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A Case study : the perception of higher education administrators at historically black colleges and universities on the importance of academic student organizations as a retention technique

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A CASE STUDY:
THE PERCEPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS AT
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF
ACADEMIC STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AS A RETENTION TECHNIQUE

A dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Leadership Studies
by
Sherri Lynn Shafer
Approved by
Dr. Teresa Eagle, Committee Chairperson
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Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
Dr. Corley Dennison

Marshall University
May 2016

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

SIGNATURE PAGE

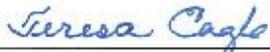
I hereby affirm that the following project meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by my discipline, college, and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With my signature, I approve the manuscript for publication.

Project Title: A Case Study: The Perception of Higher Education Administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the Importance of Academic Student Organizations as a Retention Technique.

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Committee Chairperson

Date 4-25-16

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DEDICATION

For my grandfather, Andrew Toledo Quinn. This may be the closest I come to keeping my promise. Gran kept yours.

To my parents, Andrea and Michael Wyrick, thank you for your steadfast support and prayers.

To my husband David and my children Matthew, Alyse, and Rachel... you are my reason for everything. "We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams." –Arthur O'Shaughnessy

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Last, a special thank you to the students in the West Virginia State University chapter of the National Broadcasting Society. Beyond my family, you and your peers are the reason I do what I do every day. Continue to dream. Continue to hope. Continue to keep me humble.

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ABSTRACT

This is a mixed methods study looking at the perception of student affairs administrators on the value of student academic organizations as a retention technique at historically black colleges and universities. The study is based on survey responses from administrators throughout the United States utilizing a researcher developed survey tool. Despite long standing research, findings suggest that administrators perceive some value in such organizations, although they are not administrator's first choice as a retention technique. Administrators indicate that their roles in retention within the office of student affairs vary, as do retention plans. Furthermore, they specify that barriers limiting the effectiveness of their institutional retention plans include financial support, staffing issues, and technology.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Higher education administrators today face a range of multi-faceted and complex issues. Increased competition from online providers and shrinking budgets caused by the reduction of state appropriations are among the most challenging of these issues. Administrators are powerless to address many, but one factor their schools can influence is student retention (Walsh, Larsen, & Parry, 2009), defined as retaining a student through to graduation (Burks & Barrett, 2009). In most cases, increasing the rate of student retention equals money for institutions; in fact, administrators have begun to recognize that every freshman retained saves an institution as much as \$15,000 to \$25,000 per student over a four to five year enrollment period (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999).

As administrators look to find ways to increase retention, they face many choices. Retention initiatives abound and determining the right initiative for a given institution can be a very complicated process. This study will examine the impressions of student affairs administrators on the role student academic organizations play in the overall retention scheme. Although colleges and universities throughout the country face retention problems, many historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are particularly at risk for lower enrollment (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005), thus this study will focus on these institutions.

BACKGROUND

Levitz, Noel, and Richter (1999) indicated that “every person, program and procedure on campus” (p. 40) potentially affects a student’s decision to remain in school. Thus, the most widely adopted solutions to retention are multi-faceted and may include such things as freshman

orientation programs (Titley, 1985) and learning communities (Astin, 1985). These solutions may also focus on transition initiatives, interactions between students and faculty, counseling, mentoring, and academic experiences (Patton, Morelon, Whitehead, & Hossler, 2006).

Many retention programs are focused on a student's first year, but Willcoxson (2010) stated that retention initiatives must go beyond the freshman year, to include the entire college experience. Tinto (1993) suggested that a thorough plan for retention must blend assets, employees, and activities needed to attain established retention objectives. Extracurricular activities, also included in the retention best practice schema (Tinto, 1993), are often overlooked.

Tinto's Theoretical Model of Dropout Behavior

Many academic campus student organizations are affiliated with professional organizations that offer both a social aspect and academic or pre-professional focus. It is these associations and their relationships to retention that will be the subject of this study, based primarily on Tinto's (1975) "conceptual schema for dropout from college" (p. 95), which represents one of the fundamental studies on retention in the last fifty years. While Tinto's work is dated, his model continues to serve as a basis for more contemporary research in regard to retention (Carter, 2006). Others have built on Tinto's seminal work (Braxton, 2000; Milem & Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979). Tinto wrote that goal commitment through pre-professional focus and institutional commitment affects a student's decision to remain enrolled and graduate.

His research developed through the study of retention literature specifically focusing on the dropout process. In his paper *Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research* (1975), Tinto developed a theoretical model of interactions that occur on

college campuses that might lead a student to dropout. His theory was based on Durkheim's theory of suicide, which supposed that an individual was more likely to commit suicide if he or she was less integrated into society, either morally or by overall affiliation. Tinto compared college life to society in that it also included a value system and various social configurations. He asserted that the individual's lack of affiliation or moral connectivity would not lead to suicide but would lead to a low commitment to the institution.

This fact is relevant today as nearly 75% of students on college campuses are classified as non-traditional; they thus face the added challenges of navigating family and work while going to school (Complete College, 2011). In addition, poor students and students of color face the greatest impediments to graduation. Tinto found that goal commitment and institutional commitment were key factors in student retention versus dropout (1975). Both forms of commitment can be affected by integration not only with the academic structure of an institution, but also the social structure. Thus, he concluded that the relationship academic student organizations have to both the academic and social systems position them as highly effective retention tools.

Retention

As early as the 1970s, Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) found that retention is directly influenced by student and faculty interaction both in and out of the classroom. Astin (1993) later echoed this sentiment by stating that involvement with peers and faculty positively affects retention. Tinto's work further suggested that student retention is positively influenced by not only the level of commitment an institution has to students but by social connectivity as well (Tinto, 1975). He stated that frequent contact with peers and faculty — whether in extracurricular activities, Greek organizations, sports activities, outside class lectures, and/or

dormitory activities — leads to socialization within the life of a college or university (Tinto, 1993, p. 99). Tinto was not alone in recognizing the value of such contact. Waggoner and Goldman (2005) stated that the experiences students gain from a campus link them to that institution for life.

Tinto also indicated that a student's inability to integrate into campus life leads to an increased likelihood of dropout, a situation that must command the attention of collegiate administrators concerned with retention (p. 176). According to Brown (n.d.), involvement in extracurricular activities leads to better attendance, higher grades, and increased self-worth. Furthermore, Mahoney, Cairns, and Farmer (2003) found that extracurricular activities are valuable throughout adolescence and beyond in developing aptitude, goal setting and overall educational success. Last, Hawkins (2010) stated that not only does participation in student organizations develop such things as leadership skills and social engagement, it also has an effect on retention rates. Derby (2006) found that student activity programming has a positive effect on retention at the community college level. In a study of officially recognized student organizations at three community colleges, he found a significant relationship between student participation in organizations and degree attainment. In essence, he found that students who did not participate in student organizations were least likely to persist through to graduation. Case (2011) added that focused student involvement allows a student to advance successfully throughout their time in college.

Student Organizations

Although the literature reflects the value of student involvement with extracurricular activities, a straightforward definition of what involvement entails is not clear. Tinto (1993) alluded to a definition by indicating that extracurricular activities are those that take place in “the

formal social system of the college” (p.108). Ehrenburg and Webber (2010) included student activities in the category of student services, also listing such things as student organizations and intramurals in addition to such services as registration, tutoring, and records maintenance. However, this does not clearly define the specific kinds of organizations that might be representative of extracurricular activities. Generally, student organizations fall under the umbrella of student services; under Tinto’s definition, they are part of the college social setting. Hawkins (2010), however, citing Posner’s 2009 research on student leadership behavior, defined student organizations as those extracurricular activities that are registered with and sanctioned by a university. She also affirmed that student organizations are categorized by activity. Holzweiss, Rahn, and Wickline (2007) defined an academic student organization as one having sponsorship from an institutional college or department.

Magolda (1992) found that student organizations provided a link for student interaction with peers. Holzweiss, et al. (2007) found that students who joined student organizations which met their personal interests were engaged in campus life, and further indicated that most campuses provide a variety of organizations from which students may choose those which will meet their particular interests including those of an academic nature.

Academic Student Organizations

Holzweiss et al. (2007) found that students were primarily motivated to join academic organizations for the potential career aspects, where they could learn more about their particular career field. Other factors included personal development and networking opportunities. All these factors were reported as having contributed to the persistence of membership in academic organizations and unlike non-participants, such participation was viewed as valuable to the member’s future goals. A vast majority of students who were members (92%) reported that they

believed continued membership in student organizations provided additional academic support from faculty and other student members. Only 79% of student members in non-academic organizations reported the same level of faculty support. Strapp and Farr (2010) found that students participating in organizations related to their field of study noted better career preparation further supporting the value of membership.

