

PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Students who have transferred from either a community college or other four-year institution comprise about 38% of the undergraduate student population (Shapiro et al., 2018). However, only 42% of transfer students complete a degree in six years compared to 58% of those students who begin and end their educational career in the same institution (Shapiro et al., 2018). This study attempted to address gaps in transfer student degree completion through examination of participants' characteristics, engagement, and satisfaction as a function of success. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the participants in order to understand the essence of success and how that in turn relates to transfer students' experience at the four-year institution with a mind toward understanding what supports are needed to enable transfer students to succeed. This is an especially important issue since it is economically disadvantaged students who see attending a community college as a way to manage costs to earning a bachelor's degree. It appears that the perceived savings are not realized as the time to degree is actually lengthened.

This was a mixed methods study which included a survey of the undergraduate student population within a public four-year institution's College of Communication as well as individual interviews with participants. There were a total of 439 survey respondents and 19 interviews conducted. The survey used was based on the National Survey of College Graduates (2017) developed by the National Science Foundation for the US Census Bureau. Of the survey respondents, quantitative results indicated that transfer students at the college were more likely to be men, white and Mid-Atlantic state residents. The majority of transfer students had previously attended a community college

prior to the four-year institution. Transfer students were also more apt to have enrolled in the spring semester and the majority of their reported GPAs fell within the 3.1-3.5 range. Aspects which were found to be significant for transfer students' satisfaction were campus atmosphere and social opportunities. Additionally, being a transfer student, number of semesters attended, hours worked at a paying job, and hours spent playing video games had a positive impact on students' satisfaction. The aspect which negatively influenced student satisfaction was hours spent involved with a club or school activity. Transfer students were also found to be less satisfied with advising, academic support services, and their academic progress. Qualitative results indicated themes relating to students' academic and nonacademic experiences. The interviews elaborated upon and supported these findings. The interviews also indicated themes associated with how transfer students and non-transfer students define success, students' strategies for success, as well as students' access to information at the institution.

These findings provide insight into transfer students' experience, institutional engagement, and ultimately their perception of success. The implications from this study inform policy and practices for supporting transfer students' experiences and degree attainment. Additional research is needed to further examine other nuances of transfer in higher education today such as dual enrollment programs, or internal transfer amongst different colleges within a broader institution.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Matthew. Matt, thank you for your constant patience, love, and support throughout this entire process. Your unwavering belief in me kept me going, when many times I was tempted to just give up. I am so grateful to have you by my side for each journey-whether it be academic, professional, or personal. There aren't enough words to express how much I appreciate you. I must have done something right in another life, to be able to share this one with you. I love you endlessly.

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my family, those here with me and my guardian angels above. Thank you for instilling in me the drive to never stop learning. Thank you for teaching me that anything is possible through hard work and always encouraging me to reach for the stars. I wouldn't be who I am today without you all. I am forever grateful for your unfailing love and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, only 58.3% of all college students complete and receive a degree within six years (Shapiro et al., 2018). Therefore, this means that 41.7% of the college student population does not succeed in getting their degree either on time or at all. This presents a significant problem in higher education around the retention and graduation of students. In response to this, educators have conducted further research in an attempt to explore the reasoning behind why students are not remaining in college and completing their degree (e.g., Bound, Levenheim & Turner, 2010; Oseguera & Rhee, 2009). Key areas which have been identified in the literature as factors which may impact students' degree completion are student success, perceptions, and decision making.

Research on student success has indicated that there are varied definitions of what constitutes and influences success. The literature has identified academic, social and psychological factors which impact students' success. Students' beliefs, emotional health, support, finances, learning, and institutional interactions all contribute to facilitation of their success (e.g. Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Wirth & Padilla, 2008; Yazedjian, Towes, Sevin, & Purswell, 2008). Bridging from this is the connection between students' success and their perceptions. Students' perceptions of themselves, their abilities, and the learning environment impact their behavior and success at the institution (e.g. Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002; Mattern & Shaw, 2012). Finally, in terms of decision making, research has highlighted that decision-making is an interactive and inconsistent process influenced by certain attributes such as student' beliefs, expectations, personality, and

outside individuals like friends or family. (e.g. Kreitler, Dansereau, Barth, & Ito, 2009; Galotti, Wiener, & Tandler, 2014; Moogan & Baron, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Though these findings contribute to understanding aspects that may impact the retention and graduation rates at institutions, they are based primarily upon consideration of the traditional college student, the one whose whole educational experience is spent at one institution, and leave out a substantial population in higher education, transfer students. Transfer students are students who undergo a change of institution during their time in higher education. They are defined as students that go through the process of moving their academic credits and experience from one institution to another (Senie, 2016). Transfers are a significant student population to consider given the exponential growth of students either attending community college and transitioning to a four year institution or moving from one four year institution to another (Shapiro et al., 2018). Research has shown that 38% of all undergraduate students in the United States transfer institutions (Shapiro et al., 2018). As this number of students who transfer continues to grow, it is important to note that transfer students have been identified as having lower retention and graduation rates than traditional students (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Only 42% of transfer students complete a degree in six years compared to 58% of traditional students (Shapiro et al., 2018).

Barriers faced by transfer students include transfer shock, academic integration, balance of work and class, and ratings they give themselves (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). Study has also shown that transfer students perceived academic advisement, access to financial aid, and social issues as factors which impact their success at the four-year

institution (Gard & Gosselin, 2012). Similarly, research has highlighted that transfer students' perceptions of their abilities and fear of failure influences the decisions they make at the four year institution (Cox, 2009).

Building on the existing research on transfer students, there is a need for further exploration into understanding why their retention and graduation rates are lower than the non-transferring students. The bulk of the literature on this problem centers upon the way external factors such as policies, articulation agreements, financial aid offerings, credit hours, and curriculum differences serve as barriers to transfer students (e.g., Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2008; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015; Wang, 2009;). Additionally, of the limited existing literature which does focus on either perceptions, success, or decision making, it is primarily focused upon traditional students. There is a need for further literature which considers factors connected to transfer students' experience and ultimately their degree attainment.

This study concentrated on assessing the factors through examining students' engagement as well as their perceptions and understanding of their experiences. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the participants in order to understand the essence of success and how that in turn relates to transfer students' experience at the four-year institution. The study focused on internal and external transfer students at a public four year institution.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were:

1. Explore the perceptions of success held by transfer students to understand how they may influence their adjustment to the institution.

2. Discover the principles and practices of transfer students determined by their perceptions of success.

3. Inform institutional strategies, policies, and resources for transfer students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do transfer students experience and make meaning of what “success” is at the four year institution compared to non-transfer students?
2. Do transfer students define success differently than do non-transfer students?
3. What aspects do transfer students perceive to be most important to their success at the four year institution compared to non-transfer students?
4. How does the way transfer students talk about their actions at the four-year institution differ from non-transfer students?

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic Interactionism is a theoretical framework which can be used to provide context to the issue of transfer student success and the need for an approach to the problem that is founded upon examination of external factors as well as internal, such as students’ perceptions and understanding of their experiences. The symbolic interactionism viewpoint centers around

“the manner through which human beings go about the task of assembling meaning: how we define ourselves, our bodies and impulses, our feelings and emotions, our behaviors and acts, how we define the situations we are in, develop perspectives on the wider social order, produce accounts to explain our actions and lives; how such meanings are constantly being built up through interaction with others, and how these meanings are handled, modified, transformed, and hence evolve through encounters” (Plummer, p. xi)

Essentially this theory posits that humans develop symbols and assign meaning to them through their interactions. These symbols and their meanings shape how individuals make sense of their world and how they behave. Therefore, individuals' society and reality are constructed through their interpretations and resulting behavior or interactions (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin, & Demirbuken, 2009). Symbolic interactionism was conceived from the work of George Mead and then was expounded upon by his colleague Herbert Blumer.

Meade's core contributions to the interactionist perspective were around the idea of formation of self. Mead proposed that a human being's self-concept is built in the interactions that occur between them and others. This development of the individual self is an ongoing process throughout a person's life. (Plummer, 1991). The "other" that is interacted with and shapes our self-concepts can be an individual as well as a social group or community. Thus the way an individual views and thinks of themselves, is influenced by their interactions with these "others." Their resulting sense of self is determined by an individuals' interpretation of the various symbols within these interactions and the meaning they have ascribed to them. Additionally, based on interactions with the "other", an individual takes on the attitudes and social meanings of the social group they are exposed to. This also influences how people come to understand their social roles as well as form definitions of various situations and things around them. Therefore people's behavior and choices are influenced by the social group and environment they developed in (Plummer, 1991). These concepts were then extended further by Herbert Blumer.

Blumer presented three principles which comprise the symbolic interactionism perspective, meaning, language, and thought. Meaning pertains to the idea that individuals act towards things on the basis of the meanings that each of those things have for them. “Things” have multiple applications: objects, groups of humans (like families, friends), institutions (like college and government), values (like honesty), and situations (like encounters with others) (Blumer, 1986; Plummer, 1991). The second principle, language, purports that the meaning given to all things comes from encounters with others and thus influences the naming of them and the language used. Third, the principle of thought, is the concept that individuals’ meanings are formed and modified through continuous processing of thoughts and dealing with what you’ve encountered (Blumer, 1986; Plummer, 1991).

Symbolic interactionism theory is applicable to this study because it can be used to consider how transfer students’ understanding of the social world affects their experiences. The theory states that formation of symbolic meanings and reality vary from individual to individual. Additionally, the concept of self stems from your interactions with social groups. Both of these aspects influence one’s attitudes and behavior (Blumer, 1986). Therefore transfer students’ self has been constructed by the multiple environments they’re exposed to. Their previous interactions or experiences with individuals and institutions impact them differently depending on whether they were negative or positive. After they transfer, the students then have to adjust their self to new “things”, social groups, and cultures. They have to reconcile both frames of references to build their definitions of the four year institution and understandings of interactions there. Additionally, these students are bringing their own ascribed meanings of their roles in

society as individuals as well as students into the institution. Alternatively, faculty and administrators have their own formation of roles and expectations. Then, the institution itself is a social organization comprised of symbols, interactions, and specific roles that contribute to its' functions. Therefore students are faced with interpreting the actions of the new social culture, organization, and those within it. According to the theory, humans interpret the behaviors of others and then adjust their own (Plummer, 1991). Also, the greater the understanding and awareness that individuals have about a role within a culture, the better they will be equipped to add that role to their self-identity (Plummer, 1991). Essentially students are forced to make meaning of the new social system they are in and adjust to the actions/behaviors of others. This theory can be used to suggest disparity in transfer student success is grounded in possible disconnect between students' interpretation and interaction with the social world and the institution as a social organization. The issue of transfer student outcomes may stem from incongruity amidst their understanding of the symbols, values, and expectations of the institutions and the aspects they interact with there, be it learning, behavior in classrooms, or relationships with others like faculty. Symbolic interactionism theory provides a helpful context with which to explore transfer students' views of success and how they are shaped internally through the symbols they have constructed, the various interactions they have, and their interpretation of both, ultimately influencing their understanding of their role in the social group as well as their choices and decision making.

Significance of the Study

The prominence of transfer in US higher education reinforces the need for research which addresses the issue of retention and graduation rates for transfer students.

Both four-year and two-year institutions consistently contribute towards instances of transfer, as an estimated two out of every five students will have been enrolled in more than one institution prior to earning their Bachelor's degree and within six years. Out of all students who begin at four-year institutions, 38.5% will transfer elsewhere (Shapiro et al., 2018). Growth in the number of students who start at community colleges has also contributed to this situation. Initial enrollment of first time undergraduates show that 40.7% begin at community colleges while 37.6% begin at four- year institutions. Many students choose to begin with community college as an opportunity to save costs as well as academically prepare for a four-year institution, with these students often being those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For students who start at a community college or two-year institution, 36.7% will transfer elsewhere. Of those who transfer from a two-year institution, 50.5% will transfer to a four year institution (Shapiro et al., 2018). Additionally, the majority of students who transfer from a community college are minorities. The prevalence of movement amongst institutions as well as the composition of students who transfer, highlights that this is an important population in higher education.

Given the intersection of race/ethnicity and SES as demographics of those who transfer and end up at a four year institution, it is vital to examine why lower retention and graduation rates exist for transfer students than non-transfer students. This study explores this issue by giving emphasis to conditions of the transfer process as well as the overall college experience for those who transfer. Symbolic interactionism theory supports the focus of this study because it provides a framework for consideration of potential existing institutional symbols as well as the interactions which these symbols

have been built upon and how they may be interpreted by transfer students during their transition as well as after. Similarly, symbolic interactionism assists with giving context to transfer students' experiences through understanding their development of self-identity, social construction of reality and the resulting behavioral patterns which stem from this at the institution. The information collected from current transfer students at the four-year institution in this study will provide insight into understanding the transfer perspective in order to develop strategies to better support future transfer students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The discussion below focuses on student success, perceptions, engagement and decision-making as areas of research that have focused on the current problematic trends within higher education related to student retention and completion. Since the majority of studies in these areas do not focus on transfer students, a significant population within higher education experiencing higher numbers of retention and completion problems, a review of the literature on transfer students is included as well.

Context of College Student Success

There is a significant body of literature on college student success. However, there is not one clear definition of college student success widely accepted and used across the field (Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley & Carlstrom, 2004). A traditional classification that has been widely posited for college student success is around academic achievement. From this context, college student success is evaluated through certain grade point averages, continued advancement through a program and ultimately completing a degree (Wirth & Padilla, 2008). Another classification for college student success which has arisen is students' satisfaction with their educational experience, quality of the institution, and willingness to continue to attend (Strauss & Volkwein, 2002). These two classifications differ based upon interpretation of how they are measured. The traditional classification centering on GPA, retention, and degree completion is seen as more quantifiable and directly measured. Meanwhile, the classification relating to students' willingness and satisfaction is viewed as indirectly measured due to the personalized and introspective nature of the elements examined.

Thus, the resulting research has attempted to understand the factors that contribute to both classifications. Research has found that there are certain elements which stem from both classifications that can impact success. Some of the elements which have been identified are personal, financial, coursework, learning, institutional, and student support barriers (Wirth & Padilla, 2008). Additional elements which have been identified to impact students' success are their emotional and social health. Students' with better emotional and higher social health were found to overall be more successful than their counterparts (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Also highlighted in research findings are the presence of certain character strengths that can positively impact students' success. The character strengths identified as most impactful are persistence, judgement, self-regulation, and love of learning (Loundsbury, Fisher, Levy, & Welsh, 2009).

A similar study explored whether psychosocial and study skill factors impacted outcomes of success for students. The results showed that academic self-efficacy and motivation were the best predictors for outcomes of success. Academic self-efficacy is a student's belief about their ability in relation to an academic task or goal. This study also showed a clear relationship between academic goals, skills, self-efficacy and student retention (Robbins et al., 2004). Further, Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, and Wilcox (2013) evaluated whether certain psychosocial factors such as academic self-efficacy, organization and attention to study, emotional satisfaction, stress and time management, class communication and involvement with college activity, had any effect on student success. Of these aspects, all but class communication had a significant influence on students' success at the institution. Academic self-efficacy and involvement with activity were identified as having the highest correlations. Students' involvement at the institution

is also an element which has been specifically further examined in relation to success. For example, Webber, Krylow and Zhang (2013) found that greater engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities contributes to students' success in terms of GPA and overall perception of academic experience.

