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Los Angeles

Retention of Transfer Students at

Private Religiously Affiliated

Liberal Arts Universities in California

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Arek Horozyan

2017

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Retention of Transfer Students at
Private Religiously Affiliated
Liberal Arts Universities in California

by

Arek Horozyan

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Mark Kevin Eagan, Chair

With the enrollment of community college students at four-year institutions increasing in recent years, this study examined the institutional efforts of three private religiously affiliated universities in California to aid transfer students in their transition to the new college setting. With the critical issue of transfer student retention in mind, the study sought out to find the institutional, personal, and interpersonal elements community college students identified as influential to their transition. Additionally, student affairs officers were asked to provide their

reflections on the individual and institutional factors they deemed were the most salient in the retention of transfer students at their respective campuses.

Data collection was in the form of an online survey provided to all community college transfer students who had entered the university in the fall 2016 semester. Students were sent the survey after the completion of one semester at each of the three institutions studied. The survey was comprised of questions about the various aspects that affect a student's academic and social experiences while in college. Additionally, two student affairs staff at each of the sites were interviewed to learn more about institutional efforts in relation to transfer student programming, on-boarding, and assimilation to the new campus community.

The findings of the study suggest the importance of students' academic and social experiences as they transition to the four-year setting. Transfer students experience culture shock when arriving to the university and events such as new student orientation help them acclimate to the campus culture. Furthermore, survey and interview data showed the importance of academic advisement for smoother transitions, how financial aid exacerbated transfer versus native student disparities, and the influence of on-campus housing on persistence. Lastly, the campus religious context as either a facilitator of or barrier to adjustment was discussed. These findings support the notion that multiple factors are at play when it comes to the retention of transfer students at private religiously affiliated liberal arts universities in California. Various offices within the institution need to work collaboratively to support the needs of transfer students in this transitional period.

The dissertation of Arek Horozyan is approved.

Beverly P. Lynch

Robert A. Rhoads

Cecilia Rios Aguilar

Linda P. Rose

Mark Kevin Eagan, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

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To the institutions and individuals who participated in my study, I appreciate your cooperation and hope the findings from this study will help future transfer students successfully transition to their new institutions.

VITA

Education

- 2008 BS in Biology, Cum Laude
Loyola Marymount University; Los Angeles, CA
- 2012 MA in Counseling
Loyola Marymount University; Los Angeles, CA

Experience

- 2008-2013 Admission Counselor
Loyola Marymount University; Los Angeles, CA
- 2013-2014 Assistant Director of Admission & Transfer Coordinator
Loyola Marymount University; Los Angeles, CA
- 2014-2016 Associate Director of Admission
Pepperdine University; Malibu, CA

Professional Presentations

- 2011 “No Paper Trail, No Files: Chronicling the Journey of an Electronic Document from High School to College”, Western Association for College Admission Counseling Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2013 “Wired In: Utilizing Technology and Media to Enhance the Prospective and Admitted Student Experience with On-Campus Events”, National Association for College Admission Counseling Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada.
- “Seeing is Believing: Planning Successful On-Campus Events for Prospective and Admitted Students”, Western Association for College Admission Counseling Annual Conference, Orange County, CA.
- 2014 “Facilitating CCC Transfer to a California Private”, Western Association for College Admission Counseling Annual Conference, San Jose, CA.
- 2015 “Is Your University Transfer Friendly?”, Western Association for College Admission Counseling Annual Conference, Reno, NV.

Chapter 1

Description of the Problem

Approximately 33% of all college students are transfer students, and of those who transfer, 25% will transfer more than once (Gard, Paton, & Gosselin, 2012; Marling, 2013; Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Nearly half (45%) of all bachelor's degrees are now awarded to students who have transferred from a community college (The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2012); however Cejda, Kaylor, and Rewey (1998) report that community college transfer students experience failure or academic dismissal rates between 18% and 22% at the end of their first semester at a four-year institution. First-year retention rates have consistently been around 50% for the past few decades (Barr, 2007; Hoachlander, Sikora, and Horn, 2003; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, Love, and Russo, 1994). Additionally, this 50% dropout rate does not include the students who are placed on academic probation, who technically are still enrolled but are making minimal progress before being dismissed or dropping out in subsequent semesters (Barr & Scheutz, 2008).

Enrollment of community college students at four-year colleges and universities have increased in recent years (Hossler et al., 2012). Retention rates among transfer student can be influenced by low student financial aid offers, lack of academic preparedness, a student's motivational variables, or the transfer shock that occurs upon their arrival at the new campus (Serban et al., 2008). Transfer students report a need for more awareness of academic requirements, faculty interaction, transfer-centered orientation programs, student activities, and knowledge of campus resources (Laanan, Starobin & Eggleston, 2010).

Despite this shift in the population, many receiving institutions view transfer students as additional sources of revenue but do not invest in resources to support their needs. At most institutions, transfer students are not considered in the campus rankings and are not used in measuring graduation, retention, and institutional success rates (Handel & Strempele, 2016). Due to the lack of inclusion in measures of institutional success, campus resources for transfer students are often hard to find (Handel & Strempele, 2016). The institutions that are committed to supporting successful transfer into their colleges are considered “transfer receptive” or “transfer friendly” institutions. Colleges or universities that fit this characterization aid in the navigation of appropriate community college coursework of students prior to transfer and also support the application, matriculation, and successful completion of a baccalaureate degree in a timely manner (Herrera & Jain, 2013; Jain, Herrera, Bernal, & Solórzano, 2011). Not only must they provide support during the pre-transfer processes, they must also assist students’ post-transfer, ensuring their successful integration in the campus community. There is a strong need for transfer institutions to develop support programs aimed at improving the retention and persistence of transfer students (Laanan, Starobin & Eggleston, 2010). As the number of transfer students from two-year to four-year institutions increase, both the sending and receiving institutions need to collaborate to provide a successful transition (Grites, 2013).

Enrollment trends at private religiously affiliated institutions are no different. Many of these institutions are experiencing an increase in student enrollment, making faith-based institutions one of the fastest growing segments in higher education (Davignon, 2016). Integrating faith and learning into the everyday campus culture is one of the important aspects to faith-based campuses. Students at institutions that are religiously affiliated demonstrate high institutional commitment, especially in schools that have smaller undergraduate student

populations and have more selective admission processes (Astin, 1975; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Tinto, 1987). However, students' differing perspectives and expectations about an institution's religious ethos can affect retention. Some students may prefer the enforcement of religious standards and practices, while others would prefer the freedom of personal exploration (Davignon, 2016).

Over the next 20 years, there will be a great need in the labor force for individuals with high levels of education and experience, as baby boomers will reach the age of retirement (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). Thus, the demand for individuals with a college education is at an all-time high. With 40% of undergraduate students in the United States enrolled at community colleges, and many using community college as a stepping-stone to a four-year institution, it is important to study the factors that lead to degree completion among this population (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015).

Background to the Problem

The four-year university's efforts to help transfer students fit in with the campus culture has been slight in comparison with the efforts to assist freshman students in their transition to college. Freshman receive the bulk of a college's retention efforts through living-learning communities, first-year seminars, and orientation programs that help them assimilate to the campus (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). The university's resources are focused most on freshman. Transfer students tend to be ignored in retention efforts and transfer programming is not nearly as substantive as freshman programming (Berger & Malaney, 2003; Herman & Lewis, 2004; Kuh et al., 2005).

Fit between the specific institution and individual student attributes play an important role in a student's transition, satisfaction, and retention (Bowman & Denson, 2014). Habley and McClanahan (2004) surveyed 1,000 colleges and universities and found that the lack of student institutional fit was the second most influential institutional factor that led to student attrition, with financial aid rated as the primary factor. Transfer students have a complex academic, social, and psychological adjustment process because of the environmental differences between community colleges and four-year institutions (Laanan, 2001). Having an awareness of the expectations of the four-year institution helps transfer students successfully transition and ultimately attain a bachelor's degree (Laanan, 2001).

Effect of Religion and Diversity on Retention

Because of the competitive environment of higher education, institutions, even those who have higher retention rates, are still concerned with persistence (Burks & Barrett, 2009). Astin (1975) researched religion in higher education and found that Catholic institutions had the lowest expected dropout rates (23% for both men and women) followed by Protestant institutions (29% for men and 31% for women). Students who reported one religious background and attended a university of another religion had lower persistence rates than those students that matriculated at institutions with similar religious backgrounds as their own. Students who reported they had different religious beliefs than their parents had lower persistence rates when compared to those who indicated similar beliefs to their parents. Interestingly, the students who were the most likely to drop out were those who did not indicate a religious background (Astin, 1975). Davignon (2016) surveyed more than 6,300 undergraduate students across 31 Christian colleges and universities across the United States and found that religious identity was rated nearly as high as financial assistance in a student's decision to matriculate and persist at their receiving

institution. Students who had a more literal interpretation of the Bible, white students, and female students were all shown to have their college choice influenced heavily by the religious identity of their institution. These students were also more likely to be satisfied with the integration of faith and learning on campus, which lead to their persistence.

With continuing and increasing importance of attaining a bachelor's degree, this dissertation aims to specifically look into retention rates of transfer students and understand why there is often a discrepancy between freshman and transfer persistence at four-year liberal arts institutions. It does so by examining the retention likelihood of transfer students at three religiously affiliated liberal arts universities. A student's religious ethos can have an impact on their persistence (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2005), which is why it is important to study students' sense of belonging at these institutions.

Institutions often pursue recruitment and enrollment strategies to offset the impact of student attrition rather than trying to understand and resolve attrition in the first place (Barr & Schuetz, 2008). Referred to by Barr and Schuetz (2008) as the revolving door syndrome, unsuccessful students who drop out without obtaining a degree are replaced by new transfer students. With the critical issue of transfer student retention in mind, the following research questions guide this study:

1. What institutional elements (e.g., academic rigor, Christian ethos, housing, integration into campus life, student life activities) do students who transferred from a community college identify as influential in their persistence?
2. According to community college transfer students, what personal and interpersonal elements influence their persistence at their new four-year institution?

3. What individual and institutional factors do student affairs officers describe as most salient in the retention of students who have transferred from a community college?

Research Design

My study focused on the experiences of students who transferred from a community college to a four-year faith-based institution to identify the critical individual and institutional factors that contributed to these students' success at their new institution. Data collection was in the form of an online survey to transfer students after the completion of their first semester at each of the three respective institutions studied. The focus of the survey was to understand the needs of this population and to determine if they were provided adequate support and services by their receiving institution. Additionally, two student affairs staff were interviewed at each site to get their perspective on the retention of transfer students. Interview questions addressed their interaction with and the level of support the campus provided transfer students. Materials related to activities and programs for transfer students were also collected and analyzed for each of the colleges. Frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, and measures of central tendency were used to analyze survey data, and interviews were transcribed and analyzed for emerging patterns in connection with the quantitative data.

Research Sites and Populations

Religiously affiliated institutions have a responsibility to meet the expectations of the church, which is often reflected in a mission statement that focuses on spiritual, character, and educational development (Absher, 2009). Founded in the first half of the 20th century, College X has an undergraduate student population range of 2,500-5,000. It is a private four-year

institution located in California and has ties to the Christian Church. Transfer students comprise approximately 36% of the undergraduate student population.

College Y is a private four-year institution located in California with an undergraduate student population range of 5,000-9,999. Founded in the first half of the 20th century, College Y is rooted in the Christian tradition. Transfer students comprise approximately 32% of the undergraduate student population.

College Z is a private four-year institution located in California with an undergraduate student population range of 2,500-5,000. The university was founded in the first half of the 20th century as an institution led by administrators who support Christian principles. Transfer students comprise approximately 12% of the undergraduate student population.

All three sites are liberal arts institutions that are religiously affiliated. Sites were selected based on access and transfer student retention data from the three institutions. Both College Y and College Z have low two-year retention rates for transfer students. College X was chosen due to their high two-year transfer retention rate, which surpasses their two-year freshman retention.

According to the American College Testing (2015) data, the mean national persistence to degree rates for private doctoral universities are 62.5% and the mean first to second year retention rates for these same institutions are 81.7%. All three colleges fall under the category of private doctoral granting institutions with the majority of their enrollment being undergraduates (Carnegie Classification, 2010).

Significance of Study and Public Engagement

The specific examples and data gathered helps shape initiatives at all three institutions to ensure that campus programming, policies, and procedures are not just looked at through the freshman lens. This aims to impact the experience of future transfer students, with the goal of improving their retention rates. Findings and recommendations were shown to the administrators at all three institutions. My study provides other faith-based liberal arts universities an understanding of the needs of their transfer student population with the ultimate goal of ensuring successful transition to their institutions.

Additionally, findings from this study have been submitted as session proposals for both the Western Association for College Admission Counseling (WACAC) and National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) annual conferences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Tinto's (1993) theory of factors affecting student retention has informed efforts aimed at retaining college students for the last several decades, as administrators at many institutions have developed policies and programs based upon this body of research. In his model, Tinto states that persistence is influenced by a student's pre-entry attributes and by their academic and social experiences while in college. These academic experiences (both formal and informal interactions with faculty and staff) and social interactions within the campus community help shape students' sense of belonging and can be a factor in their decision to persist or depart from their institution.

Although transfer students make up a significant portion of the undergraduate student population on university campuses, they are deemed an afterthought by many four-year institutions. Students often choose to attend community colleges due to affordability, convenience, and being undecided on what they want to study. Over the years, as college students have become more diverse, so has the path they follow. At least 40% of college students have attended more than one institution (Adelman, 2005). More specifically, 27% of students who began at a public four-year institution transferred at least once, compared to 24% who started at a private four-year institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Students now transfer vertically, horizontally, or the more recent phenomenon of "swirling," where they attend multiple institutions to either find the one that is the best fit for them or to take the classes necessary to transfer to a four-year institution (Owens, 2010). Students also engage in "reverse transfer" when they transfer from a four-year institution to a community college (Townsend, 1999). These multiple paths to transfer make it challenging for universities to

recruit, retain, and graduate increasingly mobile students in a timely manner. Thus institutions strive to create an environment of a sense of belonging to assist the retention of new students, regardless of where they are transferring from (Tinto, 1993).

This literature review begins with the evolution of community colleges and four-year universities. After outlining the current trends in transfer enrollment, an analysis of the research is done on the benefits of transferring from a community college to private religiously affiliated liberal arts universities. Following the review of the seminal studies of Tinto (1993) and Astin (1984), the student experience at private religiously affiliated institutions is discussed, with specific focus on Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integrative moments. The literature review concludes with research on institutional elements that students, faculty, and staff believe influence transfer students' personal and professional achievement and overall retention.

Trends in Transfer from Two-Year Colleges to Four-Year Colleges with a Christian Ethos

Retention and the student enrollments they represent have been determined for decades as a meaningful measure of institutional effectiveness (Roman, 2007). As the number of students enrolled at higher education institutions have increased over the years, it has become even more crucial for community colleges and four-year institutions to work together to serve this growing population. From 1970 to 1983, undergraduate enrollment increased by 47%, reaching 10.8 million. Between 1985 and 1992, undergraduate enrollment rose each year, before stabilizing in the time between 1992 and 1998 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). In the fall of 2000, the number of full time community college transfer students enrolled at four-year institutions in the United States exceeded 3,151,809 (Owens, 2010). From 2002 to 2012, undergraduate enrollment at community colleges and four-year universities once again rose by

24% from 14.3 million to 17.7 million. The rise in enrollment can be due to both population growth and the increased desire to go to college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 3 million students completed high school in 2013. Of these students, 66% enrolled at a higher education institution that fall (42% at four-year institutions and 24% at community colleges), which was an increase from the 60% of students that attended a higher education institution in 1990. During this period between 1990 and 2013, the number of high school graduates that chose to attend four-year institutions has been consistently greater than those attending community colleges.

