and traditional students. The chapter described the purpose of the research as being to evaluate policies, practices and procedures at the four-year institution, relative to community-college transfer success, that may help or hinder said success. The chapter introduced the theoretical frameworks of Dessinger, Mosely & Van Tiem (2012) and the Kellogg Foundation (2001) as models to guide the study. Later in the chapter, the theoretical frameworks were superimposed upon the *Transfer Playbook's* (Aspen Institute, 2016) conceptualized model of institutional strategies for community-college transfer success. Next, the chapter provided the research questions and described the significance of the study. The remainder of the chapter discussed limitations, delimitations, and definitions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature presents three components of the study: a) the definitions and delineations of non-traditional students b) context surrounding institutional transfer processes for community college transfers and c) context surrounding four-year institution completion for community college transfers including barriers and bridges to success. The initial part presents how non-traditional students are defined, how they come to be so, and their intentions of pursuing baccalaureate studies. The next part presents processes and transitional steps that surround the actual transfer process from community college to four-year institution. Lastly, the final part presents community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and methods from the perspective of the “receiving” four-year institution.

Non-traditional students

This section describes and defines non-traditional students as well as their relation to overall student populations. Though community-college students may or not be included in any or all of these different sub-groups of non-traditional students, it is important to provide context to the term as it relates to the students and their classifications.

Definition of Non-traditional student. The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) defines nontraditional students as meeting one of seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; attends college part-time; works full time; is financially independent for financial aid purposes; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent; or does not have a high school diploma.

Delayed enrollment into postsecondary education. Delayed entrants are, by definition, older than students who enroll in postsecondary education immediately after

graduating from high school (Horne, Cataldi, & Sakora, 2005). Therefore, delayed entrants, Horne et al says, would be expected to have gained life experiences that come along with age. Though this may be true there are also more stark differences between delayed enrollees and traditional (straight from high school) enrollees. According to a NPSAS study (2000), some delayed enrollees may not be academically primed to attend, or have the financial resources necessary to enroll in, postsecondary education. Their information also shows that others may enlist in the military first, seek employment, or start a family prior to college enrollment. Furthermore, students who do defer enrollment are at substantial risk of not finalizing a postsecondary credential when paralleled with their peers who enroll directly after high school graduation (Carroll, 1989).

Attends college part-time. Complete College America's (CCA) *Time is the Enemy* report indicates that their findings have revealed that the longer it takes to complete college, the lower the prospect of graduation becomes. Added time does not provide an enhancement to one's capability to graduate, which is not good news for the 40% of U.S. postsecondary students who only attend school part-time (2011). The study also sheds light on an interesting enigma: the 'traditional' student - one who lives on-campus and attends school full-time - is no longer in the majority. Instead, 'nontraditional' students, who commute to school and may be attending part-time, while managing a career or household, make up 75% of college students today. The non-traditional population, specifically the part-time student count, is now a larger and much more ever-growing part of our postsecondary population than it ever has been before.

Works full time/non-spouse dependents. A new report from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (2015), says that about 25% of college students are also full-time workers. The report also believes this is also linked to the non-traditional student family

scheme where students come in with families (spouses/children) that they need to thusly support. In fact, the report also says that 19% of American students that have jobs have at least one child.

Financially independent for financial aid purposes. Filing as an independent can potentially allow a student to receive more scholarships, grants, and/or loan monies than if they files as a dependent of a parent. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s FAFSA qualification form, the following allow a student to file as an independent:

- Be 24 years of age or older by December 31 of the award year;
- Be an orphan (both parents deceased), ward of the court, in foster care or was a ward of the court when 13 years or older;
- Be a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States or serving on active duty for other than training purposes;
- Be a graduate or professional student;
- Be a married individual;
- Have legal dependents other than a spouse;
- Be an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship;
- Be a homeless youth;
- Be a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

Single parent. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) provided a study on single mother students and their ever-increasing numbers. The research showed that the number of single mothers in college more than doubled between the 1999-00 and 2011-12 school years, to reach nearly 2.1 million students—or 11 % of all undergraduates—as of 2012. They report that the growth in single mothers in college was more than twice the rate of growth seen among

the overall undergraduate student population, 42 %, over the same time period. The study also showed that among female undergraduates, 19 % were single mothers as of 2011-12 (IWPR, 2017)

Does not have a high-school diploma. Ryan & Bauman (2015) report that 12% of Americans do not have high school diplomas. Though a citizen could not have a high school diploma they still can be considered a non-traditional student as they may be enrolled in courses that are either a) helping them achieve a high school credential or b) enrolling in a licensure or certificate class that doesn't require a high school credential. Ryan & Bauman also report that of the 12% of the non-high school graduates: Hispanics, foreign-born citizens and citizens with a disability make up the majority of the non-high school credential-having population (2015).

Transfer issues for the community-college student.

81% of community college students start their career with the intent on transferring to a four-year school while only 33% actually do within the first six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). That leaves a staggering 48% of community-college students, who intend on transferring to a four-year institution, not transferring within six years. There have been some explanations for the gap in matriculation to four-year institutes. Packard ,Gagnon & Senas says “ When focusing on institutional delays, three central elements emerge: (a) informational setbacks from dissatisfactory advising, (b) imperfect program alignment with four-year institutions, and (c) college resource limitations” (2012, p.670). We often see lop-sided transfer success when it comes to minority students and low-income students when cross-referenced with their majority and higher income peers, respectively.

Informational setbacks. Packard et al describes this as a disconnect between students being advised at the community college to sign-up for an associate's degree-track courses and

not transfer track courses (2012). An example of this can be seen when a student signs up for courses that are not needed or required by the “receiving” four-year institution and thusly don’t transfer. Errors like this can be blamed on the wrong information being delivered to the student by community college advisors. I also would like to lend to Packard et al’s assessment and add that it seems that some student’s lack of research into the potential four-year institution that they wish, or may wish, to transfer to can add to informational setbacks. This is akin to Hagedorn’s findings that personal resources and /or attributes also affect transfer success (2015).

Imperfect program alignment. Jenkins and Fink (2016) say that many bachelor’s degree-seeking students earn dozens of college-level credits at a community college but do not transfer and some of that can be attributed to imperfect alignment with credits from the community college to the receiving institution. An example of this issue would be a student not taking a foreign language to because it wasn’t required to satisfy the community college requirements but realizing (later) that a foreign language course was required to transfer into a particular institution. This could prove to be detrimental in aligning with the receiving institution.

College resource limitations. Packard et al admits that restrictions on resources can cause issues prior to transfer for community college students. They allude to the fact that most community colleges simply don’t have the infrastructure to support all of the classes that an abundant amount of four-institutions may require to deem a community-college transfer-ready (2012). By infrastructure they mean: available and open classrooms, labs, program areas/instructors, computer labs, etc. Flaga agrees and says that formal resources that a college has or can provide are imperative for successful transfer (2006).

Minorities. Shapiro et al reports that amongst college students who first enrolled in fall 2010, 48.5 % of Black students and 50.8 % of Hispanic students started at a two-year public college, compared with 35.6 % of White students and 37.8 % of Asian students (2017). Though we see higher rates of minorities in community colleges, we see lower rates of minorities transferring out to the four-year institutions. According to Barrera & Angel (1991), the transfer rate of minorities (Blacks and Hispanics) is significantly lower than the transfer rate of majorities at the community college level. This is especially telling since minorities are reported to have similar or even more, aspirations to transfer to the four-institution level (Richardson & Bender, 1987). Wechsler provides that this phenomenon may be, in part, due to the fact that four-year institutions point their minority recruitment to high schools more so than at community colleges (1989). Others allude to the fact that sometime minorities are at a lower economic rate than majorities.

Low-income. Berkner & Choy (2008) report that of all first-time college students in the class of 2003–04 with family incomes of \$32,000 or less, 57 % started at a two-year or less-than-two-year college rather than at a four-year institution. This means that most low-income students have to transfer into a four-year college as opposed to begin at one. Baum & Ma who write for the College Board Research Journal (2016) report:

The most recent national data indicate that 14 % of dependent students with family income in the lowest income quartile (less than \$30,000) who started at a public two-year college in 2003–04 completed an associate degree by 2009. An additional six percent earned a certificate, and 13 % earned a bachelor's degree. Among students in the second lowest income quartile (\$30,000–\$64,999) who started at a public two-year college in 2003–04, 18 % completed

an associate degree by 2009. An additional seven percent earned a certificate, and 16 % earned a bachelor's degree.

Four-year institution completion

There is an ever-increasing amount of community college transfer students who are suffering academically because their “receiving” institution’s poor transfer intake procedures (Shugart, 2008). It is well documented that community-college transfers are not successfully completing bachelor’s degrees at the rate of native (non-transfer) students. Jenkins & Fink (2016) show us that only 14% of community-college students freshman who aspire to obtain a bachelor’s degree actually do within six years. Amongst other situations, “transfer shock”, lack of student engagement, receipt (or not) of an associate’s degree, and personal habits and attitudes inhibit community college transfers from completing their bachelor degree as successfully as native (non-transfer) students at a four-year institutions.

Transfer shock. Hills (1965) states that there is a phenomenon, transfer shock, that sometimes occurs when community-college students transfer into four-year institutions. Hills also says that with this shock comes an almost immediate dip in GPA and student performance. The results of the transfer shock are typically seen in the first semester at the four-year institution (1965). Transfer shock is said to be a symptom of the onset of bigger class sizes, much more spread out campuses, and general unfamiliarity that often come along with four-year institutions. Hills does admit that the early onset transfer shock can be temporary and reversible. However, this can also lead to the first decline towards stopping out of the four-year institution or severely delaying progress towards a bachelor’s degree.

Year-level. Some researchers were able better to narrow the scope of transfer shock and were able to find that older students (relative to year-level) tend to have a diminished transfer

shock effect relative to their younger (relative to year-level) counterparts. Research by House (1989) shows that students who transfer from community-colleges to four-year institutions at the junior level have higher graduation rates, better grades and test scores and a lower attrition (dropout/dismissal rate) than those students who transfer in at the freshman or sophomore level. The studies conducted by Shapiro et al tends to agree with House's stance on student-year level (at transfer) being related to success at the four-year institution. Shapiro et al says that 48% of students who transfer into four-year institutions with an associate's degree graduate within six years of starting community college as opposed to those who transfer without an associate's degree who are graduating at a 35% rate (2013).

Student involvement. Student involvement and engagement play a crucial part in success at the four-year institution. The four pillars of student involvement according to Wang & Wharton: academic involvement (how engrained the student is into the academic work environment), involvement in student organizations (non-academic organizations that are made up students and usually led by students), social involvement (involvement in socio-political movements intra-campus), and student's use of student services (2012). Astin (1984) says that involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the experience. This can include joining clubs, athletic sports teams, on-campus jobs, etc. Flaga's (2006) research also tends to agree with the notion that the more a student is engrained in the social workings of a college, the more successful they may be. Tinto (1993) even went as far to say that failing to become a part of the social workings of the university can lead to higher rates of attrition. Flaga believes that the development of relationships of not only students with other students but with faculty members and university-personnel are important. All of these newfound notions of student involvement may also lento transfer shock as many of the student engagement,

student activity, and student organization activities are not as present or prominent at community colleges that the transfers may be coming from.

Personal Attributes. A student's personal attributes can also impact how successful they are at the four-year institution. Dennis, Calvillo & Gonzalez say that personal study habits, communication skills, and time-management are great predictors of how successful a student can be (2008). Some of these attributes may be learned and some of them may be intrinsic. Diaz (1992) believes that a student's general persistence can determine, or at the very influence, how well they succeed in college. Diaz's ideas on persistence are linked directly to Hills' "transfer shock" and the after effects. Diaz believes that if transfer students persist after an initial drop in academic performance, their GPA normally returns to a higher level in succeeding semesters—moving nearer to their pre-transfer GPA (1992).

Summary

This chapter detailed a review of literature on the following components of the research study: delineation and definition of non-traditional students, transfer processes for the outbound community-college student, and barrier to success for completion at the four-year institution. The initial part of the review of literature gave definitions and denotations of the non-traditional student. The next part of the review encompassed all that the actual transfer process from the community college entails. The last part of the review presented the relationship between the newly transferred student and the four-year institution as well as factors that may inhibit success. The ensuing chapter frames the methodology used for the study as well as presents an overview of the case study approach utilized in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina. The study also examined the institution's community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and methods that may create barriers to success for community college transfers within the four-year institution. The study also identified "best practices" that the institution had undertaken to embolden academic success for community college transfers. Finally, the study determined future practices that should be put in place to streamline and propel transfer success at four-year level. Crowe, Creswell, & Robertson (2011) describe a case study as a study approach that allows in-depth, multi-faceted examinations of complex issues in their real-life settings. Furthermore, according to Yin (2009), case studies can be used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in the everyday contexts in which they occur. This study used a single case research design to answer the following research questions:

- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion?
- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion?

Within this chapter, research design and methodology are defined. The chapter will also include praises and criticisms of utilizing the case study method. Later in the chapter, selection of the site of study and its participants will be described. Lastly, data collection, data analysis,

and issues involving validity and ethical soundness are detailed along with a statement of the researcher's positionality.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research. Sutton & Austin (2015) describe qualitative research as a method of research that can aid researchers in accessing the thoughts and feelings of research participants. They go on to say that this style of research can enable expansion of an understanding of the meaning that people assign to their own personal experiences. This is starkly different from quantitative research whereas quantitative methods can be used to determine how many people undertake particular behaviors. Quantitative research tells us the “what” of what is going on or being observed. On the contrary, qualitative methods can assist researchers in understanding the “how” and/or “why” such behaviors are occurring (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The primary goal of qualitative research is to extract the thoughts and feelings of participants yet it is also necessary for the researcher to protect participants and their data, according to Sutton & Austin. Participants are often recalling precious, sometimes troubling, memories and are left vulnerable during the research process. Methods for safeguarding participants must be precisely delineated before the onset of the research and should be approved by relevant research ethics review board before beginning the data collection process.

Qualitative research has been described by Pope & Mays (1995) as “the development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants.” Houston & Rowan (1998) go on to say that “qualitative methods were developed in the social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology, and rest largely on in-depth observation, interviews, and small-group processes.” Britten (1995) agrees with Houston & Rowan's take on

the data collection methods of qualitative study by adding that the most common methods are in-person observations and interview. They add that this allows the researcher to actually see what the participants do instead of what they report that they; this is monumental when trying to access the thoughts and feelings of the research participant.

Case Study method. Bromley (1990, p. 302) explains a case study as a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. Crowe et al (2011) reports that there are five crucial parts to a case study method:

- defining the case
- selecting the case
- collecting and analyzing the data
- interpreting data
- reporting the findings

In terms of defining the case, Crowe et al, believes that the parameters of the case should be set by the research questions. Also, they say, the case should be informed by pre-existing literature and relevant theoretical settings. The case should be time-bound, geographically-bound and relevant with explanations on the type of evidence to be collected as well as the methods of data collection and analysis (2011). When selecting the case, one must decide the merits of the case or the reason behind selecting the case and creating the style of the case. The style could be one *intrinsic* case study that can seek to inform researchers based off its own specific (intrinsic) uniqueness. One could also use a multiple case study method that are not as unique as the intrinsic style but offer more observations of data for the respective researcher (2011, p.44). For complete and thorough understanding of a particular case, Crowe et al says, there are several different data collection methods that can be employed during a case study; with the most often

utilized being questionnaires, interviews, observations and focus groups. Repeated review, grouping, and/or coding of findings are appropriate according to Crowe et al. When reporting findings, it is important to provide the reader with enough contextual information to understand the processes that were followed and how the conclusions were reached (2011).