College Student Understanding of Success

There have been multiple studies which examine students' interpretations in an attempt to build a definition of "success" from their perspectives. Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, and Purswell (2008) conducted a study of 22 first year students at a public four-year institution. They used focus groups as well as interviews to assess how these students described what a successful college student was and what it took to be successful. They found three themes for students' definitions of success. These themes were "good" grades, social integration, and ability to self-navigate the college environment. Additionally, the findings showed that students had a range of strategies for reaching these components of success. However, the students had to often readjust their expectations about the amount of work necessary to be successful. Despite readjustment, the researchers found that students did not always use their own strategies (Yazedjian et. al., 2008). This study contributed to the literature on college student success by expanding the concept of success to be beyond just that of a certain GPA minimum. While grades were identified, social integration and ability to self-navigate the institutional environment were just as valued by the students' as markings of success. This leads to implications for institutions as to whether their services and resources support students' social integration and navigation in addition to their grade levels.

Fauria and Zellner (2014) investigated student success from a similar perspective through focus on non-cognitive variables rather than cognitive variables such as GPA, dual credit coursework or test scores. Instead, the goal of their study was to identify what non-cognitive variables students felt led to their success at college. The researchers defined non-cognitive as relating to thought processes outside of academics such as effort or motivation. Through a questionnaire and interview of 29 students, they identified themes of college success. These themes which arose from the students' responses were achieving high grades, working hard, and graduating. The noncognitive variables students connected to success were determination, motivation, love for learning, time management and goal achievement (Fauria & Zellner, 2014). The results from this study showed that students' view of what contribute to their success includes extrinsic and intrinsic elements.

Though both studies mentioned provide insight into the formation of students' definition for and elements of success, there are limitations. These studies involved traditional students, one with first year students and one with upper class students at public research institutions, as well as very small samples. The findings could be impacted by change in institutional settings and change in population.

College Student Perceptions and Connections

Stemming from the literature on college student success, is the body of research on student perceptions. It is important to consider how student perceptions may influence their experiences and shape their interpretations as well as actions related to success. Mattern and Shaw (2012) focused on the relationship between students' academic self-beliefs and their success. They examined students' reporting of their self-estimate of

math ability, self-estimate of writing ability, and degree aspirations. The researchers found that there is a relationship between students' perceptions of their abilities and success. Essentially students' perception of their abilities impacted their success in regard to their GPA, their retention, and their willingness to seek help (Mattern & Shaw, 2012). The higher their self-estimate was, the better they did.

Campbell and Mislevy (2013) sought to understand whether students' perceptions were connected to retention. They surveyed full-time, freshman students on their perceptions of the institution in order to gauge whether this affected their enrollment patterns. They focused on students' attitudes, behaviors, and expectations. The researchers found that students' perceptions do influence their enrollment patterns (Campbell & Mislevy, 2013). More specifically, certain perceptions were related to the possibility of dropping out or transferring out. For example, among both men and women their general perception and attitude towards the campus was most strongly associated with their decision about enrollment and status at the institution. Also, for women the second highest perception that increased their risk of not remaining enrolled was perceived lack of future direction. Essentially, women who had not yet chosen a major or determined a future career path were more likely to drop out than those who selected majors and careers. For men, the second highest was the perceived lack of capable study skills for the institution (Campbell & Mislevy, 2013). The two studies suggest that students' perceptions of both themselves and their experience at the institution are of important consequence and impact both their decisions and subsequent actions.

Another area of student perceptions that has been considered is in relation to academics and learning. Lizzio, Wilson and Simons (2002) surveyed undergraduate

students across all majors at one large university. The survey asked students about their perceptions of the university's academic and learning environments. More specifically, the questions covered perceptions of appropriate workload, good teaching, satisfaction with the course, and self-reported development of skills. The results showed that students' perceptions of the teaching environment, workload, and good teaching practices influences their learning approaches, learning outcomes and academic achievements. The findings highlight that there is a connection between students' perceptions of this environment and how well they do academically at the institution (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002).

A similar study by Meyer, Spencer, and French (2009) investigated students' perceptions of college academics and rigor, prior to enrolling and again during their first semester in the institution. The researchers interviewed 52 college freshman from a small liberal arts university. Their interviews covered three main areas: students' impression of college from the media, their perception of academics, and their overall perception of academic life at college. All of the students' initial perceptions were that college would be very difficult and hard to manage. The follow up interview indicated that 60% of students' current perceptions differed from their initial perception. During their first semester enrolled, the students' current perception was that college was different compared to high school, however, later it was not as difficult as they had thought it would be. From the remaining portion of students, 23% were neutral on the difficulty, and 17% felt that college was either as difficult or more difficult as initially indicated. (Meyer, Spencer, & French, 2009). This study highlights that students bring preconceived

perceptions about college with them and that their perceptions most often do not ultimately match with their experience.

Another study assessed students' perceptions of the causes of their various academic outcomes. The findings highlighted that students' perceptions of the reasoning behind their academic outcomes, whether high grades or low, were based on either positive or negative views of themselves or the courses. The positive views were grouped as factors perceived as facilitating outcomes and the negative were grouped as factors perceived as inhibiting outcomes (Forsyth, Story, Kelley, & McMillan, 2009). Meanwhile, in terms of students' perceptions on teaching and learning quality, a survey was conducted that asked students about their learning experiences in college courses. Students evaluated whether they perceived learning was promoted in their class through solving real-world problems, activation of prior knowledge, and receipt of new knowledge, application of new knowledge, and integration of knowledge. Students were also asked about their academic learning time. The survey results showed that students who responded that learning was promoted through each aspect engaged in more academic learning time. Additionally, students who responded that aspects such as solving problems and application of new knowledge were present for learning, perceived that the course was satisfying, they learned a lot, and that instruction was high quality (Frick, Chadha, Watson, Wang & Green, 2009).

In addition to studies of how students' perceptions of the learning environment and academics contribute to their institutional experiences and behavior, another area which has also been explored is students' perceptions of social factors. Kelly, LaVergne, Boone Jr., and Boone (2012) examined how college students perceived social factors as

relating to their persistence. The researchers surveyed 320 undergraduate students at a large public institution. They found that the social factors students perceived to encourage their persistence were family encouragement, positive course experience, size of the university and success of university athletic teams. The social factors which students then perceived to discourage their persistence were burn out from school responsibilities and inability to handle stress. The study also found that students did not perceive that lack of a social life or being away from family would ultimately negatively affect their persistence (Kelly, LaVergne, Boone Jr., & Boone, 2012). The implications here are that students' beliefs about social factors can influence their experience and continuation at the institution.

The literature on students' perceptions of various elements of their time at college, particularly in regard to their abilities, social factors, academics, and learning environment provide perspective into how certain views can shape behavior, outcomes, and experiences. Similarly, students' definition of success and their construct of factors that impact success influence their strategies and decisions. While both these areas of the literature have implications for understanding how students make meaning of their college experience as well as for institutional retention efforts, there is a major limitation in the current research. The limitation being that the research continually centers upon the traditional notion of a college student. The studies examined here focus on either freshman students, or upper-class undergraduate students at particular institutions. The gap in the above research is consideration of diverse student populations.

College Student Academic and Social Decision Making Process

Another key to consider as a contributing component to student success is student decision-making. In order to do so there needs to be examination of the decision-making process and the elements that correspond with it. The research on student decision-making mainly centers on students evaluating their choice of college rather than their decision making upon enrolling at the institution. However, there has been some research which has begun to explore this area. As mentioned, this current research has highlighted that college student decision-making is an interactive process and certain characteristics contribute to this process such as parents, friends, expectations, and reputation (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Additionally, when it comes to making real-life decisions, students lack consistency and vary the criteria that influences each decision (Galotti, Wiener, & Tandler, 2014).

Another study examined whether college students' decision making differed based upon whether they were an extroverted or introverted personality. The results revealed that extroverted students had greater likelihood of making riskier decisions as well as changing their decisions. They were also found to spend less time on their decision making. Meanwhile, introverted students spent more time on a reflection process for their decision making. Introverted students spent more time on consideration of alternative choices for each decision as well (Kreitler, Dansereau, Barth, & Ito, 2009). These studies show that the research on student decision making while at the university is limited and there is need for further exploration into how decision making occurs, in relation to both academic and social decisions, and how it is influenced by how students make meaning of success.

College Transfer Students

Transfer students are an important population in higher education today as about one third of college students at any level transfer at least once within five years (Shapiro et al., 2018). Several studies have focused on factors related to transfer. A study by Wang (2009) looked at students who transferred from community college to a four-year institution. Wang (2009) focused primarily on transfer students' persistence and Baccalaureate attainment using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS 88). The sample considered of 786 students who had eventually transferred to a four-year institution. Wang (2009) found that 76.2% of these students in the sample persisted in their postsecondary education while 23.8% did not persist. Additionally, 63.6% of the transfer students attained a Bachelor's degree within the eight year time frame measured. The study further explored what the predictors were for each of these findings. In terms of persistence the predictors of continued enrollment were locus of control and community college GPA. Essentially, students who perceived that control for whether they continued was internally located versus left to external factors, were better equipped to persist. Higher academic performance and GPA in community college also contributed to students' ability to integrate into their next postsecondary institution as well (Wang, 2009).

In regards to Baccalaureate attainment, the predictors were determined to be centered on demographics, such as high school curriculum and college experience factors. Both SES and gender impacted attainment, with higher SES and being female positively related. Several aspects were incorporated into the finding of college experience as a predictor of attainment. One was students' experience with remediation

in certain subjects. Remediation in reading did not negatively impact degree attainment for transfers, however, remediation in math did. Another type of experience was students' involvement. Students with higher involvement in the institution had higher degree attainment. Finally, the strongest predictor of Bachelor's attainment was community college GPA, similar to the results of predictors for persistence (Wang, 2009).

Another study focused on identifying the commonalities among individuals who transferred from community college to a four-year institution. The researchers surveyed 5,000 students from nine community college campuses in the Los Angeles Community College District, one of largest community college districts in the United States. In addition to analysis of their student survey, the researchers also analyzed the respondents' transcripts. They found that the students who transferred had higher math and English placement scores, courses passed, courses taken and GPAs than those who did not. The study also found that students who transferred had much higher rates of passing courses at the community college viewed as "gateway" or "gatekeeper" courses to transfer. These "gateway" courses were in STEM subject areas such as Chemistry, Calculus, Biology, and Economics. (Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2008).

Overall both the findings from these studies highlight that academic preparation, ability and performance at the community college are key contributors to determining students' likelihood of transfer as well as their continuation and degree attainment. However given that both studies only focus on community college transfer, there is a need for further research which considers other types of transfer such as four-year to four-year transfer or internal transfer amongst different colleges at the same institution.

Transfer Student Transitions

Transfer students often experience frustration with their transition into the new institution. These frustrations include issues with credit transfer, being treated like first time college students, encountering differences in academic expectations, and campus climate (Townsend, 2008). In turn those barriers contribute to the problem of lower retention and graduation for transfer students versus traditional students (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Many studies have explored the transfer process to examine what transfer students experience when they enter the four-year institution.

Glass and Harrigan (2002) looked at the academic performance, retention and graduation rates of community college transfer students at the four-year institution versus “native” students, students who had begun at the same institution as freshman. The study also looked at the degree of transfer shock in comparison to decline of GPA for native students. The sample consisted of 100 native students and 100 community college transfers. The students’ academic records were analyzed and compared. The first finding was with respect to mean GPAs at the end of the sophomore year. Both groups had similar mean GPAs going into junior year. Transfer students and native students were similar in their performance with lower level coursework. However, GPA comparison at the end of the first semester of upper level coursework found that transfer students had significantly lower GPAs than native students. The researchers stated that this result could be related to transfer shock.

Transfer students did not perform as well as native students when it came to the first semester of courses in their majors, though in spring semester junior year as well as both senior year semesters both transfer and native students’ GPAs were not significantly

different. Retention rates declined for both groups in progression towards graduation. Graduation rates for the native students and transfer students differed for each cohort year of the study. During both years, native students had higher graduation rates than transfer students. The first year 72% of native students graduated compared to 46% of transfer students. The second year 40% of native students graduated compared to 30% of transfer students (Glass & Harrigan, 2002). This study highlights that there are differences in academic performance between transfer students and native students. The findings imply that the differences are related to students' experience of transfer shock. Though only one semester in particular had a significant difference in GPA, the variations in graduation rates per native versus transfer groups suggest that one semester can have larger implications for degree attainment.

While study has been done on academic performance after transferring, another area of focus is transfer students' integration and assimilation into the four-year institution. Ishitani and McKitrick (2010) did a study of community college transfer student's engagement once at the four-year institution of their choice. The engagement aspects they were interested in was how well students were engaged, their interaction with faculty, and involvement in active as well as collaborative learning. They used the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to survey 535 senior students, of whom 417 were native students and 118 of whom were students that had transferred from a community college. The five benchmarks from the NSSE survey used to determine engagement were: academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, supportive campus environment, and enriching educational experience.

Ishitani and McKitrick (2010) found that institutional engagement was higher for native students than transfer students. In particular, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and enriching educational experiences were identified as significantly higher for native students as opposed to transfers. Further analysis found that aspects which impact the benchmarks for students are enrollment status (full or part time), for which year of study students matriculated into the institution, residence proximity to campus, ethnicity, gender, and parental education (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). Overall, the results of the study suggest that transfer students are much less engaged than native students. Specific elements that were shown to have an impact on students, like enrollment status and timing, were aspects more often associated with transfer students, therefore implying that transfer students are predisposed to lower engagement educationally on their transfer status alone. Thus the implication is that institutions need to consider the variations in ability and opportunity to be engaged based on student status. Additionally, consideration of how to address the disparity in transfer student engagement is needed.

Laanan, Starobin, and Eggleston (2010) focused on determining what factors influence academic and social adjustment for transfer students. Their research objectives were to investigate to what extent academic and social transfer adjustment is predicted by background information, transfer capital, university experiences, and community college experiences. They used the Laanan-Transfer Students' Questionnaire to survey 800 students at a large Midwest research university who had transferred in from one of the state community colleges. The findings showed several factors which were significant to academic transfer adjustment.

The main factor related to background was the student's motivations for transfer. For community college experience, students' experiences in their general courses there were significant. Students' academic counseling experiences at the community college were the variable of transfer capital found to be of importance. Both motivations for transfer and academic counseling experiences at community college, actually negatively influenced academic adjustment. The aspects of their university experiences which were key to academic adjustment were the students' general perception of university, course learning, and stigma as a transfer student. In terms of predictors for transfers' social adjustment the results showed that of all the factors, only students' course learning at community college, experiences with faculty at the four-year institution, and satisfaction with the university environment were significant. Course learning at community college was a negative influence on social adjustment while experiences with faculty and satisfaction with environment were considered positive influences (Laanan et. al, 2010).

The findings of this study capture how academic and social adjustment are two separate processes affecting transfer students. These processes are impacted by certain aspects which can influence students' overall ability and success at the four-year institution. Also noteworthy is transfer students' knowledge and experience of stigma around their transfer status. Further examination into the negative influence of stigma on academics for transfer students as well as the factors perpetuating it at institutions is needed. Again, this study was limited in that it focused entirely on students who had transferred from a community college. Additionally, the findings are limited to the topics covered in this particular survey which were primarily centered upon academic counseling, faculty, learning, and the transfer process. There is need for additional study

which would include expansion of the type of transfer student as well as the topics covered.

Transfer Student Perceptions and Success

Townsend and Wilson (2006) interviewed transfer students about their perceptions of the transfer process and institutional factors that influenced their experience within the receiving institution. The researchers interviewed 19 students who had transferred from a community college into a four-year institution. The results showed that most students perceived a lack of assistance from the institution and connection with the faculty. The majority of students also perceived that social integration was more difficult as a transfer student (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

A similar study by Lester, Leonard, and Mathias (2013) centered on understanding how transfer students perceived their social and academic engagement as well as how they actually engaged socially or academically at the four-year institution. They conducted interviews with 31 students who transferred from either a community college or another four-year institution. They found that transfer students found social engagement to be important to their experience, however, their social engagement primarily occurred with support structures outside the institution. Family, colleagues, and community groups (such as churches) played a more significant role in transfer students' social engagement rather than peers, staff, or faculty at the institution. Social activities were perceived as a distraction from their academic work.