Student enrollment in four-year degree-granting institutions has increased not only for full-time students but also for part-time students. Between 2002 and 2012, full-time enrollment at community colleges and four-year institutions increased by 28% and part-time enrollment rose by 19%, with a total enrollment at undergraduate institutions close to 17.7 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). More specifically, for the fall 2014 semester, student enrollment at community colleges was 6,052,069, four-year public institutions was 8,020,444 and four-year private non-profit institutions was 3,823,465 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015). Due to the most recent economic recession, “community colleges saw increases in full-time enrollments- suggesting the possibility that students who might otherwise have attended four-year institutions full-time were instead enrolling in greater numbers at community colleges” (Dadashova et. al, 2011, p. 46).

However, community college transfers have had low persistence rates when compared to traditional freshman entering their junior year (Dougherty, 1994). Ishitani (2008) states that during their first semester, sophomore and junior transfer students are 73% less likely to depart the university when compared to those students who transferred with fewer than 30 semester

units. Despite the higher persistence rate found among junior transfer students in their first semester at their transfer institution, they are 1.7 times more likely to leave the institution than traditional freshman who were in their fifth semester of college (Ishitani, 2008).

California Master Plan for Higher Education

The California Master Plan for Higher Education was adopted in 1960 to define specific roles for the state's three public postsecondary education segments, which included the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and California Community College (CCC) systems. This created a system that provided broad access for students while minimizing costs and maintaining affordability. According to the UC Educational Relations Department (2007), the primary mission of the CCC was to provide academic preparation by offering lower division undergraduate courses in addition to remedial, English language, and vocational classes to any student who wanted to learn. The plan also provided transfer opportunities for community college students, with eligible CCC transfer students being given priority in the CSU and UC application processes. This plan streamlined the institutions of public education in California and clearly identified their purpose in serving students.

However, since UCs and CSUs lack sufficient capacity to handle all transfers from the 113 CCCs, private institutions in the state and colleges and universities outside of California are picking up the slack and providing for the excess demand. With CCC students now exploring their transfer options and expanding to institutions outside those outlined in the California Master Plan, private religiously affiliated institutions have become a popular option and were why they were chosen as the focus of this study.

Benefits of Going to Community Colleges

The mission of community colleges has evolved since the California Master Plan's inception in 1960. Initially, they were places where students would take their first two years of a bachelor's degree. In recent years, community colleges have become institutions that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges, while also providing vocational and remedial education (Roman, 2007). Community colleges now play a major role in the higher education system in the United States by providing access and social mobility to its constituents (Dougherty, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Students enroll at community colleges due to affordability, convenience of location, and their need to find the best fit institution for them (Marling, 2013). Students are drawn to community colleges because of their open access admission policies, career and technical education offerings, and the preparation of students to transfer to a four-year institution (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). At community colleges, about 60% of students are enrolled in vocational programs that directly lead to the workforce, while 40% seek associates degrees to transfer to four-year institutions (Ellis, 2013). In a survey conducted by Laanan (2003), nearly one-fourth (24%) of students attending community college had ambitions of ultimately getting a bachelor's degree or higher. For these students, community college is seen as a stepping-stone to degree granting institutions (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015).

Community college is seen as an affordable route to higher education (Handel, 2013). Between 1999 and 2009, tuition and fees at public and private four-year institutions have significantly been greater than those at community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009). According to College Board (2015), 2015-2016 school year tuition and fees for in-state students at community colleges averaged \$3,435 per year, \$9,410 at public four-year institutions, and \$32,405 at private non-profit institutions. By living at home,

community college students can also avoid paying fees associated with room and board, which average \$10,138 at public four-year institutions and \$11,516 at private non-profit institutions. The monetary investment of higher education can be high in reward and low in risk for those students who live at home and enroll part-time (Handel & Stremmel, 2016).

Given the affordability of community colleges, it is a popular choice for students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and racial groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education (Handel, 2013; Handel & Stremmel, 2016; Jain et. al, 2011). From 1994 to 2006, African American student enrollment at community colleges increased from 10% to 14%, while Hispanic student enrollment increased from 11% to 19% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). During the fall 2014 term, 57% of all Hispanic students, 52% of all African American students, and 43% of all Asian/Pacific Islander students currently attending higher education institutions were enrolled at community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). Additionally, community colleges enroll students with varying backgrounds including veterans, married students with families of their own, and nontraditional students aged 25 or older (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Laanan, 2007).

In recent years, diversity on college campuses has played a vital role in student persistence. Students who perceive a more positive campus racial climate have a greater sense of belonging and fit with their institution (Locks et al., 2008; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). This sense of belonging can lead to higher rates of persistence among students (Hausmann et al., 2007). Perceptions of discrimination of students at institutions are indirectly related to persistence among both White students and students of color (Cabrera et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Although many higher education institutions have seen an increase in enrollment of minority students in recent years, faith-based institutions have yielded numbers far

below the national average (Haralu, 2005). In 2008, 32.9% of undergraduate students enrolled at four-year institutions were underrepresented students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In comparison, institutions within the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities had an average minority student enrollment of only 15.1% (Institute for College Access and Success, 2008). Students who feel that they belong may fit within a particular campus niche without fitting well with the overall campus environment, which can influence the institution's retention (Bowman & Denson, 2014).

The Student Experience at Private Religious Universities

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a significant increase in enrollment at the more than 900 religiously affiliated colleges in the United States (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). Faith-based institutions focus more on holistic student development, as they integrate academics with spirituality (Morris et al., 2003). These institutions' "common mission, faith commitment, and emphasis on the liberal arts create a campus ethos that is intentionally focused on students' growth and development" (Schreiner & Kim, 2011, p. 327). Private religious universities offer students a strong sense of community where students can create personal relationships with each other, their faculty, and other college personnel. This strong sense of community is what plays a vital role in a student's decision to persist (Poggendorf, 2013). These faith-based institutions challenge students to integrate their academic knowledge with their religious engagement (Davignon, 2016).

How religiously engaged students are when entering college varies by students' religious background (Astin et al., 2011). In their study, Astin et al. (2011) found that students who enroll at evangelical colleges were the most engaged in religious services, as 90% of them were active in their church community in the year prior to university enrollment. Students enrolling at

Christian (non-Catholic) colleges had a 61% rate of frequent attendance at religious services in the year prior to enrollment, in comparison to 49% of students enrolling at Catholic institutions, 44% enrolling at private non-religious institutions, and 39% enrolling at public institutions.

Understanding a student's religious background and the religious environment of the campus they attend can help us understand if these interplay with a student's decision to persist.

Theoretical and Conceptual Models about College Student Retention

The religious beliefs a student has in relation to their institution's religious climate may influence the social integration of the student within the campus community. In this section, the conceptual frameworks based on the seminal studies of Tinto and Astin are presented, with specific focus on Tinto's longitudinal model of institutional departure (1993) and Astin's student involvement theory (1984). Expanding on Tinto's model and applying it specifically to community college transfer students, Deil-Amen's socio-academic integrative moments (2011) provide the conceptual framework for this study.

Tinto's (1993) theory of factors affecting student retention has had a great influence on retention among college students. In his model, Tinto states that persistence is influenced not only by a student's pre-entry attributes, characteristics, and goals, but also by their academic and social experiences while in college. Academic experiences include formal academic performance and informal interactions with staff and faculty. Social interactions within the institutional experience include participation in extracurricular activities and informal peer group interactions. These academic and social interactions help shape a student's sense of belonging and ultimately lead to their decision to persist or depart from their institution. This environment of a sense of belonging is what institutions strive to create to ensure retention of new students.

However, this sense of belonging differs among transfer students and those that came to the institution from high school. To operationalize the academic and social integration of transfer students, the survey distributed for this particular study incorporated elements such as on-campus student involvement in clubs and organizations, residence life, and academic advisement.

Astin's student involvement theory (1984) provides context to the institutional experiences and integration in Tinto's model. The five basic postulates for this theory are 1) investment of physical and psychological energy 2) involvement occurs along a continuum 3) has both quantitative and qualitative features 4) amount of student learning and development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement and 5) effectiveness of educational policies are directly related to the capacity of that policy to increase student involvement. Astin (1984) articulates his theory in the following way:

Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. (p. 518)

One of the main draws of this theory is that it focuses on the motivation and behavior of the student. The more the student is involved at their institution, the greater the student will learn and develop. Student time and energy are considered institutional resources and can be assessed in terms of how they influence a student's involvement. This ties into Tinto's model of institutional departure. For students who started their higher education careers at community colleges, understanding the institutional, personal, and interpersonal elements (both academic and social) can help determine a student's reason to depart an institution. If the needs of the

individual are not being met, they can choose to drop out of their current institution, which in turn affects the institution's retention rate.

Deil-Amen (2011) applies Tinto's model specifically to community college students with her concept of socio-academic integrative moments. She believes that both Tinto's and Astin's models of persistence were developed for traditional students who lived in a residential setting. To better understand how community college transfer students develop a sense of belonging, Deil-Amen states that the academic and social components of Tinto's model should be simultaneously combined: "The academic influence is coupled with elements of social integration to provide needed support and enhance feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence. Such processes revolve around events, activities, interactions, and relationships reflecting 'moments' that combine academically and socially integrative elements" (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 73). Therefore, the relationships students build with faculty, staff, and other students give them the social capital to succeed academically while providing the tools for cognitive, behavioral, and procedural success in class, college, and future careers. This is especially true in first-generation community college students who tend to have limited access to information through family or peers.

Both Tinto and Deil-Amen value the importance of faculty-student interactions, as faculty and other institutional agents play an integral role in providing social capital for students. These faculty and staff are critical to transfer students' comfort, belonging, and integration into their new college setting. However, Tinto believes that the classroom serves as the entryway to academic and social involvements outside of the classroom and stresses that the social relationships students create outside of the classroom are the foundation to integration.

Approximately three-quarters of students in Deil-Amen's study identified that feelings of belonging and connection took place during in-class interactions with teachers and other students. Most students neither expected nor wanted their in-class relationships with faculty and peers to go beyond the classroom setting. This form of integration that truly centers on the academic experience is especially relevant for transfer students who are often limited in time, resources, and support due to their external obligations (i.e. commuting, supporting their own families, off-campus employment). Students noted personal and work-related time constraints as a barrier in creating friendships and interacting with peers outside of the classroom setting. Although interaction with peers outside the classroom was minimal, students noted that working with other students in the academic setting contributed to positive feelings about the college social climate. Furthermore, interaction with faculty in the classroom setting not only provided academic support for transfer students, but also increased their self-confidence and established their sense of belonging. Students valued the personalized attention they received from their professors, even referring to their faculty as both friends and family.

Deil-Amen's belief that academic and social integration are interconnected and often indistinguishable among community college transfer students is at the core of her model of socio-academic integrative moments. In-class faculty-student interactions are a key component to this model, which expands on Tinto's understanding of the classroom as a site of integration. Interactions between faculty and students within the classroom not only help students feel academically supported, they also increase students' self-confidence, self-worth, and overall sense of belonging and successful transition.

Institutional Elements that Influence the Retention of Transfer Students

Factors such as number of units that transfer to the receiving institution, where they live (on campus versus off campus), student engagement, financial aid, and orientation to campus are important factors for transfer students during the transfer process (Ellis, 2013; Poisel & Joseph, 2011). “Assessing the experiences of transfer students as they face academic, social, and personal challenges in their transition to a new institution provides data crucial to improving transfer student retention, persistence, and well-being” (Handel & Strempe, 2016, p. 97).

Approximately 21.1% of community college students transfer within five years and only 11.6% ultimately get a bachelor’s degree (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011). Of those students who transfer, 37% transfer in their second year of community college, 25% transfer more than once, and 27% transfer to a different state from their state of residence (Hossler et al., 2012).

According to Monaghan & Attewell (2015), 58% of students that transfer between institutions bring the majority or all of their prior course credits with them. Additionally, 28% of transfer students lose between 10% and 89% of their course credits in the transition. Proper academic advising in the four-year institution contributes to the overall success of the student and should be individualized to the students’ needs (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2014). Responses of 73 students from the 2007 focus groups, as well as 19 students from her 2006 study gave Townsend (2008) qualitative data to suggest that community college students need to understand prior to transferring that potentially not all their units will transfer to the new institution. Classes taken at the community college that were not accepted by the receiving institution might be considered a waste of time and tuition, which could undermine transfer students’ motivation to persist toward earning their bachelor’s degree at their new institution. However, being aware of course transferability early in the process might help alleviate some of the frustration they may feel. Establishing articulation agreements between community colleges

and four-year institutions are advantageous for transfer students who want to know the time to degree attainment as well as give a competitive advantage to the receiving institution (Poisel and Joseph, 2011). Eggleston and Laanan (2001) advise four-year institutions to be more accommodating to course articulations by limiting the number of courses that transfer as electives and increasing the number of courses that fulfill general education requirements.

The registration process can also be confusing and frustrating for transfer students. Often times, transfer students need assistance in selecting courses, changing majors, and understanding the time to degree attainment (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001; Owens, 2010). On average, academic advisors at the two-year institution have a case load of 441 students; twice that of four-year institutions (Grites, 2013). Students want personal attention with advisors who can be their “sounding board”, which can be hard to do with the limited resources provided at the community colleges (Owens, 2010).

The number of units that transfer to the receiving institution can determine the number of years a transfer student will need to stay at the receiving institution to obtain a bachelor’s degree. This in turn has a direct relationship with tuition and financial need. Although the cost of community colleges is increasing, they still remain the most affordable higher education option in the United States (Handel, 2013). Nearly one-third (31%) of students attending community colleges, 51% of students attending public four-year institutions, and 62% of students attending private four-year institutions receive some form of federal financial aid (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015). Transfer students typically receive less financial aid at the four-year institution or are unaware of the process of applying for aid (Miller, 2013). Gard, Paton, and Gosselin (2012) conducted a focus group with 14 transfer students at the beginning of their first university term. This focus group indicated that since community colleges are less

expensive than four-year public and private institutions, transfer students can experience sticker shock when looking at the tuition of these institutions.

Paying for on-campus housing is an additional expense besides tuition for some transfer students. In comparison to students who live off-campus, students who live in on-campus residence halls have a greater satisfaction with college, increased social and personal development, and greater chance of degree attainment (Richman, 1979). Additionally, students who live on campus at religious institutions tend to experience positive spiritual growth (Ma, 2003). In a seminal study, Richman (1979) decided to test the hypothesis that transfer students who live together in the same residence hall are significantly less likely to fall below a GPA of 2.00 for their first academic quarter. More than 200 community college transfer students entering Florida State University as junior level transfers were surveyed. Richman found that having transfer students living together encourages higher grades, fosters a sense of community, and helps with the transition to new surroundings. This is further supported in Townsend's (2008) focus groups which indicated that transfer students should be housed homogeneously in a single residence hall where all programming provided by staff is aimed at and designed for the transfer student population.

Often, a student's first encounter with his or her roommate is during new student orientation. The most critical transition for both the short-term and long-term success of transfer students is new student orientation provided by the receiving institution (Grites, 2013). Many transfer orientation programs duplicate first-year programs or add transfer events to traditional freshman orientation programs (Poisel & Joseph, 2011). When an orientation is specifically for transfer students, it is more helpful than when it is for all new students (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001; Ellis, 2013; Owens, 2010). This suggests that orientation programs should be developed

specifically to help transfer students navigate the institution and help with their academic and social concerns (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001). During orientation, explanations of the differences between community colleges and four-year institutions should be discussed (Grites, 2013). Poisel and Joseph (2011) state that transfer students need more information on campus resources, career counseling, and retention initiatives, as compared to their first-year freshman colleagues. They advise that the essential steps in creating a comprehensive transfer student orientation program is to require orientation to be mandatory, create a variety of orientation opportunities, and have a clear plan as to which campus departments will have responsibility for the various aspects of orientation.