Budgets vs. Enrollment Management

DeBard and Sacks (2012) stated that the effect of student life as it relates to retention is part of the enrollment management process on campus. As institutions compete for students, the role student life plays is increasing; this fact has been evident for many years. In the early 1990s, Tinto (1993) warned that serious consequences for higher education institutions would result from a continued exodus of students. This exodus would result in lost tuition for institutions and lost income for students who did not earn a degree. Storch and Ohlson (2009) said that the foundation for success at a college or university for the general student body is strong student service programs that focus on both academic and individual enrichment. Derby (2006) noted that individuals working in student affairs should encourage participation in student organizations. Yet, substantial cuts in funding to student services continue. In 2009, Stanford University trimmed the student affairs budget by three million dollars in an effort to reduce the overall institutional budget by 15% (Sullivan, 2009). Saint Joseph's University reported budget cuts in 2013 including expenses for athletic programs, student clubs, and other student service oriented programs (Coyle, 2013). Additionally, in 2014, Cornell University considered elimination of funds for New Student Services and charging fees for counseling (Cruikshank, Howell, & Jarmon, 2014).

According to the 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement Report, higher education at the undergraduate level must be “integrated” and “comprehensive.” It must take into consideration the student as a whole. However, as financial support for higher education declines, the costs associated with this approach could make it increasingly unattainable. In recent years, institutions have faced sharp declines in state funding; these declines have led directly to increased tuition and spending cuts (Oliff, Palacios, Johnson, & Leachman, 2013). Newell (2009) noted that students are “paying more for less” and that this situation may lead to a decline in the quality of the educational experience. Pike, Smart, Hugh, and Hayek (2006) found that patterns of expenditures in higher education “represent a set of actions that can emphasize or deemphasize undergraduate education and student learning” (p. 851). Thus, colleges must weigh the choice between securing academic programs at the expense of student support services, including support for extracurricular activities such as student organizations. Some college administrators may disagree with the notion of reduced spending in academic affairs in favor of student affairs spending. However, Ehrenburg and Webber (2010) found that expenditures for student services have grown far less in the last 20 years than that of academic affairs spending. They cited that many administrators see funding student services as “frills” and as such have no correlation with graduation rates or retention. In contrast, Ehrenburg and Webber found that increased spending on these services, especially at four-year institutions where students have lower entrance test scores and a higher proportion of Pell Grant recipients, increased retention. Thus they concluded that student service expenditures must be considered important in relation to student success, further calling into question the trend of cutting such services including support for student organizations. Holzweiss et al. (2007) suggested that administrators must

appreciate the value of these organizations as it pertains to placement of students in activities most suited to their individual needs.

The Student Affairs Administrator

In 2004, East Carolina University Chancellor Steve Ballard and Vice-chancellor for student affairs at University of Missouri-Kansas City Patricia Long were featured in an interview in *About Campus*. In that interview, Long recognized the value of a blended approach to nurturing student achievement (Ballard & Long, 2004). She stated that, in the face of budget cuts, both academic and student affairs personnel must work together. Ballard said that competition, student choice, and accountability could no longer go unrecognized. In essence, each student recruited and retained mattered to the entire institution.

Hoover and Wasley (2007) indicated the diversity of students has expanded the role of student affairs administrators. From the 1930s to the 1970s, the responsibility of student affairs administrators remained student services oriented (Task Force, 2010). Following the 1970s, this ideal changed and began to focus more on student development. Later, the role of student affairs administrators became mission oriented relative to individual institutional research and data. Overall, the latest movement in the field reflects one of student affairs administrators being held responsible “for the learning and success of college students.” This change echoes the trend of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs as stated earlier by Ballard and Long (2004). Thus, there has been a new call for student affairs administrators to be included in retention initiatives. More importantly, there has been a demand for improving student engagement, which has been viewed as the key factor in retention and, ultimately, student success (2010).

Although there is a demand for involvement of student affairs administrators in retention initiatives, this fact is not generally evident in the higher education marketplace. Overall responsibilities tend to focus on other priorities. In a review of nine job postings on www.higheredjobs.com between October and December of 2012 for the position of Vice President of Student Affairs, only one, at Columbia Southern University, specifically referred to retention (www.higheredjobs.com, 2012). Under essential duties and responsibilities, the candidate would be accountable for the assessment of retention as it pertained to policies in the student handbook. Eight postings listed supervision of student affairs areas as a key responsibility. A secondary responsibility noted in five postings referred to budget development and/or oversight. Other responsibilities in at least two of the nine postings included acting as a liaison to the institution's President, acting as a liaison between student affairs and academic affairs, and service on campus committees. These postings show that retention is not viewed as a primary responsibility of student affairs administrators despite the call for increased commitment in this area.

RESEARCH FOCUS

This study explored the perception of higher education student affairs administrators at historically black colleges and universities with regard to the importance of academic student organizations as they relate to retention. Recently, declining student enrollment has affected many institutions throughout the country; this is especially true of HBCUs (Morehouse College, 2012). The financial burdens arising from declining enrollment and declining budgets place administrators in a tough position. Many must choose whether to support academic endeavors financially at the cost of student activities. They must also choose which retention efforts would secure the greatest rewards and best utilize their time.

Furthermore, this study focused on student affairs administrators working at HBCUs; this focus was motivated by the limited amount of information on these institutions as stand-alone entities (Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2010) and the significance retention initiatives pose to African American student success (Patton et al., 2006). Given the amount of evidence showing the value of student academic organization association, the resulting data may identify action items administrators can initiate to influence student organization membership, chapter sustainability, and growth, all of which affect student retention. Furthermore, these measures may be viewed and utilized as cost effective and efficient retention tools, many of which are already in place, but potentially underutilized. Findings revealed student administrator's attitudes toward retention initiatives and time spent on these initiatives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were asked:

1. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the significance of student academic organizations as retention tools?
2. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the costs of sustaining student academic organizations?
3. How do campus student affairs administrators perceive their role in retention?

LIMITATIONS

The study was a non-experimental case study using a researcher-developed survey. The survey was influenced by Tinto's (1975) "conceptual schema for dropout from college" (p. 95) and focused on the perception of student affairs administrators in regard to student organizations

and their effect on retention and student affairs expenditures. The study concentrated on perceptual data collected through surveys and required participants to self-report their responses honestly. Thus, the validity of the study was based on the responses of the participants which might have been influenced by external or internal ideals concerning student organizations and student affairs expenditures as well as personal experiences with collegiate connectivity. Furthermore, the study was representative of snapshot in time looking at the views of student affairs administrators.

Additional limitations included the use of formal student academic organizations as opposed to the inclusion of all student organizations. Furthermore, the study was conducted only at 105 historically black colleges and universities. Additional insight might prove valuable by expanding the perimeters of the study in the future.

SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of this study to higher education administrators relates to the perceived value of academic student organizations as retention tools. It focused on the perception of the student affairs administrator's role in campus retention initiatives. A perceived relationship between retention and extracurricular activities such as academic student organization affiliation may affect the argument for upper-level and middle-level administrators in making judgments about expenditures for student affairs spending on student academic organizations. Furthermore, the perceived value in participating in retention initiatives may influence the amount of time student affairs administrators devote to this purpose.

Decisions on spending from upper administrators may affect Deans and program Chairs who wish to use academic student organizations as a faculty recruiting tool. The benefits to

faculty advisors of academic student organizations may include continuing professional development, opportunities for publication and presentation, and service as an element of faculty evaluation, promotion or course loads. The opportunity to be an advisor may influence prospective faculty applicants.

Last, the possibilities for student engagement that academic student organizations provide may aid recruiters in marketing their institution to potential students. College selection may be affected as many students research their college of choice. Furthermore, students may view these organizations as an opportunity to network and improve hiring opportunities post-graduation. As a result of student organization membership, increased integration into campus life may lead to lower dropout rates which improve retention rates and ultimately campus budgets.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BACKGROUND

Retention is a catch phrase commonly used within the world of academia. For many years, experts have looked at persistence, graduation rates and dropout rates in an attempt to explain how and why students complete or fail to complete their college education. Despite all that has been learned, De'Angelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, and Tran (2011) state that the ability to assist students in continuing toward graduation has failed to progress successfully.

This being the case, colleges and universities have attempted to improve retention rates through the development of various programs meant to help students persist and ultimately graduate. However, the responsibility does not lie singularly with these individual programs. In the late 1990s, Levitz and Hovland (1998) indicated that anyone who comes in contact with a student has an effect on that student's decision to remain in school. In addition, Gardner suggests (2011) there are "critical junctures" which effect this decision. Some of these pivotal decision points of an academic nature include attending a "second choice" school, progressing from developmental course work, placement exams, success in gateway courses, the first year experience, decisions on a major, transfer from within or without the institution, dropping below full-time status or vice versa or academic probation status. Some of the pivotal decision points of a social nature include association with social groups, issues with a roommate, financial concerns or family concerns.

Gardner (2011) states that institutions of higher learning need to look for ways to focus on the student experience. Tinto (1993) stated that a comprehensive plan for retention must become a blended approach utilizing campus assets, employees, and decision making in order to meet established retention initiatives.

Tinto

In 1975, Vincent Tinto set out to define student dropout and to develop a model that would explain the phenomena. He noted that most research leading up to the mid-1970s included academic failure in with other forms of dropout. He believed that such clumping together created distorted information (Tinto, 1975). He also stated that without proper theoretical models attempting to explain the process of dropout, there could be no true understanding of persistence or dropout. Thus, he set out to develop a clearer picture of the process of dropout based on student interaction and the current research at that time.