Advantages and disadvantages of case study method. Rose, Spinks and Canhoto (2015) assert that the most remarkable characteristic of the case study method is its adaptability to multiple, or different, research settings. Rose implicated the case study as a suitable research method that can encompass, explain or answer research questions of all manners. Crowe et al adds that a case study is particularly useful when there needs to be an in-depth look at a particular issue or phenomenon (2015). The case study can narrow down on phenomena in real life context; Crowe et al says (2015). According to Yin (2009) case study often are criticized for lacking scientific rigor. It seems that is likely due to the researcher error in regard to carelessness or methodological prowess. Another disadvantage of the case study method, according to Yin, is that they are not very generalizable (2009). Case studies are often specific looks at phenomenon and are, at times, so specific that their findings cannot be assigned to larger samples or populations.

Research Design. An intrinsic case study is a study that is based off its own merits and uniqueness; furthermore, it usually isn't representative of other cases and is primarily bore from the genuine interest of the researcher(s) (Stake, 1995). This study employed stand-alone, intrinsic case study in order to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina.

Site Selection

Bromley (1990, p. 302) explains a case study as a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. The main research interest, or phenomenon of interest, of this study is to understand why there is a discrepancy in community-college transfers graduating with a bachelor’s degree relative to native (non-transfer) transfer students graduating with a bachelor’s degree.

The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina in an intrinsic case study format. For privacy and confidentiality purposes, we will refer to this university as “Family University”. Family University is small, rural university in southeastern United States. They currently have 1,357 students. Family University offers 28 baccalaureate programs and four graduate school (master’s degrees) programs. Family University’s academic offerings span from Business & Economic, Health and Physical Education to Pharmacy and Health Professions and Technology. The student to faculty ratio at Family University is 13:1. Of the 1357 students at Family University, 56.89% are female and 43.2% are male. The ethnic breakdown of Family University’s population is: 71.9% African-America, 17.2% Caucasian, nearly 3 percent Hispanic and approximately eight percent of all other ethnic categories. According to Family University’s website their goal is to maintain “academic excellence through liberal arts programming and using innovative and flexible technology-based instruction models to enhance our signature areas: integrating technology with education, improving human health and wellness, and advancing the natural and aviation sciences”.

As a way to “engage and connect with the 21st century learner”, Family University recently launched a fully-online degree program in Interdisciplinary Studies that allows students who

have completed degrees at Family University or other institutions the opportunity to complete a baccalaureate degree. The “flexible” degree program houses concentrations including Social and Behavioral Sciences, STEM, Humanities, Health, Children and Community Services, Africana Studies, and Politics and Government. Family University administrators say that “within those concentrations, students are able to design their coursework.” Furthermore, Family University houses a Distance Education program that offers off-site and online courses which allow students to gain access to their classes and courses “anytime and anywhere.”

Family University serves as a host for about 91.2 % of in-state students while nearly eight percent of their students come from out-of-state. The town that the university is located in is classified as rural and the university is the largest employer of the town. The campus spans 200 acres of the rural town. The closet metropolitan area is 40.5 miles away from the rural town that hosts Family University.

Family University is a constituent institution of a larger University-system and is the smallest university within the system. All of the universities in the system, Family University included, have articulation agreements with community-colleges within the same state that offer streamlined access and transfer-capability to the respective state-system universities pending that certain qualifications are met. Moreover, Family University has dual-enrollment programs with the local community college, in the same town, to help bolster community college transfer to Family University, locally. The aforementioned facts played a huge part in the selection of Family University as a site for this research.

Family University is a very unique case to study as it relates to community-college transfer facilitation and graduation. Currently, 50.4 % of all Family University’s transfers come from its respective state’s community college system (See Appendix A). Furthermore, 41% of

those community college transfer students from the respective state come from the local community college from the same town as Family University (See Appendix B). This lends to further information showing that the zero of Family University's in-state community-college transfers come from the top 3 community colleges (in terms of enrollment and transfer-out rate) from its respective state (See Appendix B). Also, Family University's overall community college transfer-in rate is significantly down based off the reported 10 year average. The average over the past 9 years was 78 transfer students and the last reading has a reported 48 students transferring in (See Appendix C). Consequently, transfer first year GPA's seem to be trending down as well (See Appendix D). This data piqued the interest of our study and lent to the selection of this particular university for our case study. Apparent declining community college transfer rates coupled with declining transfer GPA and graduation rates sparked the need for further research and investigation of this particular case.

Participants

The unit of analysis for this study was Family University. Students, admissions personnel (specifically those who are involved in the transfer section), and university leadership personnel were all included as data sources. Interviews were the instruments created to collect the data. In order for the right students to be selected, criterion-based sampling was used where the researcher set criteria for candidates to be interviewed for the study. In order to gain access to the interviewees, we employed the snow-balling technique to get references from admissions personnel and administrators on students who fit the criterion. Student's personnel records that included transfer status, previous demographics, current status and GPA were used to analyze if they fit the particular criteria of the study. There was an introductory letter sent to each referred-student explaining the study and requesting the interview (Appendix E). The initial introductory

letters were sent to the student's university e-mail. Students were given a specific interview protocol designed just for them (Appendix F). Separate introductory letters (Appendix G) and interview protocols (Appendix H) were provided for admissions staff and university leadership (respectively). Information was collected by interviews primarily and secondarily by document analysis of the university website. The interviewee limit was set at 10 participants-- to be made up of students, admission personnel and university leadership. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in neutral settings (i.e. library, conference rooms at school, student lounges). Document analysis consisted mainly of review and research of the student's and/or administrator's thematic results derived from the interview relative to transfer practices, protocols and thoughts relating to transfer policies, practices and protocols.

Data Collection

Data collection is critical to the social research process. When implemented correctly, data collection enhances the quality of a social research study (Rimando et al, 2015, p.2027). For data collection in this study, interviews were utilized in order to extract the necessary information, thoughts and attitudes from the participants.

Document analysis. Rimando et al define document analysis as the systematic gathering of data for a particular purpose from various sources, including, interviews, focus groups, observation, existing records, and electronic devices (2015, p. 2026). On a smaller scale, documents presented by the Family University's website regarding transfer intake policies and procedures were later used in the study to fill any gaps, informationally, that that needed to be answered prior to creating updates to policies, procedures and method relative to community-college transfer intake (See Appendix I).

Interviews. Significant challenges present themselves during the interview process in qualitative research specifically with designing an interview guide, making the interviewee feel comfortable and remaining focused on the research topic during the interview process (Ashton, 2014). In this study we attempted to alleviate those problems by interviewing participants in a comfortable setting; but not creating such a sophisticated, rudimentary interview instrument that we could not extract the thoughts, feelings and attitudes from the participants. Researchers were careful not to lead the interviewees but to let participants' thoughts, feelings and knowledge be free-flowing from interview questions.

Interviews were conducted at three levels: the student level, the admissions staff level and the university leadership level. All individual interviews were conducted after the initial informed consent instrument was completed. Interview notes were completed by the researcher during each interview and were compiled in an informal physical journal that was safely stored by the researcher as to protect privacy and confidentiality. Prior to the interview participants signed an informed consent agreement (Appendix J) approved by the North Carolina State University's Institutional Review Board. All participants were made aware about the scope, purpose and reasons for the research. All participants were made aware that they could cease participation in the interview process at any point with no threat of punishment or retaliation. Students and staff alike were made aware that their answers had no bearing on their roles at Family University be it professional, academic or other. No participants were compensated for their time or answers or lack thereof. At the cessation of each interview, main ideas, quotes and summative reports were verbally announced to participants for accuracy and then transcribed physically and provided to the participant.

Data Analysis

Data analysis usually occurs simultaneously with data collection in qualitative research (Rimando et al, 2015, p.2027). As information is gathered from the interviews it is then sifted through and compiled into categorical themes; this process is called “coding”. Coding or categorizing the data is the most important stage in the qualitative data analysis process and in simple terms, codes are tags or labels for allocating identified themes or topics from the data compiled in the study (Wong, 2008, p.16). Coding is a particular tactic that diminishes subjectivity, in my opinion, because it has to be present numerous times in order to be considered a theme. Themes have to emerge from the transcription and not just the opinion of the author.

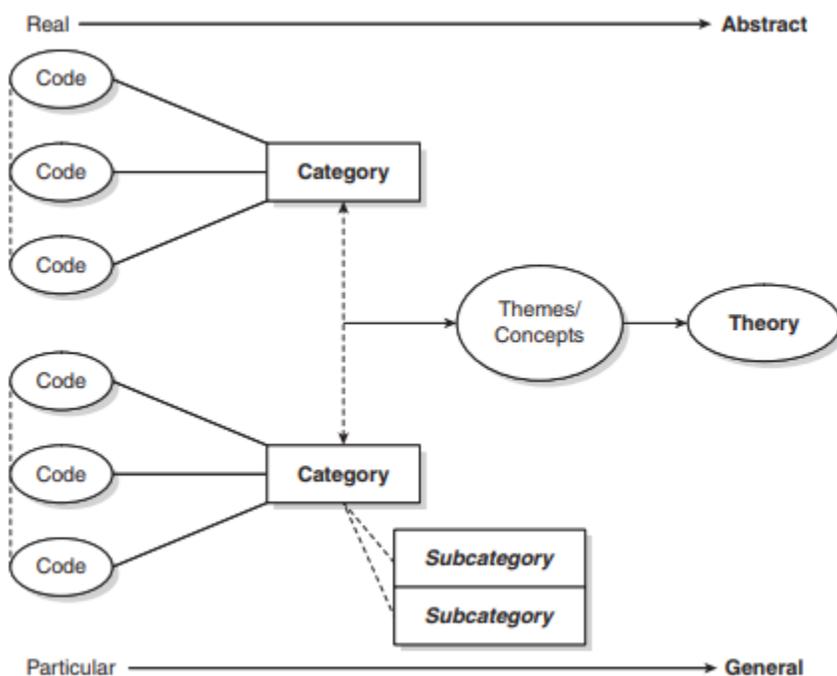


Figure 4. Data analysis in qualitative research. Reprinted from *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* by J. Saldana, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications.

The particular process in analyzing this data for this study is as follows: Once all interviews are completed, the researcher allows categories to emerge from the data. This type of “pattern coding” allows for categories to emerge from themes and thus drive the theory of the research (See Figure 4) (Saldana, 2009). In order for categories and themes to emerge there must be repetitive answers that are common amongst interviewees which will lead to the analysis of our findings and foster answers as to how we should move forward.

Validity

The researchers conducted interviews that were quite lengthy, sometimes spanning over several hours and that were led by an interview script. Several questions in the interview script were similar in nature and could bring about similar answers. This allows room for validity in the answers of interviewees as opposed to them only being asked a question only once. A short interview may produce “synthetic” answers whilst lengthy interviews where interviewees have to expand, reflect and critique their thoughts may produce more realistic answers. In order for themes and codes to be valid so must the answers of the interviewees. The researcher was careful to not ask leading questions, also, as to not skew the answers. Selection of the participants was carefully thought out by the researcher with respect to validity. With the researcher not being affiliated with Family University, they had no access or influence on students who were picked for the study. Instead, the researcher chose to pick students that they didn’t know but that were recommended (snowball sampling) by other administrators outside of the researcher’s scope of power. This negated any research bias from the researcher.

In our research we are using triangulation of data to assess our validity. According to Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) there are several types of triangulation. The two we focused mostly on were: methods triangulation and analyst triangulation. Essentially, methods

triangulation is using differing methods to extract information from the source. In our case, we used interviews to extract information from our source. Though the interviewer was one sole-researcher, thoughts and ideas were shared with a colleague to further interpretation. The additional colleagues input provided analyst triangulation. We were able to utilize two different perspectives as we evaluated the data. With our study being qualitative you have to be careful in analyzing data because it is mainly about “feelings”. I think triangulation of data is very important in this study approach. I think the analyst triangulation is especially important because it gives us differing interpretations of data that can help validate findings better. Furthering the validity of the study, we utilized “member-checking” (Stake, 1995) which essentially is verifying and paraphrasing with interviewees (in verbal and/or written formats) about the accuracy of their statements and providing an opportunity to amend or clarify their statements.

Positionality

The researcher is not affiliated with Family University in any direct fashion. The researcher is an administrator at a large, community college in the same state as Family University and thusly has interest in the topic at-hand. However, as to not poison the study or encounter researcher-bias, the researcher chose the scope of the study to be at the four-year institution level. The researcher’s role at the community-college isn’t directly involved in the transfer process for students transferring into four year schools but the topic is overall relevant to the researcher. The researcher could use insights gleaned from this study for future roles in higher education. The researcher also utilized peer review, colleague’s opinions and analyst triangulation to not skew the research to the personal views and biases of the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

The main ethical standards for the research study to be approved by North Carolina State University IRB (found at their website) included:

- to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects through project review.
- to foster compliance with institutional policy and federal regulations by facilitating institutional personnel's efforts in utilizing living human subjects for research and other scholarly pursuits that are systematic and designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge.
- to provide education to institutional personnel on the ethical use of human subjects. Helping scientists and instructors to be stellar stewards of the trust of our human subjects is of paramount concern.

In compliance with the North Carolina State University's IRB standards there was minimal risk to subjects of this study. All participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix J) prior to the onset of any and all research methods. The form gave reasonable and adequate information about the scope of the study and all decisions to participate were documented. Prior to the informed consent form being signed the students and/or staff-members were sent an introductory e-mail (Appendices E and G, respectively) that meets the ethical standards North Carolina State University's IRB.

Furthermore, details on confidentiality and compensation were given on the consent form. All participants were made aware that there was no compensation for the study and that their confidentially rights would not be violated according to their signed consent form. All materials derived from interview will be electronically saved on a pass-word encrypted laptop

device and external hard-drive which is also password encrypted. All forms (consent form included) were made available in any desired format relative to accommodations for any disabilities.

Participants were under no duress or undue pressure during the interviews. All physical notes, memos, and/or journals relative to the interviews were kept on a password-encrypted laptop which was locked in a storage cabinet in the researcher's locked office when not in use. Pseudonyms were used for all interviews and derivatives of the interviews. In the data analysis process, pseudonyms were also used to proceed through the study. Any identifiers of research participants were destroyed and/or discarded as to protect the participant. All reasonable means were employed to protect all participants from any undue harm or risk throughout this study.

Summary

Within this chapter, this study's research design and methodology were defined. The chapter also included the benefits and criticisms of utilizing the case study method. Later in the chapter, site selection and participants was described. Finally, data collection, data analysis, and issues involving validity and ethical soundness were detailed along with a positionality statement of the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina. The study also examined the institution's community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and methods that may create barriers to success for community college transfers within the four-year institution. The study also identified "best practices" that the institution had undertaken to embolden academic success for community college transfers. Finally, the study determined future practices that should be put in place to streamline and propel transfer success at four-year level. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion?
- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion?

The study employed a single, intrinsic case study. This chapter provides an examination of data gathered through interviews and document analysis.