Meanwhile, the transfer students viewed academic engagement as connected to learning, building connections with faculty, and academic challenges. Though faculty connections were regarded as a key part of academic engagement, the transfer students

did not have high interaction with faculty outside of the classroom, unless initiated by the faculty member themselves. While transfer students did email faculty and attend office hours, they considered this as part of their class experience rather than engagement. When faculty initiated additional opportunities for interaction with students beyond these items, the students then felt an increased sense of engagement. Additionally, the transfer students had an overwhelmingly strict focus on academics over any other area. The researchers also asked the transfer students about their sense of belonging to the institution. The students did not perceive that their transfer status impeded their overall belonging. However, the students connected their sense of belonging with academic engagement instead of social opportunities and events (Lester et. al., 2013). The findings from this study provide a deeper look into understanding how transfer students perceive engagement. The implication for institutions to consider are that transfer students prioritize engagement primarily on academic rather than social areas.

Gard, Paton, and Gosselin (2012) also focused on students' perceptions related to transfer status. The researchers looked at transfer students' perceptions of the factors that contributed to their successful transition from community college into a four-year institution. They were particularly interested in the transfer students' perceptions of their experiences with the transfer process particularly related to academic advisement, communication, financial aid, academic preparation and psychosocial factors. The study was conducted on the campus of a southwestern community college with a primarily Hispanic student population. Interviews were done within a focus group setting with a cohort of 14 students all enrolled in their first semester of the same Bachelor's degree program offered by a local four year university. Following the focus group session, the

researcher sent out a follow up survey to participants. The follow up survey was completed by 12 of the 14 participants. Findings were categorized into issues around finance, communication, scheduling, and facilities. The students' perceptions were that there was a lack of communication, advisement, assistance or financial aid, and poor flexibility in course scheduling with the four-year institution (Gard, Paton & Gosselin, 2012). The implications of this study are that certain factors of the institution are identified as impeding transfer success-such as advising and financial aid.

Duggan and Pickering (2008) identified factors which serve as barriers to transfer student success as well. The researchers sought to identify patterns of noncognitive factors that related to transfer student success and persistence. They collected surveys from 369 first semester, main campus transfer students at a large research institution. In their results, several barriers to transfer students' success which put them at risk for persistence were identified. These barriers were balancing employment with classes, academic integration, social integration, confidence, and attitude. The transfer students who experienced these issues were less likely to do well academically and remain at the institution (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). The implication for institutions is that these areas need to be addressed to prevent students from experiencing them as barriers to their success.

Additional study had focused on examining what factors' impact community college transfer students' success at the four-year institution, specifically in relation to student satisfaction and academic achievement. Berger and Malaney (2003) surveyed and then interviewed 392 transfer students. The key indicators for success in the study were social satisfaction, academic support satisfaction, university satisfaction, satisfaction with

sense of community, satisfaction with academic progress, and cumulative GPA. The researchers found that satisfaction was generally high across all indicators. However, academic support received the lowest satisfaction score at 68% compared to the other indicators which were all scored in the 80-89% range. Another important finding was that the students' adjustment in terms of academics and satisfaction were most significantly influenced by both their preparation for as well as their knowledge of the transfer process (Berger & Malaney, 2003).

Ellis (2013) concentrated on identifying what knowledge, actions, and attitudes students used to successfully transfer. The study involved focus groups held at each of the campuses within the University of Texas system for a total of 68 students who had transferred from a community college. The results of the study were that the majority of transfer students' motivation was self-imposed. Family and degree requirements for intended career were second and third in motivation. The students' experiences with advising at both the community college and university were also noted. The general experience of transfer students' at the community college was expressed as not beneficial. In fact, the students' preference for information was through websites or peer advisors. However, many of the students noted that websites were not always up to date with correct information, particularly with curriculum and degree requirements. At the university, the advising experience was not any better. Students' experienced issues with limited availability of advisors, turnover of advisors, and transcript evaluation processes. Only one third of students attended an orientation. Generally, transfer specific orientations were determined as more helpful (Ellis 2013).

The study also asked the transfer students to compare and contrast between community college and the university in several areas. The first area was faculty and student interaction. There was little difference between the community college and university experience with this. At the university, there was less interaction in class or after and more interaction by email. Teaching practices at the university involved more group work, presentation, and use of technology. The coursework at the university was viewed as a step up with more challenges and higher leveling thinking required. In terms of social integration, the students again identified little difference. There was slightly more difficulty for students to interact at the university. The social interactions they did have were mainly found with others in their academic disciplines (Ellis 2013). Another area evaluated was institutional services such as academic support and student support services. The main aspect noted for academic support services such as writing centers, computer labs, and math centers was that the university provided limited access to them due to the available space or hours open. Student support services like health centers, fitness centers, financial aid, and career services were found to be widely unhelpful at the university. The students stated that information was unclear and staff were unresponsive, leaving students ultimately confused and frustrated. Overall the takeaways from this study are that successful transfer students were self-motivated, understood about potential loss of credit hours, accessed information through multiple sources, and were persistent (Ellis, 2013).

In sum, the research indicates that transfer students are an important student population that faces significant barriers as they transition into their new institution. Since this problem has been so clearly documented, there is a need for an exploration into

why it is continuing. The current research on student success is primarily focused on assessment of factors which impact students rather than understanding their perceptions, experiences, and how both aspects influence their behavior. Additionally, the general body of research is focused mainly upon community college transfer students. There are two other populations of transfer students which should be considered as well—students who transfer from one four-year institution to another as well as students who internally transfer within an institution. To date there is limited current research which focuses on undergraduate students who transfer within a university from one college or school to another. This type of transfer can impact student retention and degree completion in ways similar to that of students transferring into the university overall. This population should be given consideration and evaluation as well.

The present study sought to address the various gaps in the literature in regards to not only populations studied but the methods of study. This study aimed to address these gaps through a mixed methods approach to explore external and internal transfer students' perception of success at the four-year institution. A mixed methods approach allowed for the integration and combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more complete picture of the issue. Use of mixed methods provided a bridge between the statistical relationships, trends and the shared personal experience of transfer students. Thus this study documented the experiences and attitudes of transfer students. Assessing and describing transfer students' engagement and experiences as a function of success will add to the literature by giving a voice to the students of this population and detailing their reflections. It will also contribute to higher education by providing insight into institutional practices and their impact on transfer

students. Additionally, findings from this study will indicate where changes may be considered to better support transfer students experience and success at this specific institution, particularly with administration and faculty in respect to enrollment management, policy, support services, and student programming.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A mixed method research approach was taken for this study. This approach involves collecting, analyzing, and connecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methods allows for a more comprehensive examination of the issue as it incorporates the strengths of both research methods. (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This study focuses on exploring the perceptions of the participants in order to understand the essence of success and how that in turn relates to transfer students' experience at the four-year institution with a mind toward understanding what supports are needed to enable transfer students to succeed. The quantitative approach offered information on students' characteristics, behavior, and engagement at the institution. This allowed for exploration of the relationship between these aspects and students' success in terms of university and academic satisfaction. The qualitative approach provided an opportunity to get an in-depth understanding of experiences, actions, and their connection to the students' perceptions of success. A visual representation of the conceptual project model is provided in the Appendix A.

Sample

This study was conducted at a public, state-related research university located in a major city of the Northeast. The study included the entire undergraduate population within the university's College of Communication. The students in the study are pursuing Bachelor's degrees in the following programs: Advertising, Public Relations, Journalism, Communication and Social Influence, Communication Studies, and Media Studies and Production. At the time of the study, the undergraduate enrollment for the college was approximately 2475 students. Of these students, 932 reported their gender as male, 1536 as female, and 7 as unknown. Additionally, the race/ethnicities of the undergraduate population were reported as: 383 African American, 152 Asian, 223 Hispanic, 1 Pacific

Islander, 1513 White, 86 unknown, and 223 students selected that they fit two of the these categories. In all, 1722 of the students were considered in-state residents and 753 were out of state. Further, 787 of the students or about 31.8% of the total college undergraduate population were transfer students from either another four year institution or community college.

Data Collection

The survey used was based on the National Survey of College Graduates (2017) conducted for the National Science Foundation by the US Census Bureau. The purpose of the survey was to provide a profile of those who earn Bachelor's degrees. In the research reported here questions pertaining directly to the transfer student experiences were added. A list of the survey questions can be found in the Appendix B.

One college within the university granted access to the contact information for the students. Following this, an email containing a link to the survey was sent directly to all 2475 undergraduate students at the college. For the email, see Appendix C. The initial email was sent out in the beginning of March 2020. Shortly after the survey went out, students began to receive several emails from the university president and provost office about the Coronavirus. A few days later, the university moved all classes online for the remainder of the semester.

A follow-up email was sent out again at the end of March. Again, at this time both the central university administration as well as the college administration were contacting the students with frequent updates regarding COVID19. The frequent university communication, transition of classes to virtual format, and campus closure may have impacted student response rates during this period. Based on the situation with COVID19, the survey via email was sent again in early May, after the spring semester had ended. The total response rate for the survey was 17.73% or 439 responses.

Given the impact of COVID19 on the participants and data collection process, a variable was created to differentiate between the two time periods when responses were

submitted. Survey responses received during the height of COVID communications and the period of student transitions in the semester (March-April) and those after the semester ended (May) were labelled as pre and post. As seen in Table 3.1, considerably more students responded in May than in March. There could have been a number of explanations for this. For example, students may have simply had more time in May than in March as it was the end of the semester and there were no outside activities than was the case when the campus was open. Also, perhaps they were seeking to reaffirm a connection with their undergraduate experience.

Table 3.1

Survey Completion Time Period

Survey Completion	Total Number
March- April (Pre)	183 (41.7%)
May (Post)	256 (58.3%)
Total	439 (100%)

An assessment of the relationships between time period for survey completion and demographic variables was conducted. This analysis indicated that time period was not related to a students’ gender, race/ethnicity, residency or transfer status. Although not statistically significant, the analysis reflected that completion of the survey during the “post” time period of May was greater for students within the following groups: female, African American, out-of-state residents, and transfer students. Further details and these tables can be found in Appendix H.

Interview Protocol

The final question on the survey asked students to indicate if they were willing to volunteer for an interview and to provide their email address in order to be contacted. Of the 439 survey respondents, 56.7% or 249 students gave their email. However, only 28%

or 123 of all respondents gave permission to be contacted for an interview. Additionally, only 116 respondents provided contact information. An email to schedule a time for the interview was sent directly to those who gave permission and provided contact information in July 2020. Interviews were held in July and early August 2020 based upon students' availability. A total of 38 students replied to the interview schedule request. Several of these students would either reply with their availability but then never confirm a time or establish an interview time and not show up. Ultimately, 19 students were interviewed. Of these 19 students, fifteen (79.8%) were female and four (21%) were male. Of the interviewees, 14 (73.6%) identified their race as white, two (10.5%) as Hispanic, two (10.5%) as African American, and one (5.2%) as Asian. Further, twelve students (63.1%) were in-state residents and seven (36.8%) were out-of-state. During their time at the institution, seven (36.8%) of the interviewees had changed their major at least once, and twelve (63.1%) had never changed it. Finally, seven (36.8%) interviewees were non-transfer, nine (47.3%) were external transfer students, and three (15.7%) were internal transfers. Internal transfers were students' who had indicated they began at another school or college in the same institution and changed their major or "transferred" to the College of Communication. The interviews conducted do not provide an exact subsample of the undergraduate population at the college.

Semi-structured interviews were held one-on-one via Zoom, due to COVID19 restrictions for meeting in-person. The interviews were recorded through Zoom with participant consent and lasted between thirty minutes to an hour. Data from the interviews were then transcribed through Rev.com for analysis. The interview questions focused on asking students to reflect on their transfer process, their perception of success, engagement at the institution, factors which they feel contribute to success, as well as university and academic satisfaction. A list of the interview questions can be found in the Appendix E.

Data Analyses

Statistical analysis was the guiding framework for data analysis in this study. The statistical analyses were done using SPSS and included the following four steps: (1) exploratory analysis of all variables focusing on relationships among the variables and missing data issues resulting in a specific model specification; (2) data reduction; (3) descriptive analyses of variables presented; and (4) predictor, controlling, and dependent variables specification. In the analyses, where possible, both substantive and statistical significance were addressed. The variables that were considered in the preservice student level analyses are student characteristics (gender, age, schooling history, other control variables and course characteristics (timing and format), and digital note files.

The interview data and resulting qualitative analysis were used in this study were used to inform and provide further context for the quantitative findings. The grounded theory method was used for qualitative analysis. Grounded theory focuses on creating a theory based upon information collected in the field. It involves examining processes, interactions, or actions meaning for a group of individuals (Creswell, 2013). In this study, this involved assessing transfer student success as a function of engagement. The grounded theory approach for analysis allowed for a more thorough exploration of the backgrounds and experiences of transfer students during their transition into the four-year institution in order to gain deeper understanding of how they conceptualize their satisfaction as well as their success. Data analysis through this method included a review cycle of the transcriptions and notes from the taped semi-structured interviews. Initial data review involved open coding in order to create categories and organize the highlighted clusters of data. Secondary review of data then included using axial coding to develop connections between the code categories. A codebook can be found in Appendix G. Based upon the categories and connections found, themes were identified. A detailed description on the significant themes was included within the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This study focused on the relationship between student success and engagement by examining students' demographic and educational characteristics as well as their experiences to see how they affect their satisfaction. The focus was to examine these aspects in relation to transfer students at the college in particular. The project model used for this study can be found in the appendix, as referenced in Chapter 3 .

The independent variables included were the students' gender, race/ethnicity, Mid-Atlantic state residency, year graduated high school, year and semester enrolled at Northeast University, previous postsecondary academic history, major, whether they made a change of major, and current GPA. Additional independent variables were related to hours of involvement in varied activities. They included hours involved working at a paying job, participating in Greek life, playing video games, socializing with friends, and participating in a club or other school activity. The dependent variables used in this study were related to academic achievement and university satisfaction. The academic category covered satisfaction with advising, academic progress, and academic support services. The university category covered satisfaction with campus atmosphere and available social opportunities. A Likert scale was used for each satisfaction which included two related components, an academic component and a nonacademic component. Table 4.1 depicts the relationships between the research questions, data sources and analyses for both the quantitative and qualitative data in this study.

Table 4.1

Research Questions, Data Source, and Analyses Relationships

Research Questions	Data Source	Analyses	
How do transfer students experience and make meaning of what “success” is at the four year institution compared to non-transfer students?	Survey	Quantitative	<u>Univariate statistics</u> (Frequencies, means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context.
			<u>Bivariate statistics</u> (Crosstabs, and ANOVA) to compare survey respondents.
	Interview	Qualitative	Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.
Do transfer students define success differently than do non-transfer students?	Survey	Quantitative	<u>Bivariate statistics</u> (Crosstabs, and ANOVA) to compare survey respondents.
			Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.
	Interview	Qualitative	Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.
What aspects do transfer students perceive to be most important to their success at the four year institution compared to non-transfer students?	Survey	Quantitative	<u>Univariate statistics</u> (Frequencies, means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context.
			<u>Bivariate statistics</u> (Crosstabs, and ANOVA) to compare survey respondents.
			<u>Multivariate statistics</u> (Regression) to capture the effects. Dependent variables: satisfaction scale.
	Interview	Qualitative	Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.
How does the way transfer students talk about their actions at the four-year institution differ from non-transfer students?	Survey	Quantitative	<u>Bivariate statistics</u> (Crosstabs, and ANOVA) to compare survey respondents.
			Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.
	Interview	Qualitative	Focus on in-depth material from those who agreed to be interviewed.

Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

The survey was sent out to approximately 2,475 undergraduate students at the College of Communication. The total response rate for the survey was 17.7% or 439 responses. Of the respondents, most were female (316, 72.0%) rather than male (123, 28.0%). The respondents were also primarily Mid-Atlantic state residents (314, 71.5%) as opposed to out of state (125, 28.5%). The race/ethnicity of survey respondents showed that the majority identified as White (308, 70.2%), followed by African American (67, 15.3%), Asian (28, 6.4%), Hispanic (25, 5.7%) and Other (11, 2.5%). Most respondents had first enrolled at Northeast University in Fall 2019 (97, 22.1%) though closely trailed by Fall 2018 (94, 21.4%) as well as Fall 2016 (93, 21.2%) and 2017 (93, 21.2%).

On the whole, the majority (233, 53.1%) of the respondents reported GPAs of 3.6 and above. As shown in Table 4.2 there were few students (22, 5.1%) below 2.5 possibly reflecting their relative lack of engagement with the institution.

Table 4.2

Survey Respondents' GPA


GPA	Total Number
No Established GPA	9 (2.1%)
2.0 or lower	6 (1.4%)
2.1-2.5	7 (1.6%)
2.6-3.0	42 (9.6%)
3.1-3.5	142 (32.3%)
3.6-4.0	233 (53.1%)
Total	439

While most of the survey respondents had begun their college career at Northeast University (305, 69.5%), those who transferred in came from community colleges (81, 18.5%) followed by another four-year institution (53, 12.1%), as seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Survey Respondents' Academic Experience

Post-Secondary Attendance	Total Number
Community College	81 (18.5%)
Other Four-Year University	53 (12.1%)
Always Northeast University	305 (69.5%)
Total	439



Community College	81 (60.4%)
Other Four Year University	53 (39.6%)
Total	134

Further, as shown in Table 4.4, most of the survey respondents' indicated for their prior academic experience that they did not transfer but did change their major (154, 35.1 %.) A similar amount of respondents (151, 34.4%) indicated that they neither transferred nor changed their major. Of those respondents' who did select a pre-Northeast University academic experience, the majority (36, 8.2%) transferred from another four-year institution and changed their major. Overall, between the three main populations, community college transfers, four year transfers, and non-transfers, more students in each of these categories changed their major than not.

Table 4.4

Survey Respondents' Pre-Northeast University Academic Experience and Major Change

Pre-Northeast University Academic Experience	Total Number
Community College Courses, No degree	30 (6.8%)
Community College Transfer, Changed Major	27 (6.2%)
Community College Transfer, Kept Same Major	24 (5.5%)
Four Year Transfer, Changed Major	36 (8.2%)
Four Year Transfer, Kept Same Major	17 (3.9%)
Did not Transfer or Change Major	151 (34.4%)
Did not Transfer and Changed Major	154 (35.1%)
Total	439

Of those 134 students who transferred from another college, reducing the cost of attending college was the most often given reason (68.6%) followed somewhat closely by

preparing for college (58.2%). Earning credits in high school was third most prevalent response (55.9%). Respondents were able to select multiple responses for this survey question. See Table 4.5 for further details.

Table 4.5

Distribution of Reasons Given for Beginning College Elsewhere

Reasons for Attending Community College	Total Number
Earn Credits in High School	75 (55.9%)
Complete Associate's Degree	47 (35.0%)
Prepare for College	78 (58.2%)
Increase Acceptance to Four Year	68 (50.7%)
Reduce Cost of College	92 (68.6%)
Gain Skills or Knowledge	53 (39.5%)
Change Academic or Occupational Field	17 (12.7%)
Personal Interests	18 (13.4%)
Other Reason	47 (35.0%)

The majority of students remained in the same major as they started in, see Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Major Change

Major Change	Total Number
Did not Change Major	301 (68.6%)
Changed Major	138 (31.4%)
Total	439 (100%)

Most of the survey respondents (146, 33.3%) indicated a first major in the area of communication and media, which is the same college that they are currently in. Only 35 respondents (8%) reported a first major of “undecided.” See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7***First Major Categories***

First Major	Total Number
Undecided	35 (8.0%)
Arts and Film	30 (6.8%)
Liberal Arts	44 (10.0%)
Business	27 (6.2%)
Engineering	4 (0.9%)
Science	30 (6.8%)
Communication and Media	146 (33.3%)
None Indicated	123 (28.0%)
Total	439 (100%)

As already indicated, the majority of students (301, 68.6%) did not change their major. For those who did, fit and focus was the largest percentage for reason behind the major change (39.1%). Academic related reasons was the second largest (19.6%). This was followed closely by career and opportunity related reasons (17.4%). See Table 4.8.

Table 4.8***Reason for Major Change***

Major Change Reason	Total Number
Undeclared	20 (14.5%)
First Choice Unavailable	8 (5.8%)
Fit and Focus	54 (39.1%)
Financial	3 (2.2%)
Double Major	2 (1.4%)
Academic	27 (19.6%)
Career and Opportunity	24 (17.4%)
Total	138 (100%)

An assessment of the relationships between students' major change status and demographic variables was conducted. This analysis indicated that major change was not related to a students' gender, race/ethnicity, transfer status or GPA. A similar analysis

was done to evaluate the relationship between students' major change status and satisfaction with academic achievement. The two variables associated with the academic component of satisfaction used were academic progress and advising. The findings showed that neither academic progress nor advising were related to students' major change. Further details can be found in Appendix H tables.

As seen in Table 4.9, we can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between transfer status and gender ($\chi^2 = 11.12, p = .001$). On a percentage basis, men (42.3%) were more apt to have transferred than women (25.9%).

Table 4.9
Transfer Status and Gender

	Female	Male	Total
Non Transfer Students	234 (74.1%)	71 (57.7%)	305
Transfer Students	82 (25.9%)	52 (42.3%)	134
Total	316 (100%)	123 (100%)	439

$\chi^2 = 11.12, p = .001, \phi = .02$

We can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between transfer status and their state residency ($\chi^2 = 10.57, p = .001$). Interestingly there was a statistically significant relationship between transfer status and Mid-Atlantic state residency. On a percentage basis, transfer students were more apt to have an established Mid-Atlantic state residence as compared to those students who began at Northeast University (35%, 19.2%). See Table 4.10. This is perhaps due to Northeast University being a state-related institution. Given that it is state-related, this enables the university to set lower tuition rates. Transfer students may choose to stay in state to lower their costs. Their decision may also be

connected to course equivalencies and articulation agreements between Northeast University and other Mid-Atlantic state institutions.

Table 4.10

Transfer Status and Residency

	Non Mid-Atlantic State Resident	Mid-Atlantic State Resident	Total
Non Transfer Students	101 (80.8%)	204 (65.0%)	305
Transfer Students	24 (19.2%)	110 (35.0%)	134
Total	125 (100%)	314 (100%)	439

$\chi^2=10.57, p=.001, \phi = .02$

On average transfer students were older than the non-transfer students, a difference that was statistically significant ($F=63.307, p=.001$). Additionally, transfer status was not related to a student’s race/ethnicity. See Table 4.28 in Appendix H for further details.

Relationship of Transfer Status with Various Variables

We can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between transfer status and the reported grades ($\chi=16.76, p=.005$). On a percentage basis, transfer students were less apt to be in the highest GPA category than non-transfer students. The largest percentage of transfer students were in the 3.1-3.5 range. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the school they transferred from was less rigorous than Northeast University is. See Table 4.11.

Table 4.11***Distribution of Students by Reported GPA and Transfer Status***

	No Established GPA	2.0 or lower	2.1-2.5	2.6-3.0	3.1-3.5	3.6-4.0	Total
Non- Transfer Students	6 (2.0%)	4 (1.3%)	4 (1.3%)	23 (7.5%)	87 (28.5%)	181 (59.3%)	305
Transfer Students	3 (2.2%)	2 (1.5%)	3 (2.2%)	19 (14.2%)	55 (41.0%)	52 (38.8%)	134
Total	9 (2.1%)	6 (1.4%)	7 (1.6%)	42 (9.6%)	142 (32.3%)	233 (53.1)	439

$$\chi^2=16.75, p=.005, \phi = .03$$

We can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between transfer status and semesters enrolled at Northeast University ($\chi=108.28, p=.000$). As shown in Table 4.12, on a percentage basis, transfer students were more apt to have enrolled in the spring semester. This is likely due to students' starting at another institution for the Fall semester and then ultimately deciding to transfer.

Table 4.12***Semester Enrolled and Transfer Status***

Semester Enrolled	Non-Transfer Students	Transfer Students	Total
Spring 2012	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.2%)
Fall 2015	4 (1.3%)	2 (1.5%)	6 (1.4%)
Fall 2016	85 (27.9%)	8 (6.0%)	93 (21.2%)
Fall 2017	79 (25.9%)	14 (10.4%)	93 (21.2%)
Fall 2018	61 (20.0%)	33 (24.6%)	94 (21.4%)
Spring 2018	2 (0.7%)	9 (6.7%)	11 (2.5%)
Fall 2019	64 (21.0%)	33 (24.6%)	97 (22.1%)
Spring 2019	0 (0.0%)	17 (12.7%)	17 (3.9%)
Spring 2020	6 (2.0%)	13 (9.7%)	19 (4.3%)
Fall 2009	2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.5%)
Fall 2013	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.2%)

Fall 2014	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
Spring 2016	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.2%)
Spring 2017	1 (0.3%)	2 (1.5%)	3 (0.7%)
Total	305	134	439

$\chi^2=108.28, p=.000, \phi = .25$

Students were asked about both their academic achievement and university satisfaction with five items: academic progress, advising, academic support services, campus atmosphere and social opportunities. In regards to the academic component of satisfaction: we can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between all students' satisfaction with academic progress and reported grades ($\chi=39.84, p=.000$). On a percentage basis, students who are very satisfied with their academic progress have reported their GPAs in the 2.6 and above range. Perhaps this is due to students' holding an overall positive outlook about their ability to do well and the options available to them if they need help. See Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Satisfaction with Academic Progress and GPA

	2.5 and Below GPA	2.6 and Above GPA	Total
Less or Not Satisfied	21 (32.8%)	25 (6.7%)	46 (10.5%)
Satisfied	43 (67.2%)	350 (93.3%)	393 (89.5%)
Total	64 (100%)	375 (100%)	439 (100%)

$\chi^2=39.84, p=.000, \phi = .09$

Interestingly, when the relationship between transfer status and satisfaction with academic progress was assessed, they were not related. Although there also wasn't any relationship between where a student transferred from and their satisfaction with academic progress, community college transfer students were more likely than four year institution transfers to find fault with their progress. Similarly, when the other variables associated with satisfaction with academics were evaluated, no relationship was found

between transfer status and advising or academic support services. Though there wasn't statistical significance with either of these satisfaction variables, transfer students were more apt to be less satisfied with each than non-transfer students. Additionally, the follow up interviews highlighted consistent themes related to these areas. See Appendix H Tables 4.29-4.32 for details.

Meanwhile, analysis of students' university satisfaction in terms of the campus atmosphere and social opportunities showed statistical significance. We can reject the null hypothesis between transfer status and satisfaction with the campus atmosphere ($\chi^2=4.61$, $p=.032$). On a percentage basis, transfer students were less satisfied with the campus atmosphere (10.4%, 4.9%). This is perhaps due to differences in transfer students' view of and adaptation to the institutions' campus culture, location, and population. See Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14

Transfer Status and Campus Atmosphere

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Non-Transfer Students	15 (4.9%)	290 (95.1%)	305
Transfer Students	14 (10.4%)	120 (89.6%)	134
Total	29 (6.6%)	410 (93.4%)	439

$\chi^2=4.61$, $p=.032$, $\phi = .01$

We can reject the null hypothesis between transfer status and satisfaction with social opportunities ($\chi^2=7.011$, $p=.008$). As shown in Table 4.15, on a percentage basis transfer students were less satisfied with the social opportunities than non-transfer students (22.4%, 12.5%). The likelihood is that transfer students are more invested in seeking out chances to interact with people and more motivated to get involved. Therefore they may be apt to find displeasure or frustration with availability of

opportunities for social activity compared to those who have already been at Northeast University for several semesters.

Table 4.15

Transfer Status and Social Opportunities

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Non-Transfer Students	38 (12.5%)	267 (87.5%)	305
Transfer Students	30 (22.4%)	104 (77.6%)	134
Total	68 (15.5%)	371 (84.5%)	439

$\chi^2=7.01, p=.008, \phi = .02$

Multivariate Analysis: The Determinants of Satisfaction with Northeast University

With satisfaction as the dependent variable, the R Square of .113 meant that 11.3% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables taken together. The regression calculation also showed ($\phi = .113$) which is a medium effect size. The F stat 4.167 was significant ($p=.000$) allowing us to reject the Null Hypothesis of no relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables taken together. A student’s satisfaction with Northeast University is not dependent on gender, age, race/ethnicity, in-state or out-of-state residency, if they changed their major or not, if they identified their GPA as 2.6 or above, whether they are in a sorority or fraternity, and the number of hours spent socializing with friends, as in each case the null hypothesis of new relationship between each variable and the dependent variables is accepted.

Five variables did prove to have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable. All other things equal, being a student who transferred to Northeast University added .74 points to their satisfaction score over what would be the case for a student whose whole academic career was at Northeast University. Additionally for every

additional hour a student works at a paying job their satisfaction increased by 1.27 points. Similarly, for every additional hour a student spends playing video games their satisfaction increased by .58 points. Further, for every one additional semester a student has been at Northeast University, the satisfaction score increases by .102 points. Meanwhile, for every additional hour a student spends in a club their satisfaction decreased by .67 points. See Table 4.16 for further details. Students' being more satisfied the longer they remain at Northeast University may be due to the increased familiarity with the campus, academic expectations, and resources. Their ability to navigate institutional practices and process as well as make progress towards their degree may also impact this. Another aspect which increased students' satisfaction were hours spent playing video games. This relationship is perhaps connected to both students' interests as well as their particular school-communication and media. The students' have purposefully chosen majors in a school with a heavy focus on study and use of emerging media. Interestingly aspects such as participation in Greek life and whether a student changed their major did not have a relationship to their satisfaction. This is perhaps due to a lack of prominence with Greek life on campus compared to other institutions. Additionally, students' previous major change may not have impacted their experience at Northeast University as they could feel complacent within their current major.

These findings support the elements of symbolic interactionism theory by highlighting that students' satisfaction is connected to the subjective meanings they have placed on objects, events, and behaviors around them. For instance, hours spent involved with a club decreased students' satisfaction, this suggests that students ascribe meaning and language towards club participation with a negative connotation. Meanwhile

administrators or faculty may have encouraged students to participate in clubs previously because they thought that students viewed clubs favorably.

Table 4.16

Regression Results

	Regression Coefficients b	Beta	t
Gender	-0.093	-0.015	-0.295
Respondent age	-0.053	-0.054	-0.953
Student was White	-0.252	-0.041	-0.843
Number of semesters attended	0.102	0.1	1.773*
Respondent works at a job	1.276	0.207	4.243***
Respondent participates in Greek life	-0.152	-0.018	-0.376
Respondent participates in clubs	-0.671	-0.111	-2.187*
Transfer student	0.746	0.123	2.205*
GPA 2.6 and above	-0.522	-0.066	-1.352
Student changed major	0.197	0.033	0.693
Respondent was a Mid-Atlantic state resident	-0.103	-0.017	-0.34
Respondent plays video games	0.58	0.101	1.993*
Respondent socializes	-0.166	-0.016	-0.321
(Constant)	9.294		7.23

Dependent variable is the satisfaction scale

* $p < .05$, ** $p = .01$, *** $p < .001$

Interview Themes

Of the students who completed the survey 123 agreed to be interviewed further. Of those who agreed 19 were actually interviewed. These interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour. See Chapter Three, interview protocol section for further details.