Ellis (2013) conducted focus groups on each of the eight University of Texas campuses, with each focus group comprising of six to twelve students who had experienced a new student orientation, and found that students wanted more information about campus facilities (such as health centers and computer labs) and other support services that helped them succeed at the receiving institution. Similarly, Townsend (2008), who looked at responses of 73 students from her 2007 focus groups and 19 students from her 2006 study, cited the importance of currently enrolled transfer students. Current transfer students are great resources to the incoming students, as they can talk about the campus and how they personally adjusted socially and academically to the campus community. In addition, these same students can serve as peer mentors for the incoming transfer students and provide guidance and support in the transition.

Orientation is a critical first step in transfer students' transition to their new academic environment and is where they begin to engage with the campus community (Poisel & Joseph, 2011). Many transfer students want to become part of the university culture, but are unaware of traditions, events, and activities that happen on campus (Grites, 2013). As entering sophomore

or junior transfer students, it is hard to become a part of friend groups that were created during the freshman year at the university (Ellis, 2013). Owens (2010) found that transfer students are concerned with perceptions of the academic environment and worry about fitting in to the university culture. They view themselves as “migrants or settlers moving into a new community and most perceive that they have little time to establish their niche” (p. 103). Although being a transfer student is different from being a native student, transfer students are determined to find their niche (Gard, Paton, & Gosselin, 2012; Owens, 2010). Ellis (2013) found that students in her focus groups wanted more social activities, as there seems to be very few activities that are inclusive of both freshmen and transfer students. However, since some transfer students are commuters or are of non-traditional age, attention to when activities are scheduled is important.

Christian ethos can have an impact on student retention, with students typically experiencing positive spiritual growth at religious institutions (Ma, 2003). Many students choose to attend religiously affiliated colleges due to their personal beliefs of the benefits that a faith-based education might bring them (Morris et al., 2004). “Because of the unique nature of Christian education, a measure of spiritual fit, or spiritual integration, may provide a more complete picture of student persistence and withdrawal at Christian universities” (Morris et al., 2004, p. 92). Ma (2003) conducted a national survey at 20 Christian institutions and found that religious classes, instructors, and in-class discussions were the most influential in helping student spirituality. Additionally, spiritual integration was positively correlated with Tinto’s longitudinal model of institutional departure, with students reporting greater spiritual fit also reporting “positive interactions with faculty, positive interactions with peers, greater satisfaction with the academic challenge provided at the school, and greater interest in succeeding in college” (Morris et al., 2004, p. 96). Therefore, the students who are not specifically open to spiritual growth may

find it difficult to integrate with the campus culture and not persist in subsequent semesters (Morris et al., 2003).

In addition to the institutional elements listed above, pre-transfer services are critical in the retention of transfer students. Students want sending institutions and receiving institutions to work collaboratively to ensure a successful transition process (Ellis, 2013). Community college staff should be knowledgeable about the services required by transfer students to successfully transfer to the four-year institution (Laanan, 2007). To prevent transfer students at the receiving institution from feeling like a freshman again, research has identified the positive effects on transfer student success when university staff work with these students to teach them strategies on a successful transition (Townsend, 2008).

Gard, Paton, and Gosselin (2012) found that students who were academically and socially integrated in their community college were more likely to transfer to a four-year institution. This makes it even more important for community colleges to identify and support students who plan to transfer to a four-year institution. Employees in financial aid, admissions, academic departments, transcript evaluators, and administrators need to develop their knowledge on transfer and university policies. “Everyone needs the same story, the same information, and to see the big picture” (Ellis, 2013, p. 81).

Conclusion

Although there have been several studies on retention rates among college students, very little has been researched on retention rates of transfer students at religiously affiliated institutions (Burks & Barrett, 2009). Private institutions are an option for transfer students, however they must provide the information and resources for a successful transition (Handel & Stempel, 2016). It is important to assess the amount of support and institutional resources the

receiving institution will provide and encourage these institutions to address the elements that influence the retention of transfer students (Handel & Stempel, 2016). With community colleges being both accessible and affordable, the number of students that choose to attend these institutions after high school has increased. An increase in transfer students has resulted in an increase in recruitment efforts by four-year universities. As transfer students' transition to these receiving institutions, it is beneficial to conduct an in-depth analysis of institutional factors that affect retention at private religious universities.

Chapter 3: Methods

Transfer student retention is a critical issue for higher education administrators at many colleges. It is a way to measure institutional effectiveness and can be translated into revenue for the institution (Roman, 2007). This study sought to answer the following three research questions:

1. What institutional elements (e.g., academic rigor, Christian ethos, housing, integration into campus life, student life activities) do students who transferred from a community college identify as influential in their persistence?
2. According to community college transfer students, what personal and interpersonal elements influence their persistence at their new four-year institution?
3. What individual and institutional factors do student affairs officers describe as most salient in the retention of students who have transferred from a community college?

Research Design & Rationale

My study highlighted the programs, policies, and people identified as critical to transfer student success among survey respondents who had transferred from a community college and persisted into the second term at their new four-year institution. Additionally, interviews with student affairs staff were conducted to learn about programming and campus services available for their transfer student populations. Mixed methods were used to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. With this approach “researchers can situate numbers in the contexts and words of participants, and they can frame the words of participants with numbers, trends, and statistical results” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 13). Mixed methods were appropriate for this study, as they gave me the opportunity to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from the transfer student population through administration of one survey. The survey gathered demographic data

on transfer students, their experiences before and after transfer, and their perceptions about the transfer process. Quantitative data were needed to gain a broader understanding of the kinds of experiences, interactions, and relationships that second-term transfer students identified as important to their success at their new four-year campus. Qualitative data were needed to dig deeper into specific programming and services provided to new transfer students and to get their feedback on effectiveness of such campus resources. Additionally, qualitative data in the form of interviews from student affairs staff at each institution provided insight on what staff who work with transfer students believe are important factors for retention. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data provided depth and breadth in answering the three research questions.

The Sites

The three sites were private liberal arts institutions that were located in California and had religious affiliations. Both College X and College Z had between 2,500-5,000 undergraduate students, while College Y had an undergraduate student population range of 5,000-9,999. Descriptive statistics on the 2014-2015 degree seeking undergraduate student population of each site is listed in Table 3.1. Females comprise the majority of the enrolled student population at all three institutions. The number of minority students varies per institution, with College Z having 45% of their population identifying as White, 46.7% at College Y, and 50.9% at College X.

Each institution has various religious requirements for their students, which are shown in Table 3.2. College X and College Y had similar requirements, with students required to take two religious courses in a variety of disciplines and optional attendance in worship services.

However, College Z had stricter requirements, with required weekly worship and the enrollment in three Christianity courses.

Table 3.1
*Descriptive Statistics for Degree Seeking Undergraduates from 2014-2015
 Common Data Set (Sex and Race)*

	College X	College Y	College Z
Sex			
Male (%)	44.4	42.6	40.9
Female (%)	55.6	57.4	59.1
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan Native (%)	1.1	0.2	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	7.2	10.8	13.3
Black/African American (%)	4.3	5.8	6.1
Hispanic/Latino (%)	25.5	21.9	13.4
Multi Racial (%)	2.7	7.7	8.6
Nonresident Aliens (%)	4.3	6.9	8.9
White (%)	50.9	46.7	45.0
Unknown (%)	4.0	0	4.3

Table 3.2
Religious Course and Worship Requirements for Transfer Students at Each Institution

	Religious Courses Required	Worship Services
College X	2 religion courses from a variety of disciplines	Optional
College Y	2 religion courses from a variety of disciplines	Optional
College Z	3 religion courses specifically relating to the Christian faith	Mandatory

Sites were selected based on the number of community college transfer students and on retention data from the three institutions. More specifically, one of the selection criteria was selecting colleges based on high and low two-year retention rates of transfer students. Data from the Institutional Research Offices from each university indicated that College Z's fall 2012 cohort of 86 transfer students (which was comprised of those transferring from both community colleges and four-year universities) had a one-year retention rate of 93.0% and a two-year

retention rate of 57.0%, while College Y's fall 2012 cohort of 325 transfer students had a one-year retention rate of 87.4%, and two-year retention rate of 47.7%. In comparison, College X's fall 2012 cohort of 264 transfer students had a one-year retention rate of 91.0% and two-year retention rate of 85.0%. Both College Y and College Z had lower two-year retention rates for transfer students. College X was chosen due its high two-year transfer retention rate, which even surpassed their two-year freshman retention rate. Thus, these sites provided the ability to compare cases using a maximum variation sampling strategy. In maximum variation sampling, a broad range of institutions are studied. According to Patton (1990), maximum variation sampling is considered a form of purposeful sampling where the focus is on "relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully" (p. 169). Therefore, the sites were purposefully selected to be different from one another in order to adequately answer the research questions.

Access

Having worked in the field of higher education enrollment management for several years, I had established many connections with senior leadership at all three institutions. I received written confirmation from senior leadership in Enrollment Management at all three colleges allowing me to conduct my study at their school sites. I also received verbal agreements from student affairs staff at these institutions who were willing to provide access to transfer data and work with me on survey administration. For all three sites, transfer students were an important and growing demographic that the schools wanted to support. The findings from my study were beneficial to administrators at each site in their analysis of the needs of their transfer student population.

Data Collection Instruments

For RQ 1 and RQ 2, data collection was in the form of an online survey provided to all community college transfer students after the completion of one semester at each of the three institutions studied. The survey was comprised of questions about the various aspects that affect a student's academic and social experiences while in college. The online survey primarily asked questions that used a Likert scale approach to determine the extent to which the interactions and experiences of certain campus departments influenced a student's overall persistence. Open ended questions were included for students to provide qualitative data regarding specific campus services. Most questions regarded students' interactions and perceptions of the following campus services: Admission, Financial Aid, Academics, Advising, Registration, Financial Aid, Orientation, Housing, Student Activities, and Christian Ethos. Survey questions were designed by me, in consultation with the individual school administrators. An email, which included the embedded survey link, was drafted by me and sent to one student affairs personnel at each institution. These student affairs personnel received the names and email addresses of the desired survey population from their own institution's Registrars Offices. With the email contact information of the students, the staff were able to send the electronic mail to all community college transfer students who had entered the university in the fall 2016 semester. In total, 270 students from College X, 234 students from College Y, and 51 students from College Z fell into this criterion and were sent the surveys. All surveys were administered in January 2017 during the students' second semester of academic instruction at their transfer institution. Students were given two weeks to complete the survey, with a reminder email sent out by the same staff members at the start of the second week of survey administration. To increase survey participation, students were given an incentive of a chance to win one of five \$20 gift cards per institution. Results from the surveys were kept confidential and shared in aggregate only with

the specific administrators at each college. At the completion of the survey administration period, the student response rates were 21% for College X, 19% for College Y, and 41% for College Z.

A field pre-test of this survey instrument (see Appendix for survey protocol) was conducted by administering the survey to all transfer students that entered College Z for the fall 2015 term. Among the 101 transfer students who were emailed, 22 students responded. As an incentive to complete the survey, five \$10 gift cards were randomly raffled off to those who participated. The student responses were varied depending on the campus department they had interactions with. For the most part, students were pleased with the admission process, but were dissatisfied with the amount of transfer course credit and financial aid they received. Many of the students (13 of the 22) had pleasant interactions with the housing office and were satisfied with their roommates. Students responded to the Likert scale questions, as well as provided qualitative feedback to improve certain aspects of campus life. For example, about one-third of respondents suggested additional social activities at the New Student Orientation to get to know one another in casual surroundings.

After analyzing the results from the field pre-test, modifications were made to the survey instrument that was used for this study. A modified version of the survey protocol included more demographic questions on the students, such as their age, the number of previous institutions they had attended, and the religion they closely identified with (survey protocol in Appendix). Additionally, a specific completion date was named in the initial email sent to the students. For the field pre-test, there was no response deadline and within a three-week period I had received the 22 responses. With a specific completion date selected, I hoped this new administration of the survey would generate more respondents in a shorter timeframe. I

incentivized the participation for the survey by continuing to raffle off gift cards. With additional time and revisions, the survey instrument was ready for implementation for the fall 2016 transfer cohort.

For RQ 3, data collection was in the form of interviews with two student affairs staff at each institution. By having in-depth conversations with each staff member, I was able to elicit a deeper understanding of the needs of transfer students at each institution from the staff's perceptions. Additionally, more information on what specific schools did to assimilate transfer students to their campus culture was learned. The individuals being interviewed were selected based on their high level of involvement with transfer student programming on their respective campuses. One of the individuals was from the institution's student affairs division, which provided the student programming for the college. The other interviewee was someone who worked on New Student Orientation, which all incoming students were required to attend prior to matriculation at the three sites studied. Interviews were in person at the individual sites and were with individuals who worked directly with the transfer student population. The list of interview questions were identified early on and were standardized for all six interviews. Topics related to student programming, student retention struggles, and campus initiatives were addressed in relation to transfer students' academic and social needs. Interviews were recorded with both a tape recorder and an iPhone.

By getting feedback from the transfer students and those who work with these students, I was able to understand the beliefs and factors that contribute to the retention and persistence of transfer students (both academically and socially) at each of these institutions.

Data Analysis Methods

The sample selected was the entire entering fall 2016 cohort of community college transfer students at each of the three institutions. Fall entry term was selected, as all three sites had significantly larger amounts of fall transfer students in comparison to those who entered in the spring semester. To capture the students' initial impressions of their new institution, students were surveyed after completing their first semester at their respective institutions. Therefore, the surveys were administered in January 2017, after the students had come back from their winter break. Survey data was gathered electronically through Qualtrics. Quantitative data from the survey was analyzed through Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel and tables were created to explore the different student demographics and the overall student satisfaction of the three distinct institutions they transferred to. Crosstabs were run to gain a deeper understanding of how certain survey items were related to one another. Additionally, p-values were analyzed to see if statistical significance existed within the quantitative data.

Qualitative data was organized into three sets, one for each institution. Data collected from the interviews were transcribed and open-ended survey responses were reviewed thoroughly to determine the thematic patterns and connections to the quantitative data. As the data was reviewed, the themes were continually refined and modified to determine how they related to one another and to the specific research questions they addressed. At the conclusion of the analysis, six themes emerged, some with specific subcategories on the basis of the nature of the relationship with the student population, such as programming/events, sense of belonging, academic challenges, and information provided during new student orientation. These subcategories were derived from existing research on the topic and from my specific research questions.

Tables were generated to complement the data and provide visuals of the findings for the study. Upon completion of the data analysis, the information was shared with each of the schools to provide them feedback on the needs assessment for their specific population of transfer students.

Ethical Issues

I did not foresee any ethical issues with my study as I did not work directly with any of the students being surveyed. Students were contacted through an on-campus department for survey participation, thus minimizing the possible influence of an outside researcher. All survey and interview responses were kept confidential and the raw data was not revealed to anyone. The names and titles of the student affairs representatives remained confidential with all data collected and saved on my personal laptop, which was password protected and kept at home.

To ensure anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used for the three institutions and the individual staff members being interviewed. Survey feedback was anonymous and coding ensured no individual student's name was used in the data analysis. Furthermore, specific identifiers such as institutional size, religious denomination, and institutional history were removed to prevent someone from guessing the institution's and individual's identities. This gave added protection to both student and staff participants.

Validity

Validity in a mixed methods study is defined "as the ability of the researcher to draw meaningful and accurate conclusions from all of the data in the study" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 146). A threat to the validity could be that my findings may be difficult to generalize to the entire community college transfer population at each site due to the small sample size and the specific entry term being studied. The number of transfer students in the cohort varied by

institution and survey response rates were difficult to predict. I ended up with a relatively small sample at some of the institutions that were studied. I had hoped that by administering the survey through an on-campus department students were familiar with and by incentivizing their responses by raffling a gift card, I would be able to maximize their participation.