Tinto's 1975 work, *Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research* was largely developed around Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide. Tinto noted that this theory stated that an individual was more apt to commit suicide if he or she was not sufficiently integrated into society. Tinto associated the college and university setting with that of the greater society and stated that the failure to integrate in the life of a college or university would explain the reason for dropout. However, he noted that a college or university involves both an academic and social setting and these two variables needed to be considered when developing a theory of dropout. He believed that a student could succeed in one area, but fail to integrate effectively in another, leading to dropout.

Still, Tinto was not fully devoted to Durkheim's theory as a complete explanation for dropout. He believed that individual characteristics (i.e. gender, race, social status, ethnicity, and high school background) must also be considered (Tinto, 1975). Furthermore, Tinto indicated that one must consider an individual's level of goal commitment. Thus, he concluded that failing to progress successfully through college to graduation can be seen as a progression of exchanges

over time between a student and the institution both socially and academically. He established that the higher degree of integration, the less likely a student would be apt to drop out.

Key conclusions of his theory included the concept that dropout results following the lack of experiences in both social and academic settings on campus (Tinto, 1975). On the social level, Tinto found that social systems within a college consist of student peers, faculty and administrative employees. Social interactions occur most often with peers, faculty interaction, and extracurricular activities. This interaction via extracurricular activities does not appear to negatively affect academic performance, but does have positive persistence benefits for both men and women. However, peer associations serve a primary role in developing social interaction, while faculty interaction and extracurricular activities play a secondary role in developing commitment to an institution. At the same time, Tinto concluded that academic integration affects goal commitment and student ability is a key factor in persistence. He also determined that students will direct attention and energy to activities that maximize benefit versus cost.

Tinto also discovered qualities associated with students themselves that can influence persistence. He found that students from what he termed “lower status families” or those from a lower socio-economic standing are more likely to dropout. In addition, higher persistence rates occur in families from parents that are educated, where families are more cultured and more prosperous, and where there is a family interest in education. Expectations in regard to future employment or goal commitment were also a key factor in persistence.

Last, Tinto determined that institutional characteristics played a role in persistence. Components such as faculty, facilities, and resources can influence the climate associated with the social and academic setting. Public institutions tend to have higher rates of dropout than

their private counterparts. Two year institutions have higher dropout than four year colleges. Larger institutions that provide a wider variety of opportunities or “subcultures” for students tend to reflect a lower number of voluntary withdrawals.

Tinto (1975) noted that more research needed to be done in the area of racial background in relation to dropout. He stated there was not enough evidence to explain interactions and dropout for individuals with varying racial ethnicities. He also called for additional research on urban institutions and interactions or subcultures amongst students and faculty. Additional aspects of racial background in relation to dropout have been studied since 1975, including mentoring issues with African American students (Lee, 1999), faculty race and the effect it has on retention at historically black colleges (Hickson, 2002), and interactions between minority students and faculty (Moore & Toliver, 2010). And yet, according to the 2011 report by Complete College America called *Time is the Enemy*, nearly four decades after Tinto’s theory was developed “students of color” are still listed among those least likely to graduate from college (Complete College, 2011).

Retention

Tinto (1993, p. 36) defines a dropout as someone who fails to graduate with a college degree in a specific amount of time. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2010, p.7), graduation rates were traditionally determined by a four year cohort, but by the 1970s this determination was changed to a six year cohort with many colleges and institutions graduating only about a third of their first-time, full-time freshman. In a 2009 study of college retention rates conducted by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, the following numbers indicate that retention is a potential area of concern across the board for colleges and universities nationwide (U.S. Department of Education, 2010):

- Retention rate for full-time students at public schools was 78%
- Retention rate for full-time students at private not-for-profit schools was 79%
- Retention rate for full-time students at private-for-profits was 50%

In the 1990s, Price (1993) noted that upward of fifty percent of first-time freshman did not continue in school through to degree completion. More recent figures show a further decline in graduation rates from four year public institutions averaging 37.9 percent in a five year cohort (National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates, 2011). Tinto (1993, p. 1) claimed that this “massive and continuing exodus” lead to serious consequences for both institutions and students alike. These consequences are reflected in lost tuition dollars for colleges and universities as well as the potential loss of greater income for students who do not earn a college degree. Tinto (1993, p. 5) also noted that retention rates may reflect the health of an institution both socially and intellectually.

Levitz and Hovland (1998) cited five types of issues that generally lead students not to graduate. They include social, academic, personal, institutional issues and life issues. Other influences on retention rates have also been noted. While developing their College Learning Effectiveness Inventory tool to measure academic performance, Kim, Newton, Downey, and Benton (2010) noted that additional barriers to college success and graduation included socio-economic background, ethnic background and whether a student is a first-generation college student.

In a study of minority students in the 1990s by the Education Department in New York State, college administrators were asked about retention in relation to students enrolled in two-year professional technical programs (Parker, 1998). The purpose of the study was to determine if any programs and services existed which enabled persistence and retention of these students. College administrators were asked to consider any barriers to retention. The study recognized

seven outstanding barriers which included job and family responsibilities, location, lack of minority faculty and staff, lack of funding for intervention programs, inability to afford college, lack of appropriate social and cultural activities as well as lack of support from surrounding communities (Parker, 1998).

Additionally, the administrators pointed to eight initiatives that served to assist with retention which included support groups and clubs for minority students, special advertising to minority communities, intrusive or directive academic advising, and special orientations to help minority students with course selection and registration. Further initiatives included cultural workshops, awareness efforts, scholarships, tailored financial aid programs and policies, ethnic studies courses and an office or coordinator for minority affairs (Parker, 1998).

Parker (1998, p. 4) noted that colleges needed to “offer a more hospitable and accepting learning environment for all cultures and ethnic diversities.” He stated that institutions must design programs allowing students to transition from high school and their communities affording students a positive college experience, thus changing the opinion of college.

Astin (1993, p. 394) wrote that retention is effected by interaction with faculty, peers, and involvement. As early as the 1970s, Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) studied academic and social integration and their influence on student persistence. They performed a longitudinal study at an institution in New York State with a student population totaling near 10,000. A random sample of 1905 students was sent a questionnaire. Of these, 1457 students responded. Following a second mailing aimed at these students, it was determined that 773 participants were freshman. These students were asked to quantify their involvement in extracurricular activities. Responses were categorized by social integration and academic integration. Study results showed that

retention is directly affected by student and faculty interaction both in and out of the classroom.

Astin (1993) reiterated the importance of such interaction nearly twenty years later. However, he took it one step further and suggested that not only were faculty interactions valuable to students, but also those interactions with peers (p. 394).

Elkins, Forrester, and Noel-Elkins (2011) studied student perceptions of campus community. They conducted an online survey at a Midwestern institution with a student population of 21,000. Three hundred thirty students participated. They examined involvement in out-of-class activities through a hierarchical cluster analysis. They found that involvement in student activities developed a sense of “campus community” especially in the area of history and tradition, which in turn may lead to greater sense of campus community as a whole. According to Brown (n.d.), involvement in extracurricular activities leads to better attendance, higher grades, and increased self-worth.

Schuh and Laverty (1983) set out to determine the longitudinal influence of student leadership positions held while participating in various student activities. They studied graduates from Notre Dame, St. Mary’s College, and Indiana University in three year increments beginning in 1950 until 1977. A written survey was mailed to participants designated by faculty advisors as student leaders. The mean of each response was calculated and analysis of variance utilized to compare responses between each university. They concluded that participation in student activities also develops leadership skills relevant to the time a student spends while in school.

In a study of 695 students participating in the Carolina Longitudinal Study, Mahoney, Cairns, and Farmer (2003) researched the effect of extracurricular participation on academic success in relation to students in the primary and secondary school systems. The study indicates

that the effect of extracurricular activities is not only important in college but across grade levels. Interviews were conducted during the fourth grade, seventh grade and post high school graduation. They found that extracurricular activities are valuable throughout adolescence and beyond in developing aptitude, goal setting and overall educational success. In addition, Lawhorn (2008) noted that extracurricular activities also lead to increased opportunity for teamwork amongst students as well as the potential for the development of leadership skills. Additionally, Tinto (1993, p. 147) claims that the social activities/life of an institution are a key aspect of the retention schema.

Tinto (1993, p. 53) suggested that it is the faculty that drive the overall perception of an institution intellectually whether it be in the classroom or out. Astin (1993, p. 410) says that it is the faculty-to-student relationship that impacts a student's development next to that of his or her peers. Furthermore, Tinto claims that persistence is an indicator of what occurs on a campus rather than how a student judges an institution prior to admission (1993, p. 56). He also indicates that it is a student's ability to find "one's niche" that impacts retention (p. 59). Thus, one can infer that the faculty advisor's role with a student organization is a vital piece of the retention puzzle. Reese said (2011, p. 20), "Behind every great student leader is a great adviser."

Waggoner and Goldman (2005) studied the effect of retention activities on colleges and universities by reviewing institutional rhetoric at schools in Oregon. They reviewed campus documents spanning a 20-year timeframe. In this qualitative study, they determined that campus rhetoric evolved over time. In addition, they surmised that the experiences students gained from a higher education institution served to link students to an institution for life. In summation, their experiences not only earned students an education but created a personal identity.