Participants Interviewed

The students that participated in this study were chosen based on completion status as of May 2018 for students who entered Family University's degree completion program in August 2015. The students were also selected with the stipulation of being a transfer student from a community-college. This information was gathered from admissions staff. Five students with

“complete” ($n = 2$) status and students with “not complete” ($n = 3$) status were identified for interviews. The student recruitment letter can be found in Appendix E. Three admissions staff and two administrative participants were selected based on subject matter expertise on, and general proximity to, the admission policies and procedures of the university’s degree-seeking program(s). The admissions and administrative staff recruitment letters can be found in Appendices J and K, respectively. The admissions and the administrative staffs were asked a set of separate, but similar, questions that related more specifically to employees and the admission policies and procedures at Family University. The student’s responses will be presented first with admission and administrative staff afterwards.

Student Interviews

The interviews were presented in the order that the questions were asked. Students were asked a set of questions specifically tailored for them. Presented below are summaries of questions: a) describe the initial transfer experience b) Most supportive and least supportive features of the admissions policies, procedures and practices c) perceived areas of improvement within the transfer recruitment and admissions process d) post-admission campus environment and e) describing what the University does to help or impede bachelor’s completion.

Describing the initial transfer experience. The students were given a particularly open-ended question to just give their thoughts about the initial transfer process—from the moment they began the process until acceptance.

Laura. Laura found out about Family University while attending a basketball tournament for the respective athletic conference that Family University participates in. One of the events that she attended had an admissions fair where Family University had a booth set-up. Laura said that she knew she would be applying for schools in that respective conference because she

wanted to be a cheerleader. Family University was further from her hometown than the other three schools she considered but she said Family University's host at the booth was engaging. The booth had "on the spot" paper applications. Laura said that this was the only school at the event that accepted applications and that she applied there. It took her awhile to hear back from the school but when she did she was told that she had to submit her official transcripts and a \$30 non-refundable fee. Within three weeks she was told that she was accepted into Family University.

Jaren. Jaren enrolled in her respective community college with the intention of attending Family University after she obtained her associate's degree. The community college that she attended has an articulation agreement with Family University whereas the successful completion of an associate's degree guarantees acceptance into Family University. Jaren earmarked Family University as her university of choice while in high school because of their proximity to her hometown and their Sports Management program. Jaren describes the transfer process as "seamless" mainly because of the help of her advisors at her respective community college. She submitted her application and non-refundable payment online and received notice of admission within two weeks.

Travis. Travis found his way to Family University through delayed academic enrollment. Travis is a student-athlete at Family University who initially committed to participate in athletics at Family University but was deemed an academic "non-qualifier" through the NCAA standards. He thusly had to attend community college for two years and maintain a 2.0 GPA and at least 12 hours accumulated per full-time semester. After 3 semesters, Travis was eligible to transfer to Family University. He described his initial transfer process as "confusing" because he couldn't figure out who to talk to from Family University. He proclaimed that he was getting the "run

around” from admissions staff because his “[soon to be] coach at [Family University]” was supposed to be “handling everything”. Travis says that the admissions staff was “short” with him and had “attitudes” when he tried to ask questions. He then visited Family University to handle “everything” in person whereas he was later accepted into Family University within two weeks.

Haley. Haley attended two previous community colleges, one being outside of Family University’s respective state, and called her transfer process a “nightmare”. Haley found out about Family University from her neighbor, a Family University alumnus, and applied over the summer after her third semester at her second community college. She admits that Family University wasn’t totally to blame for the holdup in her acceptance as her first community college delayed her transcript; however, she had issues with transfer courses transferring completely over. She explains that she had to appeal nine credits (three classes) not “transferring over” to Family University. Ultimately, she was able to receive six of those nine credits and was accepted to Family University three credits away from being a second semester junior.

Russ. Russ was also a recipient of the benefit of Family University’s articulation agreement. He received his associate’s degree from a community college and was guaranteed acceptance into Family University. He found out about Family University when they attended a college fair at the respective community college. He had no intentions of attending Family University when he initially decided to attend the community college but was impressed by the “staff” present at the college fair. He was not aware of the articulation agreement at was prepared to enter the workforce after receiving his associate’s degree. He said it had taken “a long time” to hear back from Family University about his official acceptance but he said “was not worried” because of the articulation agreement guaranteeing his acceptance. He projected that the process

would have been “a lot more nerve-wrecking if [he] didn’t know [he] had guaranteed acceptance”.

Most supportive and least supportive features of the admissions policies, procedures and practices. Students were asked to give a description of what was most helpful and least helpful during their transfer process to Family University.

Laura. Laura said that the best thing that Family University did, in her case, was to be present at the basketball tournament event. She believes that without that “community outreach presence” she would not be at Family University at all. She thinks that on-the-spot applications were beneficial but believed that a) the reply from the on-site application took too long and b) that the university should have “several laptops in place to do electronic applications instead of paper ones”. Laura also said that it wasn’t immediately clear to her how many community college credits would transfer and that admissions staff could have been more “helpful” in detailing to her: a) which credits would or would not transfer and, more importantly according to her b) why certain courses wouldn’t transfer. She also mentioned that she had a dedicated transfer advisor, which was helpful, but the transfer advisor seemed to be extremely busy and was hard to contact and get in touch with. She goes on to say:

My transfer advisor, [advisor name] was very helpful when I actually got to see her but it was extremely hard to get in touch with her and I had to set appointment dates weeks out from when I needed her. I think the school should invest in hiring more transfer advisors so transfer students aren’t waiting weeks to receive important information and guidance.

Jaren. Jaren seemed extremely appreciative of the articulation agreement. She said that the articulation agreement “helped [her] mentally streamline what [she] needed to do in order to get in to [Family University]”. She gave credit to the advisors at her community college for

helping “line up her seamless transfer”. She did go on to say that she was upset that Family University only accepted up to 64 credits. She goes on to say that she “lost 8 credits” because of the maximum cap that Family University imposes on their transfers. She went on to say: I think that [Family University] should evaluate transfer maximums on a case-by-case basis. Students work extremely hard, and spend a lot of money, to take those classes and they shouldn’t be tossed to the side like that. I feel like I was being punished for over-achieving and doing the best I could do.

Travis. Travis credited Family University’s athletic program with helping him “officially” transfer to the university. He stated that the “admissions staff did more harm than good when [he] was trying to transfer”. He said that they were hard to get in contact with and that “even when [he] did get in touch with them they wanted to rush [him] off the phone”. He went on to say:

Luckily I had a scholarship in place or otherwise I don’t know how they would have treated me. I don’t know what other non-athlete transfers experience but it can’t be good because mine was terrible. I literally had to walk to the admissions office with my coach to get all my stuff straight. After that I didn’t have [any] problems but when I first got there it was terrible.

Travis said that prior to the trip to the admissions office he had left “three or four voicemails in a week” and didn’t have any response from anyone. He also added that people in admissions kept saying that he should talk to his coach while his coach was saying that the admissions staff bore the responsibility of helping him get enrolled. He also noted that Family University should have dedicated transfer staff solely for transfer athletes.

Haley. Haley reiterated that she did not have a positive transfer experience with Family University. She was upset that Family University did not accept all of her credits. Haley says:

I did go to two different junior colleges so I expected it to be a little bit of a hassle already as far as receiving my transcripts was concerned but I didn't expect them to not take 15 of my credits. That's a whole semester worth of work! And I paid out of my pocket for that! The only excuse that they gave me was that the first junior college that I went to didn't have the same accrediting body as [Family University]. I get that too but I think they could have made an exception. One of the courses that didn't transfer even had the same name as the course that they did accept but they just told me that the course descriptions were totally different. I was really upset when they wouldn't accept my credits.

Haley also says that the hold up on her transfer appeal "messed up" her housing assignment:

I wanted to room with a friend of mine that transferred here but she was already accepted and I had to wait to do my transfer credit appeal. Anyway, the deadline passed for housing requests and I got waitlisted and couldn't room with my friend. If [Family University] would have accepted my courses, I would have been living with [her friend]. I feel like they need to do a better job of making transfers feel like regular students. It seems like we always get stuff second like: housing, advisors, pick of classes, etc. I had to wait to pick my classes because of the credit appeal so the classes that I needed, as a junior at the university, I couldn't get into. The incoming freshman had already picked their classes by the time I could register and I had to get the leftovers. So not only did they not accept 15 of my credits but then I had to take elective classes instead of course

classes because I had to wait so long to be able to register. This set me back even more. Regular juniors get priority registration after seniors and I feel like I missed out on all that because of [Family University's] so-called transfer process.

Russ. Russ wasn't disappointed in the transfer process at Family University mainly because of, he says, the fact that he knew the articulation agreement between his community college and Family University guaranteed his acceptance. He said the staff at the college fair "sold" him on Family University. He does, however, wonder what the process is like with students who are not beneficiaries of the articulation agreements. He went on to say:

I do wonder if it would have been this easy if the articulation agreement wasn't in place. I mean, they did [kind of] take a long time to get back with me in regard to my final acceptance. I had to register [kind of] late but it worked out. I also met some students in my class who had received academic scholarships. I feel like I did well enough to receive scholarships but it was never mentioned to me at any time that scholarships were available. I asked some of my other friends that transferred and they weren't told about them either. I wonder if they are only for, like, the students that came here from high school.

Russ says that overall the process was "cool" and "helpful" but said a few tweaks could be made. He said that he didn't feel he had any control over what was happening relative to him being able to contact his transfer advisor, sign-up for courses on time and apply for housing. Below is a table highlighting the positive aspects of the transfer experience, according to the students.

Table 1. *Students' reported positive aspects of the initial transfer experience (pre-admission).*

Student	Reported positive experience
Laura	Being present at a community event to recruit students; "on the spot" paper applications
Jaren	Having an articulation agreement in place
Travis	Athletic program was helpful in his transfer
Haley	n/a
Russ	Having an articulation agreement in place; great staff at recruitment fair that "sold" him on Family University

What are perceived areas of improvement within the transfer recruitment and admissions process? Students were asked to provide what they believed to be the negative areas, or what can be improved, from the recruiting and admissions process. Their answer are summarized in the table below:

Table 2. *Students' summary of negative areas in the transfer recruitment and application process.*

Student	Negative areas of recruitment	Negative areas of admission
Laura	Should have electronic applications at recruiting event; should reach out to students in different areas of NC (long-distance)	Reply/acceptance letter took too long; needs more information on what credits transfer/what don't and why; transfer advisor hard to get in touch with
Jaren	N/A	Only accepted 64 hours- "not fair"
Travis	Needs more transparency on admission requirements	Needs better communication between admissions and athletics department; negative interactions with admission staff- didn't call back in timely manner, felt "rushed" off the phone; delay in acceptance process
Haley	Needs to be more upfront with admission/credit standards	Several like or similar classes didn't transfer over from previous community college
Russ	Needs to advertise more (he never heard of Family University); needs to tell the stipulations of articulation agreement.	Took a long time to hear back with regard to official acceptance

Post-admission campus environment. Students were asked a series of questions that involved the environment of the campus once they arrive. Students were asked about orientations, advisors, professors, student groups and the overall campus environment.

Laura. Laura was able to make summer orientation and she said the campus was "much larger" than she expected. She met friends at the orientation that she still socializes with. Her only complaint about orientation was that it was extremely hot and humid outside and they had to walk the entire campus. There weren't any obvious student groups created just for transfer

students, she says, but she is considering pledging into a sorority. She said that she had a dedicated transfer advisor but she only met with her about twice a semester. She said that the “line is long” to get a sit-down with her transfer advisor. She enjoyed the professors for the most part; she said the Sports Management program has some “great subject-matter experts”. She says that a few of her professors did take a while to get her grades back but she thinks she was a bit “spoiled” from her previous community college where the classes were smaller and the professors had more time (less students) to grade work and return it. She says Family University is much bigger than her community college but it still is considered a “small university”-which she enjoys. The campus life and family atmosphere are amongst her favorite things about Family University. Laura tried out for the cheerleading squad and she says that “making the team” really opened up the social scene for her. He enjoys travelling to the games and helping set-up and designs the pep rallies. She says that Family University “revolves” around sports and she is glad to be in the inner circle of Family University athletics.

Jaren. Jaren thoroughly enjoyed the summer orientation. She was most interested in seeing the common areas and the new Student Union that Family University boasts. Family University has a “cool culture” relative to student diversity and campus activities, according to Jaren. She was on the Student Services board at her community college so she focused on student activity offerings during the orientation tour. Relative to campus student groups, she hopes to join the student activities committee at Family University. Jaren had a dedicated transfer advisor but rarely went to him for guidance. Since Jaren came in as an “upper-classman”, she could utilize her major-specific advisor and visited with her about twice monthly. Jaren gave high praise to the advisor and said that she really helped Jaren “navigate the trenches”

of the new university. Jaren also gave high praise to the professors and the setting within her program. She says:

The classrooms are larger than what I'm used to but I enjoyed that. I always wanted to be in this kind of college setting and the professors made it easy for us all. The professors stayed after classes and answered questions all the time. I could send emails and get a fast response and they even created study groups for us to utilize. Working with students who have the same aspirations as me made it even better. I felt like we were all a family working towards the same goals and helping each other along the way.

Travis. Travis was not able to attend the orientation but he was able to go on more intimate tour with a fellow transfer athlete a week before school started. He said that he was most curious about the cafeteria, athletic facilities and housing. He wasn't particularly happy with the entire process with advisors. He says that he couldn't meet with his advisors until two weeks into the first semester. He says he was lucky that his "coach could help [him] register for courses and put [him] in the classes that he needed to be in. Travis most loved the comradery developed with his teammates and considers his athletic team a "student group".

I mostly hangout with my teammates because they are going through the same thing that I am going through. Our schedules are similar, we are mostly in the same classes and we, obviously, go to practice and workouts together. I honestly wouldn't have time to join any other student groups but I do enjoy the campus and campus life. We have a good environment and great turnouts for our [athletic] games. It's fun and I'm glad that I came here. I know I have made some lifelong friends with my teammates.

Travis proclaims that he is “not a school person” and he relies heavily on the study hall sessions that are required for athletes. He describes the professors as “pretty cool” and that they “help out” whenever he asks.

Haley. Haley also missed orientation as she was “tied up” with her transfer credit appeal process. She says that her and her friend, who was considering transferring to Family University at the time, came and did an unofficial tour of the campus. She says that she was impressed with the campus and how “green” it was. She visited her assigned transfer advisor on her tour and said that it was good to finally put a face with the name. She does give her transfer advisor praise for taking her without an official appointment. She says that her relationship with her transfer advisor was strengthened, she believes, after the visit. Haley said that her professors are really helpful and seem more dedicated than her previous professors from previous colleges. She says that they “provide face-to-face feedback, send several emails and setup study groups”. She enjoys the office hours that her professors provide, also. Haley, an out-of-state transfer, enjoys the laid-back vibe of the campus, as she is used to “a more fast-paced, hustle and bustle environment being from up north”. She says the students “are really cool and like to have fun”. She enjoys the football games and “really enjoys the marching band”.