While conducting 19 one-on-one interviews with the students whom volunteered, there were ten themes which emerged from the participants' responses. These themes were

divided into those relating to their academic experiences and those relating to their nonacademic experiences.

Academic experiences themes included:

- Depersonalization of advising
- Student drive behind major change
- Personal relationships vs offices as a resource

Nonacademic themes included:

- Career focus and values
- Extracurricular activities
- Campus perspectives
- Transfer social network

In addition, there were some other themes which arose from the interviews that highlighted the differences between transfer and non-transfer student experiences. These themes were:

- Students' definition of success
- Students' strategies for success
- Accessing information

The themes which arose from the interviews served to provide further insight and support toward the quantitative analysis of this study. Table 4.17 provides a list of number assigned, gender, and transfer status for the interviewees' quotes highlighted in the themes.

Table 4.17

Information on Interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Transfer/Non-Transfer Student
1	Female	Transfer Student
2	Female	Internal Transfer Student
3	Female	Transfer Student
4	Female	Transfer Student
5	Female	Transfer Student
6	Female	Non-Transfer Student
7	Male	Non-Transfer Student
8	Female	Non-Transfer Student
9	Female	Internal Transfer Student
10	Female	Non-Transfer Student
11	Male	Transfer Student
12	Male	Transfer Student
13	Female	Transfer Student
14	Female	Transfer Student
15	Female	Non-Transfer Student
16	Female	Non-Transfer Student
17	Male	Transfer Student
18	Female	Non-Transfer Student
19	Female	Internal Transfer Student

Academic Themes

Depersonalization of Advising

Though no statistical significance was found between transfer status and advising in the quantitative analysis, transfer students were more apt to be less satisfied with advising. During interviews both transfer and non-transfers had much to say about their experiences with advising at the school and university. Most of the transfer students' interviewed made clear that they felt frustration and unconfident with advising due to

inconsistencies with information, receiving generalized advice inapplicable to their own situations, and not feeling valued. For example interviewee one, stated:

I think from what I've, you know, through talking with other students and everything, um, everyone really appreciates having, um, just someone, you know, that they can like an advisor or whatever that they can trust and rely on, not someone who, um, they feel like they're just, you know, they don't have time for the student and they're just kind of sloughing them off. And, you know, if they do have a meeting, they're just rushing them out the door and just giving very general advice. Like, um, I will say like that, that is something that, um, students don't necessarily appreciate, like that doesn't make them feel like valued or, um, make them want to do good or anything. So I guess my advice would just be, or just for improvement is just like always making sure to, um, to the best of their ability, given their volume of students and busy schedules, just trying to check in with students and trying to give them that personal experience, even in a, in a big school, just trying to give them that personal experience, um, of, you know, just being there for them and helping them through the process because it's easy to get lost in the crowd and not know what you're doing.

A similar experience and viewpoint was expressed by interviewee two. She said:

Being at Communications, I've had advisors like lead where this one's going there and they just, and so it was so chaotic and they didn't understand. And there was this constant back and forth between go to the Communications college office and go to try to get to an advisor. So the way I did it, I hated being told no by the office, like the, whoever was running the office. So I would just go straight to an advisor and I would wait outside their office and ask them questions like unsolicited, like, Hey, I need your advice. It's like, if you aren't tenacious about it, like it's would be easy to just feel that you were stuck like that you couldn't do anything. Advising only works. If you have questions for them, they're not going to ask you. They're not going to look. You have to look at where for you to know to get them to help you. It's more of a like, how can I help you situation? Whereas this like, well, aren't useful. Like, I don't know what I need, but I know I need help. So advising is just more of like, they're not, not a guidance, but just like a response.

Student Drive Behind Major Change

In interviews with students who had changed their major, it became apparent that their reasons for doing so were related to dissatisfaction with their first major. This dissatisfaction was generally tied to the student feeling that the major was not a “fit” for

them. Each student explained the aspects which impacted fit for them. The most prominent factors which influenced a student's concept of "fit" for a major ranged from a school's culture and administration to academics and students' interests or goals. For instance, interviewee three's major change was fueled by her experience with culture of the school her major was in and the way that this culture affected the learning environment. Ultimately this culture ended up impacting the student's ability to learn and feel like she would do well there. Reflecting on her major change she said:

So like in the academic culture for Liberal Arts they were more, I would say it was more like a forced learning, but at the same time, the professors were willing to like go with the students, you know, they had their boundaries and they were more personal classes, like very intimate classes. They, I would say were the most personable. And the professors were the most open, willing to like build a relationship one-on-one individually taking time out of their day, or, you know, at the end of class, um, always inviting their students to their office hours. That was something that was really apparent in Liberal Arts than in Business. Business was a more, we're not a baby and he's got this, you don't .Oh, well sucks to suck. So they had a very like tough love approach, which didn't make them approachable at all. They were very laissez Faire, like hands off. And then in Communications was a really fun experience because it was more of a safe place. And I appreciated being able to have specially like with everything going on after like 2016 and like Trump and all of this stuff, there was so many things going on, social issues that Communications became like a social issue college. Like if you wanted to talk about something, you got to talk about it. And so that didn't feel as much as a classroom as like an open discussion.

Meanwhile, interviewee four's explained that realization of "fit" for major was related to her personal and academic interests. The courses and material did not connect to these interests which resulted in the student belief that she hadn't learned much or that the information was repetitive. For example she said:

And yeah, like Liberal Arts just wasn't, it wasn't a place for me. Um, when I got to Communications, like I started one being more interested, liking my professors and like feeling like I was learning new things. Whereas like in Liberal Arts was like, I wish I had like pulled up my transcript for

you or something, but it was just like high school stuff. Like, you know what I mean? It already, you know, I felt like I had gone to college and I wasn't like, like learning anything.

Personal Relationships vs Academic Offices as a Resource

In the survey students were asked to identify their satisfaction with academic support services. While there wasn't any statistically significant relationship found between these two aspects, it became apparent throughout the interviews that there was a theme connected to the idea of academic support services. The interviews showed that a possible disconnect between the administrative connotation of "academic support services" and students' connotation exists. During the interviews when discussion of academic support and resources arose, the most common term used was "professors." Though there were some mentions of specific academic offices on campus, such as the writing center, the responses generally referred back to experiences and interactions with professors as a valued support. For example interviewee five said:

My professors are definitely like, um, what helps me the most. A lot of them have become my mentors and have helped me, um, like network and get crazy, like, incredible opportunities for like my music career. So, um, yeah, I didn't mean like, in general, they're just like good people to talk to and to have in my life besides from like academic stuff. I feel like a professor to have a good connection with that like changes your whole experience, um, as, as like a transfer student, cause I feel like it's a little bit different than being like a regular incoming student or, you know, having, or having started at Northeast University from a freshman and just been there all the time.

A similar perspective was shared by non-transfer students. Interviewee six stated:

Okay, so these are maybe like nontraditional resources, but I would say like the professors are incredible. I think I had really great relationships with my professors and I think they were more of a resource to me than almost any like of, I guess like the true set of resources that I would think of. Um, I just think that there are people that were in the industry and if you like every single professor that I've had, like an MSP wanted to chat,

wanting to learn more about me, like wanting to see me succeed. Um, and I think for that, I'm like forever grateful.

The interviews and students' responses suggest that they place greater emphasis on relationships, particularly with faculty, as a source of academic support rather than services or offices. This also highlights that students, especially transfers, may be better aided academically through interpersonal connections and interactions instead of broad direction to programming or services.

Nonacademic Themes

Career Focus and Values

A concept which was consistently mentioned across all interviews with students was careers. Students continually referenced their involvement with professional development opportunities at the institution. They also mentioned holding jobs or internships (sometimes both) while balancing their academic and personal responsibilities. Though taking on these additional commitments could have potential negative impacts, the students actually felt strongly that they were positive. Students indicated that they enjoyed holding jobs and internships. Additionally, they liked that the college placed an emphasis on professional development and careers. This allowed the students to get experience while still in school. Students seem to greatly value being able to get practical experience. This is evidenced in their interview responses as well as the quantitative analysis. For instance, interviewee seven stated:

I really liked about Northeast University is that it was like the experience that was available to me outside of the classroom. Um, which is something that I really don't find a lot of other places. I feel like Northeast University was really good at helping me get set up for a career, which was really my goal. Like I'm not, I'm not like a research major or anything, so I wasn't really planning on doing anything academic, um, and with journalism, like I really needed that hands on experience.

Likewise, interviewee eight said:

I've enjoyed it. Especially like getting work experience. I feel like, uh, Communications college like getting work experience and just like actual hands on working and doing activities like you would do in the field. Like that's been really good and that like makes me feel like productive and like I'm actually working towards something that's tangible. Um, also connecting with like outside resources. I think Communication is like a really good job with, um, I went to go see like the talk show show and that was really fun. And I got do that through Communications for free. We went to New York and things like that and like having, um, I remember my first year I saw the host and that was a highlight of my life. She signed my book and told me I should write a book. So things like that. It's like really cool. And I think connecting like with bigger names and like real people in the industry, like it kind of like, I think Communications does a good job of like making your future seem like a reality and not just like something like very distance.

Extracurricular Activities

In the quantitative analysis, it was found that hours participated in clubs and school activities contributed to students' being less satisfied. The interviews provided further insight into why this may be the case for students. Involvement in professionally related activities such as jobs, internships or networking events were not only positively described but frequently mentioned as well. However, when it came to clubs students were less enthusiastic. During the interviews there was a mixed response in view of club participation. It appears that some students see it as an opportunity while other students see it as a burden or added pressure on top of other responsibilities. Interestingly, these varied perspectives can be seen in the difference of responses between transfer students and non-transfer students. Interviewee nine voiced her frustration with clubs being the primary suggested outlet for meeting peers and the expectation of balancing a club on top of other obligations. She stated:

I think if we had more open dialogues and more spaces where students have similar backgrounds or students have, and not just a club. I'm not

talking about, I have to go join the club, because I tried that. I'm a black student, but I come from a suburban neighborhood. And so I didn't really have a lot of black friends. And it's like the opposite experience. And a lot of the, what comes to my mind, me, I'm not their cup of tea. So I think if we had more conversations with other students, information would spread faster, but there's no place on campus besides a couple of classrooms. Or instead of just like, Oh you have to be in a club in order to interact with your peers. That's not fair because not everyone's a club person and not everyone can go to their meetings and everyone has restricted schedules and there was a lot of activities that honestly, real life hit. And so I couldn't go to not because I didn't want to, but because that's not a part of like my cards.

Meanwhile interviewee ten discussed shifting her mindset and viewing clubs as an opportunity. She said:

So my freshman year I was very reluctant in joining a lot of, um, clubs because I was just, I was like, all right, my mindset was, I'm going to get good grades. I'm going to go to classes and that's what I'm going to do. And going to be a good student because I have always been a good student. But then, um, I think opportunities really started opening, meaning for me my sophomore year, when I changed my mindset and I was like, Oh, wait, Northeast University is really not that bad, it has, so many opportunities. I just, wasn't looking for them and my heart wasn't open to actually accept them and stuff like that. So yeah. And ever since sophomore year, I feel like I've been really, um, I've been finding out what my passions are more and I am, I would say that I'm pretty involved.

Campus Perspectives

Throughout the interviews, both transfer and non-transfer students shared their perspectives about experiences with campus. However, there were noticeable differences in the phrases transfer students and non-transfers used to describe their attitudes towards campus. This was reinforced by the quantitative analysis which highlighted that transfer students were more apt than non-transfer students to be less satisfied with campus atmosphere. This may be due to the differences between the two groups in what they value about campus. Aspects of campus which may have impacted transfer students' outlook mentioned during interviews were the institutions' campus culture, urban

location, and diverse population. Interviewee eleven reflected primarily on the culture, stating

I felt when I, as soon as I stepped on the campus down there in center city, um, I felt like I belong to something, something very special. And that's the truth. Uh, I know it's kind of cliché when people say that. Um, and, and, uh, just really the reputation for strong academics and it, it, uh, it, you, you can really see it. There's a lot of pride at Northeast University.

Meanwhile interviewee twelve focused on the diversity on campus compared to his previous experience:

You know, one thing, the two schools I went to a Massachusetts were largely very white. You know, at least the, um, the four year school I went to, but you know, City Community College is very diverse. Northeast University's very, very diverse. I don't think I ever once had a minority professor in the two schools I went to at Massachusetts, but I've had all kinds of professors at City Community College and Northeast University, Black, Asian, you name it. So it's been, you know, a very great experience, you know, going through the two schools in the city.

In comparison, non-transfer students' responses about campus typically focused on the look and feel of campus as well as it's accessibility to other parts of the city or suburbs. They used similar phrases for campus about enjoying the campus green space and frequently said that they "fell in love with it." They also reiterated their desire to go to a city school.

Transfer Social Network

Students' views on opportunities for social activity were assessed within the survey. Quantitative analysis showed that transfer students were much more apt to be less satisfied with social opportunities than non-transfer students. Additionally, during the interviews, transfer students were the ones who particularly emphasized their views and interest towards the social environment at the institution. Transfer students indicated that they understood that formation of new relationships and connections was a side effect of

the transfer process. However they felt it was necessary and appeared to view transfer as a chance to start over and build a new social network. The social changes associated with transfer were viewed as a clean state instead of a worry. Developing a new social network was seen as a welcome opportunity rather than a challenge. For example interviewee thirteen stated:

Being at Northeast University is like literally a dream. Cause it's like, if I want to know people, I can go somewhere and feel like I know people, but if I also want to feel like, I don't know anybody, like, there's like so many places to go and it's just like me and I can start all new first impressions all over again.

Similarly, interviewee fourteen, an out of state student said:

I have a different perspective coming, not from Mid-Atlantic state and not from like one of the community college around or just being out of state. And even though it's New York, like, it was like a lot of people, new people. Like I knew nobody, so that was just a, a clean slate. I actually like made a best friend with someone who lived on the floor I lived on by accident. I didn't know, like we had a project together and then we lived together for the next three years.

Though the interviews suggested that transfer students were open and interested in development of a social network, the quantitative analysis showed that they were less satisfied with social opportunities. Transfer students may hold a positive view and desire for social interaction, however when it comes to the availability at the institution to find opportunities to engage they may be frustrated. Their dissatisfaction may be tied to a negative view of the chances or exposure to social interactions they are given. They may be unhappy and frustrated with finding opportunity to engage socially. Their frustrations with social opportunities may be connected to their view of club involvement, as transfer

students felt that they were pressured to join clubs and wanted other ways to meet people than the responsibility of participating in a club.

While the themes related to students' satisfaction with academic and nonacademic components at the institution primarily connected to the quantitative analysis, there additional themes which arose during the interviews. These themes were: students' definition of success, students' strategies for success, and accessible information.

Additional Themes

Students' Definition of Success

Throughout the interviews, each student was asked how they would define success as a college student. Interestingly, there were clear differences between transfer and non-transfer students in the language used to define success. Transfer students used language that emphasized determination, goal orientation, focus on the task, and just getting through. Meanwhile non-transfers language related more towards being happy, learning, developing a work-life balance, and contributing to community. For interviewee eleven stated:

I think success comes from what we just talked about a little bit and it's pushing you out of your comfort zone a little bit. Um, I mean, look at me. I mean, I, I didn't have any, no one in my family had ever gone to college before I started. Um, and I think when you look at like the academics of it, it could be intimidating to a lot of people. And I think the best advice that I ever got was just do it. Just, just do it, get it done. And I think because I procrastinate, if I'm, if I'm not sure about something like a long paper or maybe a project, something similar to what you're doing, if it's big and it's like, I don't know how to approach it. I might put it off for a little bit. And I think what, what success at this level is, is I think doing the best you can soaking in a lot of what these professors are teaching you and you gotta take risks.