Such experiences include participation in student organizations. Hawkins (2010) studied the relationship between student organization membership and academic performance at Purdue University. She reviewed academic records of students based on overall grade point average (GPA) and student organization involvement. Data from 42,575 students were collected for both graduate and undergraduate students in the fall semester of 2009. Among these students, 2,007 held leadership positions within student organizations and 10,642 identified as having held a membership within a student organization. Three overall categories were established including those that were student organization members, those that held a leadership position in student organizations and those that were not members of a student organization. A mean grade point average was calculated for each group. Results showed a larger percentage of students involved with student organizations had a GPA of 3.0 or higher than non-members. In addition, a larger proportion of student organization leaders had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Females scored higher GPAs regardless of membership while GPA for both males and females was higher for organization leaders than non-members. Hawkins concluded that student organizations attracted higher achieving students while many organizations have set academic standards that must be maintained. Her research determined that participation in student organizations not only develops leadership skills and enhances social engagement but also has a positive effect on academic performance.

Derby (2006), in an attempt to recognize a relationship between student organizations and retention, studied student activity programming at the community college level. He studied officially recognized student organizations at a public, midwest, rural community college. His population consisted of 7,833 students involved between 1997 and 2003. The sample consisted of 3,797 students who had declared a degree program and were enrolled in an associate's degree

track. Of this number, 104 students reported having participated in student clubs or organizations while the others had not. The sample had no African American participants, yet a large proportion of the population was not white, including 19.2 % Hispanic, 5.8% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1.9% other). The grade point average for the involved group was higher than those that were not involved with student clubs or organizations. Derby established the following criteria when looking at institutional data: drop out status, degree completion, stop out status (students who re-enrolled after an absence of a few semesters), and persistence (students who had completed three plus course load average and at least four semesters of work within the six year period, but had not earned a degree. The independent variable was student organization participation at a time during the time of the study.

Derby's study identified a significant relationship between degree completion and student organization participation. He also found a significant relationship between student organization participation and dropout; fewer students dropped out who had participated in these types of organizations. No significant relationship was found between stop out and participation. In all, he found that "students who participated in clubs and organizations were more likely to complete a degree, be retained, and persist over time when compared to students who were not involved in student clubs or organizations." Derby recognized limitations with his study (i.e. the use of Chi Square, one institution, other factors possibly affecting retention), however he stated that his study filled a void in the limited research conducted on community colleges, student organizations and retention. He believed his study indicated that faculty and student affairs faculty should encourage student participation in student clubs and organizations, which can best be accomplished through institutional policy development in support of these organizations.

Student Organization History

Extracurricular activities have long been recognized as those activities which take place outside the scope of a prescribed curriculum (Extracurricular, n.d.). Perhaps the earliest recognized form of extracurricular activities, fraternities and sororities, developed in the United States more than 200 years ago. Fraternities as we know them began in the United States in 1776. On the campus of William and Mary College in Virginia, students came together and formed the secret society named Phi Beta Kappa (Fraternity and Sorority Life, 2007). After the Civil War, sororities evolved as more women entered college. The first was Pi Beta Phi at Monmouth College in Illinois in 1867. The National Pan-Hellenic Council, comprised of historically black organizations, came into existence in the 1930s. These organizations had varying missions, from social integration to developing leaders. Currently, more than 9 million people are known as “Greek” (Daley, 2013), with nearly 123 sororities and fraternities throughout the country (Fraternity Facts, n.d.). Other organizations with an academic orientation also evolved at varying times in the United States, including the American Chemical Society which began in 1876 (First 100 Years, 2013), the Mathematical Association of America which formally began in 1915 (About MAA, 2013), and the National Broadcasting Society in the early 1940s at Stephens College (Gainey, 1998).

Academic versus Non-academic Organizations

Student organizations under Tinto’s definition (1993) are part of the social college setting. Hawkins (2010) stated that student organizations are categorized by activity. Student academic organizations are defined as those sponsored by an academic department or college (Holzweiss et al., 2007).

Holzweiss, et al. in a study entitled *Are All Student Organizations Created Equal? The Differences and Implications of Student Participation in Academic versus Non-Academic Organizations*, examined a large predominantly white research institution to determine differences in outcomes based on participation in student academic organizations and participation in non-academic student organizations (2007). They specifically looked at why students became involved in organizations, why they stayed involved, what specifically students gained from this involvement, and how participation related to academic performance.

A random sample of traditional students ages 18-22 were selected from the student body cohort of 741. Students participated in an electronic survey during the 2005-2006 academic year. If students indicated that they participated in student organizations, they were selected for inclusion in the study. Three hundred fifty four students participated out of 554. Sixty four percent of females participated in student organizations. Only thirty six percent of men participated. Participants were largely commuter students with only 33% reporting they lived on campus. The class rank was fairly consistent with 20% freshman, 22% sophomores, 25% juniors, and 33% seniors. Eighty two percent of participants were white.

Qualitative responses were divided among categories based on response and coded by student affairs employees who participated as research assistants. Grade point averages were also obtained by permission. Quantitative data were analyzed by frequency percentages using SPSS software. The institution offered more than 200 academic organizations and more than 500 non-academic organizations from which students could choose to participate. Twenty-five percent reported affiliations with both types of organizations, while 23% reported an affiliation with academic organizations and 52% reported an affiliation with non-academic organizations.

Students in academic organizations reported their motivation to get involved was primarily focused on future career goals. This included opportunities for academic development, networking, career development, and personal development. Students in non-academic organizations stated that they were motivated to join to fulfill more direct needs, which included a sense of belonging, relationship building, and service activities.

Students in academic organizations stated that they remained active due to relationships that were developed and career aspects. Members of non-academic student organizations reported similar reasons for maintaining membership. Reasons included personal benefits such as relationships and personal growth. The difference in the two was that members of academic organizations spoke of the benefits membership developed for their futures and members of non-academic organizations spoke of the benefits developed in the present.

Members of both categories stated that benefits of membership included personal development. The only difference was that students in academic organizations referred to the future benefits of career development. Members of non-academic organizations spoke of the benefits in a more current realm such as leadership development and communications skills development. However, 92% of members of academic organizations stated that they believed faculty supported their organization while only 79% of members in non-academic organizations stated the same.

Nearly half (49%) of students participating in academic organizations reported that their participation had no effect on their academic performance. Their counterparts in non-academic organizations reported that 39% believed participation had no effect. However, 46% of participants in academic organizations stated that participation did have a positive effect on their

academic performance while 50% of those students involved in non-academic organizations reported participation did have a positive effect. No difference in overall grade point average was found between the two types of memberships. Both groups did state that membership provided opportunities for assistance from peers, faculty and staff which did have a positive effect on their academic performance.

Holzweiss, et al. concluded that members of academic organizations were future-oriented with a focus on careers, while members of non-academic organizations were present-oriented, focusing on college experience. Despite this difference, both groups persisted in the organizations because needs were met.

Holzweiss, et al. concluded that membership in student organizations based on individual needs improved persistence due to the level of active membership and participation in the organization. They stated that directing students into organizations was key and could be done at the administrative level, the advisor level, as well as directed by staff members that have contact with students.

And yet, in today's economic downturn and with operational costs to run student organizations of all kinds rising (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007), campus organizations may find it more challenging than ever to remain of interest and importance to the student, and to their institutions. These organizations compete not only for finances, but for time, credibility, and relevance as well. Richmond (1986) noted a shift in student priorities years ago when quoting Alexander Astin's claims that students "have become more greedy, less concerned with others, more focused on power and status, and less interested in all social or environmental issues" (p.

93). This, coupled with competing economic concerns, indicates that the challenges faced by student organizations to remain relevant on college campuses are indeed great.

Budgets, Enrollment Management, and HBCUs

In 1993, Tinto warned of an impending threat placed on institutional budgets due to what he perceived as declining enrollment. Declining enrollment meant declining tuition dollars.

During the 2012-13 academic year, colleges realized the first substantial decline in enrollment at two percent since the 1990s (Perez-Pena, 2013). Today, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are even more vulnerable to the financial struggles seen in many of their predominantly white institutional counterparts. Merisotis and McCarthy (2005) stated that HBCUs tend to have lower tuition rates, which results in an affordable college option for African Americans. These schools often have smaller endowments as well. This situation creates strains on HBCU institutional budgets.

Now, many of these institutions are also dealing with declining enrollment, which puts an additional strain on institutional budgets. They are faced with reduced state funding as well (Morehouse, 2012). Only those few HBCUs with large endowments have successfully survived this recent trend. However, even these schools may not remain immune to funding cuts as their endowments also show signs of decreasing. Morehouse College in Atlanta, which has typically enjoyed a large endowment, has seen a recent drop in endowments and is now faced with financial difficulties already plaguing its smaller endowed counterparts.

According to the 2011 NSSE Report (2011), undergraduate higher education must be cohesive and inclusive, taking into advisement the student as a whole. However, as financial difficulties continue to exist, costs associated with this approach to education could make this

ideal increasingly unreachable. Yet expenditures directly related to student programming affect learning (Pike, Smart, Hugh, & Hayek, 2006). Thus, institutions of higher learning are often faced with choices between funding academic programs at the expense of student support services, including support for extracurricular activities such as student organizations.