Russ. Russ was able to attend the orientation and was very impressed with the landscape of the campus. He also said that he already had his fall schedule so he was able to earmark the location of where his classes were while he was on orientation. He made some friends on orientation and ended up rooming off-campus with one of his orientation companions. Moving off-campus, however, is one of his regrets. He says that when you live off-campus you do “miss some of the on-campus activities and student activities”. Luckily, Russ says, he doesn’t live that far from campus and he can still enjoy the “plethora of student activities” that Family University

has to offer. Russ really enjoys his major and his professors. He says that Aviation Science major has “a small group of dedicated staff and faculty” and it really helps him. He says the professors are highly accessible and extremely “dedicated to their craft”. In fact, his professors have encouraged him into pursuing a career in teaching Aviation Science and he has taken on a mentee/mentor role with one of his professors. This same professor is actually his major-specific advisor—which really helps him “line up [his] coursework” and get on track to graduation.

Table 3. *Students’ input on post-admission campus environment.*

Student	Orientation	Advisors	Student Groups	Professors	Overall Campus environment
Laura	Positive: enjoyed orientation; appreciated the size of the campus; met new friends; Negative: in the middle of summer-hot and humid for such a large campus	Positive: she did have a dedicated transfer advisor Negative: hard to get in touch with advisor/waiting list	Positive: considering joining a sorority; already on cheerleading team Negative: No student groups exclusively for transfers;	Positive: subject matter experts Negative: take longer than she prefers to return graded work	Positive: family atmosphere; small community vibe; enjoys athletics-centered university Negative: n/a
Jaren	Positive: thoroughly enjoyed the orientation; focused on Student Union and student activities Negative: n/a	Positive: used and praised major-specific advisors Negative: didn’t use transfer advisor because they were “hard to get to”	Positive: huge proponent of student activities and student services-plans to join student activities board; enjoys the student diversity	Positive: says professors are helpful/answers questions/stay after class, etc.; created helpful study groups; Negative: n/a	Positive: “cool culture”; family atmosphere Negative: n/a

Table 3 (continued)

Travis	<p>Positive: smaller tour where he observed and appreciated the athletic facilities and dining halls</p> <p>Negative: couldn't attend due to transfer hold-ups</p>	<p>Positive: n/a</p> <p>Negative: did not respond in timely manner; not available or helpful for student athletes</p>	<p>Positive: considers athletic team his student group-enjoys comradery and team environment</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: described as "pretty cool" and relatively helpful</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: enjoys campus life and the turnouts for athletic events</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>
Haley	<p>Positive: went on private tour; enjoyed the green landscape of the campus</p> <p>Negative: missed the orientation because of transfer credit appeal process</p>	<p>Positive: met her transfer advisor on tour; forged a strong bond; advisor was very helpful</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: enjoys football games and marching band</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: described as helpful; provide face-to-face feedback, send several emails and setup study groups; enjoyed use of office hours</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: thinks the student population is "cool"; enjoys the laid back vibe of the campus/town</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>
Russ	<p>Positive: appreciated the landscaping on the campus; was able to utilize orientation to find classes; met his roommate during orientation</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: professor served as advisor and mentor; helped him get on career track</p> <p>Negative: didn't meet with transfer advisor often</p>	<p>Positive: says there are a plethora of student groups and activities that he wants to participate in</p> <p>Negative: living off campus diminishes access to student activities and groups</p>	<p>Positive: a small group of dedicated staff and faculty; says professors are highly dedicated and accessible</p> <p>Negative: n/a</p>	<p>Positive: likes the environment and activities</p> <p>Negative: can't enjoy environment as much because of off-campus living</p>

What does the University do to help you complete your bachelor's degree? What does the University do to impede completion of your bachelor's degree? The students were asked to summarize practices that assist and obstruct them in their pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

Laura. Laura believes that the University purposely creates and fosters a “small-town” environment by keeping the student-professor ratio low in order to create student success. She believes that other schools in Family University’s system have become increasingly large and focus on having as many students as possible. She believes that Family University can “reach” and “serve” the students better by creating an environment that’s more personal for the students and professors. She believes that the only impediment to bachelor’s success is the “somewhat” lack of support staff. She believes the faculty to be “awesome” but there is a lack of support staff, mainly in the financial aid, advising and admissions department, that can lead to some students not having the correct information to make important decisions that affect their academic “standing and livelihood”.

Jaren. Jaren believes that the University purposely supports and fosters student community and activities to keep students engaged. She says:

Students get tired of just school sometimes. You have to think; some of the students are 18 or 19 years old and like to have a good time. And I personally believe that having a good time helps keeps students in school. There has to be a balance of work and fun but I absolutely think the fun is important for students to stick to their studies. [Family University] does a great job of providing student activities, clubs, volunteer opportunities and sports to keep students actively engaged. Those activities are the highlights of some of the students’ college careers and one hundred percent believe that it’s what helps student persevere and finish their degree here at [Family University].

Jaren also credit Family University for creating the articulation agreement with community colleges as taking steps to help students graduate. Jaren believes that it gives students who attend community colleges the confidence to transfer, [because admittance is guaranteed], and they come in well on their way to receive a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, Jaren believes that the University having a cap on how many credits can transfer from a community college impeded her progress to obtaining a bachelor's degree. She admits that she understands that there has to be a cap at some point but she thinks that it should be decided on a case-by-case basis. She attests that she had a 3.9 at her previous community college and graduated with honors so the classes that Family University "threw away" were classes that she had A's in. She says these classes were transferrable courses specifically for Family University and put her back about a semester. She then had to retake similar, or the same, courses at Family University. Essentially, Jaren says, Family University costed her valuable time and financial resources because of their credit transfer cap.

Travis. Travis credits Family University with creating and sustaining "study hall for athletes". He thinks without the study hall and tutors many student athletes, he included, would not be on the path to academic success or graduation. He says:

It's a win-win for everyone. [Family University] needs the athletes because they need sports. Sports bring money and attention to the school. With that being said, they need to keep the athletes eligible so they have to provide us with academic support—especially with our hectic schedules. It would be hard to juggle all of this, for me at least, if I didn't have study hall and tutors. But on the other hand, athletes need the school to showcase their talent and play the sports that they love. And we also need to get our degrees so we

can do something with ourselves. So I'm happy that [Family University] invests in our academic support.

Travis didn't reveal anything that he believes impedes his progress towards a bachelor's degree. He did say the initial entry process would be "a lot easier" if they had transfer advisors and intake staff specifically for athletes—similar to how they have academic support staff and tutors specifically for athletes.

Haley. Haley was initially displeased with Family University's transfer intake process and says that the school impeded her graduation by not accepting all of her credits. She also had to "scramble" to find housing because the transfer appeal process took so long which put her in a financial bind. Registering late for classes because of the transfer appeal process, she couldn't take classes that she needed because they were full and thusly had to take them the following semester. All of the aforementioned issues, according to Haley, impeded her progress towards completion. She did not identify specific measures taken by the University that help her towards degree completion.

Russ. Russ credits Family University with hiring and maintaining "excellent and dedicated faculty" that provide excellent guidance and tutelage to their students. Russ says that his particular faculty members in his major have gone "above and beyond" with him and his classmates relative to providing study groups, assistance and mentorship within their program. He doubts if he would be as engrained in his studies if it weren't for his faculty members. He did not identify specific issues that would impede his completion of a bachelor's degree.

Staff Interviews

Five staff members were interviewed about transfer policies, procedures and practices relative to transfer students. Three of the interviewees were a part of the admissions team:

Martina, Corey and Jackson. The remaining two staff members, Aaron and Donald, are executives in the college; neither have direct responsibility over admissions. Presented below are the five staff members' take on a) the current transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University b) the description of what they personally deem to be beneficial or not beneficial relative to transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University c) answers relative to orientations, faculty, advising and programmatic pathways as it related to transfer students at Family University and d) factors that inhibit or support completion of a bachelor's degree for transfer students at Family University.

Describe the current transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University. Here the staff members answered an open-ended question asking about their opinions on the recruiting and admissions practices, policies and procedures at Family University.

Martina. Martina has been at Family University for seventeen years and has seen the “admissions process grow drastically”. She says that Family University is much more proactive in their approach to getting students “to and through” the school. She preaches that Family University has a program that lowers in-state tuition to \$500; for anonymity purposes we will call it the “Assurance Program”. She also attests that Family University sends recruiting staff out to community college recruiting fairs, community events, sports events and more to recruit prospective community college students. She believes that, with the resources available, Family University maximizes their potential in recruiting and potentially admitting community college transfer students.

Corey. Corey is new to Family University and has been working at the school for three years. He is a recent college graduate and this is his first job after college. He says that he went

to a school that is very similar to Family University and that his alma mater didn't "seem to be as committed to recruiting and bringing in students" as Family University is. He says:

[Family University] has taken several huge steps to make sure that they are making it as easy as possible for students, even junior college transfer students, to be admitted here.

We have a large presence in the recruiting arena for [in-state] community colleges. We also have articulation agreements in place with several [in-state] community colleges. We offer scholarships and the Assurance Program to make [Family University] affordable for students.

Jackson. Jackson is an alumnus of Family University and has worked at the university for eleven years. He admits that the student population at Family University has dwindled since he was a student but attests that it's not because of a lack of effort in the recruiting and admissions departments. He claims that the recruiting department spends "big money" on travel, setup and marketing materials for the recruiting staff to "go out and get students to at least be interested, or know, about [Family University]". He thinks that the student organizations and athletic program are "top-notch" and really draws prospective student's attention.

Aaron. Aaron is an executive, above the dean level, at Family University and has been employed there for fifteen years. Aaron says Family University and the recruiting and admissions staff work tirelessly to come up with innovative ways to garner attention from prospective students. He says:

The new wave is obviously social media. I know that we at [Family University] have really worked hard to create a social media presence by utilizing and marketing our university on all available platforms. We have also tried to get the jump on marketing by being early adopters on emerging platforms outside of the normal ones with hopes to get

the edge on out other universities. Our studies show that a student is almost three times as likely to select a university if they have seen the university on some sort of social media platform. Big data can show us how many times students have clicked on those links or posts.

Aaron also believes that having nationally ranked academic programs really wins over some of the parents who are sometimes the “gate-keepers” on where the prospective students ultimately decide to go. He says that hiring proficient faculty who can boost the research, grant reception and academic environment really “lend to creating nationally ranked academic programs”.

Donald. Donald is a senior executive that has been at Family University for seven years. He, too, admits that he has seen the student population drop but he also says that average GPA and graduation rate has risen. He thinks the efforts that Family University have taken to “recruit high-quality scholars” has paid off and it won’t be long until the student population follows the trend that the GPA and graduation rate has. Receiving grants, having highly-acclaimed faculty and aggressive recruiting and marketing initiatives are the staples of what upper administration perceives to be next-level recruiting tactics. Donald says that they may have actually lost some of their students to the community college so it was very important that those articulation agreements are in place to “reclaim” some of the students. He says:

“We love working with the community colleges. When the economy went down, we noticed a dip in our enrollment and an increase in community colleges enrollment—for obvious reasons. We don’t want to take students from the community college; we just want to serve the students after the community college can serve them no more. It was extremely important that we partner with the community college and create articulation

agreements that can streamline the transfer process from respective community colleges to [Family University].

Financial reasons are sometimes a huge factor in why students choose community colleges, Donald says, so it was imperative that they establish the Assurance Program that could help “mirror” the tuition costs of community colleges. He also said that he feels Family University has done an excellent job of fostering an environment of “inclusiveness, community and acceptance” that is very attractive to prospective students that includes but is not limited to: student organizations, academic honor societies, top-notch athletic programs, and Greek organizations.

What transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University do you feel are most beneficial students? What transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University do you feel are least beneficial? The staff members were asked to give their insight on what they believed to be most beneficial and what they perceived to be least beneficial relative to transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University. Their answers are presented in the table below.

Table 4. *Staff members' perceptions of the benefits and impediments related to transfer practices, policies and procedures at Family University.*

Staff Member	Most Beneficial	Least Beneficial
Martina	Assurance Program; student organizations	Lack of global training for all staff of faculty-she feels that they can't answer all of the questions that prospective and incoming students have which leads to gaps in information
Corey	Assurance Program; articulation agreements	Believes the school should offer more scholarship for auxiliary athletic program scholarships to boost the athletic program (offer more scholarships to band members, cheerleaders, etc.)—believes the athletic program is the marquee recruiter for the school and the conference
Jackson	Resources allocated to recruiting and marketing; student organizations; athletics	Believes that the academic advisors are spread thin and can't provide students dedicated time and attention that they need
Aaron	Social media presence; nationally ranked academic programs; proficient faculty; athletics and student organizations	Too much marketing dollars spent on print material and face-to-face visits when the "Wave" in recruiting is digital and social media marketing;
Donald	Receiving grants to embolden nationally ranked academic programs; hiring acclaimed faculty; Assurance program; student organizations	Believes that they need to "bridge the gap" between how many resources are allocated to high school prospects versus community college prospects—as the number of community college transfers has increased he hasn't seen a congruent rise in resources dedicated to the recruitment of community college prospects.

Detail information and perspective relative to orientations, faculty, advising and programmatic pathways as it related to transfer students at Family University. The staff was asked: what aspects of community college transfer (CCT) recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices seem to be least beneficial to potential CCT students? Is there anything that the University should add to embolden recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for CCT students? Is there a specific orientation just for CCT students? If so, please describe it. What aspects of the orientation are most helpful? Least helpful? What evidence or examples do you have of your assumptions? What is your overall impression of the faculty that are teaching CCT students? Is there a difference (in your opinion) on instruction between CCT students and native students? If so, what would you believe contributes to that discrepancy? Are there clear programmatic pathways set in place for CCT students that will help them efficiently reach completions? Is there dedicated advising just for CCT students? A summary of their answers is located in the table below.

Table 5. *Summary of staff members' perspective relative to orientations, faculty, advising and programmatic pathways as it related to transfer students at Family University.*

Staff Member	Orientation	Faculty	Advising	Programmatic Pathways for transfers
Martina	Orientations are provided throughout the summer; helps students get acclimated to environment; not specific to transfers;	Aware that students really speak well of the faculty; sits on a panel with faculty and appreciates what they bring; not sure how they deal specifically with transfers	Aware of dedicated advising for transfer students;	When students have graduated from community college they generally have a more streamlined program pathway; credits not transferring hurts students the most

Table 5 (continued)

Corey	is orientation tour leader; enjoys answering the questions; not specific to transfers;	Gives high praises to faculty; wants to work more directly with them to embolden admissions process;	Aware of dedicated advising for transfer students; has heard that there are complaints	Students who don't have transferrable credits often times have slower pace
Jackson	Believes there aren't enough orientations; has inquired about setting up community college and lateral transfer orientations	Nationally ranked professors and academic programs; works directly with some faculty on committees	Aware of dedicated advising for transfer students; often receives calls for students looking for advising	Articulation agreement helps students come in and "hit the ground running"; students often have transcript issues that hinder them
Aaron	Thinks there is a better way to do orientations (virtual tours); wants to use less manpower; not specific to transfers	Credits faculty for being innovative and award-winning; not aware of how they interact with students	Aware of dedicated advising for transfer students; Wants to add virtual advising	Students are often unprepared pre-transfer and have to "mix and match" courses which significantly slows them down.
Donald	Not directly familiar with the orientation process; did not know there wasn't a transfer specific orientation.	Credits faculty for generating income via grants; hires faculty (sits on review panel); high satisfaction rate from student surveys	Aware of dedicated advising for transfer students; wants to increase amount of dedicated advisors	Lack of research and forward-thinking often delays progress whether transfer or native;

Factors that support or inhibit bachelor's completion. Staff members were asked to delve into factors that support or impede transfer completion of a bachelor's degree.