In addition, the cohort selected at each institution was the community college transfer students entering in the fall semester. However, there were students that entered these institutions in the spring semester and may have had a different experience than their fall counterparts. For example, students who enter in the spring semester oftentimes have shorter orientation programs and limited access to campus support services prior to matriculation. I planned to minimize the impact of this limitation by analyzing common themes that emerged from my survey data that could impact students regardless of what term they had entered their new college.

Reliability

The methods for this study have been clearly stated in this chapter. If another researcher wants to replicate the study, they have enough information to design their own study on the retention rates of transfer students at specific institutions. The rationales for the sites selected were clearly articulated and could be replicated by others who wish to study certain elements of the transfer student population. Data about the survey and respondents and the interview process have clearly been outlined for replication.

Summary

There has been an increased amount of importance placed on community college transfer student enrollment and retention in recent years. With higher education being a high priced commodity, it is beneficial for universities to retain the students that transfer to them. Both the

sending and receiving institutions need to collaborate to provide a successful transition for these community college transfer students (Grites, 2013). I hope the findings and conclusions in the following chapters will help college administrators at private religiously affiliated universities understand the needs of this population in an effort to increase their retention at their own institutions. The next chapter reviews the findings from my research.

Chapter 4: Study Findings

This study investigated the various needs of transfer students at three private religiously affiliated universities in California through the analysis of transfer student surveys in conjunction with student affairs staff interviews. Through their survey responses, transfer students provided anonymous and confidential feedback about their experiences in and perceptions of their respective institutions. The interviews of student affairs personnel (Patty, Jesse, Robert, Sharon, Cathy, and Keith) at each of the three sites offered insight on individual and institutional assessment on initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of transfer students. The goal was to help schools understand the needs of the transfer student population, identify any unmet needs, and offer suggestions to increase overall satisfaction among this population with a general goal of improving each institution's retention and yield.

To achieve these aims, I examined the transfer student population at three different institutions, which have been given the pseudonyms College X, College Y, and College Z. The remainder of this chapter presents key findings organized by themes that emerged from a combination of the survey responses and staff interviews. I first talk about the descriptive statistics of the survey population and respondents, then address the six themes that both students and staff deemed as crucial to the success of transfer students at the four-year institution.

Demographic Characteristics

Before highlighting students' experiences with and perceptions of their institutions, it is important to understand the characteristics of the transfer student survey respondent sample and the fall 2016 community college transfer population within each of the three institutions, and

Table 4.1 provides these details. At the conclusion of the survey, student response rates were 21% for College X, 19% for College Y, and 41% for College Z.

Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics for Fall 2016 Community College Transfer Student Survey Population and Survey Respondent Sample (Sex, Race, and Age)

	College X		College Y		College Z	
	Fall 2016 Transfer Population N=270	Survey Sample N=57	Fall 2016 Transfer Population N= 234	Survey Sample N= 45	Fall 2016 Transfer Population N= 51	Survey Sample N= 21
Sex						
Male (%)	52.6	31.6	39.3	31.1	51.0	52.4
Female (%)	47.4	68.4	60.7	68.9	49.0	47.6
Race/Ethnicity						
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native (%)	0.4	1.8	0.4	0	1.9	0
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	7.4	8.8	18.1	15.6	23.5	19.0
Black/African American (%)	6.7	3.5	4.7	6.7	7.8	4.8
Hispanic/Latino (%)	12.6	12.3	24.8	22.2	7.8	9.5
Multi Racial (%)	18.5	17.5	13.4	15.6	8.1	19.1
White (%)	50.0	50.9	35.9	37.8	49.0	47.6
Other (%)	4.4	5.3	2.7	2.2	1.9	0
Age						
18-21 years old (%)	48.9	57.9	60.7	68.9	68.6	81.0
22-24 years old (%)	40.0	29.8	26.9	24.4	31.4	19.0
≥25 years old (%)	11.1	12.3	12.4	6.7	0	0

As the table illustrates, the population of students who transferred to College X in fall 2016 split fairly evenly by sex with females representing 47.4% of the population (males comprising 52.6%); however, more than two-thirds (68.4%) of students responding to the survey identified as female. About half of all transfer students entering College X and College Z in fall 2016 identified as White, which paralleled the proportion of White students responding to the survey at each respective campus. By contrast, College Y had more racial/ethnic diversity among its transfer population and respondent sample, with 35.9% of the population and 37.8% of the respondent sample identifying as White. Although College X had a broader distribution among

the three different age groups, all three colleges had the majority of their respondent sample between 18-21 years of age. Overall, College X's survey sample roughly mirrored the transfer population in fall 2016 in terms of race/ethnicity, and College Z had similar distributions between their population and survey sample by sex. College Y had material deviations between their transfer population and survey sample in terms of race/ethnicity and sex, and all three campuses had survey samples that tended to skew younger than their overall incoming transfer populations in fall 2016.

The following sections explore findings organized by major themes that emerged from my research, spanning all three research questions. Each theme reflects an aspect of community college transfer students' needs as identified by student survey responses, staff interviews, or a combination of the two. All six staff interviewed currently work with incoming and current transfer students. Patty and Jesse work at College X, Robert and Sharon work at College Y, and Cathy and Keith work at College Z. In addition to their work with the transfer population, Jesse, Sharon, and Keith all have significant roles in determining programming for New Student Orientation. The first of the findings deals with the various stereotypes and stigmas transfer students experience when entering a new four-year institution.

Stereotypes and Stigmas Community College Students Experience When Transferring to a Four-Year Institution

In addition to adjusting to a new institution, transfer students overcome challenges related to the many stigmas and stereotypes held by various campus stakeholders. It can be the native students who do not view them as part of the campus community, administrators who consider them an afterthought to the native freshman population, or staff members who work with them

and perceive certain attributes common within this population. Staff members participating in interviews recalled specific circumstances where they witnessed an “othering” of transfer students by their native peers. Such instances included suggestions that transfer students were outsiders or had some sort of deficit relative to native students. Three of the staff participants also described some administrators as viewing the transfer population as an afterthought as it pertains to the allocation of university resources. Sharon commented,

Transfer students here are sometimes an afterthought or considered backfill to the freshman population when it comes to bodies and money. While I do think that we are transfer friendly because we do want them and we go recruit them and once they are here we want to make sure that they are ok, we don’t put as much effort in their experience as we do for traditional freshman.

Sharon explains that her institution does support recruitment and retention efforts for transfer students. However, she also observes a gap in institutional support and funding between efforts designed to support transfer students and those aimed at native students.

While Sharon describes the administrators’ interactions with transfer students, Cathy, who works at College Z, discusses those of the native students. She vividly remembered an encounter she witnessed between a transfer student and a native student a few years back.

I actually heard one of the transfer students experience a first-year student say “Oh, you’re a transfer student. I’m sorry.” So it was an apology, straight out, and I was like “What do you mean you are sorry?” But it was just this mentality that you must not be as good as us because we came in as first-year students and you are coming in, for whatever reason, later on. Is there something like you couldn’t afford it, you didn’t have the grades. It’s kind of a deficit lens that some of our students view transfers through.

Cathy further stated that these attitudes towards transfer students have slowly improved over the years. As more and more transfer students have owned their experiences and have shown leadership roles within the campus community, they have been recognized and honored at

different award ceremonies and are now being seen as valuable members of the student body. Such leadership roles include those in student clubs and organizations, Greek life, community service, and volunteer opportunities, all of which are highly visible positions to stakeholders within the campus community.

Despite institutions' recognition of transfer students' accomplishments, staff interview participants believed transfer students maintained a sense of not being good enough, which has had an effect on the student's academic attitude and performance. Patty described the ways in which she has perceived self-doubt among this population.

There are these stereotypes that some people might have. "Oh, you didn't start off here as a freshman" or "Oh, you came from a community college. Why didn't you go straight into a four-year, what was wrong?" Whether these stereotypes exist or whether they think that people are doing it, they might even have them themselves. So there is that self-doubt. "Do I belong here, can I do this?"

Patty implies that interactions with and perceptions expressed by campus stakeholders contribute to transfer students' self-doubt. When a current student judges incoming transfer students for not being native students, transfer students have their sense of belonging questioned, which ultimately can undermine their academic attitude and performance.

Despite the many stigmas and stereotypes about transfer students that interview participants attributed to students who entered as first-year freshmen and some administrators, three staff members described the inclusivity of the campus as acting as a buffer or perhaps a more powerful context that mitigates the negative views some on campus have of transfer students. Robert, who works at College Y, explained:

I think it's telling when you walk around campus and tell people 20% of our undergraduate population are transfer students and they are shocked. I think people have

a perception that transfer students look or act a certain way. But people are legitimately shocked that 1/5 of our students didn't come here as freshman. That is a testament to the environment here; that it is inclusive, accepting, it embraces diversity and in my opinion there is no more diverse group than transfer students... That experience going through the transfer process adds to their success here.

Robert appreciates the diversity of perspectives that transfer students bring to the campus culture. Although there may be initial stereotypes and stigmas associated with transfer students, integration to the campus community can lead to their sense of belonging and future success.

Transfer Students' Transitional Experiences at Their New Institution

New student orientation, programming, and personalizing the academic experience are all strategies institutions utilize to minimize and counter transfer students' sense of culture shock when arriving to a new institution. Culture shock can be expressed as a decline in a student's academic, social, or emotional performance during their first semester at the four-year institution (Owens, 2010). Ishitani (2008) conducted studies on transfer culture shock and stressed the importance of helping transfer students recover from their initial culture shock as quickly as possible. He stated that most transfer students recover from culture shock within one year of transferring to their new institution, however those who return for their second year and still have not acclimated to the campus culture face a high risk of departure.

After a transfer student has decided to matriculate at an institution, staff at the respective universities help them acclimate to the campus community. Occasionally, this transitional period can contribute to transfer students' sense of culture shock (Ishitani, 2008). Robert described the transition process as being overwhelming for students, explaining that "most students would say there is a lot of anxiety and a lot of unknowns coming to a new place and not knowing anyone or who to go to for help." Robert believes that helping students adjust by

providing resources and connecting them to on-campus support offices will aid in their transition and minimize this culture shock.

New Student Orientation Helps Students Acclimate to the Campus Culture

Culture shock may first manifest during new student orientation, which some schools require and others highly recommend (Grites, 2013). All three sites in this study require students to attend new student orientation but have no repercussions if students decide not to attend. Five of the staff members noted that transfer students may exude a level of confidence or aloofness that suggests the characteristic of being a “know it all,” signaling a perception they do not want to attend orientation or need to use the services provided to them by the institution. In essence, their attitude conveys a strong sense of independence and self-sufficiency. Keith, who coordinates new student orientation at College Z, described his frustrations in creating programming for transfer students transitioning to the new four-year setting.

During orientation, they tell me flat out that they just want to make their class schedules and leave. They don't want to hang out with what they perceive to be younger people. They have a sense of I've already accomplished some things. I think they want us to know that as well. They don't want us to treat them that way. And yet there is a naiveté about that. They need to know who we are specifically.

Keith implies an understanding as to why transfer students may express such confidence, but he also feels strongly about the ways the institution's efforts seek to connect with and support transfer students.

Jesse offered similar sentiments about feedback she has heard regarding transfer student orientation, saying that “some of them were like this was great, I learned a lot, I got the information I needed where others were like this was completely pointless and was not helpful at

all. So we have a lot of different perspectives to please.” Jesse is aware that each student has a different mentality about orientation, which challenges her to consider programming and content that appeals to students in both of these mindsets when coordinating new student orientation.

Students’ survey responses about new student orientation seemed to align with Keith’s and Jesse’s comments. Although a super majority of respondents within each institution felt positively about their orientation experience, not all students shared this perspective. As Table 4.2 demonstrates, roughly 85% of survey respondents at each of the three campuses agreed that the information provided at orientation was useful to them. Student survey respondents also largely agreed that orientation helped them in navigating the campus (76.1% at College X, 81.6% at College Y, and 71.4% at College Z). Although Keith and Jesse did not characterize the balance of favorable versus unfavorable feedback students provided about the helpful versus time-wasting nature of orientation, the survey results do indicate that not all students saw value in the time they spent in orientation.

Table 4.2
Student Survey Responses Regarding New Student Orientation (% Yes)

	College X N= 46	College Y N= 38	College Z N= 21
The information provided at orientation was useful to me	84.8	86.8	85.7
Transfer orientation helped in navigating the campus	76.1	81.6	71.4

Open-ended questions on the survey provide additional evidence as to how students’ opinions about orientation varied. When asked to offer suggestions to improve orientation, students at College X wanted a shorter program that focused on their specific needs. They felt that the orientation programming was geared more towards on-campus freshmen and less so for commuting transfer students, who tend to seek functional and logistical information. One student commented, “Transfer students want to know the important information like finding

classes, avoiding traffic spots, and where the cheapest places are to get some food. Not the programs and activities that are for freshmen.” This quote was emblematic of the plurality of suggestions provided by the students at College X. Another suggestion given by the student survey respondents were better training of student presenters. One student commented, “The students at the information session I had should be instructed a bit better on the information they share. I felt like they didn’t know how to answer some of our questions.” This sentiment was echoed by several other students at College X, inferring that current students who are more knowledgeable about the institution provide invaluable advice to assist transfer students in their transition to the new college setting.

Concerns expressed by students at College Y focused more on the need to enhance new students’ navigational and social capital through orientation by spending more time orienting students to the physical layout of campuses and key offices as well as including some icebreakers. Students’ comments included wanting “more ice breaker activities, and a campus tour would be nice”, a need to “go over the names of all the campus buildings”, and including “more things like games to build friendships, and exchange numbers.” The request to have more social activities to bond with other transfer students was similarly made by six students from College X and five students from College Z.

Transfer students at College Z perceived transfer orientation as receiving less attention or resources from the campus compared to freshman orientation. One student commented, “I think transfer orientation should be as involved as freshman orientation. At times I felt in the dark because I was a transfer.” This student’s comment, in particular, not only highlights a sense of differential treatment of transfer students by the institution but also underscores the diversity of

perspectives held by transfer students with respect to wanting or needing information about connecting to campus beyond the classroom. With variations in the level of support and kind of information they think they need from the campus as they matriculate into their new institution, programming for transfer student orientation can be challenging for the receiving institution.

Transfer Students' Sense of Belonging to a New Campus

Orientation represents the first opportunity campuses have to integrate transfer students into the community and make them feel welcome, but these efforts to provide opportunities for transfer students to become connected need to continue beyond their first few days. In addition to addressing and combating the stigmas described earlier, transfer students have other unique hurdles to overcome in establishing a true sense of belonging on campus. Keith reflected on the difficulty he perceives transfer students experiencing when trying to find their place in an already established, functioning campus community:

I can see where they feel like the university is already running and they're new and they don't know where to plug in. "Where do I jump in and how do I jump in?" I can just imagine there is a loneliness factor, a relationship factor, especially if they are living off campus. If you haven't had that full time at the institution, I can imagine it'll be difficult. You can plug in, go to some events, but truly creating relationships can be a challenge.

Keith understands the difficulties of coming into a new environment and being surrounded by students who have pre-existing relationships. These native students have spent months, if not years, building social relationships with each other and new transfer students have to figure out how to create rapport with these native students, all while trying to learn the nuances of a new campus environment.

This social struggle is evident in many of the transfer students that Sharon works with. She echoed other staff's comments about the difficulties transfer students have coming into an institution at a different time than the native students: "Even if the student transfers after one year at a community college, they feel like they are coming into what could already have been established friend groups. So they struggle to find new friends who are of their age." Sharon notes something important about the transfer population. Most first-year students tend to be 18 year old recent high school graduates, while transfer students typically are older, more mature, and have additional outside family responsibilities. Given the sometimes large gaps in age and maturity between transfer and native students, transfer students may find difficulty in relating to first-year students on a social level.