Expenditures for student services have grown less in the last 20 years than expenditures for academics programs; moreover, many administrators see no connection between graduation and retention rates in relation to student services (Ehrenburg & Webber, 2010). Ehrenburg and Webber (2010) studied data from a sample of colleges and universities nationwide in an attempt to determine if expenditures in the areas of research, student services and academic support had any effect on graduation and persistence. They found that increased spending in the areas of academics and student services, especially at four-year institutions where students have lower entrance test scores and a higher proportion of Pell Grant recipients, increased persistence and graduation rates. In addition, they found that moving as little as two hundred fifty dollars per student from instructional spending (excluding funds for academic personnel, course development, or technology related to academic support) to student services would increase graduation rates by 0.3 percent. They concluded that student service expenditures must be valued in relation to student success, calling into question the trend of cutting such services including support for student organizations.

Storch and Ohlson (2009) support the ideal of strong student service programs as the underpinning for student success. Derby (2006) espoused the idea that individuals working in student affairs should encourage participation in student organizations, which fall under the umbrella of student services.

Student Affairs Administrator's Role

Tinto (1993) reported that the causes for leaving an institution are situational. The causes reflect on both the student and the institution as well (p. 33). He stated that interaction among students is vital to establishing links between the student and the institution (1993, p. 118). Astin (1993) noted that due to the value of student-to-student interface, these interactions should be supported by student affairs professionals. Tinto's work further suggested that retention of students is positively impacted by the level of commitment an institution has to students as well as social connectivity (Tinto's Theory, n.d.). He also said that students have a greater persistence rate on campuses where they find support in all areas academically, personally, and socially (Tinto, 1999).

Far too often administrators look at retention initiatives with what might be called a band-aid approach. According to Tinto (1999) retention is just one more thing on a growing to-do list that is served by following the latest national trend or quick fix. However, Elkins, Forrester, Noel-Elkins (2011) suggest that for a campus to develop any sense of campus community, administrators must recognize the connection between activities both in the classroom and out, which includes extracurricular activities.

Attention must be paid to student engagement, to the quality of the learning environment, and to academic and social supports provided to diverse students attending higher education institutions. Sixty years of research on college impact demonstrates that the most important factor in student success—more important than incoming student characteristics—is student engagement, i.e., students' investment of time and effort in educationally purposeful activities. (Task Force, 2010, p. 8)

Institutions play a vital role in developing environments for success. According to the Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs (2010), colleges and universities must create opportunities for success and remove barriers which prohibit diverse student populations from

thriving. In 2007, Pennsylvania State University President Graham Spanier stated that the tradition among student affairs administrators during the 1980s and 1990s was to believe that students were capable of achieving on their own. Prior to this time, student affairs operations focused on student services (Task Force, 2010). Spanier said that notion has changed. He said that administrators realize that today's student is in a state of transition from childhood to adulthood (Hoover & Wasley, 2007). As a result, the student affairs field is changing. The call to refocus the direction of the field in relation to the effects of technology, globalization, diversity and economic variability has emerged (Task Force, 2010).

Tinto (1993) suggested that institutions must become “committed to the goals of education” (p. 210) by modeling this behavior, which is desired amongst students, first. Tinto said, “We cannot expect students to do what we are unable or unwilling to do” (p. 210). He went on to say that any type of long term retention initiatives should include such things as counseling and advising, as well as activities that will get students involved in what he calls the social life of the college or university (pp. 176-177). In addition, he said, “Effective retention programs are committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members,” (Tinto, 1993, p. 147).

Yet, student affairs expenditures may be viewed on many campuses across the country as wasteful investments when compared to those monies designated for academic affairs spending. However, Ehrenberg and Webber (2010) suggest that student services expenditures, which include those funds designated for campus student organizations, increase persistence and ultimately affect retention.

HBCU Background

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded initially in the 1830s as a means to educate African Americans (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). The first institutions primarily focused on religious training and youth development. However, this system lacked a true structure as some states across the country had laws in place prohibiting the formal education of black students (U.S Department of Education, 1991). After the Civil War, these institutions took on the role of training freed slaves (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). In the latter part of the century, public support grew for the education of black students and culminated in the passage of the Second Morrill Act of 1890. This act provided for public institutions for Blacks. In all, sixteen such schools were designated for the purpose of teaching black students agricultural and mechanical courses as well as offering to them college degrees. As of 1953, upwards of 32,000 students were enrolled in black institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). Today, these schools still primarily educate African Americans, and they represent one part of a trinity of minority-serving institutions which also includes Hispanic and tribal colleges (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005).

According to Merisotis and McCarthy (2005), minority students encounter a greater number of challenges toward earning a college degree. These individuals traditionally are from lower income families, are academically disadvantaged, and are often the first in their families to attend college. An additional barrier includes cultural differences. Furthermore, Merisotis and McCarthy state that African American students are more reluctant to borrow money to attend school than their white counterparts. This situation leads to an increased number of African American students working outside of school, which can elevate retention concerns. HBCUs

tend to fight this situation with increased advising and remedial programs as well as smaller class sizes (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010).

HBCU Research

While studies have focused on minority students, little research had been conducted on historically black colleges and universities until the mid-1900s (Gasman, et al., 2010). One fact from recent studies shows that African American women are more involved on their HBCU campuses and take part in increased leadership positions while also interacting with faculty more often. However, most studies tend to compare HBCUs with their white institutional counterparts and may not provide a clear picture of the HBCU campus operations and students (Gasman, et al., 2010). Furthermore, the ASHE Higher Education Report (2010) suggests that more non-black students are enrolling in HBCUs, which suggests that further research is needed to study the effect of these students on environment, support systems, and academics.

As previously stated, according to Merisotis and McCarthy (2005) HBCUs tend to have lower tuition rates and smaller endowments. This propensity creates strains on HBCU institutional budgets. In addition, a primary barrier for minority students entering college is cost (Task Force, 2010). This fact in conjunction with retention issues is a primary and critical concern for these institutions. The ASHE Higher Education Report (2010) states that increased attention to accountability further escalate the concern for retention.

Patton, et al. (2006) reviewed research of institutional retention initiatives and the efforts being made to curb student dropout. They studied both empirical and propositional published articles. They noted that their study was limited by the program administrators who are often

individuals or are part of a small team involved with retention efforts on their campus and are faced with diminutive resources and time.

They found a finite amount of research on the effectiveness of counseling or mentoring programs. Thus, they concluded that there was little support for the value of such initiatives on increasing retention rates. They also found limited support for learning communities and their effect on increasing retention.

Research by multiple individuals (Chang, 2005; Hoffman, 2014) pointed to the efficacy of student-faculty interaction both in and out of class upon retention and persistence. Patton, et al. (2006) reviewed one study of note, the Adventor program at Kutztown University, in relation to minorities and student-faculty interaction. For this program, 19 non-white students were required to meet with an appointed advisor weekly. Of these 19 students, 77% returned the following year. Only 67% of the control group returned. Thus, Patton, et al. concluded that this type of faculty interaction had a positive effect on retention for African American students. They further suggested that the research proved value in student-faculty interaction.

Transition programs (such as orientation and freshman courses) were also reviewed. Patton, et al. (2006) found that more research was needed in this area, but did find a linkage between these initiatives and retention in the areas of grade point average and campus integration.

In all, Patton, et al. suggested that as of the time of their study, there was not a concrete set of ideals upon which institutions could build a retention plan. They also found little research in the area of retention initiatives at minority-serving institutions or community colleges. While some findings have been suggestive, none has revealed a concrete retention plan at historically

black colleges and universities nor has the research pointed to the perceptions of student affairs administrators in regard to their role with retention at these institutions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Research indicates that student organization funding is most directly affected by student affairs administrators operating with pre-set budgets (Ehrenburg & Webber, 2010). Typically these administrators work as an individual or with a small team, spearheading retention initiatives on their campus (Patton et. al., 2006).

The focus of this study examined administrators' perceptions of the importance of student academic organizations as they relate to retention. Student affairs administrators located at historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) throughout the United States were the target population due to the limited research at these types of institutions (Patton et al., 2006) and the increased financial struggles these institutions face in comparison to their non-HBCU counterparts (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). Research occurred during the spring and summer of 2015.

The following research questions were asked:

1. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the significance of student academic organizations as retention tools?
2. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the costs of sustaining student academic organizations?
3. How do campus student affairs administrators perceive their role in retention?

Research Design

A case study was conducted utilizing mixed methods research. According to Yin (2003), case studies are not limited to qualitative research design but can be quantitative in nature. Survey research (Fink, 2003) was utilized based on a non-experimental cross-sectional design

including a qualitative element through concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2009). A survey tool entitled *Student Organization Perception Survey* was developed by the researcher. The survey focused on student affairs administrator's perception of student academic organizations as a retention tool.

A pilot study involving the survey tool was launched at West Virginia State University, which is listed among those documented as historically black colleges and universities (Historically Black Colleges, 2013). As of the 2011-2012 academic year, only 357 students (12.62 %) of the total student population of 2, 827 were identified as African American students (West Virginia State, n.d.). However, the institution continues to identify itself as an historically black college and university based on its being established as a land grant institution under the Second Morrill Act of 1890. Student Affairs administrators from this institution tested the readability, delivery, and comprehensiveness of the survey. The pilot study also served to identify obvious errors within the survey tool (Litwin, 2003).