Martina. Martina states that Family University does “an excellent job in providing sustained support” to students as they progress towards a bachelor's degree. By providing academic advising, independent learning centers and library education, “Family University is committed to getting student's the degrees and certifications that they need to be viable members of society”. Martina thinks that more can be done, though. She wants to see an increase in job-market relationships that students can intern, or volunteer, for prior to graduation. She says:

We often get questions, a lot, from students wanting to come to [Family University] to enter a specific job market. I think we should try to place these kids with certain companies, prior to their graduation, as to keep them motivated and focused on their goals. We really want them to hit the ground running. I think more resources should be allocated towards that.

Corey. Corey believes that Family University does an excellent job of keeping students engaged with student organizations, athletics and campus events and that those entities directly affect student retention. He believes that providing the extra-curricular helps establish school pride and a sense of community which is “paramount in retaining students and having them stick around to receive a [bachelor's] degree”. Corey thinks Family University needs to provide students with more access to advisors. He claims that they frequently receive calls from students who frequently confuse Admissions with Advising. Without proper advising, or access to advising, Corey feels that “[Family University] may be setting kids up for failure without providing them the full gambit of advising services that they need”.

Jackson. Jackson believes that Family University works “tirelessly” to utilize its resources to provide students with facilities, programs and staff that help usher them toward graduation. In the Admissions department, they utilize post-admission surveys to see what it is that students specifically look for when selecting their respective university. He believes that leadership would be remiss to not pay attention to what the “needs assessment” reflects and utilize their resources to give students what they need to be successful. He thinks that Family University needs to increase its reach in the job market to give the students a more pragmatic approach to job preparation. He believes that when students know the jobs that they can receive with their degree, talk to people in that field then they can have a more “realistic” approach to what they want to do post-graduation. He thinks that this will embolden their final semesters at the college and give them that final “push” that they need towards graduation.

Aaron. Aaron believes that the number one practice that Family University employs that boosts success towards bachelor’s completion is providing students with “top-notch faculty” that can provide leadership and development to students in their respective fields. He says that Family University searches “far and wide to recruit faculty that possess exemplary practical and tacit knowledge in their respective fields and high-academic acumen”. He would like to see Family University have a further reach into social media and the digital world to provide students with “cutting edge access to the digital world around them”. He goes on to say that Family University is light years behind some of the “first tier research institutes relative to social media, digital learning and accessibility”.

Donald. Donald believes that Family University employs every resource possible to providing a high quality education and an affordable cost. He believes that the students are getting a “steal” as it relates to cost of school to benefit of the academic programs. He credits the

quality of the academic programs to Family University's relentless approach in recruiting top-tier faculty. He believes that ultimately the students will only be as successful as the staff that's leading them. He wants to create more auxiliary buildings (libraries, tutoring centers, etc.) that can help embolden student success and graduation. He wants Family University to have a plethora of buildings and student resources similar to that of its sister schools.

Summary of Interviews

Interviews were conducted to answer the research questions. The students that participated in this study were chosen based on completion status as of May 2018 for students who entered Family University's degree completion program in August 2015. The students were also selected with the stipulation of being a transfer student from a community-college. This information was gathered from admissions staff. Five students with "complete" ($n = 2$) status and students with "not complete" ($n = 3$) status were identified for interviews. Three admissions staff and two administrative participants were selected based on subject matter expertise on, and general proximity to, the admission policies and procedures of the university's degree-seeking program(s). Generally, the interview questions questioned the following (for the students):

- How would you describe your initial transfer experience to the University (beginning from Day 1)?
- What features of the admissions policies, procedures, and practices did you find most supportive? Least supportive?
- Do you believe anything to be negative in the University's recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for transfer students? If so, please describe.
- In your opinion what could the University do better, if anything, to create a better experience for potential transfer students?

- Was there an orientation just for transfer students? Describe your orientation experience with the University.
- What facets of the orientation were most beneficial? Least beneficial?
- When you were assigned an advisor, was the advisor just for transfer students?
- Describe your interactions with your advisor and how helpful they were for you.
- Describe your interactions with your professors and how helpful they were for you.
- Were there any peer groups or student groups created for transfer students? If so, describe that experience.
- Describe the overall campus and class room setting and environment. Did you feel as if you were a “part” of the University at the same level as non-transfer (native) students?
- Are there ways that the University can improve the experience and environment for transfer students?
- How has the University supported your completion of a bachelor’s degree?
- How has the University inhibited your completion of a bachelor’s degree
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about transfer experience with the University - anything I should have or could have asked but didn’t?

Generally, the interview questions questioned the following (for the staff):

- Could you describe the University’s recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices of community college transfer (CCT) students?
- What aspects of CCT recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices are most helpful to potential CCT students?
- What aspects of CCT recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices seem to be least beneficial to potential CCT students?

- Is there anything that the University should add to embolden recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for CCT students?
- Is there a specific orientation just for CCT students? If so, please describe it.
- What aspects of the orientation are most helpful? Least helpful? What evidence or examples do you have of your assumptions?
- Describe your perception of the overall preparedness of CCT students attending their first classes at the University.
- What is your overall impression of the faculty that is teaching CCT students? Is there a difference (in your opinion) on instruction between CCT students and native students? If so, what would you believe contributes to that discrepancy?
- Are there clear programmatic pathways set in place for CCT students that will help them efficiently reach completions?
- Is there dedicated advising just for CCT students?
- How does the University specifically support CCT student completion? Is that different from how native students are supported?
- What changes could or should be made to support CCT student completion?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the University's recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for CCT students? Is there anything I should have asked but didn't?

The findings from the interviews were presented in order by person. All responses, positive or negative, that were presented were relative to Family University's transfer policies, practices and procedures. The interviews reflected varying degrees of positive and negative responses relative to the transfer policies, procedures and practices of Family University.

Document Analysis

Information was collected by interviews primarily and secondarily by document analysis of the university website.

University website. At the main web page there is a tab at the top of the page highlighted: “Admissions”. It is one of six “main” tabs on the page. Once the Admissions tab is clicked, or hovered on, it leads up two a two-column drop-down list. The third listing on the second column is a “Transfer Students” tab. This takes you to the “Transfer Students Resource” page. This page gives information on transfer requirements and processes. It also provides a table for the “Transfer Handbook. It shows the transfer advising office hours, and contact information for the Transfer Student Coordinator and the Community College Liaison. The “transfer students resource” page also provides “useful links” relative to Distance Education, Financial Aid, Library, etc. The page also provides a link that gives information on the various Articulation Agreements that Family University is engaged in. There is also a link for ‘Transfer Student Orientation’ that leads to an error page. There is a transfer credits tab that leads to a comparative list of transfer courses that transfer directly to Family University; the list denotes that the classes must be from the community college system of Family University’s respective state.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the Findings from interviews and document analysis. The interviews were grouped in two different categories: students and staff. The staff category was grouped into two different sub-categories: admissions staff and administrative/executive staff. Research findings and interview protocol were guided by the respective research questions of the study. Answers, from both categories, were in reference to the transfer policies, procedures and policies of Family University. The findings from the interviews were presented in order by person. The

interviews reflected varying degrees of positive and negative responses relative to the transfer policies, procedures and practices of Family University. The university website was analyzed as information triangulation source to analyze if interview responses matched with what the website was displaying. Chapter 5 focuses on interpreting these findings and implications for further study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This discussion includes a restatement of the purpose of the study, research questions, and problem studied; influences from the literature; summary of findings; themes that emerged; discussion of findings; limitations of the study; implications to practice and research; suggestions for future research; and conclusions.

Introduction

The following research questions (devised from the aforementioned problems/issues) guided this study:

- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion?
- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion?

Preceding research shows that the vast majority of students who enter higher education through community colleges each year indicate that they intend to earn a bachelor's degree but only a relatively small percentage transfer and earn a bachelor's degree (Jenkins and Fink, 2016). Often times, the blame of the lack of baccalaureate receipt are aimed at the student or the community-college that sends the student and not the "receiving institution". Jenkins and Fink also found that while outcomes varied substantially among individual four-year institutions, on average, the type of four-year institution that students transferred to was more important than the type of community college they transferred from (2016).

On a much more narrow scale, The University of North Carolina system mirrors the conclusions of Jenkins and Fink's research. According to the UNC system's Transfer Enrollment report (2017), North Carolina Community College junior transfers are graduating from UNC school systems schools (51.2%) at a much lower rate than Native (traditional, non-transferred) UNC school system students of the same classification (75.2%). There is an ever-increasing amount of community college transfer students who are suffering academically because their "receiving" institution's poor transfer intake procedures (Shugart, 2008). The purpose of this study was to analyze how community college transfer preparation can be improved at a rural, public four-year university in North Carolina. The study also examined the institution's community-college transfer intake policies, procedures and methods that may create barriers to success for community college transfers within the four-year institution. The study also identified "best practices" that the institution had undertaken to embolden academic success for community college transfers. Finally, the study determined future practices that should be put in place to streamline and propel transfer success at four-year level.

Influences from the Literature

The review of literature presents three components of the study: a) the definitions and delineations of non-traditional students b) context surrounding institutional transfer processes for community college transfers and c) context surrounding four-year institution completion for community college transfers including barriers and bridges to success.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) defines nontraditional students as meeting one of seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; attends college part-time; works full time; is financially independent for financial aid purposes; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent; or does not have a high school diploma.

81% of community college students start their career with the intent on transferring to a four-year school while only 33% actually do within the first six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). That leaves a staggering 48% of community-college students, who intend on transferring to a four-year institution, not transferring within six years. There have been some explanations for the gap in matriculation to four-year institutes. Packard, Gagnon & Senas says “ When focusing on institutional delays, three central elements emerge: (a) informational setbacks from dissatisfactory advising, (b) imperfect program alignment with four-year institutions, and (c) college resource limitations” (2012, p.670). We often see lop-sided transfer success when it comes to minority students and low-income students when cross-referenced with their majority and higher income peers, respectively.

There is an ever-increasing amount of community college transfer students who are suffering academically because their “receiving” institution’s poor transfer intake procedures (Shugart, 2008). It is well documented that community-college transfers are not successfully completing bachelor’s degrees at the rate of native (non-transfer) students. Jenkins & Fink (2016) show us that only 14% of community-college students freshman who aspire to obtain a bachelor’s degree actually do within six years. Amongst other situations, “transfer shock”, lack of student engagement, receipt (or not) of an associate’s degree, and personal habits and attitudes inhibit community college transfers from completing their bachelor degree as successfully as native (non-transfer) students at a four-year institutions.

Summary of Findings

Students and administrative and admissions staff were asked a series of questions pertaining to the transfer policies, procedures and practices of Family University. More importantly, the research questions that were posed were specific around Family University’s

support or inhibition of degree completion for the transfer students. In order to get a microscopic view of the transfer policies, procedures and practices the interview answers were grouped into three groups: pre-admission (questions revolving around recruitment), the initial admission process (questions revolving around acceptance, transfer credits, course enrollment, etc.) and post admission (questions revolving around campus environment, faculty, advising, etc.). The following summary of findings were also separated by student answers and staff (administrative and admission) answers and relative to policies and procedures/practices that inhibit and support completion (receipt of bachelor's degree) from Family University.

Students. The student's answers were broken into four groups: policies that inhibit completion, policies that support completion, practices/procedures that inhibit completion, and practices/procedures that support completion.

Policies that inhibit completion. Haley and Jaren both said that the policy in place that only allows up to 64 credit to transfer from community college(s) set them back. Jaren had more than 64 credits that "she performed really well in" and felt that she could have been in a higher class at Family University had all her credits transferred over. Haley also had issues with the policy which didn't her to bring in credits that she worked hard for. A second policy that Family University employs that students said inhibited their progress towards completion was the transfer appeal process that's instituted for students who don't agree with their credits not transferring. Students are guaranteed an appeal process but along with that appeal process comes a lengthy waiting period that affected student's admission status. Because of the students lag in full acceptance, students missed out on class enrollment periods (thusly enrolling late and not getting the classes they needed), housing assignments and initial meetings with their advisors. Students reported that missing out on class enrollment made them end up taking electives, and

classes that they didn't necessarily need, because the junior (or sophomore) level classes were full. They were forced to enroll full-time, to be eligible for scholarships/aid, but couldn't take the classes they need it. From that point they needed to take those "needed" classes the following semester thusly delaying their progress towards completion by at least a semester.

Policies that support completion. Students identified Family University's articulation agreement with statewide community colleges as a policy that supported bachelor's completion. The policy allows students who graduate from certain community colleges within Family University's home state to automatically be admitted into Family University. Knowing this, students were better prepared for entry into Family University and thusly more successful at pursuing their bachelor's degree. Secondly, the transfer appeal process also proved to be helpful to students also. The transfer appeal process, when favorably applied to students, and which every student is afforded if there is a discrepancy with transfer credit acceptance, allows students to "get back" credits that were previously denied at initial admittance to Family University. One student reported that they gained back six of the nine credit hours that were denied at first thusly putting them almost a "half a semester back on track".

Procedures/practices that inhibit completion. The main theme that arose from nearly all of the interviewed students was the time that it took for advisors, specifically transfer advisors to respond to students' email, calls, etc. Students also complained that the transfer advisors were hard to "book for an appointment" and often had to wait several weeks out to land an advising appointment with their transfer advisor. A second issue that arose was the school's apparent inability to properly, or "fairly" (according to Haley), assist special population transfers. A special population transfer, for this study, were students who were community college transfers but who had "special circumstances" such as: a) attended more than one community college prior

to Family University b) student-athlete and/or c) transferred from an out of state community college with different course titles and less streamlined than an in-state (same state as Family University) community college. These special population students reported needing more assistance than the regular community college transfer student and said that they weren't provided, or wished they were provided, the services. Students also reported that it took a long time to hear back from the school as it relates to them being accepted; because of the delay on knowing their acceptance status (and/or not being accepted in a timely fashion), students missed out on class enrollment periods (thusly enrolling late and not getting the classes they needed), housing assignments and initial meetings with their advisors. Students reported that missing out on class enrollment made them end up taking electives, and classes that they didn't necessarily need, because the junior (or sophomore) level classes were full. Building on earlier statements from the students related to transfer credit acceptance, it was reported that Family University commonly would not accept credits that "matched completely" either in title or substance from certain community colleges. Students reported that the courses not transferring set them back in enrollment, class selection, important meetings, etc. Students, also reported about not being told about scholarships and aid that they would have been eligible for. They don't feel that there was proper communication overall about financial aid, transfer credit information, etc. The general consensus from some of the students was that they often felt "in second place" when it comes to being students on campus and that they "were the last to hear about things".

Procedures/practices that support completion. Several students said that Family University attending (or "having booths") at college fairs and recruiting events really helped them pursue their education at Family University. Russ gave kudos to the admissions staff at the recruiting event that he attended for "selling [him]" on Family University. Laura also said that a

recruiting event was an extreme help and that the on-site applications that were made available by Family University is “essentially why [she] ended up at [Family University]”. The most prevalent positive attribute that students reported was the proficiency and aptitude of the faculty. All students had positive responses about faculty and how they helped students and seemingly went above and beyond to propel students toward completion. A second positive attribute that students reported about Family University is the campus environment and how they fostered an environment of community with the provision of student groups such as athletics, Greek life, student organizations, etc. There were also several students who appreciated the facilities and landscaping of Family University. Students reported that the environment, especially as it relates to athletics, is major attribute that allows students to “unwind and have fun” or “participate in activities that create lifelong passions and forever friends”. Students all, in some way, linked morale and campus environment to positive entities that support completion and persistence in completion.