Patty also highlighted transfer students' difficulty of integrating into new social circles and navigating new institutional norms. She compared her experience working with transfer students to her upbringing as a military brat, with her family constantly moving from one military base to another. "So I feel like I get a sense of what a transfer student might feel like. When they have to move differently with institutions, like us having to move from base to base and having to navigate all the different nuances that occur at each location and how to go about making new friends and getting to know the schools." Given how frequently she moved due to her family's affiliation with the military, Patty understood transfer students' difficulties of transitioning from different institutional cultures and contexts. She elaborated:

They are at the community college and they figure it out and it takes them a while and then they are great at it. They do what they need to do and they are successful because they navigate that institution. Then they have to do it all over again. And so I think that could just wear you down and discourage you. If you combine that with mitigating factors of being first-generation, potentially being low income, being from a family that maybe doesn't value or understand higher education. They want it for you but don't

know how to best support you in that transition or that journey. You combine all that with the culture shock and you've got even bigger issues.

The unique demographics of transfer students can affect their social integration. Students who are low income, first generation, or lack a family support system have additional challenges to overcome (Deil-Amen, 2011). Integrating into the campus culture is tough enough, but not having role models or members of their family who can share their personal college experience can be frustrating and overwhelming for these new transfer students.

All staff interviewees linked campus involvement and sense of belonging with strong student success, as they tended to associate the most successful transfer students they knew with being engaged in the school community and having some sort of support system. For example, Sharon noted:

The students that are the most successful are the ones that take it seriously and put themselves out there. If you make an effort, go to clubs and organizations, attend all these events, and seek assistance, you will be very successful as a transfer student here.

Sharon directly links involvement with success among transfer students. The transfer students whom she perceives as being the most successful are the ones who participate in various on-campus activities and have built connections within the campus community.

Robert also identified this connection between the institution and the transfer student as particularly important for preventing transfer students from feeling stressed:

The biggest issue that affects transfer students is finding a connection. I find that everything can be great, but if they don't find their home here, if they don't get involved and engaged with the community and find people they can hang out with and make friendships, then they get lost and dismayed and overwhelmed.

Although not mentioned directly, Robert infers that transfer students who are not actively plugged in and engaged in the community have a more difficult time making friends, which can affect their persistence.

As shown in Table 4.3, the vast majority of transfer students at each institution successfully made friends at their new campus, but much smaller proportions felt connected to the campus community. Between 73% and 86% of students agreed that they had made friends while at their respective colleges. This could have been during new student orientation or any other avenue where they were able to connect with other students. By contrast, much smaller proportions of students reported seeing themselves as part of the campus community, as agreement with this item ranged from 54.4% in College X to 61.9% in College Z, roughly matching the proportions of students who felt a sense of belonging to campus.

Table 4.3
Student Survey Responses on Integration into Campus Life (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 41	College Z N= 21
I have made friends on campus	Agree	80.7	73.2	85.7
	Neutral	12.3	17.1	14.3
	Disagree	7.0	9.7	0
I see myself as part of the campus community	Agree	54.4	58.5	61.9
	Neutral	33.3	29.3	33.3
	Disagree	12.3	12.2	4.8
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus	Agree	56.1	53.7	57.1
	Neutral	33.3	31.7	38.1
	Disagree	10.6	14.6	4.8

Further analysis of the relationship between students making friends on campus and their integration with the campus community is shown in Table 4.4. At all three colleges, the majority of students who agreed they were able to make friends also agreed they were part of the campus community (50.9% at College X, 53.7% at College Y, and 61.9% at College Z).

Table 4.4
Proportion of Transfer Students Who Agreed They Felt Like a Part of the Campus Community, by Whether They Had Made Friends (%)

	College X N= 57	College Y N= 41	College Z N= 21
Ability to make friends			
Agree	50.9	53.7	61.9
Neutral	1.8	4.9	0
Disagree	1.8	0	0

The disconnect between transfer students’ relative success at establishing on-campus friendships and the extent to which they feel connected to the larger campus community raises questions about what additional efforts institutions can make to connect the students with one another. Interviewees identified more specific social programming for this population as perhaps the most effective strategy. Social programming that kept the students engaged and involved included retreats, off-campus excursions, and opportunities to hang out with one another away from the academic setting. These are immersive and time-intensive activities which seem to be taking the students away from the campus, thus influencing their sense of belonging and inclusiveness in the community.

Staff from each of the three institutions described their programming efforts. Jesse, who works at College X, explained that her office’s programming included “things as small as coffee and donuts, where we tell them to come to the student center, check out the space, and enjoy some free coffee to bigger events where we’ve helped them de-stress and find a balance in their lives.”

Sharon described her approach to working on social programming for the students at College Y.

The model is every other week there is a dinner or excursion or some sort of activity for our students. Often it's just in our office around food, because students are always looking for food. We invite the current cohort of new transfer students so that they can start getting to know each other socially. There is a structure to it, a theme usually, but it really is trying to engage them and bring them together so they can meet one another.

While this strategy can help transfer students connect with one another, it can further isolate them from the broader student body. They start to get to know other transfer students socially, but do not have the same opportunity to connect with the native student population.

Cathy and Keith portray a similar approach to campus programming for students at College Z. They described most of their programming as social, incorporating off-campus excursions, and allowing for transfer students to predominantly interact with other transfer students. They also discussed some of the changes being implemented this year, which include expanding their current programming to incorporate more "intellectual faith-based interactions" and "opportunities to expose students to some of the arts or some of the special faculty lecture series." They hope that this change in approach will help students integrate with the campus community by acquainting them with faculty, religion, and culture.

The staff interviewees described fairly routine programs that could just as easily serve the needs of all students, not just the transfer population. This could be why such a small portion of transfer students (just more than half) who participated in the survey at each of the three institutions felt like they belonged. Further analysis on student satisfaction with transfer student programming and agreement with sense of belonging was conducted and is shown in Table 4.5. 32.1% of College X students, 20.6% of College Y students, and 47.6% of College Z students who were satisfied with transfer programming also felt connected to their campus community. Students not displayed in this table had neutral responses to one or both of the survey items.

Survey analysis showed a statistical significance (p-value of 0.01) between College X students' sense of belonging and their satisfaction with transfer specific programming. Students who expressed dissatisfaction with their institution's programming felt less connected to their campus community. One of these disconnected students commented that he wanted "more social events, in various timeframes, rather than just in the morning or late at night." Other dissatisfied students echoed the need for more activities, but did not provide specific recommendations.

Table 4.5
Analysis of Student Survey Responses to Satisfaction with Transfer Student Programming and Agreement with Sense of Belonging (%)

	College X N= 53	College Y N= 34	College Z N= 21
Satisfaction with transfer student programming / Agreement with sense of belonging	32.1	20.6	47.6
Satisfaction with transfer student programming / Disagreement with sense of belonging	0	2.9	0
Dissatisfaction with transfer student programming / Agreement with sense of belonging	5.7	5.9	4.8
Dissatisfaction with transfer student programming / Disagreement with sense of belonging	7.6	8.8	4.8

The social programming efforts described by the staff interviewees appear to satisfy most transfer students at College Z, but less than half of transfer students at College X and College Y expressed satisfaction with their institution's transfer specific social programming efforts. Table 4.6 shows that the majority of students at College Z (76.2% and 71.4%) felt satisfied with the availability of social activities and transfer specific programming. Satisfaction with programming for transfer students and the availability of social activities was more tepid among transfer students at College X and College Y. Only 40.4% of students at College X and 37.2%

of students at College Y were satisfied with the transfer specific activities provided by their respective campuses. Similarly, close to half (49.2% at College X and 53.5% at College Y) of transfer students were satisfied with the availability of campus social activities.

Table 4.6
Students' Satisfaction of Student Activities Provided by the Institution (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Transfer student activities/ programming	Satisfied	40.4	37.2	71.4
	Neutral	36.8	32.6	9.5
	Dissatisfied	15.8	14.0	19.1
	Can't Rate/No Experience	7.0	16.2	0
Availability of campus social activities	Satisfied	49.2	53.5	76.2
	Neutral	29.8	23.3	14.3
	Dissatisfied	10.5	11.6	4.7
	Can't Rate/No Experience	10.5	11.6	4.8

There seems to be a disconnect with staff's perception of transfer specific programming and contentment among the transfer student population. Although staff portrayed a need to tailor programming specifically for the transfer population, most of the activities recounted were programs that could just as easily have been for native students. While the staff described their efforts with providing various opportunities for transfer students to connect on a social level, less than half of the student survey respondents at College X and College Y were satisfied with the transfer specific activities and programming provided by their institution.

From Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 we can conclude that social programming is not an effective way to establish transfer students' sense of belonging. Despite 71.4% of students at College Z expressing satisfaction with their institution's social programming, less than half (47.6%) of those satisfied students felt they had a sense of belonging. This would suggest Tinto's and Astin's theoretical frameworks may not be appropriate for understanding transfer

students' experiences at their new institution and that Deil-Amen's socio-academic integrative moments provide a more accurate representation of student belonging.

Transfer Students' Struggles with Adjusting to New Academic Challenges

In addition to adjusting to a new institution's social environment, transfer students also have to overcome the challenges associated with the rigor of academic life at their new campus. All six staff interviewees acknowledged that the academic difference between the community college and the transfer institution contributed to the initial culture shock transfer students may experience upon matriculation. Sharon pointed to a difference in academic rigor as an initial obstacle in transfer students' adjustment: "It is harder [here] than some of the community colleges. They may be taking general education courses and not as prepared in college-level writing, and, depending on their major, sometimes math is a struggle for them too." Sharon implies that if the students are not taking the necessary math and English courses at the community college prior to transferring, they may fall behind when coming to the four-year institution.

Robert echoed this sentiment, noting that the additional credits students take each term and the more intense curriculum at the four-year institution present significant adjustment challenges for transfer students.

The amount of work that is involved in completing at a satisfactory level is oftentimes overwhelming. In particular with our first-generation students who don't really have a roadmap. They might have had some counselors or some peers maybe, but they are kind of experiencing this for the first time without ever really knowing what it entails or what it's all about. So there is the transfer shock element, which usually wears off after the first semester but is initially one of the things that paralyzes our students or could lead to less than stellar results academically, socially, and emotionally.

Robert perceives the academic level of work to be difficult particularly for first-generation students given that they have no one in their family who has gone through the transfer process.

Given the salience of academic adjustment as one of the primary contributors to culture shock for transfer students, it was surprising to learn that some staff felt least prepared or least empowered to address this issue. For example, Sharon said, “We can help them and try to get them to the right people, but we don’t have a say so over their academics. So our programming to assist them in the transition is more social.” Given her office’s charge, Sharon sees limits in her office’s capacity to help, limiting assistance to connecting students with individuals who do have the authority and/or knowledge to provide academic support. Sharon was not alone in this sentiment. Staff from each of the three institutions felt that their primary roles were to assist students with the social transition and to direct students to the appropriate campus offices when academic challenges arose.

Unfortunately, the survey did not include direct measures about how students perceived their adjustment to the academic demands of their new college. However, the survey did ask students about their satisfaction with academic courses, faculty instruction, and overall academic experience, which is displayed in Table 4.7. A super majority of students across all three institutions expressed satisfaction with the academic courses, instruction by faculty, and overall academic experience of the college. It is important to note that the survey sample only included students who returned for their second term at the new institution. Students who left after their first term in the fall of 2016, perhaps due to dissatisfaction with or trouble adjusting to academic life at their new institution, were not represented in the survey data.

Table 4.7

Students' Satisfaction with Academics and Faculty at Transfer Institution (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Academic courses	Satisfied	91.2	86.1	85.7
	Neutral	7.0	4.7	14.3
	Dissatisfied	1.8	9.2	0
Faculty instruction	Satisfied	86.0	74.4	90.4
	Neutral	12.2	20.9	4.8
	Dissatisfied	1.8	4.7	4.8
Overall academic experience	Satisfied	91.2	83.7	80.9
	Neutral	7.0	11.6	19.1
	Dissatisfied	1.8	4.7	0

The Importance of Academic Advisement for Smoother Transitions

Academic advising is a crucial piece to ensure students are on the right track for timely graduation. Private universities tend to have more flexibility on when students can transfer into the institution, allowing students to transfer with varying semester units and in the fall or spring semesters. Public universities have system-wide policies that require transfer students to have a specific number of units prior to transferring and may limit admission to only the fall entry term. Sharon verifies this notion, saying that “as a private school, it allows us to take students with almost any course. We can take students in their sophomore year with 30 units or can take them with 60 units and they like the flexibility of being able to transfer in various semesters.”

Advisement can occur at two stages of the transfer process: one being pre-matriculation and the other post-matriculation. Pre-matriculation advisement focuses on the credits and degree requirements that students can transfer into the four-year campus, and Robert noted that “academic advisement is a critical part of the transition process, with the goal being to make sure all their classes transfer while maximizing the courses the students have taken.” Cathy discussed how the pre-matriculation advisement process has become more inclusive and student-centered

at her institution. The process has shifted from one where students arrived on campus without knowing which credits would transfer to their new institution to a protocol that gives students greater confidence in knowing the specifics about the exact courses and credits that will transfer.

We've started working closely with academic advising, and now they can sit down with prospective transfers and give them a review of their transcript and what they have already taken and even if they come here and they realize that they can't afford it but they want to graduate from here, the advisor can say here are 12 more units you are allowed to take elsewhere.

Cathy explains the benefit of having academic advisors work with students as early in the process as possible. This allows for students to have an advanced knowledge of the number of units that will transfer into the new institution and also gives them the opportunity to take advantage of low cost summer courses provided at their local community colleges.

Unlike orientation, academic advisement for transfer students tends to receive greater attention and resources from the institution. For example, Robert discussed how the transfer advisement process requires more time and attention from campus officials compared to the parallel process for freshmen. He went on to explain:

Transfers are a little more vague. We spend a lot of time trying to help them understand what courses on the front end they should be taking while still at their prior institution so that when they get here they have a better understanding of their time to degree, which is important in regards to retention and ensuring that these students maximize their experiences here and minimize their out of pocket expenses.

Robert sees the time investment as worth it given how it can help clarify time to degree, minimize tuition cost, and improve retention efforts.

Post-matriculation advisement approaches also vary across institutions based upon advisors' communication strategies and expectations regarding the frequency of advising check-

ins. Some colleges require students to meet with their advisors to stay on track, while others provide these resources for the students who seek them. For the three sites studied, College X and College Z required all their students to check-in with academic advisor at least once a semester. College Y required students with certain majors to check-in with their advisors once a semester and recommended all other students to do the same. According to Patty, College X changed its post-matriculation advisement process to include more faculty involvement based upon student feedback.

One of the biggest missing pieces for us was that faculty were not previously involved in our transfer registration process... We do this event now where we bring in the faculty... So we usually have anywhere from 50-60 students at one of these registration days and about 15 faculty. We go for 30 minute appointments throughout the morning and throughout the afternoon. So the faculty and the student sit down and come up with a schedule...and potentially, if there is time, talk about some other subsequent semesters about what the eventual path would look like.

Patty expressed how these changes have helped transfer students at her institution get acquainted with their academic advisors. Prior to faculty involvement, transfer students felt hesitant approaching faculty for scheduling advice. This streamlined process lets transfer students and faculty interact on a more personal level and allows for both student and faculty input in the creation of a student's academic schedule, which could be why College X had a higher two-year transfer retention rate among the three sites studied.

Sharon points out that there is room for improvement with College Y's advisement and articulation processes.

I think we can do a better job with our academic advising piece. We need to make sure academic advisors are being more attentive and [they] understand that students may have credits from another institution that need to be looked at when they are helping students with their academic plan.