Population

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the study looked specifically at student affairs administrators serving at historically black colleges and universities. There are 106 such institutions throughout the United States and the United States territories (White House Initiative, 2014).

Through the use of purposive sampling (Fink, 2003), student affairs administrators at 105 of these institutions (excluding West Virginia State University) were identified and contact information determined through research from each institution's website. Follow-up phone calls were conducted to verify each administrator's contact information as current. Of these 105

individuals, each was contacted for voluntary participation in the study by means of an online survey tool.

Instrumentation

Survey research (Fink, 2003) was employed based on a cross-sectional design utilizing concurrent triangulation. The researcher's self-developed survey tool, entitled *Student Organization Perception Survey*, specifically focused on student affairs administrator's perception in relation to student academic organizations as a retention tool. Qualtrics Research Suite, an online survey delivery tool, was utilized to submit surveys to the HBCU student affairs administrators through email. Qualtrics Research Suite allows researchers to develop online survey tools, distribute the survey to predetermined recipients, track participation, as well as collect and analyze data (Qualtrics Research Suite, 2013). This system also allowed the researcher to track participation and resubmit survey requests as needed to maximize optimal participation while protecting participant anonymity. A link to the survey and a participant consent letter was delivered to participants online through email. The letter conveyed the purpose of the study, study parameters, as well as perceived risks and/or benefits. Steps to limit contact emails from being flagged as spam included sending individual emails, avoiding spam trigger phrases in the subject lines, and utilizing text messages rather than the HTML format (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

Additional measures to ensure maximum study participation included piloting the survey design at the researcher's institution of employment. This step allowed the survey tool to be tested for readability, comprehensiveness, and delivery. In addition, the researcher verified the participant's contact information at each HBCU prior to the launch of the survey tool to ensure maximum deliverability. The verification process involved institutional website searches and

subsequent follow-up phone calls to confirm student affairs administrators contact information. Last, the survey was launched during the spring and summer of 2015 to further ensure the highest response rate possible. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey tool.

Data Collection

Data were collected digitally utilizing the Qualtrics survey delivery tool. This system tracked participation anonymously. All survey responses were housed electronically within the Qualtrics database. Participants received an informed consent letter through email. A digital link to the survey tool was sent in three rounds to maximize participation. The consent letter described the research process, participation requirements, benefits, and risks. Contact information for the primary investigator was provided.

The survey tool was accessed through the Qualtrics survey delivery tool. The survey was designed to provide participant anonymity; however, participants were instructed not to provide identifiable information within the survey tool. At the conclusion of the study, a master list containing participant identification information will be housed in the researcher's office in a locked cabinet for a period of three years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of quantitative elements proceeded in Qualtrics following the receipt of final survey responses. Responses were categorized dependent upon research questions and the corresponding survey questions. Each category was mathematically calculated within the Qualtrics database utilizing percent distribution (Analyze Quantitative, 2014) in order to tabulate participant's perceptions related to each question. Qualitative elements were collected according to responses applicable to each survey question. Respondent comments were coded and labeled

in an effort to allow themes to evolve. These themes were interpreted through comparison with existing literature when possible (Creswell, 2009). Further analysis was conducted as deemed necessary and applicable.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This mixed methods study examined the perception of student affairs administrators at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) on the importance of academic student organizations as a retention technique. Results are structured as data collection and demographics of participants, primary findings, and summation of findings.

DATA COLLECTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

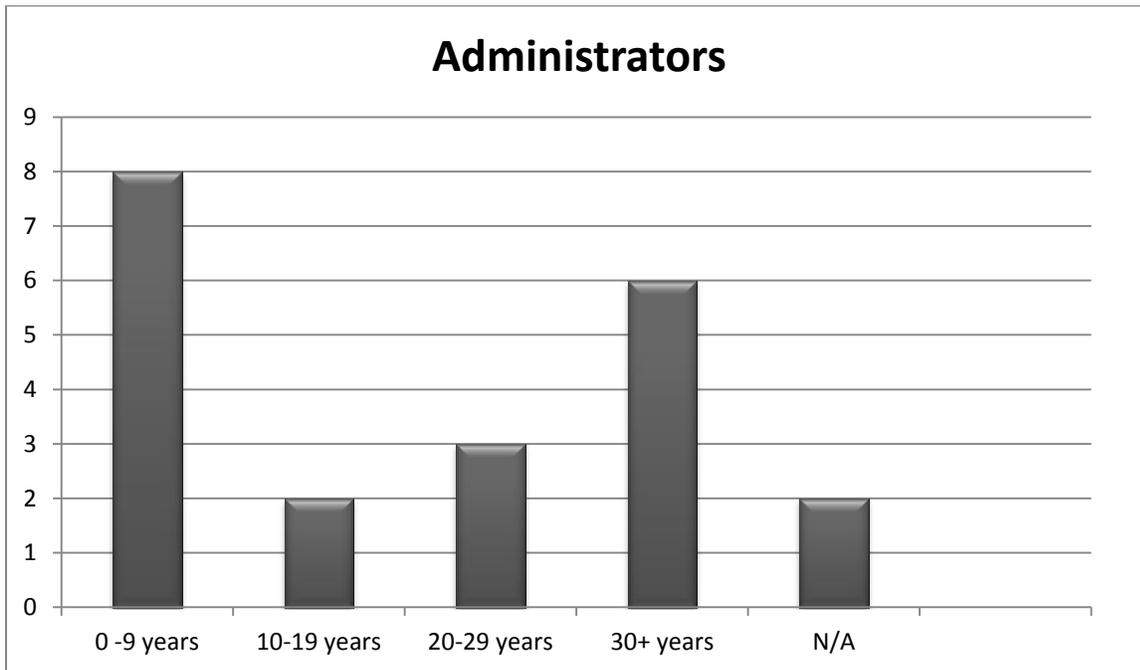
A single population was included in this study derived from the list of schools recognized by the 2014 White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (White House Initiative, 2014). Participants were invited to participate in the study as approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to determine their perception of academic student organizations as a retention technique.

The population consisted of student affairs administrators from HBCUs ($N=106$) throughout the United States and territories included in the White House Initiative. One institution, West Virginia State University, served as the pilot institution and was excluded from the overall population. Three additional institutions were removed due to closure or impending closure. Thus, the total population for the study included 102 institutions ($N=102$). Thirty-three percent ($n=34$) of the HBCU student affairs administrator population returned the survey. Twenty-six surveys were fully completed. Eight surveys were partially completed.

The student affairs administrators were primarily the chief student affairs administrator at the institution (64%). Titles included Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President of Student Success, Director of Student Affairs, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Vice President of Student Development, Dean of Students, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Success/Management, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, Dean

of Student Affairs, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Associate Vice President of Student Services, Interim Director of Housing and Residence Life, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Director of Enrollment and Student Services, Associate Provost for Student Affairs, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Executive Director of Student Success, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, and Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. These individuals reported the number of years they had worked in their current positions as follows: two at 20 years, one at 15 years, one at 13 years, one at 12 years, three at eight years, four at seven years, one at six years, two at five years, five at three years, one at two years, one at 1.5 years, eight at one year, and two at less than a year. Time spent working in student affairs ranged from less than one year to 41 years. Six individuals reported having worked in student affairs for more than 30 years. Three reported having worked in student affairs for 20 to 29 years. Two reported having worked in student affairs 10 to 19 years. Eight reported having worked in student affairs less than 10 years. Two responded “N/A.” Reporting structure varied from “N/A” to others including Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Institutional Research, Retention Committee, and the entire campus.

Figure 1 Demographic data on number of years spent working in student affairs (Student Affairs administrators N=102)



Institutional size ranged from less than 5,000 students (61%) to institutions with enrollment 5,001 to 14,999 (39%). No schools reported an enrollment larger than 14,999. Respondents reported that they were largely from public institutions (69%), private for profit institutions (3%), and private non-profit institutions (28%). Respondents reported the highest degrees awarded at their institution were associate degrees (13%), bachelor's degrees (31%), master's degrees (6%), and doctoral degrees (50%). Four respondents reported that their institution served a 100% commuter student population. Three responded that their institution served a commuter student population of 75-99%. Four reported serving a commuter student population of 50-74%. Four reported serving a commuter student population of 25-49%. Only two reported serving a commuter student population of 24% or lower.

The highest number of academic student organizations reported on campus was 782. Academic student organizations were defined as organizations having sponsorship from an

institutional college or department (Holzweiss et al., 2007). One institution reported having no academic student organizations on campus. One respondent reported not knowing how many academic student organizations were on campus. Twelve respondents reported having one to 50, five reported 52-100, and one reported 165 academic student organizations. Most administrators reported fairly large numbers of active organizations on their campus, which according to Holzweiss, et al. (2007) seems to support the ideal of a variety of choices afforded to students, although the percentage of student participation varied.