Staff. The staff’s (both administrative and admissions) answers were broken into four groups: policies that inhibit completion, policies that support completion, practices/procedures that inhibit completion, and practices/procedures that support completion

Policies that inhibit completion. None of the staff members readily provided policies that are put in place that actually inhibit students from completion.

Policies that support completion. The most common attribute reported by staff members, is the “Assurance Program”, which is the policy set in place that guarantees \$500 tuition for in-state students and \$2500 tuition for out-of-state students. Staff agree that this program relieves the financial burden that tuition may cause students and allows them to progress through Family University. The second-most mentioned attribute reported by staff members is the articulation

agreement. Staff identified Family University's articulation agreement with statewide community colleges as a policy that supported bachelor's completion. The policy allows students who graduate from certain community colleges within Family University's home state to automatically be admitted into Family University. Knowing this, students were better prepared for entry into Family University and thusly more successful at pursuing their bachelor's degree.

Procedures/practices that inhibit completion. Several of the staff members that they are sometimes doing the students a disservice by having a lack of intra-campus communication. Students often have issues, problems or questions that span beyond the respective staff member's area and they were quite frank in stating that they sometimes don't know how to help those students. They believe that creating a system that can provide intra-campus information, updates and news to all staff would be beneficial to students and help them better progress towards student completion. Staff also admit that they "have heard the rumblings of students and their unhappiness with the apparent inadequacy of the Advising program" as a whole. Staff members admit that the "advising department is spread thin" and "grossly under-staffed" and that students are being done a "disservice" by not having "adequate access" to quality and/or readily-available advising. Staff members also stated that they would like to change how the marketing dollars are being spent as it relates directly to community college transfer. They admit that more money is spent on recruiting high school upper-classmen than prospective community college transfers and that this negatively affects incoming community college transfers.

Procedures/practices that support completion. Staff members reported that Family University's practice of sending students out to staff fairs and recruiting events are extremely important to student success and completion "on the front end". According to staff, it provides invaluable information about Family University and allows prospective students, who eventually

attend Family University, to get the upper hand on selecting majors, student organizations, etc.; all of which reportedly propel students towards successful completion. Staff agreed that the presence of student organizations, mainly athletics, foster an optimal environment for cohesion and positive morale that also propels students towards successful completion. Staff reports, collectively in unison, that the practice of seeking and hiring proficient faculty members is one of the main pillars of student success at Family University. The leadership traits, academic prowess and research knowledge that the faculty of Family University possess are “second to none” according to Donald and he reports that those traits directly “pour over” to the students and thusly help propel them towards successful completion.

Website. The website provided several links and resources specifically for transfer students. Family University had a dedicated tab and resource page that gave information specific to transfer credits, course transfer options, and contact information for transfer coordinators. The link for transfer orientation was not working.

Categories that emerged

After the raw data was collected from the interviews, different codes, and later themes began to emerge from the responses given from the students and the staff. The coding, categorical and thematic scheme came from the figure below. We used the codes, categories and themes to formulate ideas of what staff and students were alluding to in their interviews. We then could proceed with formulating the discussion of the findings.

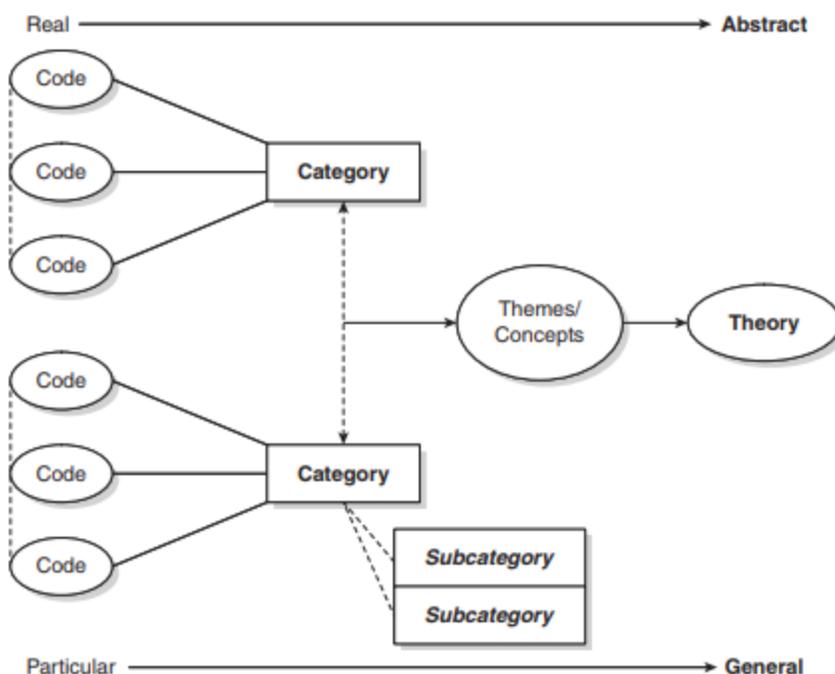


Figure 4. Data analysis in qualitative research. Reprinted from *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* by J. Saldana, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications.

Relative to figure above, the overall theory of the research is: what does Family University do relative to transfer policies, procedures and practices. That theory, via the interview answers, was broken into two Themes/concepts: 1) what students and staff thought was positive/helpful for completion of bachelor's degree at Family University and 2) what students and staff thought was negative/inhibitive for completion of bachelor's at Family University. The next, and most important for the research, level was the categories that derived from the answers. There were six main categories that were pulled from the coded answers of the interviews:

- Recruiting events
- Student groups organizations
- Advising
- Information delivery/communication
- Faculty

- Campus environment

All, or most, of the above stated categories had both positive and negative code3d answers that came from students and staffed and were used as the focal points to answers the research questions:

- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that fosters community college transfer-student success and completion?
- What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution that impedes community college transfer-student success and completion?

All of the earlier stated categories had policy and procedure/practice implications that were used to answer the research questions above.

Discussion of Findings

The summary of findings showed positive and negative implications that derived from interviews from both students and staff. In the discussion of findings, the focal point will be the perceived negative, or inhibitive, implications from the findings; the viability of corrective options of the inhibitive findings will be discussed below as well.

Transfer credit limit. Students reported that this policy hindered certain credits transferring over from their previous community college. From reviewing the website, it seems that Family University allows a junior level amount of credit to transfer over. It seems that Family University still wants students to transfer in and have “time” to be a student (at least two years) at Family University. It also seems that if students were able to bring in as many credits that they want it would negatively affect Family University’s ability to have optimal enrollment;

i.e. students could transfer in with over 80 or 100 credits and be close to graduation but did not really attend Family University to obtain those credits but would be receiving a degree from there. A possible option to correct this would be to have an appeal process (similar to the transfer appeal process that is already established at Family University for credits that don't "line up" or directly transfer from other community colleges). The appeal process, put in place by executive leadership, would allow up to a certain amount of transferrable credits if the courses a) directly line up with Family University courses and b) the student showed extreme proficiency in the courses. An example would be if students have an "A" or better in a certain amount of those courses, they can transfer over up to 10 more "A" hours. This would help Family University by being an extremely attractive transfer option for students with high grade point averages. The students would benefit by being able to transfer over more credits

Transfer appeal process. Students expressed displeasure with the transfer appeal process. It was reported that the process held them up from receiving decisions based on class enrollment, financial aid, housing assignments, etc. All of the appeal processes, from this research's interviews, came from appeals during the summertime. Family University should allocate dedicated personnel just for the appeals process with a set amount of time for the process. This would speed up student's process and create a more satisfactory review of the community college transfers. Another viable option would be to have an "on-site" transfer appeal event that gives you same-day results. Setting the time for the event and allocating the personnel resources just for one, once a semester, would guarantee a beginning and end for students involved in the transfer appeal process.

Advising issues. One of the most common codes that emerged was the inefficiency of the advising process. Students, and staff, reported that there were issues with transfer advisor

availability. The most obvious solution to this issue is to hire more staff in the advising area. Corey admitted that there needed to be more advisors for the students so that a) the students can receive more academic support and b) other areas of the college, staff-wise, wouldn't catch the overflow of students who can't reach their advisors. Donald admits that there are resources available but they aren't allocated directly to the transfer students; especially the community college transfers who receive less support, resource-wise, than incoming freshman from high school. Furthermore, Family University could allocate those same resources to support special population transfers such as: a) students who attended more than one community college previously b) student-athlete transfer and c) students who attend out-of-state community colleges. These students seem to need even more support, advising-wise, than the common community college transfer student.

Classes not transferring. Students complained about classes not transferring because they didn't line up with the specific requirements of Family University even though the classes were, reportedly, the same or similar. Family University's website has a list of in-state, public community college's classes that they accept but they don't have a similar list that can account for private schools or out-of-state community colleges. Very little resources would be used to create a one-time "transfer cheat sheet" that would serve this population better. It also could be a benchmarking opportunity for those in the admissions department to go out and seek the best practices of optimizing transfer courses.

Communication. Students reported that several issues weren't communicated to them well. Students mentioned that the credit transfer process wasn't clearly communicated to them. Also students reported that they weren't aware of the available scholarships and "free" aid that could have been provided. Family University could create a "transfer only" newsletter, email

blast, and blog/social media page that transfer students and even prospective transfer students could have access to. According to the University website, there are calendars for enrollment, beginning of classes, end of classes, etc.; there could be a similar calendar just for transfer students. There would be little resource allocation for this undertaking and the resource could be provided from the office of the transfer coordinator that is advertise on the website. Students complained about the overall admissions process taking very long and the communication of whether they were accepted or not was longer than expected. Family University could use the above stated “transfer-only” resource to communicate when applications are received, when students should expect to hear back from the university, etc. This would alleviate perceived communication info issues. Providing the ”transfer only” resource as well as providing “transfer only” students groups would provide resources that transfer students could call “their own” which would eradicate the reported feeling of “coming second” to non- community college transfer students on campus.

Staff’s perceived lack of intra-campus communication. Staff report that they don’t always know how to help students who ask questions or have issues dealing with other arenas of the college. Family University could hold an information session, or in-house professional development, that can familiarize different staff groups of the college with processes and practices so that they can be familiar with the on-goings outside of their specific arena. This could be done once a semester to ensure that the process is a sustained effort to acquaint staff with other areas of Family University.

Staff’s perceived lack of community college transfer specific funding. Staff member’s report that there should be more resources available to help market to community college transfer students but the majority of recruiting and marketing goes towards prospective students who are

still in high school. Donald admits that there are resources available but they aren't allocated directly to the transfer students; especially the community college transfers who receive less support, resource-wise, than incoming freshman from high school. Executive leadership can create an incremental increase in funds for recruiting and marketing to community college transfers. Annually, the leadership team would evaluate the cost-to-benefit ration as it relates to the marketing dollars spent and adjust accordingly; hopefully increasing the budget, annually, for the community college transfers.

Website. The website, overall, is very transfer-friendly. It has helpful contact information and resources that are specifically designed for transfer students. The website does, however, have a transfer orientation link that does not work. This leads researchers to believe, and corroborates the students answers in the interviews, that there isn't a transfer-specific orientation but here may have been. The website needs to reflect that there isn't one at this time. And Family University needs to re-institute the transfer-only orientation in order to better serve transfer students and perhaps answer some of the unanswered questions that community college transfer students seemingly have.

Limitations

The choice to study a singular, four-year institution limits the study and may not make its findings fully applicable to all four, year universities nationwide. With the case study format having a singular sample, it may not allow us to generalize across the entire population of institutions.

Implications to practice

The findings from this research will be used to improved institutional policies, procedures and practices at Family University as it relates to community college transfers. The

findings from this study came directly from students who fit the criterion of community-college transfers and staff who are involved with, or informed about, the on goings of the community college transfer process at Family University. The problem categories the consistently emerged from the study were:

- issues surrounding advising
- issues with communication and information delivery
- lack of (staff) intra-campus communication
- issues with credit transfer processes
- resource allocation for community college transfers

Moving forward, Family University should increase advisors specifically for transfer students and also provide “special population transfer” advising; this includes but it is not limited to a) student athletes b) out-of-state community college transfers and c) students who attended more than one community college previously. Family University could also employ virtual advising so that they can serve more students and not have to do face-to-face advising- which would stagnate the advising process. They should create a “transfer-only” website or social media forum, email, newsletter and calendar to communicate important dates and processes with transfers or prospective transfers. Family University should create a professional development series that familiarizes staff with other areas of the university so that they can better assist students. This research should also implore Family University to create a more visible transfer credit “worksheet” that helps prospective students visualize what classes may or may not transfer from their respective community college. Family University should also improve their transfer credit cap process by allowing qualifying students to transfer over more than the allotted 64 credits hours to Family University. Overall, this research should implore Family University leadership

to apply more resources to community college transfer students as to foster an environment of support and inclusion of the community college transfer student.

Implications to Research

This study lends to prior research relative to the graduation rate discrepancy between non-transfer (traditional) and community-college transfer students with respect to four-year institutions. However, this study is one of the few that aims its scope at the four-year institution, and not the community college, with respect to institutional policies, procedures, and practices that either enhance and/or obstruct community-college transfer success. This study is also one of the first to use the Aspen Institute's *Transfer Playbook* as a conceptual framework to gauge the efficacy of practices, or lack thereof, at the four-year institution as it relates to transfer student success. This study is also one of the few that uses this particular rural, four-year, public institution as a case study in any realm relative to community-college transfer student success.

Suggestions for Further Research

Moving forward, Family University could benefit from more research on the implementation of digital and electronic upgrades such as: virtual advising, digital marketing vs. face-to-face marketing and cost-to-benefit ratio of the aforementioned. Family University could also use further research on why the community college transfer graduates seem to have a better transition than non-graduate community college transfers. This research lends to information about staff and students; further research could be sought out to get the point-of-view from faculty. Also, a more broad study involving several universities may create more legitimacy in the findings as it relates to the success of community college transfer students.

Conclusion

According to Jenkins and Fink, 81% of community college students start their career with the intent on transferring to a four-year school while only 33% actually do within the first six years (2016). Jenkins & Fink also report that of the 33% that transfer to four-year institutions, 42% graduate within the six years (of starting their community college career). This means that 14% of the community college cohort graduate within six years of initial enrollment. Family University's success with community college was no different than national rates. In fact, of the 10,364 community college transfer students from Family University's state system—only 59 of them went to Family University. When controlled for population, as Family University is much smaller than its in-state university counterparts, Family University still had 10% less than the second lowest rate in the university system. The initial thoughts of this study's researcher was that because of Family University's rural location that it thusly had low enrollment and/or low appeal to prospective students. However, this study didn't reflect any negative remarks about the location of Family University from staff or students. More anticipated findings were that recruitment, mainly because of location, would be an issue and that the already lowering enrollment at Family University would create a budget issue. These two hypotheses were not totally off-base. This study found qualitative data that showed that when students were being actively recruited, they were likely to attend Family University. Conversely, the research showed that some students had not heard of the school but when they actually did—their interest was piqued. The research also was congruent to the anticipated findings as it relates to budgetary issues. Many of the staff interviewed reported that the university needed to allocate more resources to community college transfers especially as it related to communication, marketing and advising support.