Sharon believes that some academic advisors are misinformed with the number of previously articulated courses transfer students have taken. If faculty advisors are unaware of a student's prior course history, they may register students in unnecessary coursework, which in turn affects a student's academic experience. With College Y being the only site to not require all students to check-in with their academic advisors at least once a semester, when a student does meet with their advisor, there needs to be an accurate exchange of information.

Students' survey responses provided additional evidence regarding the variation across institutions in post-matriculation advisement processes and expectations. Table 4.8 highlights students' satisfaction with academic advising and the frequency with which they met with their advisors. Across all three campuses, students most commonly met with their academic advisors one to two times per month or one to two times per semester, with students from College X meeting with their academic advisors on a more frequent basis (12.3% at least once a week). Perhaps the more frequent interactions with academic advisors by College X students was a result of the increased faculty involvement during the post-matriculation advisement process that Patty previously described.

Students' satisfaction with academic advisement differed across the three sites, as students at College X and College Z had a more positive experience with 72% of College X students and 66.7% of College Z students being satisfied. Students at College Y felt that their experience with academic advisors was not as positive, as only 46.5% of students reported feeling satisfied. A deeper analysis between satisfaction and frequency of meeting with academic advisors resulted in p-values greater than 0.05, which meant that there was no statistical evidence that students from any of the sites who met more frequently with their advisors were more satisfied with the advising process. Table 4.9 shows the relationship

between the two survey items. Among students who met their advisor at least once a week, 85.7% of College X students were satisfied with their academic advising.

Table 4.8
Students' Interaction and Satisfaction with Academic Advising (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Satisfaction with academic advising	Satisfied	72.0	46.5	66.7
	Neutral	17.5	20.9	28.5
	Dissatisfied	10.5	32.6	4.8
Frequency of interaction with academic advisors/ counselors	At least once a week	12.3	2.3	0
	1-2 times per month	22.8	18.6	47.6
	1-2 times per semester	61.4	72.1	47.6
	Never	3.5	7.0	4.8

Table 4.9
Student Satisfaction with Academic Advising, by Frequency of Meeting with Advisor (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Frequency of meeting with advisor	At least once a week	85.7	100.0	0
	1-2 times per month	92.3	75.0	70.0
	1-2 times per semester	65.7	41.9	70.0
	Never	0	0	0

Financial Aid Exacerbates Transfer versus Native Student Disparities

Since each additional semester is an added cost for the student, academic advisement is important in ensuring students graduate in a timely manner. With the high cost of tuition at private institutions, financial aid can have a major impact on student attrition (Serban et al., 2008). As financial aid awards vary across institutions and individual students, affordability persists as a top concern among many students and college administrators.

Table 4.10 shows the students' satisfaction with the financial aid packages awarded by their institutions. More than half (57.9%) of students at College X expressed satisfaction with the financial aid they received by the institution, a full 10 points higher than the proportion of satisfied students at College Z (47.6%). Students at College Y were the least satisfied with the financial support given by their institution, with only a 30.2% satisfaction rate. One reason for the higher satisfaction rate among College X students could be the financial aid matching program offered to its students. Students at College X who are admitted to any of the six in-state public universities can pay the same tuition at College X that they would pay at the public university. This provides students a price match option, giving them the opportunity to get a private liberal arts education at the same cost as an in-state public university. Making the private college experience more affordable can lead to an increased satisfaction rate among students with respect to their financial aid package and could be another reason why College X had high two-year transfer retention rates.

Table 4.10
Students' Satisfaction with Amount of Financial Aid Provided by the Institution (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Satisfaction with financial aid package	Satisfied	57.9	30.2	47.6
	Neutral	22.8	23.2	28.5
	Dissatisfied	15.8	32.6	19.1
	Can't Rate/No Experience	3.5	14.0	4.8

All the staff interviewed across the three institutions agreed that they would benefit if there was parity in the financial aid packages awarded to the freshman and transfer populations. Currently College X and College Z provide both merit and need-based aid to their transfer student population. However, transfer students at College Y are only eligible for need-based aid, with freshmen being the only population eligible for the merit awards. This could be one of the

reasons why students at College Y were the least satisfied with their financial aid packages among the three sites surveyed. Sharon commented on the financial struggles students often deal with at her institution.

Some of the transfer students also drop out in their second year due to finances...A lot of our freshman will be able to make up that balance through institutional grants or work study, but our transfer students are not eligible for as many [opportunities] as our freshman students are. So they [transfer students] really want to get out and they are trying to get out with as little debt as possible...If we could give them equal opportunity for our institutional aid, it would help. I think freshmen get better financial aid packages.

Sharon explains how her institution's policy with respect to merit aid awards constrains funding opportunities for transfer students, creating a chasm between them and native students. With an increased financial aid package for transfer students, or at least parity with the freshman population, Sharon believes that transfer students would be more likely to persist and graduate from the institution with a lower amount of accumulated debt.

Where and with Whom a Transfer Student Lives Can Affect Whether Transition Is Successful

On-campus housing is another costly expense students pay for when attending a university. Living on campus provides an added value, especially for students who transfer into a new college and seek engagement opportunities within the campus community (Kranzow et al., 2015; Ma, 2003). On-campus housing not only is practical for transfer students but also provides the social atmosphere many seek to make new friends and establish their sense of belonging in a new environment (Townsend, 2008). The unique demographic characteristics (e.g., age, family situation, military status) of transfer students have contributed to different approaches to providing these students access to on-campus housing, including designated buildings to more

general assignments. For example, College Z places transfer students in halls that correspond with their age, as Cathy noted, “We’ve recognized the style of housing that works best for transfers is trying to keep them in their age group.” Cathy has found that transfer students are the most satisfied when they are paired up with other transfer students who are of the same age, as they can relate to one another on a more personal level.

Constraints associated with campus housing availability and the timing that transfer students’ applications for on-campus housing get processed present challenges. For example, Sharon shared:

All of it is dependent on each other, but if we can enroll them in more of a timely manner, then we could house them in a more timely manner and they wouldn’t be backfilled and placed in situations or housing accommodations that aren’t necessarily the best for them. But when you enroll a student in August, you got to get what you can get if a student is looking for housing.

Sharon refers to a transfer students’ decision to matriculate as the trigger to their housing assignment. Since housing offices typically start placing students after they have committed to the university, the sooner a student matriculates, the more options are available to them. If a transfer student decides to enroll very close to the start of the semester, they may be placed in any available vacant dorm, regardless of the age of the other student occupants. Thus, creating a more streamlined process that encourages transfer students to commit to enrolling at the campus as early as possible may allow the college to offer more intentional and appropriate housing accommodations.

It is important to note that College X and College Y recommend, but do not require, transfer students to live on campus. However, College Z requires all transfer students to live on campus their first year, with some exemptions to this policy granted. Robert’s institution also

suffers from limited on-campus housing capacity. He expresses frustration that, although the institution accommodates all transfer students who request housing, residence hall capacity prevents the institution from strongly encouraging more transfer students to live on campus given the many benefits associated with doing so:

I think it would be great to be able to guarantee housing for all incoming transfer students. Now the way it is set up, we have been able to provide housing for the students that want it. But knowing how important it is for students to get plugged into the university, it would be nice to be able to suggest or strongly encourage students to live on-campus, but we can't do that right now because we don't have the physical space or the number of beds available to make a legitimate push.

Native students are the first to be assigned housing, with transfer students being put in dorms on an as available basis. This policy illustrates another way in which the institution differentially treats transfer and native students.

Although living on campus provides important benefits for many students, especially those who transfer, staff explained that proper roommate matching can make for either a smooth or a challenging transition for transfer students. For example, Patty, who works at College X, explained:

The transition into housing for us can be a challenging one since we have quite a bit of first-time freshman. Moving into an established group of people who maybe have lost a roommate and have been living together since their freshman year and now this person is coming in two years into it and I don't know who you are and now you are going to be living with me. This could sometimes make for a rocky start.

Patty was not alone in the frustrations she expressed in relation to on-campus housing assignments. The five other staff interviewees corroborated Patty's sentiments regarding the difficulties transfer students can have when placed with incompatible roommates. With the native student population far outnumbering the transfer population at all three institutions,

transfer students can be placed in dorms with students who are much younger than them. When transfer students are not able to connect with their roommates, disengagement from the campus community can occur. Staff acknowledged that this suggests a flaw in the current housing process with opportunities for their institution's housing assignment process to be reviewed and to move towards a more transfer friendly approach.

Students offered mixed reviews when asked how they felt about roommate assignments and the housing process. Some students expressed satisfaction with certain aspects of the process, but many others reported displeasure with their placement. Student survey comments reflected two common categories: issues with roommate compatibility and being placed with students of a different age group. Students who expressed a lack of compatibility with their roommates included a need for "better pairing methods" and commented that "I do not feel that I was matched with people that shared my same interests and habits." Students also voiced their frustrations about being placed with younger roommates, disclosing their dissatisfaction with "being a junior stuck with a bunch of freshman I don't identify with" and wishing they were "placed with people of the same year." The varying housing policies at the three institutions did not provide any distinctions among student comments.

Table 4.11 illustrates the extent to which students were satisfied with the housing process at each of the three school sites. Since only students who lived on-campus participated in this survey question, the sample sizes were much smaller. Overall, students at College X and Z were more pleased with the various components to on-campus housing. Contrastingly, students at College Y seemed to be dissatisfied with the overall housing process. When it came to roommate pairings, students at College X (47.4%) and College Z (44.4%) were satisfied to a

great extent with their roommates, yet only a quarter (23.5%) of students at College Y felt especially satisfied with their roommates. Similarly, when it came to the sense of community students felt in their residence halls, 42.1% of College X students and 50.0% of College Z students responded with great enthusiasm compared to just 17.7% of students at College Y. One student from College Y commented on this lack of community among residents by suggesting a possible solution of “a mandatory meet your neighbors event where you knock on people’s doors near you to meet and greet them”. This would allow students to network with one another and build a supportive community.

Table 4.11
Extent to which Students were Satisfied with Housing Process (%)

		College X N= 19	College Y N= 17	College Z N= 18
Happy with the housing selection process	A Great Extent	57.9	23.5	55.5
	Some Extent	42.1	58.8	38.9
	Not At All	0	17.7	5.6
Satisfied with your roommates	A Great Extent	47.4	23.5	44.4
	Some Extent	36.8	47.1	50.0
	Not At All	15.8	29.4	5.6
Satisfied with living in a residence hall	A Great Extent	63.2	17.7	50.0
	Some Extent	36.8	64.6	38.9
	Not At All	0	17.7	11.1
Feeling a sense of community with where you are living	A Great Extent	42.1	17.7	50.0
	Some Extent	31.6	23.5	44.4
	Not At All	26.3	58.8	5.6

Where and with whom a transfer student lives is a critical aspect to persistence.

Although housing policies varied among the three institutions studied, the students who chose to live in on-campus housing felt an overall satisfaction with and sense of community, particularly at College X and College Z. Transfer students tended to favor living with other transfer students, with staff interviews corroborating this sentiment. With the demand for transfer housing far

surpassing the supply at all three colleges, staff interviewees emphasized the importance of timeliness in enrolling students.

The Campus Religious Context as Either a Facilitator of or Barrier to Adjustment

For all three institutions, religion represents a part of the academic and social atmosphere of the campus. Depending on the individual campus, the religious requirements placed upon students range from quite stringent to more lenient. Even though the religious experiences may vary among the three campuses, the staff agree the best approach is to be upfront about it when interacting with prospective students. Robert explains his approach when talking to students about the religious environment at College Y.

That's our goal with every new student we meet. To be transparent about our school's experiences, academic standards, expectations of our students as a whole, so that there are no surprises. If a student gets here and is surprised we are a religious institution, then something was lost along the way.

Robert communicates the importance of discussing the religious aspect of the campus when meeting with prospective students. He wants students to have all the necessary information about the expectations and requirements associated with being a faith-based institution prior to making the decision to enroll. Cathy, who works at College Z, shared this perspective:

Being very upfront with our Christian mission is important. It is a challenge for a lot of our students. We've even gotten feedback from our students that say that they are not religious at all or their faith traditions are different and now they have to take these religion classes that they don't know the history of... So I think it's just being upfront about saying this is the experience we provide but also to help them with that transition, whether it's the academic rigor or it's just recognizing that they don't feel like they fit in.

Cathy understands that being upfront about the campus spiritual identity may be off-putting for those students who may have a different faith background. She is sympathetic to these students and wants to assist them in fitting in with the campus community.

Certainly the campus religious climate has a lot to do with the requirements set forth by the institution. College Z has stricter religious requirements that may alienate students who are not looking for a religious experience at their new institution. These include requiring students to take three Christianity courses and attending mandatory weekly worship. College X and College Y have a more laid back approach to the religious requirements, providing students opportunities to participate in as little or as much as they feel comfortable with. Students at College X and College Y are not required to attend worship services and must take two religious courses that can be chosen from a variety of disciplines. When students were asked to describe the religious identity of their university, College X students acknowledged the surrounding religious context but did not feel pressured to subscribe to a certain belief. The following two comments represented the general sense of survey respondents about the campus religious environment at College X: “[Christian] college, but I don’t feel pressured to be a part of a certain group due to religion” and it has a “[Christian] title, but not strictly religious campus and is open to all religious views.” Students from College X welcomed the institution’s more liberal approach to religion.

College Y students had a similar description of their campus religious identity, describing it as not as imposing. They commented that the campus was “[Christian], but it’s not too in your face” and “the [Christian] presence is felt, but never overwhelming.” Clearly the students

understood the spiritual identity of the institution and appreciated that it was not something forced upon them.

By contrast, College Z students had more diverse perspectives with respect to the campus religious context. Some felt the campus was exactly what they were looking for in creating a Christian identity, but others commented on the alienation felt by those who were not Christian. One student commented that the institution “helped them gain a relationship with God and learning the Bible.” By contrast, another student offered a warning to prospective transfer students: “If you are not a Christian, you will be likely to not be satisfied/happy in the school's environment.” These two comments emphasize the polarizing views about religion held by transfer students at College Z. The comments suggest that, in addition to adjusting to the academic and social spheres of the university, transfer students who do not identify as Christian may have particular challenges acclimating to the religious context of College Z.

The polarizing qualitative comments about the religious context at College Z also emerged in transfer student respondents' self-reported satisfaction with various religious components at the institution. As Table 4.12 shows, 61.9% of transfer student respondents at College Z felt satisfied with their college's required religious classes and commitments compared to 54.4% of College X students and 37.2% of transfer students at College Y. Not only did College Z respondents register the most satisfaction with their institution's religious components, these students also expressed the most intense dissatisfaction on this same measure (23.8%). This echoes the previous analysis of the students' description of College Z's campus religious identity. Additionally, the “can't rate/no experience” option was popular among

students in College X and College Y, most likely due to the institutions' less imposing religious requirements.

Table 4.12
Students' Satisfaction with Religious Components of Institution (%)

		College X N= 57	College Y N= 43	College Z N= 21
Religious classes/commitments required by the university	Satisfied	54.4	37.2	61.9
	Neutral	26.3	25.6	14.3
	Dissatisfied	8.8	9.3	23.8
	Can't Rate/No Experience	10.5	27.9	0
Non-academic religious activities	Satisfied	54.4	51.2	57.2
	Neutral	24.5	25.6	33.3
	Dissatisfied	5.3	2.3	0
	Can't Rate/No Experience	15.8	20.9	9.5

An analysis of student survey responses to satisfaction with religious commitments and agreement with sense of belonging was conducted and is displayed in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13
Analysis of Student Survey Responses to Satisfaction with Religious Commitments and Agreement with Sense of Belonging (%)

	College X N= 51	College Y N= 29	College Z N=21
Satisfaction with religious commitments / Agreement with sense of belonging	41.2	27.6	47.6
Satisfaction with religious commitments / Disagreement with sense of belonging	5.9	6.9	0
Dissatisfaction with religious commitments / Agreement with sense of belonging	3.9	6.9	4.8
Dissatisfaction with religious commitments / Disagreement with sense of belonging	0	0	4.8

College Z students were most satisfied with the religious commitments of the university and felt a sense of belonging (47.6%), however they also were the only institution with students who were dissatisfied with the religious requirements and less likely to feel as part of the campus community (4.8%).