Percentage of student membership campus-wide in academic student organizations varied. One administrator reported 50% of the students were members. Another reported 43%. Four indicated 30% while five reported 20-25%. Five reported 10-15% while five indicated five percent or less. Only one institution reported zero student membership and four indicated “unsure”, “I do not know”, or “no data.” None ranked participation greater than 50% of students, which appears counter to Tinto’s foundational work in the 1970s and beyond which speaks to the relationship between engagement, integration, and a decreased likelihood of dropout (Tinto, 1993, p. 176). Hawkins (2010) reiterated the point that participation indeed had an effect on retention, which begs the question of the relation of membership to the current reported retention rates.

Administrators reported retention rates ranging from 5% to a high end number of 82%. Clearly, some institutions reported an increase in retention (52%), while 48% saw a decline in retention rates or rates remained unchanged. According to recent national indicators, retention rates at a public school for full-time students were 78% and 79% at private schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Most recent retention rates from first to second year at each institution included in the study were specified. The lowest retention rate was reported at one

institution at 5%. Two administrators reported 80-82% first year retention rates. Ten administrators reported 70-79%. Eight reported 60-69% and four reported 50-59%. One reported 34% and one reported “not sure.”

Student affairs administrators were asked if the first year to second year retention rates over the past three years had increased, decreased, or remained the same. Fifteen (52%) responded that first to second year retention rates had increased. Four (14%) reported it had decreased. Ten (34%) reported retention rates had remained the same.

PRIMARY FINDINGS

Primary findings were clustered according to information related to each of three research questions which served as the principal focus for this study. The questions delved into the perception of student affairs administrators in relation to academic student organizations as a retention technique, their perceptions pertaining to the costs associated with sustaining these organizations, and the perceived role student affairs administrators play in retention.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the significance of student academic organizations as retention tools?

Student affairs administrator responses to the perception of the significance of student academic organizations as a retention technique were captured in questions 14-22 of the *Student Organization Perception Survey*. The questions focused on the existence of a retention plan, the value of student academic organizations, the inclusion of these organizations as part of a retention plan, the effect of student academic organization membership on dropout, a ranking of these organizations against other retention initiatives, the biggest obstacle to the retention

strategy, and the administrator’s opinion on the use of student academic organizations as a retention technique.

With regard to the existence of a retention plan, administrators were asked to rank their responses using a Likert scale ranging from I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree somewhat, I disagree, or don’t know. Nineteen administrators responded with I agree (73%). Six responded with I agree somewhat (23%). No responses were indicated for I disagree or I disagree somewhat. One administrator responded don’t know (4%).

Table 1

Existence of a retention plan (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	I agree	19	73%
2	I agree somewhat	6	23%
3	I disagree somewhat	0	0%
4	I disagree	0	0%
5	Don’t know	1	4%
	Total	26	100%

When asked if they believed student academic organizations were a valuable retention tool, they were asked to respond using a Likert scale including I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree somewhat, and I disagree. Twenty administrators responded with I agree (77%). Four responded I agree somewhat (15%). One responded I disagree somewhat (4%) and one responded I disagree (4%).

Table 2

Student academic organizations as a valuable retention tool (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	I agree	20	77%
2	I agree somewhat	4	15%
3	I disagree somewhat	1	4%
4	I disagree	1	4%
	Total	26	100%

Looking at the inclusion of student academic organizations as an important part of a retention plan at their institution, participants were asked to rank their perception using a Likert scale ranging from very important, important, moderately important, of little importance, to not important. Ten administrators responded that the inclusion of student academic organizations as part of a retention plan was very important at their institution (38%). Five responded (19%) that inclusion was important. Nine responded (35%) that it was moderately important. Two (8%) indicated it was of little importance. Zero participants responded not important.

Table 3

Student academic organizations an important part of the retention plan (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Very important	10	38%
2	Important	5	19%
3	Moderately important	9	35%
4	Of little importance	2	8%
5	Not important	0	0%
	Total	26	100%

Administrators were asked to rank their perception of the effect of membership in a student academic organization on dropout rates at their institutions. A Likert scale ranging from frequently, occasionally, rarely, never, and undecided was used. Four (15%) responded that membership frequently had an effect. Five (19%) responded that it occasionally had an effect. Six (23%) responded that membership rarely had an effect. Three (12%) responded that it never had an effect. Eight administrators (31%) responded undecided.

Table 4

Effect of membership in a student academic organization on dropout rates (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Frequently	4	15%
2	Occasionally	5	19%
3	Rarely	6	23%
4	Never	3	12%
5	Undecided	8	31%
	Total	26	100%

Administrators were asked to expand upon the basis of the answers for this question. Nineteen responded. Their responses are recorded in Appendix E. Four administrators indicated they had no data or needed more data. One indicated that his/her institution does not currently have any academic organizations but plan to implement such organizations in the future. One indicated that there were a low number of such organizations with “limited funding”, advising and so on. One found that he or she has not seen dropout rates increase due to the “inability to secure memberships in academic organizations.” Two suggested that membership in academic organizations increased retention/graduation rates.

Student affairs administrators were asked to rank the value of the retention initiatives in relation to retention efforts at their schools (1 being most valuable and 9 being least valuable). Their responses are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5

Student Affairs Administrator rankings on the value of retention initiatives in relation to retention efforts at their schools (n= 26)

Initiative	Answer 1	Answer 2	Answer 3	Answer 4	Answer 5	Answer 6	Answer 7	Answer 8	Answer 9	Mean
Freshman Experience/ First Year	14	2	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	2.08
Living Learning Community	2	0	5	4	2	0	4	3	3	5.3
Student Academic Organizations	0	1	2	1	6	6	5	1	0	5.7
Non-academic Student Organizations (excludes Greeks)	0	1	1	4	3	6	6	2	1	5.79
Athletics	1	0	0	2	4	4	2	7	1	6.29
Advising	6	12	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	2.13
Academic Support Services	6	6	6	2	0	3	0	1	0	2.92
Counseling	2	3	2	5	6	2	2	2	0	4.42
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	8.67

Retention programs vary from first year initiatives to learning communities, however Willcoxson (2010) stated that retention plans must reach beyond the freshman year. Yet, when asked to rank retention initiatives at their institution (which included freshman experience or first year course, living learning communities, student academic organizations, non-academic organizations, athletics, advising, academic support services, counseling, or other) student affairs administrators ranked freshman experience as most valuable (mean score of 2.08) with an average answer ranked 1 being the most valuable to 9 being the least valuable. Student academic organizations received a mean score of 5.7, superseded in lower scores by non-academic organizations (5.79), athletics (6.29), and other (8.67). These scores mirror Tinto's (1993)

conclusions that extracurricular activities may often be overlooked in regard to retention plans. Additionally, these results reflect Patton, et al. (2006) studies on retention initiatives. They concluded that there was little support for the value of counseling or mentoring programs. However, though more research was suggested, they did find a link between transition programs such as orientation or freshman courses and retention. They also concluded that no concrete set of elements for a retention plan existed at that time. Yet, Derby (2006) found a significant relationship between degree completion and student organization participation. Holzweiss, Rahn, and Wickline also found that membership in student organizations improved persistence. Elkins, Forrest, and Noel-Elkins (2011) suggested that developing a campus community required administrators to recognize connections between activities both in and out of the classroom.

Qualitative questions supporting administrator perception were asked in questions #20-22. Administrators were asked in an open-ended question to describe their opinion of their institution's retention strategy and its overall effectiveness. Twenty-five administrators responded. Responses are recorded in Appendix F.

Three administrators indicated that the effectiveness of their institution's retention strategy was excellent or good. Three indicated the strategy was adequate or effective. Two indicated their institution had no retention strategy or needed a new one. One administrator stated, "It is not the best. Too many hands with people who do not know." Three administrators stated that their institution's retention strategy was developing or in the early stages. Seven administrators indicated that their retention strategy could be better or needed improvement. One described a lack of campus buy in on the current strategy. One administrator noted that their strategy was "poor."

In regard to the overall effectiveness of current retention plans at their institutions, administrator responses were mixed. Many (eight) indicated in their qualitative responses that their plan needed improvement. Six indicated that the effectiveness of their institutional retention plans were good, effective, or excellent. Others indicated that the plans were in progress or in the formative stages. Still, student affairs administrators reported in large numbers (77%) that they agreed that student academic organizations were a valuable retention tool. At the same time, 38% indicated that student academic organizations were a very important part of the retention plan at their institutions. Meanwhile, 23% of administrators reported that student academic organization membership rarely had an effect on dropout and twelve percent reported it never had an effect. Qualitative responses further indicated that some administrators saw no link to the effect on dropout, while others reported no data available or possible other factors involved. These results counter Case's (2011) findings that indicate a significant relationship between degree attainment and participation in organizations.

Administrators were asked their perception of the biggest obstacle to their institution's retention strategy. Twenty-five participants responded. Responses are recorded in Appendix G. Among those responses, only two administrators noted that they were unaware of obstacles or that their retention strategy was working. Seven administrators suggested that resources were an issue including technology and funding. Six cited issues with campus buy-in or involvement as an obstacle to strategy effectiveness. Two noted student issues which included finances or lack of preparedness. Four administrators noted leadership or personnel issues. Among these responses were indications of lack of staff or time to devote to retention. Another response noted ineffective leadership and the inability to promote change.