The research showed that students and staff alike appreciated the faculty that Family University had to offer. Students praised the faculty for being helpful, going “above and beyond” and optimizing the Family University learning environment. Staff echoed the sentiments by reporting that Family University seeks and hires very proficient faculty to propel students toward success. Staff and students alike were also in agreement about the campus environment and student groups that Family University. Students reportedly enjoyed the athletics program, the landscaping of the campus and the various student organizations that they could join. Staff agrees that the student organizations and the campus life embolden the student’s success and potential completion. Recruitment fairs, and the college being present at recruitment events, also proved to be a positive asset that staff and students agreed on. In this study, the students who encountered admissions staff at recruitment events report that they were “sold” on the university and extremely intrigued with the idea of attending. Staff echo the sentiment by stating that significant resources are allocated to the recruitment fairs, as well as, marketing events as a whole.

Several negative issues arose from this study; the most glaring of them being the issue with transfer student advising. Students, and some staff, reported unreasonable wait times relative to booking appointments with transfer advisors. Corey admitted that “the advising department was spread thin”. Students also reported that the overall communication from the university was scarce-especially during the initial transfer period. Students report that there was very little, or no, communication as it related to the credit transfer process, scholarships and aid, and orientations. Students felt that some of these communication gaps left them significantly behind when they were able to get enrolled. Students reported negative feelings toward the credit transfer process. Several students, in this study, reported that they “left credits on the

table”, according to Haley, because they reached the transfer credit limit that Family University accepts from other schools and/or because their previous courses didn’t “line up” with what Family University accept. This issue then brought the students to the transfer appeal process that, in both cases in this study, took so long that the students missed out on necessary events such as housing assignments, class enrollment periods, etc.

Staff reported that there are resource allocation issues that do the students no favors. Donald, a university executive, admitted that more funds are allocated to prospective high school students than prospective community college transfer students. Resources also would be needed to bolster the advising department for community college transfers, the study shows. Internally, the staff believes that there needs to be more intra-campus communication so that staff members can help answer questions that students have relative to other departments. This would help students but also help ease the burden off other departments.

Family University was not proven to be transfer-friendly or transfer unfriendly when just examining the findings from the interviews as there was no specific gauge to measure what is a transfer-friendly place or not. The reviews were mixed as it related to the students and the staff. However, when using the *Transfer Playbook* as a guideline (see Figure 3 below) it is easy to see that there are significant steps that Family University needs to take to embolden its community college transfer policies, procedures and practices.

Make Transfer Student Success a priority	Create clear programmatic pathways with aligned High-Quality Instruction	Four-year College Advising Practices
Communicate transfer as a key component of the institution's mission.	Work collaboratively with colleagues from partner institutions to create major-specific program maps.	Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students.
Share data to increase understanding of the need to improve transfer student outcomes—and the benefits of doing so.	Provide rigorous instruction and other high-quality academic experiences to prepare students for four-year programs.	Assign advisors and clearly communicate essential information to prospective transfer students.
Dedicate significant resources to support student transfer services	Establish regular, reliable processes for updating and improving program maps.	Strongly encourage transfer students to choose a major prior to transfer.
Design unconventional pathways, as necessary.	Replicate elements of the first-year experience for transfer students.	Exercise fairness in financial aid allocation.

Figure 3. Reprinted and Revised from *Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges*. Copyright 2016 by the Aspen Institute.

The *Transfer Playbook* has describes three main pillars of how to have a successful community college transfer system in place at a university: a) make transfer student success a priority b) create clear programmatic pathways with high-quality instruction and c) have a high impact advising system. Finding in this study show that Family University has not made transfer student success a priority. In fact, one student reported that she sometimes feels like “a second class citizen” when she compares herself to what the non-transfer students experience. She reported that transfers often get the last pick of classing, housing assignments, advisors, etc. Another student, who was a recipient of guaranteed admission through articulation agreements, wondered what it would have been like had he not been a recipient of guaranteed acceptance. His lack of communication, feedback and information made him leery of related practices. Secondly, this research shows that though Family University has made a commitment to high-quality

instruction, they have not created clear programmatic pathways for community college transfer students. Students reported that there was a significant lack of communication as it related to credit transfers, acceptance status and class enrollment. Thirdly, this research showed that there was no high-quality advising for community college transfers. The advisors themselves weren't reported to be the main issue, the lack of availability and promptness created the negative feedback relative to advising. Students reported that they, sometimes, would only have face-to-face contact with their transfer advisor once a semester. There were also several reports of taking weeks to hear back from the advisors via email. Staff, once again, echoed the sentiments by admitting that the advising department was "spread thin" and that the lack of quality advising was doing the students a "disservice".

This study highlighted some positive qualities of Family University. Students and staff, alike, reported that Family University is dedicated to providing high-quality faculty and instruction. It was also noted several times that the campus environment, athletics and student organizations provided were positive qualities enjoyed by all. However, Family University showed glaring weaknesses in advising, transfer credit processes, communication (both intra-staff and to the students) and in resource allocation for community college transfers. By the *Transfer Playbook's* standards, Family University needs improvement in several key areas in order to optimize their community college transfer experience. This qualitative study shows just what Family University needs to do to maximize their potential as a transfer friendly university for community-college students.

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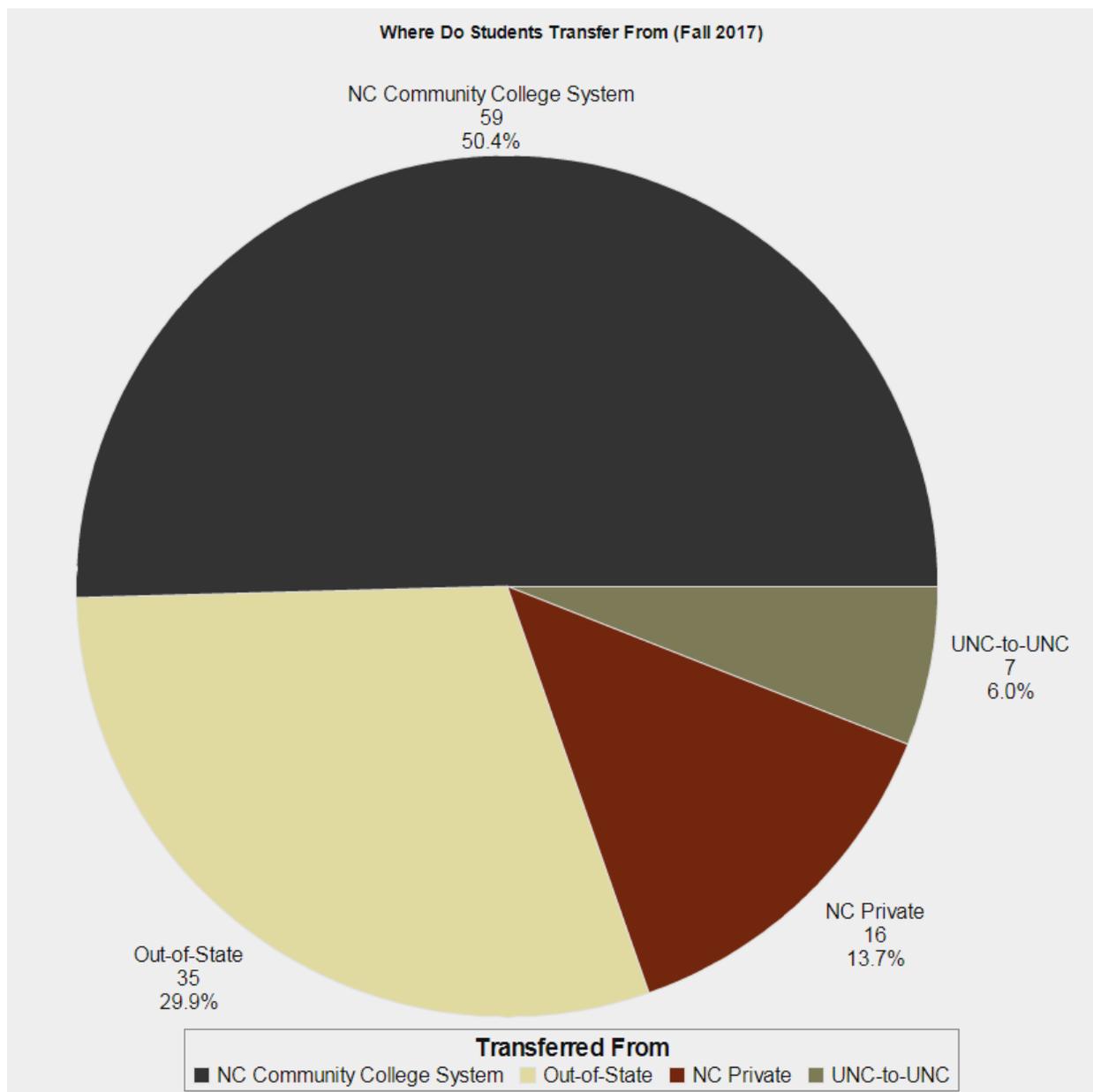
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

Number of Transfer Students From Each Community College (Fall 2017)	
Transfer Institution	Transfer Students ▼
NC Community College Total	59
College of the Albemarle	24
Halifax Community College	12
Roanoke-Chowan Community College	8
Central Piedmont Community College	3
Edgecombe Community College	2
Nash Community College	2
Guilford Technical Community College	2
Pitt Community College	1
Lenoir Community College	1
Gaston College	1
Wayne Community College	1
Mitchell Community College	1
Beaufort County Community College	1

APPENDIX C

Transferred ... ▲	NC Community College System
Fall Term ▲	Transfer Students
2009	94
2010	83
2011	73
2012	88
2013	89
2014	63
2015	56
2016	48
2017	59

APPENDIX D

GPA During 1st Year				
Transferred ... ▲		NC Community College System		
Fall Term ▲	Transfer Students	Transfer Student Courses	Transfer GPA	Non-Transfer Students
2009	2,979	31,436	2.99	
2010	3,189	30,617	3.03	
2011	3,262	31,697	3.01	
2012	3,755	36,329	3.04	
2013	3,905	37,821	3.03	
2014	3,955	37,614	3.00	
2015	4,195	39,042	2.84	
2016	4,584	41,695	2.88	

APPENDIX E

Invitation for Participation to Students

(Date)

Hello (Name),

I am reaching out to you in hopes of your willingness to participate in a study that I am organizing for my doctoral dissertation at North Carolina State University. As a prerequisite for the completion of my degree, I am organizing a study on institutional influences on the completion of bachelor degrees for community college transfer students. As a community-college transfer student attending the University, you have been identified, by University data, as an ideal participant for my research.

I am particularly interested in speaking with you to grasp more information about your initial transfer experience and first term experience at the University. I would also like to hear your perspective on the University's support of your completion of a bachelor's degree; this may include, but is not limited to, your perspective on onboarding orientations, faculty relations and the overall community atmosphere provided for community college transfer students.

Please note that this study is also a professional one. As the lead, and sole, investigator of the study, I am researching to obtain more knowledge on the matter to enhance the educational experiences of all community college transfer students at the University level.

Participation in this study is not required, is totally voluntary, and will not impact your relationship or standing with the University; nor will it affect your potential re-enrollment in the following term.

If you are willing to be interviewed please respond with 2 times and dates during which you would be available for an interview via phone or in person. If you have any questions about this research, please share them and I would be happy to provide more details.

Thanks for your attention. I'm looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Frank Fields

ffields@ncsu.edu

919-520-7779

APPENDIX F

Student Interview Protocol

Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. As you may already know, I am highly interested in bachelor's degree-seeking students who are community college transfers at your University. For my doctoral dissertation, I would like to speak with you about your experience in the recruiting and admissions practices for community college transfer (CCT) students, like yourself, at the University. Also, I would like to talk with you about your initial intake experience. Furthermore, I would like to talk with you about your thoughts on what you think could or should be done to embolden CCT students' completion at the University. As a formality, I have listed my specific research questions below:

- i. What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution?
- ii. How do established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation impact community college transfer-student success and completion?
- iii. What changes can be proposed to improve community college transfer-student success and completion and how can it be measured?

Student (pseudonym): _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

1. How would you describe your initial transfer experience to the University (beginning from Day 1)?
2. What features of the admissions policies, procedures, and practices did you find most supportive? Least supportive?
3. Do you believe anything to be negative in the University's recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for transfer students? If so, please describe.
4. In your opinion what could the University do better, if anything, to create a better experience for potential transfer students?
5. Was there an orientation just for transfer students? Describe your orientation experience with the University.
6. What facets of the orientation were most beneficial? Least beneficial?
7. When you were assigned an advisor, was the advisor just for transfer students?
8. Describe your interactions with your advisor and how helpful they were for you.
9. Describe your interactions with your professors and how helpful they were for you.
10. Were there any peer groups or student groups created for transfer students? If so, describe that experience.
11. Describe the overall campus and class room setting and environment. Did you feel as if you were a "part" of the University at the same level as non-transfer (native) students?
12. Are there ways that the University can improve the experience and environment for transfer students?
13. How has the University supported your completion of a bachelor's degree?
14. How has the University inhibited your completion of a bachelor's degree?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about transfer experience with the University - anything I should have or could have asked but didn't?

APPENDIX G**Invitation for Participation to Administration/Admissions Staff**

(Date)

Hello (Name),

I am reaching out to you in hopes of your willingness to participate in a study that I am organizing for my doctoral dissertation at North Carolina State University. As a prerequisite for the completion of my degree, I am organizing a study on institutional influences on the completion of bachelor degrees for community college transfer students. As a degree completion administrator, you have been identified as an ideal participant for my research.

I am particularly interested in speaking with you to grasp more information about the University's recruitment and admissions policies, procedures, and practices of/for community college transfer students. Also, I wish to learn your opinion about the University's support for the community college transfer student completion of a bachelor's degree.

Please note that this study is also a professional one. As the lead, and sole, investigator of the study, I am researching to obtain more knowledge on the matter to enhance the educational experiences of all community college transfer students at the University level.

Participation in this study is not required, is totally voluntary, and will not impact your relationship or standing with the University.

If you are willing to be interviewed please respond with 2 times and dates during which you would be available for an interview via phone or in person. If you have any questions about this research, please share them and I would be happy to provide more details.

Thanks for your attention. I'm looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Frank Fields

ffields@ncsu.edu

919-520-7779

APPENDIX H

Admissions/Administrative Staff Interview Protocol

Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. As you may already know, I am highly interested in bachelor's degree-seeking students who are community college transfers at your University. For my doctoral dissertation, I would like to speak with you about your role in the recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for community college transfer (CCT) students. Also, I would like to talk with you about your role in CCT students' intake experience. Furthermore, I would like to talk with you about your thoughts on what you think could or should be done to embolden CCT students' completion at the University. As a formality, I have listed my specific research questions below:

- i. What established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation, are in place at the respective four-year institution?
- ii. How do established institutional policies, procedures, and practices, relative to community college transfer intake and facilitation impact community college transfer-student success and completion?
- iii. What changes can be proposed to improve community college transfer-student success and completion and how can it be measured?