Alternatively, interviewee sixteen said they defined success as:

I think like knowing your own like worth work ethic and like developing your own work ethic and your like work life balance, you know, even though now it's like, not necessarily like holding down a job. I mean, for me it is, um, but being able to like, do your schoolwork or like have a job, like maintain, I have my own place, like maintain a household and like developing those skills and like also, still be being able to like have a social life and like go to concerts and like do the things that I enjoy.

Students' Strategies for Success

Another reoccurring theme was students' strategies for success. In the interviews both transfer and non-transfer students provided their suggestions for what they believe it takes to be successful in college. Students' responses went in two general directions either practical or conceptual. The practical strategies involved items like attending office hours, writing proper emails, meeting people face to face, and going to offices. The conceptual strategies were the most heavily suggested however. They pertained to students' mindsets such as "be open minded", "step out of your comfort zone", or be "resilient." For instance, interviewee seventeen said:

Um, I think like kind of like resilience, um, because it's, I feel like when you come as a transfer, like a lot of there's so many, so like, you know, they always talk about like how difficult it is to transition, um, you know, from high school to freshmen in college. And that is so true, but like having to kind of do that twice, if not more times, um, by like having to come in to like a brand new school so many times, um, like you have to have this sort of like resilience and like also this drive to like succeed in wherever you're at and kind of just make the best of whatever you have there. So I feel like that's like really important to succeed as like a transfer student.

This was also evidenced in non-transfer students' responses. Interviewee eighteen focused on the concept of self-advocacy as a strategy for success. She stated:

I would have to say like a hundred percent, like if you don't have that almost self-advocate sort of attitude, um, it is like very easy to, I feel like almost like get swept under the rug or like, not know where to go. Um, and I saw that like with like a lot of my friends and like with my freshmen and like, they would come to me like with all these questions and I'd be like, I know I keep going back to the career center, but I'd be, they'd be

like, Oh, can you like help me check my resume or like something? And I'd be like, okay, like, absolutely I can like also just like know, like we have a career center and they'd be like, Oh my gosh, like what? And I think like freshmen, I mean, they're new. So they are just like learning everything. Um, but even some of like my friends, like later on, um, I think there's like a lot of Northeast University resources that are like underutilized, whether it's we have like tutoring services, whether it's, um, I know like more recently, like we have like a whole, um, like office dedicated to like entrepreneurship and they'll like, I think like, literally coach you, like on your business ideas and stuff. And like, that was something that like, not a lot of people know about that, but I think I was also like a very firm, um, like have for people, I was like, guys, like, you have to be your own advocate. And I think too, like, make your tuition dollars, like worth it. Like you do have like access to whether it's like events, whether it's different offices on campus, like you have like a leadership development office. We have like the ideal office, like things like that, like go to those events, like get on those lists or make things happen for yourself. And again, I think in a lot of ways like that does, I think require like certain that's not as easy for certain types of people as it is for some.

Accessing Information

An additional theme which unexpectedly came up during interviews was accessing information. The majority of students, both transfer and non-transfer, mentioned in their interviews that they felt there was a lack of clear information from either the university or the school. The students' explained that in addition to not receiving the information they needed, they then didn't know where to find it. This involved students' having to do their own research in order to access the information sought. For instance interviewee nineteen stated:

I feel like I had to seek out a lot of information after I got in, because on a whole before I actually decided to go to Northeast University, I feel like they were like, look at all these things we have, like, we can do all of this for you. And then once you're there, it's kind of like, you're on your own. Um, but it was more, just a matter of me figuring that out for myself.

Throughout the interviews, students' consistently expressed confusion, frustration, and stress around this. Contributing to these emotions was the worry that even when they

found information related to their needs, there was lack of reassurance about whether it was correct. Interviewee three explained:

It's like something I'm worried about for myself as like, what if I get to senior year? And I think I'm about to graduate and I'm going to take that class for my last semester, but then it turns out, you know, I need to actually take two more prerequisites to get to that class. So it throws off my whole, you know, I think it's easy to get, it can be confusing and can be easy to get, like just, just lost and that if you're not super informed about it.

As discussion of the problem with accessing information continued, it became clear that students' primarily felt that they could rely on friends rather than administration for guidance and support. For example interviewee 13 said:

I did have, my friend helped me, but had I not had a friend that could help me figure it all out and maybe having someone who knows what they're doing help you would be beneficial for people. Cause I feel like if I didn't have my friend, I kind of would have been in the same spot I was in. Like in the dark despite like how much Communications tries to keep you in the loop and stuff like that.

Students' view that their peers were crucial sources for accessing information suggests that there may be disconnect between students and administration. Student's place more value upon the guidance of their peers than the university or school itself. This may be due to student's being unclear about where or whom to go for information or support. An alternative reason may be that students' share a similar perspective towards this like the one they shared on advising, the information given by administration is depersonalized, generalized, and inconsistent. Ultimately, this causes students to view administration as unhelpful or invaluable.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the findings of this study. The mixed methods approach to the study allowed for both exploration of the relationship between student success and engagement as well as insight into the transfer student perspective with this particular college and the institution itself. The quantitative data provided information on the students' demographics and educational backgrounds. It also gave context where students engaged at the institution as well as how this correlated with their academic or university satisfaction. This data indicated that transfer students were primarily men, Mid-Atlantic state residents, older, and had lower GPAs than non-transferers. Additionally when it came both to university climate satisfaction and academic satisfaction they were less or not satisfied. Transfer students' dissatisfaction with university climate, in terms of campus atmosphere and social opportunities were much more significant. However they were still likely to be less satisfied with aspects related to their academic satisfaction such as advising, academic progress, and academic support services. Other elements which impacted satisfaction were hours worked at a job, hours playing video games, semesters spent at Northeast University, and participation with clubs.

The qualitative data then provided a means for deeper examination into these findings. It allowed for exploration into the students interactions and engagement at the institution. This ultimately highlighted several themes, both academically and non-academically related, amongst the students which connected back to the survey findings. While the themes at first review seem to highlight information about transfer students that reaffirms some of our expectations about transfer students' at the four-year institution, the qualitative analysis allowed for the nuances of the transfer student

perspective and experiences to be identified. For example, transfer students were found more likely to be less satisfied with campus atmosphere and social opportunities. The interviews identified what may have influenced this likelihood. Transfer students' explained that they were drawn to the diversity and urban location of the campus. Similarly, the interviews showed that transfer students' expressed positively their desire to socialize because the ability to start over and make new connections appealed to them. However, the interest to socialize may not have not have matched with the availability or opportunity to socialize provided by the institution. Finally, the interviews also provided an opportunity for students' to share their understanding, perceptions, and experiences in their own words. This ultimately emphasized additional themes not apparent in quantitative findings such as how the students defined and strategized for success as well as accessed necessary information as a college student. These themes highlight unexpected findings that the interviews and qualitative analysis brought out. For instance, though differences in transfer and non-transfer students' definitions of success were expected, analysis of the interviews showed clear differences in not just their definitions, but the language used by the students. Transfer students used much more assertive and aggressive language in the way they discussed their definition of success. Meanwhile, non-transfer students used much more passive and relaxed language in their discussion. The qualitative portion of this study provided the opportunity for refinement of the distinctions between transfer students and non-transfer students as well as exploration of unanticipated findings which provide further insight into the perspective of transfer students.

Overall the quantitative and qualitative data together helped to form a more complete picture of the transfer student experience at the college and university. This in turn enables further discussion into understanding transfer students' success, implications for policy and practices, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Retention and graduation rates are a problem in higher education. Research done to explain the ongoing issue of retention and graduation rates has focused on several factors. Student success, engagement, decision making, and perceptions are key areas which have been identified in the literature when exploring what impacts students' retention and graduation (e.g Bound, Levenheim & Turner, 2010; Oseguera & Rhee, 2009). The findings in these areas typically have primarily focused on traditional college students. One such group lacking research in these areas is transfer students. One third of all college students' transfer at least once in five years. Yet transfer students have even lower retention and graduation rates than traditional college students (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). The majority of literature examines external factors that serve as barriers to transfer students and impact retention and graduation (e.g. Gard & Gosselin, 2012; Glass & Harrigan, 2002). There is a need for further exploration into internal factors by looking at transfer students' perceptions. The purpose of this study was to understand how transfer students make meaning of success by exploring their experiences, engagement and satisfaction.

Previous research done to understand issues of retention and graduation for college students has focused on students' success, perceptions and decision making. Most of the literature on this area attempts to explore factors which impact student success in relation to two general classifications: students' academic achievement or satisfaction with their experience. (Strauss & Volkwein, 2002). These studies have found aspects

related to both classifications that have impacted success. These aspects were connected to personal and financial elements as well as coursework, learning, institutional, and student support barriers (Wirth & Padilla, 2008). In a similar context, research has been conducted to attempt construction of students' definitions of success. These studies identified certain consistent themes and noncognitive variables connected to how students viewed success such as grades, institutional environment, social integration, motivation, time management, love of learning, etc. (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). Also connected to evaluating students' understanding of success is the research on students' perceptions that are formulated and influence their experiences at the institution. Research found that students' perceptions of themselves, academics, learning environment, and social factors shaped their experiences and behavior (Mattern & Shaw, 2012). Overall, the majority of literature on student success has focused on traditional student populations rather than diverse groups. In particular, research on transfer student success is mainly centers upon assessment of factors which have impacted the students' transition processes rather than examining their perceptions and experiences.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted at a public, urban, research university located in the northeast of the United States. It included undergraduate population of the College of Communication. A survey, based on the National Survey of College Graduates (2017) conducted for the National Science Foundation by the US Census Bureau, was designed to collect data on the students' demographic and educational backgrounds. The survey was sent through email in March, April and again in May given the situation with COVID-19. The total response rate for the survey was 17.73% or 439 responses. The

survey also asked students to indicate whether they would volunteer to be contacted for an interview. Out of the survey respondents, 116 provided contact information for an interview. Students were contacted via email in July and August for interviews. A total of 19 students were interviewed. Of those interviewed, seven individuals were non-transfer, three were internal transfers, and nine were external transfer students. The interview questions focused on asking students to expand upon their survey responses. They were also asked to reflect upon their educational journey, engagement at the institution, perceptions of success, as well as their satisfaction with the university.

Summary of Findings

This study found that within the College of Communication, transfer students were more likely to be men, white, and Mid-Atlantic state residents. Additionally, the majority of transfer students had previously attended a community college versus a four-year institution. The reasons most often cited for doing so were reducing the cost of college, preparing for college and increasing the likelihood of acceptance to a four-year institution. In terms of university climate satisfaction, transfer students were particularly less satisfied with social opportunities and campus atmosphere. This was supported by interviews that highlighted transfer students' indication of interest and motivation to meet new people as well as form connections versus their view of the availability to do so. This is also reinforced in the differences between transfer students and non-transfer students' perspective on and evaluation of campus. Additionally, when it came to academic satisfaction, transfer students were found to be less satisfied with advising, academic support services, and their academic progress as well. During interviews transfer students referenced frustrations with personal advising interactions, transfer of

credits, as well as the differences in academics and course expectations from the previous institution to this one. However when looking at a scale of student's satisfaction at the institution overall, satisfaction increased by being a transfer student, hours spent working at a job, number of semesters attended, and hours playing video games. Satisfaction decreased with hours spent involved with a club. This was reinforced by student's mention in interviews of enjoying the professional development focus and career opportunities at the college as well as being overwhelmed by the pressure to participate in various clubs. Additional findings that arose from the study interviews are themes for students' definitions of and strategies for success-the key differences between transfer and non-transfer students. Another theme is "accessing information." All students, with transfers in particular, expressed concerns and frustrations with how information was made available and could be accessed by students.

The findings from this study can be connected to the principles of symbolic interactionism theory. The academic and nonacademic themes highlighted in analysis identify the symbols and meanings which have impacted transfer students' behavior and experiences at the institution. For example, the drive behind students' major change theme showed that students created their own subjective meaning for "fit" within a major. The meaning of "fit" varied from students' interests to their view of a school's culture or administration. The meaning the student imposed on their "fit" ultimately influenced their interactions with the major and led to the behavior of changing majors. Symbolic interactionism also became evident in themes which connected to students' interactions with administration and faculty. One theme was the depersonalization of academic advising and students' frustration with their experience there. The students' interpreted

the behavior of the advisors and from this created their own definition of the situation there. In this case, the students' interpretation of the social bond was that there wasn't one or it was lacking. This led to students viewing academic advising as unhelpful and leaving dissatisfied. Alternatively, another theme from the data was students' preference for personal relationships over academic offices as a resource. Here students expressed that their interactions with faculty as well as interpretation of faculty behavior towards them was considered both positive and valuable. Another element of symbolic interactionism which the themes relate to is how transfer students perceive themselves and ultimately their presentation of this self-concept at the four year institution. In terms of how transfer students view themselves, they were less satisfied with their academic progress and had a smaller number of GPAs in the 3.5-4.0 range. Meanwhile, transfer students expressed that they placed great importance on their involvement with professional development opportunities at the college and institution. Additionally, the students' satisfaction increased with the number of hours worked at job. Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative findings can be further examined through the framework of symbolic interactionism theory. Doing so provides a deeper explanation into transfer students' construction and perception of their experience at the four year institution, with an understanding towards what shapes their success.

Implications

While, on the whole the students both transfer and not, were generally satisfied with their college experience, improvements can always be made. The findings from this study highlight several key areas where practice may be improved in order to better

support transfer students. These areas are academic advising, administrative practices and policy, enrollment management, support services, and student programming.

Academic Advising

In this study, transfer students were more apt to be less satisfied with advising than non-transfer students. The students' consistently expressed frustrations with advising during the interviews. The experiences they shared with advising indicated lack of consistency with information and receipt of advice or suggestions that were not useful to their situation as they frequently were directed to meet with various advisors each time they needed assistance. The students also felt undervalued given the impersonal nature of their interactions and transition between members of the advising staff. Therefore administrators at the college should consider making changes to the advising practices and processes. A recommendation would be to assign each advisor a specific caseload of students to oversee. The goal behind this is to have particular individuals that transfer students can seek out for questions related to the transfer process, credits, registration, etc. This would also provide a greater consistency of responses and information given to students. Another recommendation would be to have required transfer check-ins with advising. The check-ins would be offered as an opportunity for transfer students to meet with advising beyond the general appointment availability for all students.

The purpose behind these once a semester meetings would be to specifically go over upcoming registration, review student's graduation progress, and answer any questions. This would allow advising to monitor the coursework requirements and progress for transfer students as well as reemphasize points addressed at orientation. They may even highlight other resources available to students' based upon topics of

discussion during these meetings. Finally, the check-ins would also address students' feeling of depersonalized advising by giving advisors the opportunity to become more familiar with the students and their individual situations. This would support student engagement in the university, a key variable for student success.

Support Services and Student Programming

In addition to advising, transfer students' were also more apt to be less satisfied with academic support services and their academic progress. They were also less apt to be in the 3.6-4.0 GPA range than non-transfer students. Transferring from one institution to another is difficult as the student needs to address new academic expectations. This is not an easy process. This highlights that student programming and support services are important areas to consider for supporting transfer students academically. One recommendation would be for the college to reconsider how orientation is run. Instead of requiring students to select and attend one orientation day, orientation sessions could be broken into three sessions. The first session would serve to cover curriculum questions, course requirements, registration, and other administrative processes. The "other" administrative processes applicable to transfer students would be aspects such as course equivalency evaluations, transfer credits, transcripts, etc. It would also cover specific institutional technology structures like the learning management system, student portal, and so on.