Through the analysis of student survey feedback and staff interviews, the students who attended these three institutions fell into one of three categories: They had a spiritual background and were seeking a religious college environment, were not religious and were open to the faith component the campus has to offer, or were not aware of the religious requirements of the university and were surprised upon matriculation. Cathy described these various mentalities students have when coming to the campus she works at.

One student told me she's fine with it, that it's not as Christian as she thought it would be. Some students, depending on the classes they take and the people they interact with, being a faith-based university could be an issue, if that's not something they were used to or were expecting. For the people coming here wanting a faith-based university, they actually like it...For the student that maybe didn't come here for the religious reason, giving them the opportunity to decide if they agree or disagree with the campus religion is important.

Cathy understands that multiple factors are at play in a student's decision to matriculate.

Students vary in the importance they place on religion, an institution's religious affiliation, and its religious requirements in deciding where to enroll (Eagan et al., 2015). Regardless of the student's spiritual background, Cathy believes that faith-based institutions can provide opportunities for students to reflect on their identity and beliefs so that students can arrive at their own conclusions with respect to how closely they hue to the college's religious doctrine.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study looked at three different private religious liberal arts universities in California and gathered the student and staff perceptions on what they believed made community college students successful in their new setting. All of the themes discussed interconnect with one another and affect transfer students' overall experience at their new four-year institution. From the stereotypes and culture shock community college students experience upon matriculation, to interpersonal and institutional elements such as orientation, academic advisement, financial aid, and housing, of which all are influential components to their transition to the new college setting. Furthermore, the additional element of the campus religious climate at the three institutions can either facilitate or become a barrier to students' success. As Robert stated, "Most students that are having an issue are going to touch multiple different areas. If they are having a social/emotional issue that is preventing them from going to class, financial issues with paying their bills, or not being able to connect with others, all of these can collectively affect their student experience and ultimately their retention." What Robert and the five other staff interviewees expressed was that many factors are at play in a student's decision to persist. The interactions students have with various student service offices are critical and so as a university, these offices are now trying to work better as a team to identify factors and strategize ways to ensure a successful on-boarding process for transfer students. Coming to a new college environment is difficult for any student, let alone for those who are unfamiliar with a four-year faith-based university setting. This transition and adjustment period is a crucial piece for transfer students as they start their college journey at their new institutional setting.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings and Concluding Remarks

This study examined the experiences and satisfaction associated with transitioning into a new institution for community college students who transferred to one of three private religiously affiliated liberal arts universities in California. The study also focused on the ways in which staff at each of the three campuses perceived transfer students' transition experiences and how these receiving institutions provided support to transfer students. Although the three receiving institutions were faith-based, each represented different religious denominations and varied in the religious requirements for students. The campuses also differed with respect to the proportion of transfer students among all undergraduate students, as transfer students accounted for 36% of the undergraduate students at College X, 32% of the undergraduate students at College Y, and 12% of the undergraduate students at College Z. Both College Y and College Z had low two-year retention rates for transfer students. In comparison, College X had a high two-year transfer retention rate, which even exceeded their two-year freshman retention rate.

At 85%, the two-year transfer retention rate at College X exceeded the two-year transfer retention rates at the other two institutions. The success of College X in retaining transfer students may connect to several of the institutional policies highlighted through interviews and document analyses. Additionally, student satisfaction with the campus across several domains related to these policies placed College X atop the three institutions included in the study. For example, College X updated its post-matriculation advising to introduce students to faculty advisors early on and facilitated a connection to academic life on campus, and survey respondents from College X registered the highest satisfaction rate for overall academic experience and academic advisement. Additionally, College X transfer students met with their academic advisors more frequently than their peers at the other two campuses. College X also

provided both need-based and merit financial aid, and the institution offered a program that matched its tuition to any one of six UC campuses for students who gained admission to both College X and one of these UCs. Not coincidentally, transfer students at College X expressed stronger satisfaction with their financial aid awards than their counterparts at Colleges Y and Z. College X's transfer students were more satisfied with living in the residence halls compared to transfer students at the other two campuses, and some of this difference may be attributed to the lack of a policy requiring transfer students to live on campus. Collectively, these policies appear to contribute to College X transfer students' generally stronger satisfaction with the campus across several domains and its much stronger two-year transfer student retention rate.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the major findings from the study and how they relate to the existing literature on the needs of transfer students with respect to student engagement and retention. Following the discussion of findings, I review the limitations that affected the findings. I conclude with recommendations, which include policy implications, implications for practice, and directions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Given that students who transferred from a community college represent 33% of all students enrolled at four-year institutions (Gard, Paton, & Gosselin, 2012; Marling, 2013), policymakers and educational leaders concerned with maintaining or increasing the supply of bachelor's degree holders need to understand and address the needs of this population. There has been a significant increase in enrollment at faith-based universities in the United States over the past few decades (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012), which is why understanding the transitions of this population is particularly important. Among all transfer students, those who start their educational journey at a community college are the most defenseless and least equipped to

navigate the process of transferring and transitioning to a new four-year institution (Handel & Strempel, 2016). Understanding what they desire at the four-year institution is critical to setting them up for success and timely graduation.

Stressing the importance of socio-academic integrative moments, Deil-Amen (2011) concludes that the relationships new students establish with faculty, staff, and peers gives them the social capital to succeed academically. The coupling of the academic influence with elements of social integration provide support for transfer students and helps them achieve a sense of belonging with the campus community. With these perspectives in mind, the following sections situate the study's findings within the broader context of the marginalization, transitionary supports, and navigational challenges experienced among students who transferred from community colleges to private religiously affiliated liberal arts universities in California.

New Student Orientation

New student orientation represents an integral part of a student's transition to the new university setting (Grites, 2013). Orientation programming and content varies by campus, as some schools hold separate orientations for different populations of students (i.e. transfers, freshmen, international), while others offer one general orientation for the entire incoming student population (Poisel & Joseph, 2011). Student survey data showed that not all students saw a value or need for orientation. For example, satisfaction with orientation ranged from 84.8% at College X to 86.8% at College Y. Additionally, responses to open-ended questions highlighted how several students did not find relevance in their orientation experience.

Some students felt the academic piece was the most crucial, while others felt that it needed to be supplemented with a stronger social-emotional component. Student survey comments revealed the need to make orientation content more transfer specific, as students felt

that much of the programming was geared towards the needs of freshman students. This sentiment aligned with findings from previous studies, which concluded that the more specific orientation was for transfer students, the more beneficial it was for them (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001; Ellis, 2013; Owens, 2010). Students also felt that orientation programming would benefit with an increased amount of navigational tools to help them get familiar with the new campus and ways of incorporating additional social activities to aid in creating relationships with other transfer students. This was also supported in previous literature by Eggleston and Laanan (2001) who believed that transfer students were seeking orientation programming that aided in navigation of the campus, while addressing their academic and social concerns.

Comments made by staff who participated in interviews suggested a recognition of transfer students' varied experiences with and opinions about orientation, as staff described the need to balance the sense of self-sufficiency exhibited by transfer students against an obligation to ensure transfers have information about and access to services the campus offered. This creates a challenge for staff who try to create orientation programming for students with both mindsets.

Sense of Belonging

Orientation is one of the first opportunities for institutions to create a sense of belonging for their new student population. Staff recognized that creating a connection between the institution and the student was the most important factor for persistence. They perceived the most disengaged students as those who had the "take classes, get out" mentality, omitting the social component of a college environment. Although staff interviewees recognized that students often struggled connecting with the native population (who had pre-existing relationships with one another), survey data revealed that most transfer students made friends in

their new setting. Despite successfully making friends, transfer students who responded to the survey reported a relatively weak sense of belonging and connection with the campus community. Just over half of the student survey sample at each institution felt like they belonged (56.1% at College X, 53.7% at College Y, and 57.1% at College Z).

Staff interviewees described a number of initiatives designed to facilitate strong connections to the campus among transfer students, yet many of the programs seemed fairly routine. Additionally, the programs that staff identified suggested a disconnect between staff's perceptions of transfer programming's effectiveness and the realities of the kinds of programs transfer students' sought. Students' surveys showed College Z students were the most satisfied with the availability of transfer specific programming, with College X and College Y students being less satisfied. College X students' survey responses showed a statistical significance between students who felt dissatisfied with campus programming and them feeling less connected with the campus community. More satisfied students felt like they had a stronger connection to the campus, and students who foster a stronger sense of belonging to their college tend to persist at higher rates (Poggendorf, 2013).

Academic Advisement and Adjustment to the New Environment

Transitioning from a community college to a four-year university can be difficult, as students need to understand and adapt to a new set of academic requirements. Student affairs staff explained their offices focused on helping students more on the psychosocial level while offering very little assistance related to addressing transfer students' academic struggles. Instead, staff perceived academic advising initiatives, both pre- and post- matriculation, as primarily responsible for fulfilling this role.

Staff described advising prior to matriculation as more time-intensive but ultimately worthwhile to ensure setting up the student for success. Staff perceived establishing early connections between students and academic advisors, giving students the confidence in knowing what courses transferred, and articulating the specific time to degree as positive influences with respect to institutional efforts to retain transfer students. This echoed Townsend's (2008) study, which stated that the sooner transfer students are aware of their transfer coursework and time to degree, the more motivated they are to persist and earn their bachelor's degree.

In a study conducted by Allen, Smith, & Muehleck (2014), post-matriculated transfer students described universities as complex and hard to navigate, with disappointing advisement qualities. Additionally, they noted extreme ramifications for advisement mistakes, which often led to unnecessary classes, supplementary semesters, and added expenses. Interviewees viewed post-matriculation advising as equally crucial to students' persistence. Specifically noted in College X, post-matriculation advisement days included more faculty involvement as an earlier form of introduction between the students and their faculty advisors. Establishing these relationships early assisted in informing students about the people and offices available to support them whenever they encountered academic challenges or scheduling issues that may negatively affect their progress and time to degree.

Due to the environment of a university being different than that of a community college, students feel overwhelmed after completing the transfer process and need help establishing connections with on-campus support services (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). One element of Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integrative moments is the importance of connecting students with their faculty advisors early on. The sooner a student connects with faculty and academic advisors, the earlier they gain academic self-confidence and the ability to navigate their

institutional academic policies and requirements. Faculty and academic advisors provide this support for students adjusting to the new college environment, which can counteract the dissatisfaction associated with creating and following degree plans associated with transferring (Deil-Amen, 2011). Students at all three institutions met with their academic advisors at least one to two times per semester. Students at College X met with their academic advisors on an even more frequent basis (daily/weekly), possibly due to their earlier exposure to faculty advisors. In other words, it seems possible that once students were able to identify the individuals with the knowledge and capacity to provide academic support, they were more willing to seek their counsel. Survey data showed College X and College Z students were more satisfied with their academic advisement, with less than half of College Y students expressing their satisfaction (46.5%). Analyses comparing the frequency of advisement with students' satisfaction with the advising process did not find a statistically significant relationship.

Financial Aid and College Affordability

Financial aid has consistently been rated as one of the most influential factors in a student's decision to matriculate and persist at the receiving institution (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001). Davignon (2016) reported that the top three influencers of college choice for transfer students who had matriculated to faith-based universities were their financial aid package, institution's spiritual identity, and academic reputation. Although a supermajority of students at all three institutions expressed satisfaction with their academic courses and faculty instruction, they had more mixed views regarding their individual financial aid awards. Overall, 57.9% of College X students, 30.2% of College Y students, and 47.6% of College Z students expressed satisfaction with their financial aid packages. College X and College Z awarded transfer students both merit and need-based aid, while College Y students only received need-based

awards, which generally provide less free money in the form of grants. The decreased amount of aid available to transfer students at College Y may have negatively affected their satisfaction. College X's tuition match program, where transfer students who had been admitted to any of six selected in-state public universities pay the same tuition at College X charged by the public institution, may account for the higher rates of satisfaction expressed by transfer students at College X.

Regardless of students' varying satisfaction with financial aid, staff interviewees unanimously endorsed parity in financial aid award eligibility between freshmen and transfer students. From institutional knowledge and working with individual students, they noticed an inequality in aid awarded to transfer students, with freshmen receiving more financial support from the institution. This corroborated existing literature that transfer students typically receive less financial aid at the four-year institution when compared to their freshman counterparts (Miller, 2013).

Transfer Housing

Staff perceived transfer students as being the happiest when rooming with other transfer students, especially those of similar ages. However, with the demand for on-campus housing far outpacing the supply at the three institutions studied, the campuses placed transfer students based upon available space rather than through an intentional strategy that matched transfer students with housing accommodations and roommates that more closely aligned with their needs and tastes. Freshmen typically have different social and emotional needs than the incoming transfer students, given differences with respect to age, maturity, and family expectations (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001; Townsend, 2008), which occasionally resulted in unexpected challenges when institutions assigned students from each of these populations to room with one another. This was

supported by Deil-Amen's (2011) socio-academic integrative moments framework, where long-term friendships among transfer students were not expected. When compared to four-year residential students, community college transfer students can have different expectations and perceptions of college that may lead to incompatibility among the two populations when assigned to room with one another.

For many students, living on campus adds value to their experiences and helps them form a stronger connection with the campus community (Ma, 2003; Richman, 1979). However, appropriate roommate matches are equally as important, as mismatched pairings can lead to tension and frustration, which can factor into students' decision to persist (Townsend, 2008). Staff interviews and qualitative data from the survey revealed transfer students exhibited discontent when paired with students not of the same age as them, with students disclosing their dissatisfaction with "being a junior stuck with a bunch of freshman I don't identify with" and wishing they were "placed with people of the same year." Specifically, College Y students were the least satisfied with the housing process and their roommate pairings, with satisfaction rates of 23.5% on both survey items. Students from College Y were also least satisfied with the sense of community in the dorms, with only 17.7% of students expressing satisfaction. Staff interviews and survey feedback provided recommendations for changes to the housing processes. There was a consensus in the value of pairing transfer students with other transfers, which was in agreement with previous literature (Townsend, 2008).

Religious Component of Campus

Campuses' religious affiliations represent another possible way in which students find a connection to the institution. According to Davignon (2016), most students who enroll at faith-based institutions do so for their interest in a liberal arts education that is grounded in religious

values. The students who make their college enrollment decision based on the spiritual identity of the institution are more likely to integrate with the campus community and connect with on-campus spiritual mentors.

Student feedback corroborated the spiritual nature of the three campuses. Students at both College X and College Y felt that a spiritual presence was felt on campus, but was not forced upon the student population. Contrastingly, students at College Z were divided in their comments. There were students who were seeking the more stringent religious environment or were at least open to it. However, there were also students who commented on the alienation they felt if their faith was disparate from the campus spiritual identity or religious majority. Students like these find it difficult to integrate with the campus culture, which can lead to disengagement (Davignon, 2016). Morris et al. (2003) concluded that students who felt a disconnect with the religious nature of the campus, or were not open to spiritual growth, were more likely to have persistence issues in subsequent semesters.

Limitations

There were several limitations that affected the findings in this study. One such limitation had to do with bias towards engaged students. Since the surveys were administered through the student affairs office at each institution where staff may have promoted the survey to transfer students who had leadership positions on campus or even worked in the office, the sample of students responding to the survey may be biased toward students who have stronger connections to and more involvement on campus. The staff could have promoted the survey to the students who worked in their office or who actively engaged in student life activities. The students who are the most engaged tend to have a higher satisfaction with their transfer experience (Burks & Barrett, 2009), which can result in a positive skew on the survey responses.