Administrative personnel: _____ Title: _____
 Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

1. Could you describe the University's recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices of community college transfer (CCT) students?
2. What aspects of CCT recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices are most helpful to potential CCT students?
3. What aspects of CCT recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices seem to be least beneficial to potential CCT students?
4. Is there anything that the University should add to embolden recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for CCT students?
5. Is there a specific orientation just for CCT students? If so, please describe it.
6. What aspects of the orientation are most helpful? Least helpful? What evidence or examples do you have of your assumptions?
7. Describe your perception of the overall preparedness of CCT students attending their first classes at the University.
8. What is your overall impression of the faculty that are teaching CCT students? Is there a difference (in your opinion) on instruction between CCT students and native students? If so, what would you believe contributes to that discrepancy?

9. Are there clear programmatic pathways set in place for CCT students that will help them efficiently reach completions?

10. Is there dedicated advising just for CCT students?

11. How does the University specifically support CCT student completion? Is that different from how native students are supported?

12. What changes could or should be made to support CCT student completion?

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the University's recruiting and admissions policies, procedures, and practices for CCT students? Is there anything I should have asked but didn't?

APPENDIX I

TRANSFER STUDENTS

Articulation Agreements
North Carolina Community College Degree
Reverse Transfer
Transfer Credits
Transfer Handbook
Transfer Student Highlights

TRANSFER STUDENT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

At _____ we understand that transfer students are unique and have different needs. _____ works closely with our prospective transfer students to ensure a seamless transfer process. All transfer students are encouraged to utilize the resources available to them through the Office of Admissions and the Office of the Registrar during the transfer process and while attending the university.

In an effort to maximize efficiency and respect your busy schedule, we encourage applicants to make appointments specific to your needs. We look forward to helping you achieve your goals and make the most of your experience at _____

Useful Links:

- [Distance Education](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Student Accounts](#)
- [Summer School](#)
- [Student Life](#)
- [Transfer Student Orientation](#)
- [Military and Veteran's Affairs](#)

Office Hours:

Monday	8:00AM - 5:00PM
Tuesday	8:00AM - 7:00PM TRANSFER TUESDAYS
Wednesday	8:00AM - 5:00PM
Thursday	8:00AM - 5:00PM
Friday	8:00AM - 5:00PM

For more information please contact:

Vicky Tillett, Transfer Student Coordinator
 127 Marion D. Thorpe Administration Building
 252-335-3474

LuAnn Riddick, Community College Liaison
 110 McLendon Hall
 252-335-3815

APPENDIX J

Title of study: Examining the transfer policies and procedures at a public, four-year university: impacts on community college student success.

Principal investigator: Frank Fields

Faculty sponsor: Dr. James Bartlett

What are some general things you should know about the study?

You are invited to participate in this study. Participation in this study is not required and will not impact your relationship with the University. You may, at any time, stop participating. The reason for this study is to grasp more information on a specific topic or matter. There is no benefit or reward for partaking in this study. This consent form will specify important details about the study in which you will participate in if agreed to. If there are any uncertainties with the consent form it is your right to reach out to the investigator for clarity. You will receive a copy of the consent form. You may, at any given time, contact the investigator during the study with any and all questions.

What is the intent of this study?

The intent for this project is to get a better idea on the support provided to the adult transfer students coming from a community college and transferring into a rural, public University. It is vital to gain a better understanding of the completion process to increase the completion rates of transfer students who are enrolled in the University.

What will occur if you volunteer in the study?

You will be asked to be interviewed once for the study. A maximum of two hours will be allotted for the interview. The interview will take place at a site that is convenient and comfortable to you. A phone interview can be used as an alternative if a face-to-face meeting is not possible. The interview will be audio recorded.

Risks and Benefits

There is little to no risk affiliated with your participation in the study. You are not required to share any information that you feel is confidential. There is no benefit or reward for partaking in this study other than gaining more knowledge of the matter in which could potentially help you in your professional development. Findings from the study may be a benefit to you as they may enhance practices, policies and procedure at the University relative to community college transfers.

Confidentiality

By law all recorded information will be confidential. All recorded data will be secured password-protected laptop that I will have sole possession of. Furthermore, recorded data will be stored in a password-protected desktop in my personal office in which I only have access to. Nothing will be stated written or orally that could implicate you to the study. Upon completion of the study all information provided by you (be it written, audio, transcribed, electronic or otherwise) will be destroyed.

Compensation

No compensation is awarded for your participation

Questions about the study

If you come across any questions or concerns regarding the study you may contact the investigator, Frank Fields, ftfields@ncsu.edu, 919-520-7779.

Questions about your rights as a research participant

If you feel that your rights have been violated throughout the time of research you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, dapaxton@ncsu.edu, 919-515-4514.

Consent to participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of the consent form and agree to participate in the study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty”

Subject's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX K

Summary of Literature

Source	Topic	Type of Inquiry	Findings/Conclusions
American Council on Education, (1991)	Discusses the national agenda on academic achievement	National Report	Identified national statistics for community college transfers/attrition/matriculation rates.
Archer, E., & Pincus, F. L. (1989)	Examines if community colleges are meeting the transfer needs of minority students	Research Report	Found that in most instances that minority students are being under-served by the community college system relative to transfer. Discussed the ineptitude of researchers to give un-biased interviews. Provided best practices of such.
Ashton, S. (2014)	Explores the difficulties of undertaking semi-structured interviews on sensitive topics	Qualitative research report	Identified the interpersonal characteristics that influence student involvement.
Astin, A. (1985)	Discusses achieving educational excellence	Descriptive Report	Identified measures to increase minority college enrollment nationwide.
Barrera, A., & Angel, D. (1991)	Discussed achievement gaps and college access for minorities	Descriptive Report	Identified statistics about college debt and enrollment information.
Baum, S., & Ma, J. (2016)	Discusses the trends in Community Colleges	National Report	Found several differing and competing experiences for multiple students in a nationwide study.

Berker, L., and Choy, S. (2008)	Describes postsecondary students experiences years later in life (post-graduation)	Descriptive Report	Identified most common method employed in qualitative research.
Britten, N (1995)	Qualitative interviews in medical research	Qualitative Report	Analyzes the qualities of case study method.
Bromley, D. B. (1990)	Examines the scientific philosophy of individual case studies	Descriptive Report	+ Identified patient's feelings with the wait process of a liver transplant. Found differing views.
Brown, J., Sorrell, J. H., McClaren, J., & Creswell, J. W. (2006)	Discussed thoughts and feelings about waiting for a liver transplant.	Phenomenological analysis	Found best-practice scenarios to employ when trying to increase job attainment.
Carnvale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013)	Discusses variables associated with job growth and education requirements	National Report	Found differing opinions on persistence in high school that produced differing results. Found different resources, environment, matriculation, and production qualities for different schools.
Carroll, C.D. (1989)	Addresses college persistence and degree attainment for 1980 high school graduates	Case Study	Found that length in college time inversely correlates with graduation rate.
Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., Muschkin, C. G., & Vignor, J. L. (2012)	Address differences in community colleges nationwide.	Multiple case studies	Multi-faceted in-depth exploration of the case study method

<p>Complete College America (CCA). (2011)</p>	<p>Discussed how time correlates with graduation rates</p>	<p>National Report, Qualitative</p>	<p>Surveyed US Population and related statistics.</p>
<p>Crowe S, Creswell K, Robertson A., et al. BMC Med Res Method. (2011)</p>	<p>Discussed employment of case study research</p>	<p>Descriptive Report</p>	<p>Found three main pillars of transfer intake success for universities to employ.</p>
<p>Current Population Survey (CPS). (2015)</p>	<p>Discusses the current population reports between US Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics</p>	<p>National Report</p>	<p>Found that study habits, time management skills, etc. affect student success.</p>
<p>Deane, K.C., Fink, J., Jenkins, D., & Wyner, J. (2016)</p>	<p>Describes the essential practices for two-and four-year colleges</p>	<p>Descriptive Report</p>	<p>Found methods and protocols for triangulation.</p>
<p>Dennis, J., Calvillo, E. & Gonzalez, A. (2008)</p>	<p>Discussed attributes needed for student success.</p>	<p>Qualitative Study</p>	<p>Describes process improvement for change management.</p>
<p>Denzin, NK. (1978)</p>	<p>Described methods of triangulation.</p>	<p>Descriptive Report</p>	

Dessinger, J., Moseley, J.L., & Van Tiem, D.M. (2012)	Modeled Performance Improvement	Descriptive Report	
Diaz, P. E (1992)	Discuss general characteristics of successful students	Multiple Case studies	Found that student persistence was linked to student success.
Fink, J., & Jenkins, D., (2016)	Summarized theory on a community college success.	Report	Indicated clearest difference between high and low impact colleges was with support of minority students.
Flaga, C. (2006)	Discussed attributes needed for successful college transfer.	Report	Indicated the necessity for resources for successful college transfer.
Hagedorn, L. (2005)	Provides definitions of retention	Descriptive Report	Provided detailed analysis on retention rates and practices
Homeland Security (2012)	Describes qualities of community colleges	Descriptive Report	Defined community colleges as two-year, degree-awarding, accredited institutions.
Horn, L., Cataldi, E.F., & Sikora, A. (2005)	Gave details of delayed entry college enrollees	Descriptive Report	Provided specific details on why delayed entrants tend to enroll later than high school graduates.
		National Report	Comm. College students who transfer at the junior or senior level tend to graduate a higher

House, J. D. (1989)	Discusses how time affects transfers.	Qualitative Analysis	rate than freshman/sophomore transfers Found certain qualities that make qualitative studies viable for medical research.
Houston P., Rowan M. (1998)	Analyzing how qualitative studies fit into medical research.	Qualitative Analysis	Described the barriers to success and specific adaptations for single mother college students.
Institute for Women's Policy Research. (IWPR). (2017)	Analysis on single mothers and their role as students	Descriptive Report	Provide details on the iterative flow of change management. Detailed how the transfer shock phenomenon plagues some incoming transfer students that lead to lower graduation rates
International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPI). (2017)	Describes the Performance Improvement Model	Descriptive Model	Describes logic models to bring together planning, evaluation & action.
Hills, J. R. (1965)	Describes transfer shock phenomenon	Qualitative Report	Describes the state of college admissions nationwide.
Kellogg Foundation (2001)	Describes logic models development.	Descriptive Guide	Describes four-year institution as postsecondary institution that offers programs of at least 4 years duration or one that offers programs at or above the baccalaureate level
National Association for College Admission Counseling (2015)	Describes statistics of college admissions.	Descriptive Report	Gave information on delayed enrollees at what causes them to delay applying and enrolling

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2015)	Describes various statistics relative to national education.	Descriptive Report	into college; also detailed stop-out/drop-out causes. Gave percentages of how many community/junior college transfers attend four-year universities and how they contribute to student groups, college environment, etc.
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). (2000)	National study describing educational statistics.	National Research Study	Gave the three central elements of institutional delays: informational setbacks from dissatisfactory advising, (b) imperfect program alignment with four-year institutions, and (c) college resource limitations
National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2015)	Detailed contributions of two-year institutions to four-year completions.	National Research Report	Divulged basic characteristics of methods of research involving triangulation. Describes social phenomena in natural rather than experimental means.
Packard, B., Gagnon, J. & Senas, A. (2012)	Detailed community college transfers in STEM	Descriptive Report	Described the aspirations and plans of attainment of minorities relative to higher education.
Patton, MQ. (1999)	Detailed methods of triangulation.	Descriptive Report	
Pope C, Mays N (1995)	Describes the use of qualitative methods in health research.	Descriptive Analysis	Assert that the most remarkable characteristic of the case study method is its

<p>Richardson, R. C., & Bender, L. (1987) Rimando, M., Brace, A., Namageyo-Funa, A., Parr, T. L., Sealy, D.-A., Davis, T. L....Christiana, R. W. (2015)</p>	<p>Describes the qualities of minority success in higher education</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>adaptability to multiple, or different, research settings</p> <p>Provided evaluation focused on whether or not a program is operating as intended, reaching targeted audiences, and delivering the advertised services to the target audiences.</p> <p>Reported that 12% of Americans do not have high school diplomas.</p>
<p>Rose, S., Spinks, N., & Canhoto, A. I. (2015)</p>	<p>Describes qualities of the case study method.</p>	<p>Descriptive Report</p>	<p>Described that we see higher rates of minorities in community colleges, we see lower rates of minorities transferring out to the four-year institutions</p>
<p>Rossi, P., Lipsey, M., Freeman, H. (2004)</p>	<p>Provided aspects of program implementation evaluation.</p>	<p>Educational Text</p>	<p>There is an ever-increasing amount of community college transfer students who are suffering academically because their “receiving” institution’s poor transfer intake procedures</p>
<p>Ryan, C., & Bauman, K. (2015) Saldana, J. (2009)</p>	<p>Described educational attainment in the United States.</p>	<p>National Report</p>	<p>Described how Logic models, which are grounded in a theory of change, use words and graphics to describe the sequence of activities thought to bring about change</p>
<p>Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., & Harrell, A. T. (2015)</p>	<p>A state-level review of educational attainment rates</p>	<p>State-wide Report</p>	<p>Revealed that an intrinsic case study is a study that is based off its own merits and uniqueness</p>

Shugart, S. (2008)	Provided definitions and qualities of adult students	Descriptive Report	Described the Traditional Student as typically 18- to 22-years-old, financially dependent on parents, in college full time, living on campus student
Social Innovation Fund (SIF). (2016)	A step-by-step guide to creating a rigorous evaluation.	Evaluative Guide	Described qualitative research as a method of research that can aid researchers in accessing the thoughts and feelings of research participants. Reported that 70% of college students work while enrolled.
Stake, R. (1995)	Describes qualities of an intrinsic case study	Qualitative Report	North Carolina community college transfer graduate at a lower rate than native students.
Stamats Marketing Firm. (2016)	Described the qualities of a traditional student	Magazine Article Report	Claimed that failing to become a part of the social workings of the university can lead to higher rates of attrition. Detailed the qualifications of filing as an independent.
Sutton J, Austin Z. (2015)	Defined the qualities of qualitative research.	Descriptive Report	Reports that the factor that is driving the plummeting acceptance rates is the number of applicants Described the four pillars of academic involvement
The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. (2015)	Reported statistics on working students.	National Report	Focused and described educational advancement

The University of North Carolina Systems Office. (2017)	Gave state-wide enrollment data	Report	technique called vertical transfer
Tinto, V. (1993)	Detailing college attrition rates.	Descriptive Study	Reports barriers to success are due to the fact that four-year institutions point their minority recruitment to high schools more so than at community colleges Describes data analysis tools in quantitative research
US Department of Education. (2017)	Describes Financial Aid data	National Report	Describes how to transition from research questions to proposal in research.
US News. World Report (2017)	Report on College acceptance rates	World Statistical Report	Described the research design and methods of case studies.
Wang, X. & Wharton, B. (2010)	Describes difference between transfer and native college students.	Qualitative Study	
Watkins, B. T. (1990)	Describes how to ease transfer from the two-year college perspective	Higher Ed Report	
Wechsler, H. (1989)	Describes moving barrier to transfer success	Quantitative Report	

Wong, L. P. (2008)	Brief guide to using Nvivo software	Descriptive guide	
Wood MJ, Ross- Kerr JC (2006)	Describes basic steps in planning research in nursing	Descriptive Report	
Yin, RK (2009)	Describes case study research	Descriptive Report	