The second session would cover support services available to students: what they are, what they offer, and where they are located. This would include taking students to these offices on campus. The third session would address the change in academic expectations. This would familiarize transfer students with the potential differences in

coursework, assignments, class structure and style. The purpose of restructuring orientation would be to address the current negative views held by transfer students on not just advising, but academic support services and their academic progress. This change would help to address this by providing separate occasions for transfer students to get both assistance and information useful to their academic experience. The reason for suggestion of three sessions was to not overwhelm the students and allow them to focus on specific topics.

Also related to programming was the finding that transfer students were apt to be less satisfied with social opportunities and campus atmosphere. Similarly, they were less satisfied the more hours they spent involved with clubs. A recommendation for the college is to offer more social events for current students connected to their majors as opposed to similar events held for prospective students. The purpose would be for current transfer students to meet other students in their major (either transfer or non-transfer). This would foster transfer students' positive outlook on forming new connections and participating in social opportunities. At the same time, it would also give students a chance to interact with those in their major or minor on campus outside of a club or classroom. This would put less pressure on transfer students to join or invest a great deal of their time in clubs-an aspect which impacts their overall satisfaction. It also provides another source of information for transfer students as they adjust to their new environment.

An additional recommendation would be for the college to continue to develop and expand their opportunities related to professional development, job/internship fairs, networking, and career workshops. Not only did students' satisfaction increase with their

hours worked at a job in this study, but it is evident across all interviews that they highly valued the college's focus on obtaining practical experience while an undergraduate. Students' repeatedly expressed that hands on work was on important to them. Additionally, they were appreciative of the college's support in finding these opportunities as well as the guidance on navigating them through the fairs, events and workshops.

Administrative Practices and Policy

Interestingly, one of the unexpected yet prominent themes which arose from the interviews in this study centered upon students' access to information. Students, particularly transfer students, repeatedly referenced situations or experiences where they felt they were not given sufficient information. Additionally, it was unclear where to obtain the necessary information. It was also continually unclear whether any information eventually located was actually correct. This resulted in continued stress and frustration for students with the college and institution. Due to this, students primarily felt that it was up to them to figure out and find the information needed. This ultimately led to students reflecting that beyond reliance upon themselves, their next best resources for help and guidance were their peers.

The implications from this is that there is a clear disconnect or issue with how information is disseminated from administration to students. The result of this disconnect is that students are driven to answer their own questions or depend on peers rather than administrative offices or staff. This situation leads to the potential spread of misinformation and increases the likelihood of student issues down the road. This issue is particularly significant to consider in relation to transfer students. Transfer students are

already at a disadvantage in that their transition requires learning a new system which takes time. Lack of accessible information may increase the difficulty of navigating the system and could ultimately impact their success overall.

A recommendation for administration to address this issue would be for the college to begin with a self-examination of how information is dispersed to transfer students. This could be done through a committee or possibly through a survey of transfer students. The goal would be for the college to initially understand what information transfer students receive and how they receive it (email, etc.). Within this review, the college should also assess where transfer students' go to find information and what websites or tools they use. Based upon this information, follow up for the college administration would be to consider how they could improve the transfer experience with accessing pivotal information. This would involve reviewing the language and terms at the college as well as institution. The purpose would be to ascertain what transfer students are expected to know.

The resulting information acquired from this review, could then be applied to administrative practices at the college. One recommendation would be for the college to create a guidebook for transfer students, which could be provided via the mail prior to the semester start and again at the beginning of the semester. The guidebook would serve to give transfer students a breakdown of their next steps, key resources (names, addresses, contact information), and a campus map. The reason behind the guidebook would be to familiarize transfer students with information ahead of time rather than have them scramble to locate information later on. Another recommendation would be the development of a student peer mentor/mentee program. This program would involve

having both current non-transfer and transfer students volunteer to be mentors for incoming transfer students. The program would be structured so that first semester transfer students are paired with current transfer students. Then for their second semester at Northeast University, new transfer student would be paired with non-transfer students. The goal of this peer mentorship program would be to help with the transition process for transfer students. The intention would be to provide incoming transfer students with a peer who could assist them with location of information-whether it be campus directions, available resources, etc. Additionally, the program would also support increased social interactions amongst students within the same college, as currently this aspect was found in the study to have contributed to transfer students' dissatisfaction. Finally, the program would allow the new transfers to connect with someone with a similar experience. The switch to transfer to non-transfer mentorship for the second semester is to not limit exposure to only be amongst transfer students. Non-transfer students' have additional perspective and experiences which may be helpful to transfer students, given that they have had a longer time to acclimate and understand the institution. Overall, these recommendations would be employed to address and prevent future problems with accessible information for transfer students. The expectation would be that these changes could support transfer students' experience and improve their satisfaction with the college as well as the institution.

Enrollment Management

This study found that transfer students within the college were predominantly in-state residents versus out-of-state and most had previously attended community college rather than another four-year university. From an enrollment management perspective

this information is important to the college. This implies that the college should focus their recruitment efforts on in-state students and community colleges. Additionally, transfer students' explained in the interviews that community college was primarily chosen in order to reduce the cost of college and prepare for college. Therefore the college should market and recruit at community colleges in order to emphasize the lower tuition costs associated with state residency.

Another area that the college should underscore for recruitment purposes is their focus on professional development, job/internship fairs, networking and career workshops. As referenced, students' satisfaction increased with the amount of hours they worked at a job. Additionally, a theme within the interviews were the reoccurring references to as well as positive connotation around the professional knowledge, skills and opportunity emphasized. The college should continue to market this aspect of both the curriculum and culture as it is evidently highly valued and used by their current students.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted at one college within one large northeast coast University. Given that the study was held at one college, the college of communication, participants were limited to the students within the majors there. Therefore the participants are all communication majors, are a certain type of student, fairly typical and middle of the road. Another limitation to the study is the number of participants. The undergraduate population at the college was 2475 students and the total response rate for the survey was 17.73% or 439 responses. Similarly, of the 123 respondents who provided permission to be interviewed, only 19 responded and took part in an interview. Both the

survey responses and interview responses may be a result of self-selection bias as the students were contacted via email to volunteer to complete the survey as well as provide their contact information for an interview. This contact took place during the initial months of COVID. COVID and the transition to online courses placed the students in an unnatural setting. There is no way to assess this effect. However, respondents for the survey and interview were generally at the ends of the distribution. Therefore the distribution is not skewed.

Recommendations for Future Research

From the groundwork done by this study, future research should focus on expanding beyond the traditional definition of “transfer.” There should be exploration into the nuances of transfer in higher education today as they are more complex than may be realized. One instance of this are dual enrollment programs where students take college level courses on community college campuses during their junior and senior year of college. If these students ultimately attend a four year institution, they are transferring in previous college credit, academic and campus experiences.

Similarly, another type of “transfer” to further consider are internal transfers or those who change majors and move from one college/school to another within the larger four year institution. Additional research should emphasize how to identify these students as separate groups instead of their continuing to be merged into the non-transfer versus transfer categories. It should also delve deeper into exploring the relationship between their success and engagement by examining their experiences. Doing so would allow for consideration into the similarities and differences between the types of “transfer” student.

This information could ultimately impact policy and practice in terms of how these students are supported.

Another potential area for study would be to include the detailed academic history of the various types of transfer students and then connecting these data to students' engagement and success. This would involve examining academic history in terms of aspects such as credits transferred in, course equivalency, number of courses dropped, credit load, academic standing, leave of absences, holds, etc. This information when combined with additional interviews would provide greater insight into transfer students' academic engagement at the institution and in conjunction better understand their academic satisfaction.

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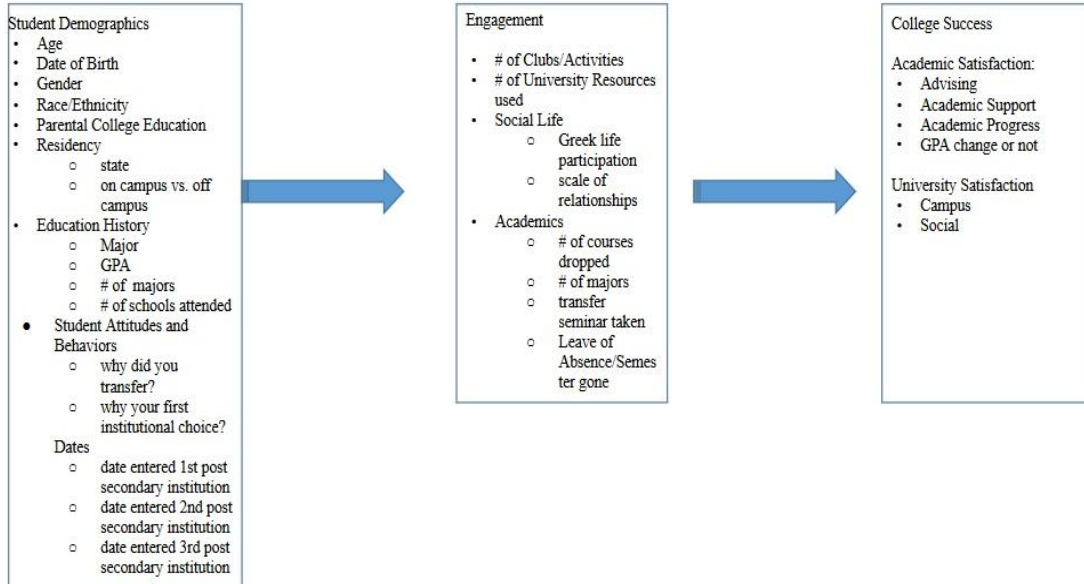
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APPENDIX A

CONCEPTUAL PROJECT MODEL

Project Model



APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Student Experiences Survey

In order to understand better student experiences so that needed programs and supports can be developed and implemented, we are asking you to share your experiences and thoughts with us. Every response will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, you can contact Kaitlin Fitzsimmons-Pierce, tuf81291@temple.edu) for further information. We know that you are busy at this time, but rest assured this will not take long and it will help us. Thank you!

1. In what year were you born?

2. Gender: Please check one.

- Male
- Female
- Other

3. Are you a Mid-Atlantic state resident?

- Yes
- No

4. Please indicate which racial/ethnic category you identify with. Check One.

- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- White
- Other

5. Please specify "other":

6. What year and semester did you first enroll at Northeast University?

7. In what year did you graduate from high school?

8. What changes have you made during your college experience? Please check one.

- I started at Northeast University and have stayed in the same major
- I started at Northeast University, but have changed my major
- I started at another 4 year institution in the same major I am now
- I started at another 4 year institution and in a different major
- I earned an associate degree in the same major
- I earned an associate degree in a different major
- I attended a community college but did not earn a degree. I just entered a four year institution
- I attended a community college but did not earn a degree. I just enrolled at Northeast University.

9. Thinking back to the time before you came to Northeast University, please check all of the reasons listed below for why you took classes at a community college. Check all that apply.

- To earn credits while in high school
- To complete an associate degree
- To prepare for college
- To increase the change of acceptance at a 4 year college
- To reduce the cost of a 4 year college degree
- To gain skills of knowledge in an academic or occupational field
- For leisure of personal interest
- Other

10. What is the most important reason of those listed just above?

11. What is the second most important reason?

12. What was your first major?

13. What is your current major?

14. If you changed your major, please indicate why. Check all that apply.

- I found something more interesting
- The required classes were too hard
- I changed schools and my former major was not offered in the new school
- I changed schools and my new major was not offered in my former school
- Other. Please Explain.

15. Please explain the change in major.

16. In a normal week, how often do you do the following?

	Never	1-5 hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	More than 15 hours
Work at a paying job	1	2	3	4	5
Participate in Greek activities	1	2	3	4	5
Participate in a club or other school activity	1	2	3	4	5
Play video games	1	2	3	4	5
Socialize with school friends	1	2	3	4	5

17. Please evaluate the following items with respect to your Northeast University experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
How satisfied are you with the campus atmosphere?	1	2	3	4
How satisfied are you with the academic support services?	1	2	3	4
How satisfied are you with advising services?	1	2	3	4
How satisfied are you with social activity opportunities?	1	2	3	4
How satisfied are you with your academic progress?	1	2	3	4

18. What is your current GPA?

- 3.6-4.0
- 3.1-3.5
- 2.6-3.0
- 2.1-2.5
- 2.0 or lower

19. We would like to get some additional information in order to improve student services and supports. Would you be willing to let us contact you for a very short interview on campus? Your interview responses would remain anonymous and be greatly appreciated.

- Yes
- No, I am too busy at this time

20. Email address:

APPENDIX C

SURVEY EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Dear Student,

My name is Kaitlin Pierce and I am currently a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at Temple University. I am writing to request your participation in a brief survey that will be used in my research study. My research focuses on understanding undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences at the university.

Your participation is completely voluntary. All of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you are interested in volunteering for a short interview about the topic, you will be given the option to include your name and contact information at the end of the survey. By completing this survey, you agree to be part of the study.

The survey will take about 10 minutes or less to complete. Please click the "start survey" link below to go to the survey.

Start Survey (<https://edtemple.wufoo.com/forms/woh0xki1qxjwj0/>)

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215-204-8560 or at kaitlin.pierce@temple.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Kaitlin Pierce

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Good Afternoon,

I hope you are doing well and having a great summer so far! My name is Kaitlin Pierce, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at Temple. You previously completed a survey (email below as a reference) for my research study on student experiences and indicated “yes” to be contacted for additional information.

I am following up to ask if you would be willing to participate in a short interview for my research study? The purpose of the interview would be to get some further information on your experiences as a student in order to improve student services and supports.

The interview would take about 30 minutes, using either zoom video or zoom phone call. Your interview participation is completely voluntarily and your responses will be kept anonymous.

If you are willing to participate in an interview please let me know. I will send you more details and we can also set up a day and time that would work best for you.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Kaitlin Pierce

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me about your educational journey in college.
2. Why did you choose this college/university?
3. Why did you transfer from your previous institution?
4. What has your experience as a student at this college been like so far?
5. What has your transfer experience been like?
6. How are you feeling about your decisions to transfer?
7. Have you always been at this college?
8. What is your major and did you change majors/schools?
9. What is your definition of success as a college student?
10. In your own words, what does it take to be successful as a transfer student?
11. What is most important to your success?
12. What resources contribute most to your success?
13. What do you feel impacts/has impacted your ability to be successful at this institution/?
14. Can you tell me about some of things you have done in order to be successful in college?
15. What are some hard or difficult choices you've had to make in college or within the transfer process?
16. Is there a story you might tell me about some aspect of your transfer process?
17. What are your plans for Fall?
18. Have your plans changed due to COVID at all? If so, how?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title: Perceptions of Success for Transfer Students

Investigator: Kaitlin Pierce,

344 Annenberg Hall, 2020 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122

Daytime Phone Number: 215-204-8560, 856-701-9795

RESEARCH CONSENT

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- This form sums up that explanation.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to examine how different types of transfer students perceive student success, and how these perceptions may influence their adjustment to the institution. It will also focus on exploring principles and practices of transfer students which are determined by their perceptions of success. It will seek to assess their engagement and ascertain academic and university satisfaction.

About 30 subjects will take part in this research.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that you will be in this research for about 10 to 15 minutes while completing the survey. For those who volunteer to participate in an interview, you will be asked to meet for a 30 to 60 minute interview with the researcher. Collection of the survey data and interview data will take place from March to August 2020.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

Participants will complete a brief 10 to 15 minute survey between March to May 2020. The survey will be the extent of involvement for the majority of participants. Participants will be anonymous. Participants will be given the opportunity to provide their contact information to voluntarily participate in a one on one interview between March to August 2020. The interviews will be held in person and on campus. Participants will be asked for their consent to be audio recorded. If participants do not wish to be recorded written notes will be done. The interview time is expected to last about 30 minutes to 60 minutes if needed. The interview will be done in a conversational style with the researcher asking questions about your time as a student. Participants will be asked questions about

their background, perceptions, and experiences as a transfer student. The interview responses will be used as data for this study.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to meet and interview with the researcher.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no expected risks or discomfort for participating in this research.