Students who were already disengaged may not have felt the need to complete the surveys or may have dropped out prior to the survey administration period.

With respect to the survey sample, some additional limitations were present. Response rates and the representativeness of the sample with respect to demographics was one such limitation. The survey sample did not exactly match the student demographic population of the individual sites. Additionally, the small sample sizes may have constrained opportunities to find statistically significant relationships. If a greater number of students had participated in the surveys, there could have been more connections made between various survey items and the general demographic population. Furthermore, since the surveys were administered at the same time as staff interviewed, surveys could not more directly test some assumptions mentioned by the interviewees.

The staff who were selected for the interviews could be considered limitations themselves. Two student affairs staff interviews per institution may not have been enough to accurately assess the campus climate. Efforts were made to interview staff who worked directly with the transfer population and were in tune with the overall institutional commitments made for this population, which adds credibility to their descriptions of the programs and opportunities available to transfer students. However, their perspectives about these initiatives may represent a minority opinion within the larger campus. Furthermore, staff could have given positive exposure to the programs they had implemented, even if they were not effective in addressing the needs of transfer students. The connections made by staff between transfer initiatives and student success were anecdotal, as the study did not have data (qualitative or quantitative) to empirically support such connections. Additionally, findings related to stigma rest entirely on perspectives of staff, since surveys did not include such questions and the study did not include

interviews with students. Lastly, there were no specific questions asked to staff interviewees in regards to the religious component of the campuses and their perception of how it could affect students' successful transition.

Recommendations

The findings from this study have a number of implications for policy, practice, and research. The three campuses have opportunities to revisit their financial aid and housing policies in a way that treats transfer students more equitably. The lack of a centralized office responsible with coordinating all transfer-related initiatives and the disconnect between staff's perceptions of the kinds of program desired by transfer students and the reality of how transfer students felt about these programs may lead to new directions for the campus to reconsider institutional practices concerning this student population. Finally, the limitations in terms of the number of survey respondents at each campus, the cross-sectional nature of data collection, and the constraint of examining transfer student experiences at just three campuses offer several possible directions for future research. The remainder of this section elaborates upon each of these implications.

Policy Implications

Findings from this study can be used by institutions to revisit their financial aid and housing policies to determine ways they can be made more equitable for transfer students. With 36% of College X, 32% of College Y, and 12% of College Z undergraduate students being those that transferred from another institution, policy changes that are equitable among all undergraduates is important in maintaining and growing those coming from community colleges. When providing financial assistance to transfer students, institutions should assess their awarding structures to provide consistency with the freshman population. Availability of need-based and

merit awards, class standing based on number of units transferred, and expected family contribution should all be considered when award packages are distributed to individual students. Additionally, housing timelines and processes should be reviewed to determine the best approach to on-campus housing and roommate pairings for transfer students. Colleges should examine future opportunities to create transfer specific residence halls or ways for transfer students to network and create their own support communities. Making these changes to institutional policies in regards to housing and financial aid will address the needs of current and future transfer students.

Implications for Practice

The lack of a centralized office responsible for coordinating all transfer-related efforts suggests an important practical implication for the study: campuses should consider establishing such an office. Better outcomes for transfer students exist when institutional efforts and programming are well coordinated through a central transfer center that aids in the successful transition to the new college setting (Miller, 2013; Serban et al., 2008). While College Y and College Z had dedicated space and staff to address transfer students' social needs during the transition process, College X's university personnel were responsible for general social programming for all undergraduate students, not just transfer students. However, none of the campuses had one centralized office that truly oversaw the entirety of the needs for this population. Individual staff and offices within the institutions relied on collaboration with one another to address the various social, emotional, and academic challenges that may arise within the transfer student population. Having a more centralized office may provide more efficiency and better service to students, as a more structured approach can alleviate institutional

misdirection of energy and resources and aid in the synchronization of diverse efforts made by individual offices (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Disconnect between staff's perceptions of the kinds of programming desired by transfer students and how transfer students felt about these programs may lead to institutional practices being reexamined. Student survey feedback may be especially useful to staff and administrators, as they provide data on the insufficiency of current programming efforts and recommendations for better utilization of university resources specifically related to the integration of transfer students with the campus community.

Directions for Future Research

Although much was accomplished in this study, it could certainly be expanded for future research. With each additional semester a student completes at their transfer institution, new experiences, staff, and peers are introduced to them (Townsend, 2008). One way to expand on this study is to conduct longitudinal studies to track how students strengthen their connections to campus, persist within their majors, and find academic success. Learning from students' new experiences and seeing how it affects these areas is research that can aid staff and administrators in identifying ways to work with subsequent transfer cohorts.

Demographics may moderate how student experiences and campus programs correlate with persistence. Another direction for future research can be to see if orientation works to connect students to campus even better among first-generation students than it does for students who have parents who attended college. With varying support systems among these two demographics, can the orientation and campus programming offered by the institution be more effective in connecting one group of students to the campus community over the other?

Furthermore, comparing the community college and horizontal transfer population (those transferring from other four-year colleges) in relation to academic adjustment and participation in social programming would be an interesting study to conduct, as there may be different challenges and frustrations that arise from this population. Perhaps horizontal transfer students, who have already experienced a four-year university setting, would have an easier time getting involved with campus programming and taking classes that are academically more rigorous than those at the community college level. Culture shock may be expressed differently or vary in prominence in students who have prior exposure to the university setting.

Limitations in the survey response rates at each campus and the constraint of examining transfer student experiences at only three campuses offer additional directions for future research. Further studies comparing the experiences of transfer students at additional number of institutions and getting a higher survey return rate among students would expand on the current research and provide more opportunities of generalizing the needs of transfer students at private faith-based institutions.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the experiences, perceptions, and academic and psychosocial needs of students who transfer to one of three religiously affiliated four-year liberal arts universities and identified the initiatives and policies at each of these campuses aimed at improving transfer student success. Findings suggest transfer students have specific needs that differ from the freshman population, and campuses need to study, understand, and address those needs through a mix of strategies that integrate transfer students into the campus culture while also accommodating the distinctiveness of this population. Meeting the needs of transfer

students and helping them face challenges requires support systems that integrate various offices across the institution (Moxley et al., 2001).

The goal of this study was to determine transfer students' needs, gather student feedback on current programming, and provide data to administrators to make necessary changes to help support this important and growing population. From the data collected, it became evident that institutions needed to address the culture shock that existed among the transfer student population as early as possible. Transitioning to a new campus environment can be difficult for any student, especially when transferring in the middle of their academic career. Efforts made by institutions to counteract culture shock and create a sense of belonging have been found to be crucial to students' decision to persist (Ishitani, 2008). Students generally expressed satisfaction with their experiences in orientation, academic advisement, financial affordability, and housing, but they had more mixed feelings related to the religious affiliation and associated requirements at their institutions.

Of the nearly 3 million students who completed high school in 2013, close to a quarter (24%) enrolled at community colleges across the country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). With the increase of transfer students at the four-year institution, colleges need to ensure transfer student bachelor's degree completion to fully realize the democratizing effect community colleges potentially hold for higher education. Community colleges are a popular choice for students who come from less affluent backgrounds, as affordability is often a factor in their college selection process (Handel, 2013; Handel & Stremmel, 2016; Jain et. al, 2011). Given students of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to start in community colleges, these institutions and their broad access missions mean little unless there is a realistic pathway with structure and support to transfer and subsequently earn a

bachelor's degree. Implementation of the California Master Plan for Higher Education has created these pathways for eligible California Community College transfer students and public colleges within the CSU and UC systems. However, private institutions have varying application processes, institutional priorities, and enrollment goals in relation to transfer students, which make such structured and supportive pathways more difficult to establish. Private institutions presumably have a lot more flexibility to design customized support programs and articulation agreements, as CSUs and UCs need system-wide approval for some of these kinds of changes. The religious aspect of the institution can bring flexibility, cohesion, and facilitate some sense of belonging, but universities must also provide transfer students the navigational tools to learn how to navigate that flexibility. Assessing the academic and social experiences of current transfer students as they transition to the new four-year setting equips these universities with data to review their own efforts with respect to transfer students' transition, engagement, and retention (Handel & Stempel, 2016). The more the institution and its staff is aware of the specific needs of the transfer population, the more they can revisit institutional policies and practices to make their campus more transfer friendly.

Appendix

Field Pre-Tested Survey

- 1) What institution did you transfer from?
_____ (fill in response)
- 2) How many semester units did you transfer with?
 - 0-15
 - 15-30
 - 31-45
 - 46-60
 - 61+
- 3) What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
- 4) What ethnicity do you identify with?
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian and Pacific Islander
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic
 - Multi-Racial
 - White
 - Other: _____

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS USING A SCALE OF 1 TO 5

***(1) STRONGLY DISAGREE, (2) DISAGREE, (3) NEUTRAL, (4) AGREE,
(5) STRONGLY AGREE***

- 5) I was able to get in contact with a representative from Admissions prior to attending this University.
- 6) I was able to get the information I needed about transferring on the University Admission website.
- 7) I am satisfied with the credits that transferred from my previous school.
- 8) I was able to register for the classes that I needed.
- 9) My academic advisors helped me create an individualized academic plan.
- 10) I am satisfied with the classes I took last semester.
- 11) I feel challenged with the classes I took last semester.
- 12) I am satisfied with the general education classes that I am required to take.
- 13) I feel like I have the tools/information necessary to graduate from this University when I want to.
- 14) I am satisfied with the financial aid I was awarded from this University.
- 15) I attended New Student Orientation.
- Yes
 - No
- 16) Which transfer New Student Orientation events did you participate in?
_____ (fill in response)
- 17) The information provided at the transfer New Student Orientation events was

useful to me.

18) The transfer student mentors provided helpful insight on being a transfer student.

19) I made friends with other students during New Student Orientation.

20) I felt welcomed as a new transfer student at this University.

21) How would you improve New Student Orientation?

_____ (fill in response)

22) Where are you living this semester?

- On Campus with other transfer students
- On Campus with other non-transfer students
- Off Campus – On My Own
- Off Campus – With Family

23) I am happy with the housing selection process.

24) I am satisfied with where I am living this semester.

25) I feel a sense of community with where I am living.

26) I am satisfied with my roommates.

27) Suggestions for housing and residence life?

_____ (fill in response)

28) I feel well adjusted to the University.

29) I feel supported by the faculty and staff at this University.

30) I am involved in one or more clubs/student organization at this University.

31) I currently have a job:

- Yes – On campus
- Yes – Off Campus

- No

32) Other feedback about social/campus life.

_____ (fill in response)

33) I understand the religious identity of the University.

34) I feel supported in my religious beliefs, regardless of what they may be.

35) I am satisfied with the religious classes and commitments that are required of me by the University.

Survey Administered to Fall 2016 Transfer Students at Each Institution

Q1 What institution did you transfer from?

Q2 How many semester units did you transfer with?

- 0 - 15
- 16 - 30
- 31 - 45
- 46 - 60
- more than 61 units

Q3 What is your current age?

- 18 -21
- 22 - 24
- more than 25 years old

Q4 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other _____

Q5 What ethnicity do you identify with?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Multi Racial
- White
- Other _____

Q6 In what religious tradition were you raised?

- Anglican (Episcopal)
- Baptist
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Church of Christ
- Congregationalist (UCC)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Muslim
- Orthodox
- Presbyterian
- Protestant
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Sikh
- Other (Christian)
- Other (Non-Christian)
- Not religious

Q7 Describe the religious identity of the university.

Q8 Do you feel supported on campus in your religious beliefs, regardless of what they may be.

- Yes
- No

Q9 Why did you transfer to this institution? (select all that apply)

- Academics / Major
- Affordability / Financial aid awarded
- Campus Safety
- Career outcomes after graduation
- Graduate in a timely manner
- Know others who have attended or are attending the college (relatives, friends, etc.)
- Private institution
- Recommended by someone (relatives, friends, etc.)
- Religious
- Reputation of the college
- Sense of community
- Small class sizes
- Student activities / programming available to transfer students

Other

Q10 Did you have any fears prior to transferring to this institution?

- Yes
- No

Q11 What were some of the fears you had prior to transferring to this institution and were they actualized upon enrollment?

Q12 Since entering this university, how often have you interacted with the following people (by phone, email, text, or in person):

	Never	1-2 times per semester	1-2 times per month	Once a week	2-3 times per week	Daily
Faculty during class or office hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty outside of class or office hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic advisors/counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus ministry / spiritual leaders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 Please rate your satisfaction with your institution in each area:

	Can't Rate/No Experience	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Academic courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious classes / commitments required by the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non academic religious activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall academic experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Financial aid package	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New student orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer student activities / programming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of campus social activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall sense of community among students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Did you attend Transfer New Student Orientation?

- Yes
- No

Q15 Transfer New Student Orientation

	Yes	No
The information provided at orientation was useful to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer orientation helped in navigating the campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer orientation leaders provided helpful insight on being a transfer student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I made friends with other students during orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 Do you feel that changes need to be made to new student orientation? If yes, what changes would you suggest?

- Yes _____
- No

Q17 Where are you living this semester?

- On campus (with other transfer students)
- On campus (with other non-transfer students)
- Off campus (on my own)
- Off Campus (with family)
- Other

Q18 In regards to on campus student housing, to what extent were you:

	A Great Extent	Some Extent	Not at All
Happy with the housing selection process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfied with your roommates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfied with living in a residence hall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling a sense of community with where you are living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19 If you have suggestions for housing and residence life, please include them below:

Q20 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the credits that transferred from my previous institution(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The admission / recruitment materials portrayed this campus accurately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel supported by the faculty / staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made friends on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as part of the campus community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I have the tools / information necessary to graduate from this university when I want to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 I am involved with one or more clubs / student organizations at this institution.

- Yes
- No

Q22 I currently have a job.

- Yes (On Campus)
- Yes (Off Campus)
- No

Q23 What transfer events / programming have you attended this past semester?

Q24 What would you like to add to the social / campus life?

Q25 If you could make your college choice over, would you still choose to enroll at your current institution?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure yet

Q26 What are your plans for Fall 2017?

- Staying at your current college
- Transferring to another college
- Don't know / have not decided yet
- Not attending any college

Q27 To enter the raffle to have a chance to win one of five \$20 Amazon.com gift cards, please enter your email address (emails will be confidential and are not part of survey responses).

Interview Protocol for Student Affairs Staff

- 1) How long have you worked at this school?
- 2) How long have you worked with transfer students?
- 3) How often do you interact with transfer students each week and in what capacity?
- 4) Were you a transfer student in college?
 - If so, what was your experience as a transfer student?
 - If not, how did you get involved with working with this population?
- 5) What are the needs of transfer students in comparison to the needs of freshman?
- 6) How do transfer students describe their transfer process?
- 7) Do you feel that transfer students are satisfied with their choice of coming to this college?
 - If yes, why?
 - If no, why not?
- 8) What programming does your office provide for new transfers to transition to this new university setting?
- 9) What programming does your office do to promote transfer student retention and timely graduation?
- 10) Are there specific campus offices you partner with for transfer student programming and student retention?
 - If yes, what are they?
- 11) What issues do transfer students frequently struggle with?
 - In what ways does your office provide help with these issues?
 - If no, what other campus offices or groups could students go to for help?
- 12) Are there new initiatives you or your office will be implementing in the upcoming year for transfer students?
 - If yes, what are they?
- 13) Do you consider your campus transfer friendly? Why or why not?
 - If not, what changes can you make to be more accommodating towards transfer students?
- 14) Do transfer students have unmet needs related to the campus?
- 15) What are the institutional goals in relation to transfer students?

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