Will being in this research benefit me?

There are no compensation for your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. The process may prompt you to think about your college experience. Possible benefits to others include informing institutional practices and programs for undergraduate students, particularly transfer students.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data or specimens collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can remove your data from consideration in the study. Additionally, your decision to participate or to withdraw will be confidential and will not be shared with other participants.

Statement of Consent:

Thank you for consenting to be interviewed and acknowledge that there is a loss of confidentiality in doing so. However, a pseudonym will be assigned to your responses once the interview has been conducted.

Signature of adult subject capable of consent	Date
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Printed name of subject	
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Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
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Printed name of person obtaining consent	
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APPENDIX G

CODEBOOK FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Code	Description	Example
Advising Responses	Reference to frustration and lack of confidence, inconsistencies with information.	“Advising only works. If you have questions for them, they're not going to ask you. They're not going to look. You have to look at where for you to know to get them to help you. It's more of a like, how can I help you situation? Whereas this like, well, aren't useful. Like, I don't know what I need, but I know I need help. So advising is just more of like, they're not, not a guidance, but just like a response.”
Advising Interactions	Receipt of generalized advice inapplicable to individual situations, and not feeling valued/respected.	“Everyone really appreciates having, um, just someone, you know, that they can like an advisor or whatever that they can trust and rely on, not someone who, um, they feel like they're just, you know, they don't have time for the student and they're just kind of sloughing them off. And, you know, if they do have a meeting, they're just rushing them out the door and just giving very general advice. Like, um, I will say like that, that is something that, um, students don't necessarily appreciate, like that doesn't make them feel like valued or, um, make them want to do good or anything.”
Fit and Focus	Student feeling and view that the major was not a “fit” for them which influenced them to change. Factors which influenced a student’s concept of “fit” for a major ranged from a school’s culture and administration to academics and students’ interests or goals.	“And yeah, like Liberal Arts just wasn't, it wasn't a place for me. Um, when I got to Communications, like I started one being more interested, liking my professors and like feeling like I was learning new things. Whereas like in Liberal Arts was like, I wish I had like pulled up my transcript for you or something, but it was just like high school stuff. Like, you know what I mean? It already, you know, I felt like I had gone to college and I wasn't like, like learning anything.”

Understanding of Academic Support	Mention of resources for academics. References to specific academic offices on campus versus experiences and interactions with professors. Students focus on faculty. Greater emphasis on relationships, particularly with faculty, as a source of academic support.	“My professors are definitely like, um, what helps me the most. A lot of them have become my mentors and have helped me, um, like network and get crazy, like, incredible opportunities for like my music career. So, um, yeah, I didn't mean like, in general, they're just like good people to talk to and to have in my life besides from like academic stuff. I feel like a professor to have a good connection with that like changes your whole experience, um, as, as like a transfer student, cause I feel like it's a little bit different than being like a regular incoming student or, you know, having, or having started at Northeast University from a freshman and just been there all the time.”
Professional Development	Reference to involvement with professional development opportunities at the institution and college. Career office and networking usage as well.	“I feel like Northeast University was really good at helping me get set up for a career, which was really my goal. Like I'm not, I'm not like a research major or anything, so I wasn't really planning on doing anything academic, um, and with journalism, like I really needed that.”
Practical Experience	Emphasis on being able to get hands on experience. Mention of holding jobs or internships (sometimes both) while balancing their academic and personal responsibilities.	“I've enjoyed it. Especially like getting work experience. I feel like, uh, Communications college like getting work experience and just like actual hands on working and doing activities like you would do in the field. Like that's been really good and that like makes me feel like productive and like I'm actually working towards something that's tangible.”
Opportunity	Club and activity involvement viewed positively. Seen as occasion and welcomed. Mindset shift towards clubs as an opportunity.	“Oh, wait, Northeast University is really not that bad, it has, so many opportunities. I just, wasn't looking for them and my heart wasn't open to actually accept them and stuff like that. So yeah. And ever since sophomore year, I feel like I've been really, um, I've been finding out what my passions are more and I am, I would say that I'm pretty involved.”
Pressure	Club and activity involvement viewed negatively. Seen as forced and an extra	“That's not fair because not everyone's a club person and not everyone can go to their meetings and everyone has restricted schedules and there was a lot of activities that honestly, real life hit.

	obligation. Not connected to interest.	And so I couldn't go to not because I didn't want to, but because that's not a part of like my cards.”
Campus Composition	Value and understanding of campus. Focus on composition related to diversity, reputation of institution.	“You know, one thing, the two schools I went to a Massachusetts were largely very white. You know, at least the, um, the four year school I went to, but you know, City Community College is very diverse. Northeast University's very, very diverse. I don't think I ever once had a minority professor in the two schools I went to at Massachusetts, but I've had all kinds of professors at City Community College and Northeast University, Black, Asian, you name it. So it's been, you know, a very great experience, you know, going through the two schools in the city.”
Aesthetics	Focus on look and feel of campus. Referenced visit to campus, fell in love, accessibility, inclusion of green space.	“I visited and, um, really fell in love with the campus. Like I love being in the city.” And I was like, fine, I'll go, but I'm not applying. I'm not going there. Um, and then I got in, I visited and I just fell in love with it right away. And I was like, this is the perfect school. Northeast University was just perfect because it's close to the city, but you still have a campus. Um, that campus feel.”
Forming Connections	Discussion of relationships and interest in forming connections. Students viewed transfer as a chance to start over and build a new social network.	“Being at Northeast University is like literally a dream. Cause it's like, if I want to know people, I can go somewhere and feel like I know people, but if I also want to feel like, I don't know anybody, like, there's like so many places to go and it's just like me and I can start all new first impressions all over again.”
Type of Definition	Transfers emphasized determination, goal orientation, focus on the task, and getting through. Non-transfer emphasized being happy, learning, developing a work-life balance, and contributing to community.	“I think success comes from what we just talked about a little bit and it's pushing you out of your comfort zone a little bit” “I mean, for me it is, um, being able to like, do your schoolwork or like have a job, also, still be being able to like have a social life and like go to concerts and like do the things that I enjoy.”

<p>Student Language</p>	<p>The students' word choices and language about how they defined success. Transfers had much more assertive definitions and language. While non transfers seemed much more passive</p>	<p>“Do the things that I enjoy”, “Trying your best and caring”, “The more positive impact you have on people”, “Just to go to bed, feeling proud of yourself”, “I hope to be happy”, “If I can just like be content like that was what, um, that's what I'm aiming for.” “Just do it, get it done”, “You gotta be committed”, “You have to do the work” ,“Setting your goals and then conquering them”, “Looking back and thinking that I didn't waste my time”</p>
<p>Practical versus Conceptual</p>	<p>What students' believe it takes to be successful. Either practical/action based or more conceptual/internally located. Practical strategies: attending office hours, writing emails, meeting face to face. Conceptual strategies pertained to students' mindsets, attitudes, and motivations.</p>	<p>“Um, I think like kind of like resilience, um, because it's, I feel like when you come as a transfer, like a lot of there's so many, so like, you know, they always talk about like how difficult it is to transition, um, you know, from high school to freshmen in college. And that is so true, but like having to kind of do that twice, if not more times, um, by like having to come in to like a brand new school so many times, um, like you have to have this sort of like resilience and like also this drive to like succeed in wherever you're at and kind of just make the best of whatever you have there.”</p>
<p>Receipt of Information</p>	<p>Reference to a lack of clear information from either the university or the school. Expression confusion, frustration, and stress around this. Lack of reassurance about whether information was correct.</p>	<p>“It’s like something I'm worried about for myself as like, what if I get to senior year? And I think I'm about to graduate and I'm going to take that class for my last semester, but then it turns out, you know, I need to actually take two more prerequisites to get to that class. So it throws off my whole, you know, I think it's easy to get, it can be confusing and can be easy to get, like just, just lost and that if you're not super informed about it.”</p>
<p>Information Sourcing</p>	<p>Students' couldn't find information/ felt they had to do their own research. Students' primarily rely on self and friends rather than administration for guidance and support</p>	<p>“I did have, my friend helped me, but had I not had a friend that could help me figure it all out and maybe having someone who knows what they're doing help you would be beneficial for people. Cause I feel like if I didn't have my friend, I kind of would have been in the same spot I was in. Like in the dark despite like how much Communications tries to keep you in the loop and stuff like that.”</p>

APPENDIX H

ADDITIONAL QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS TABLES

Table 4.18

Survey Completion Time Period and Gender

Survey Completion	Female	Male	Total
March-April (Pre)	130 (41.1%)	53 (43.1%)	183 (41.7%)
May (Post)	186 (58.9%)	70 (56.9%)	256 (58.3%)
Total	316 (100%)	123(100%)	439 (100%)

$\chi^2=.139$, $p=ns$

Table 4.19

Survey Completion Time Period and Race/Ethnicity

Survey Completion	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Total
March- April (Pre)	26 (38.8%)	13 (46.4%)	12 (48.0%)	132 (42.9%)	0 (0.0%)	183 (41.7%)
May (Post)	41 (61.2%)	15 (53.6%)	13 (52.0%)	176 (57.1%)	11 (100%)	256 (58.3)
Total	67 (100%)	28 (100%)	25 (100%)	308 (100%)	11 (100%)	439 (100%)

$\chi^2=8.93$, $p=ns$

Table 4.20

Survey Completion Time Period and Residency

Survey Completion	Non Mid-Atlantic State Resident	Mid-Atlantic State Resident	Total
March- April (Pre)	51 (40.8%)	132 (42.0%)	183 (41.7%)
May (Post)	74 (59.2%)	182 (58.0%)	256 (58.3%)
Total	125 (100%)	314 (100%)	439 (100%)

$\chi^2=.056$, $p=ns$

Table 4.21***Survey Completion Time Period and Transfer Status***

Survey Completion	Non-transfer students	Transfer students	Total
March- April (Pre)	133 (43.6%)	50 (37.3%)	183 (41.7%)
May (Post)	172 (56.4%)	84 (62.7%)	256 (58.3%)
Total	305 (100%)	134 (100%)	439 (100%)

$\chi^2=1.51$, $p=ns$

Gender is not related to whether students changed their major or not as we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

Table 4.22***Major Change and Gender***

	Female	Male	Total
No Major Change	217 (68.7%)	84 (68.3%)	301
Changed Major	99 (31.3%)	39 (31.7%)	138
Total	316 (100%)	123 (100%)	439

$\chi^2=.939$, $p=ns$

Race/ethnicity is not related to whether students changed their major or not as we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

Table 4.23***Major Change and Race/Ethnicity***

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Total
No Major Change	50 (74.6%)	18 (64.3%)	16 (64.0%)	208 (67.8%)	8 (72.7%)	300
Changed Major	17 (25.4%)	10 (35.7%)	9 (36.0%)	99 (32.2%)	3 (27.3%)	138
Total	67 (100%)	28 (100%)	25 (100%)	307 (100%)	11 (100%)	438

Transfer status at the university is not related to whether students changed their major or not as we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

Table 4.24

Transfer Status and Major Change

	No Major Change	Changed Major	Total
Non-Transfer Students	212 (69.5%)	93 (30.5%)	305
Transfer Students	89 (66.4%)	45 (33.6%)	134
Total	301 (68.6%)	138 (31.4%)	439

$\chi^2=.521$, $p=ns$

Students' GPA is not related to whether students changed their major or not as we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

Table 4.25

Major Change and GPA

	No Established GPA	2.0 or lower	2.1-2.5	2.6-3.0	3.1-3.5	3.6-4.0	Total
No Major Change	8 (2.7%)	5 (1.7%)	7 (2.3%)	24 (8.0%)	93 (30.9%)	164 (54.5%)	301
Changed Major	1 (.7%)	1 (.7%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (13.0%)	49 (35.5%)	69 (50.0%)	138
Total	9 (2.1%)	6 (1.4%)	7 (1.6%)	42 (9.6%)	142 (32.3%)	233 (53.1%)	439

$\chi^2=.107$, $p=ns$

There is no difference between those students who changed their major and those who did not in how they view their academic progress we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

Table 4.26***Major Change and Academic Progress***

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
No Major Change	32 (10.6%)	269 (89.4%)	301
Changed Major	14 (10.1%)	124 (89.9%)	138
Total	46 (10.5%)	393 (89.5%)	439

$\chi^2=.877$, $p=ns$

There is no difference between those students who changed their major and those who did not change their major in how they view academic advising services we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no relationship. Students, whether they changed their major or not, are satisfied with academic advising.

Table 4.27***Major Change and Advising***

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
No Major Change	94 (31.2%)	207 (68.8%)	301
Changed Major	53 (38.4%)	85 (61.6%)	138
Total	147 (33.5%)	292 (66.5%)	439

$\chi^2=.139$, $p=ns$

Table 4.16 reflects that race/ethnicity was not related to whether a student transferred or not.

Table 4.28***Transfer Status and Race/Ethnicity***

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other	Total
Non-Transfer Students	41 (61.2%)	24 (85.7%)	16 (64.0%)	216 (70.4%)	7 (63.6%)	304
Transfer Students	26 (38.8%)	4 (14.3%)	9 (36.0%)	91 (29.6%)	4 (36.4%)	134
Total	67 (100%)	28 (100%)	25 (100%)	307 (100%)	11 (100%)	438

$\chi^2=.179$, $p=ns$

Although no statistical significance between those students who transferred to Northeast University and those who started as freshmen at Northeast University in how they view their academic progress, transfer students were more apt to find fault with their academic progress.

Table 4.29

Transfer Status and Academic Progress

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Non-Transfer Students	29 (9.5%)	276 (90.5%)	305
Transfer Students	17(12.7%)	117 (87.3%)	134
Total	46 (10.5%)	393 (89.5%)	439

$\chi^2=.317$, $p = ns$

Although no statistical significant between those students who transferred to Northeast University from either a community college or four year institution and those who started as freshmen at Northeast University in how they view their academic progress, community college transfer students were more apt to find fault with their academic progress this is perhaps due to lack of familiarity with academic expectations and practices at four year institutions.

Table 4.30

Where Transferred From and Academic Progress

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Community College Transfer	13 (16.0%)	68 (84.0%)	81
Four Year Transfer	4 (7.5%)	49 (92.5%)	53
Non-Transfer	29 (9.5%)	276 (90.5%)	305
Total	46 (10.5%)	393 (89.5%)	439

$\chi^2=3.47$, $p=.ns$

Although no statistical significance between those students who transferred to Northeast University and those who started as freshmen at Northeast University in how they view advising, transfer students were more apt to find issues with advising. This is supported by student interviews.

Table 4.31

Transfer Status and Academic Advising

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Non-Transfer Students	97 (31.8%)	208 (68.2%)	305
Transfer Students	50 (37.3%)	84 (62.7%)	134
Total	147 (77.0%)	292 (23.0%)	439

$\chi^2=.260$, $p = ns$

Although no statistical significance between those students who transferred to Northeast University and those who started as freshmen at Northeast University in how they view academic support services, transfer students were more apt to find issues with support services. This is perhaps due to challenges with navigating the resources at a new institution, which is likely much larger and complex than their previous institution attended-particularly if they transferred from a community college.

Table 4.32

Transfer Status and Academic Support Services

	Less or Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Non-Transfer Students	65 (21.3%)	240 (78.7%)	305
Transfer Students	36 (26.9%)	98 (73.1%)	134
Total	101 (23.0%)	338 (77.0%)	439

$\chi^2=.203$, $p=ns$