Responses indicated that student affairs administrators perceived a multitude of obstacles in relation to their institution's retention strategy. Primary obstacles included resources (finances, technology, and people). A secondary obstacle appears to be campus buy in for the retention strategy. These findings do not appear to be in line with Storch and Ohlson (2009), who indicated that success in college is linked to strong student service programs. However, a robust majority of administrators indicated in qualitative responses that they believe using student academic organizations as a retention technique is "valuable," "a must," "a great strategy," or "can help." These responses appear to be in line with Holzweiss et al. (2007), who suggested that administrators must appreciate the value of such organizations.

In another open-ended question, administrators were asked their opinion of using student academic organizations as a retention tool at their institution. Responses are recorded in Appendix H. Three administrators noted that the use of student academic organizations as a retention tool at their institution was good or valuable. Two stated it was important or a must. Five indicated it was great or excellent. Five suggested these organizations could be or were helpful as a retention tool. One administrator was uncertain and one had no opinion. Two suggested they needed more study on the use of student academic organizations as a retention tool at their institutions. One stated it needed implementation. Two indicated they would use anything. One stated, "I will use any avenue that is beneficial to retaining students." One administrator maintained that these organizations had minimal impact. Another noted that "it would call for changing campus culture and the perception of these organizations."

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the costs of sustaining student academic organizations?

Perception of costs related to sustaining student academic organizations were measured via responses to survey questions 23-24 in the *Student Organization Perception Survey*. Administrators were first asked their perception of financial support in relation to student activities on their campus. Using a Likert scale, they were to rank responses from increased significantly, increased minimally, remained relatively unchanged, decreased minimally, and decreased significantly. Three administrators (12%) responded that funding had increased significantly. Seven (27%) responded that funding had increased minimally. Ten (38%) responded that funding had remained relatively unchanged. Three (12%) responded that funding had decreased minimally while three (12%) responded that funding had decreased significantly.

Table 6

Financial activity at the institution (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Increase significantly	3	12%
2	Increase minimally	7	27%
3	Remained relatively unchanged	10	38%
4	Decreased minimally	3	12%
5	Decreased significantly	3	12%
	Total	26	100%

Student affairs administrators were then asked if the budget for supporting student academic organizations at their institution was in line with their effect on retention. Using a Likert scale to report their responses, answers were recorded either as I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree somewhat, or I disagree. Three administrators (12%) agreed that the budget for

supporting student academic organizations was in line with their effect on retention. Eleven (44%) responded that they agreed somewhat. Two (8%) responded that they disagreed somewhat. Nine (36%) responded that they disagreed with the budget supporting student academic organizations at their institution was in line with their effect on retention.

Table 7

Budget for supporting student academic organizations is in line with their effect on retention (n= 25 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	I agree	3	12%
2	I agree somewhat	11	44%
3	I disagree somewhat	2	8%
4	I disagree	9	36%
	Total	25	100%

In relation to value, administrators revealed that financial support for student activities has remained relatively unchanged in the last five years (38%). Twelve percent reported funding had decreased minimally, while twelve percent indicated it had decreased significantly. Only 39% reported increases in the last five years. These findings are indicative of trends across the country reported by Ehrenburg and Webber (2010), who stated that student service expenditures have increased far less than those for academic areas. Twelve percent of student affairs administrators indicated that the budget for student academic organizations is in line with their effectiveness. Forty-four percent of administrators indicated they agreed somewhat that the budget was in line. Eight percent disagreed somewhat, while 36% disagreed. Ehrenburg and

Webber (2010) called to question the idea of undervaluing student service expenditures in relation to student success.

Research Question #3: How do campus student affairs administrators perceive their role in retention?

In regard to research question three, responses were captured in questions 25-27 of the *Student Organization Perception Survey*. Student affairs administrators were asked to rate their professional role in retention initiatives at their institution. They were first asked if they considered themselves to be a critical participant in retention efforts at their institution. Responses were collected using a Likert scale from I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree somewhat, to I disagree. Three (12%) indicated I agree with their role in retention initiatives. Eleven (44%) indicated I agree somewhat. Two (8%) responded with I disagree somewhat. Nine (36%) administrators responded with I disagree with considering themselves to be a critical participant in retention efforts at their institution.

Table 8

Student affairs administrators consideration of themselves as a critical participant in retention efforts (n= 26 responses)

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	19	76%
2	Agree	6	24%
3	Disagree	0	0%
4	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	25	100%

These findings seem to echo Ballard and Long's (2004) supposition that there is a growing collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs and the new call for student affairs administrators to be involved in retention efforts. In qualitative responses to discussing their role in retention efforts, only four student affairs administrators reported they were the chief retention officers at their institution. One reported that he or she ensures "the Division of Student Affairs maintains services and programs that complement academic programs and services." Two reported participating on a retention or enrollment management committee. Others indicated varying levels of service including counseling, supervision, and mentoring. These findings seem to collaborate with DeBard and Sacks' (2012) conclusions that student life and the effects it has on retention are part of the enrollment management process.

Additional qualitative data were gathered in questions #26-27. Through question #26, administrators were asked describe their role in the retention efforts at their institution. Responses are recorded in Appendix I. Responses varied from overseeing student affairs activities to strategy development, counseling, advising, and teaching. Others noted leadership positions. Only six administrators specifically described retention in any way linked to their role at their institution.

Last, administrators were asked to describe what they believed their role in the retention efforts at their institution should be. Responses are recorded in Appendix J. Administrators provided a multitude of responses. Several indicated it should remain the same. Others stated "I am responsible for student engagement, retention and graduation rate," "be a positive influence on students' development," "work closely with my colleagues to remove barriers to student success," and "I believe my role is to work with other divisions, especially academic affairs, to ensure our goals and outcomes are aligned to provide the programs and services our students

need to succeed.” Calls for collaboration throughout campus were indicated on several occasions. One administrator responded, “Work closely with my colleagues to remove barriers to student success. Galvanize resources to improve student experience. Ensure our facilities are state of the art and that my departments are operating within best practices of student affairs.” Two others responded that his or her role was satisfactory or “ok.” One administrator noted a desire to chair or co-chair a retention committee.

According to Storch and Ohlson (2009), strong student service programs serve as the foundation for student success. Meanwhile, Derby (2006) indicated that student affairs staff should encourage participation in student organizations which fall under the auspices of their campus area. According to the Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs (2010), institutions must construct opportunities for success and eradicate barriers prohibiting students from thriving.

SUMMATION OF FINDINGS

Student affairs administrators perceive their role in retention to be multi-faceted. Primarily, they mentioned collaboration with other campus entities, student development, and involvement in student activities. Actively engaging in retention efforts appears to be of some importance as well.

Many reported funding for student activities had remained relatively unchanged or decreased in recent years mirroring national trends. Furthermore, a relatively large percentage reported that spending for student academic organizations was in line with their effectiveness as a retention tool.

In regard to the use of student academic organizations as a retention technique, the majority of administrators did not indicate it was their first choice for retention initiatives.

Several also indicated these organizations rarely or never had an effect on dropout. However, they did indicate that student academic organizations should be included in a retention plan even though the perception of value for such organizations to retention efforts was mixed. Many perceived their institutional retention plans needed improvement. Reported obstacles to retention included resources such as funding, technology, and staffing.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reviews the findings of this mixed methods study from the perspective of student affairs administrators at historically black colleges and universities from across the United States. The focus of the study was the administrator's perspective of student academic organizations as a retention technique. The following research questions served as the primary guide for this study:

1. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the significance of student academic organizations as retention tools?
2. What are the perceptions of American HBCU Student Affairs Administrators related to the costs of sustaining student academic organizations?
3. How do campus student affairs administrators perceive their role in retention?

Responses to the researcher developed survey tool provided insight into the perspective of student affairs administrators. Qualitative responses were blended with quantitative data providing a unique snapshot of the administrators' viewpoints.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Student affairs administrators serving historically black colleges and universities recognize universally the importance of their work in the lives of students on their campus. They also recognize that they have a role to play in retention efforts at their individual institutions although that role seems to vary campus to campus. However, they do identify several obstacles which tend to block retention efforts including funding (which appears to remain the same or has decreased for student affairs spending in recent years), technology, and staffing.

Regardless of the indication throughout the literature that student academic organizations are an important retention tool, these administrators do not list student academic organizations as their first choice for a retention technique. Instead, the overwhelming focus appears to be on freshman or first year experience initiatives which tend to overshadow the long standing student academic organizations (some nearly 100 years old) as a retention technique. Still, administrators recognize that student academic organizations may play a role on their campus but that role has not been studied thoroughly or clearly defined. One administrator stated, "I am open, but we need to examine how to best utilize student academic organization to impact retention efforts." These responses indicate a need for further study in regard to the usefulness of student academic organizations as a retention technique. The results infer that administrators are open to new ideas, to the extent that they may often neglect otherwise tried and true methods of retention techniques. Such is the case with student academic organizations at the campus level, which should be considered one of many possible retention tools. Additional research at non-HBCU institutions may provide added insight into the applicability of student academic organizations as a retention technique by clarifying if they are excluded only at historically black institutions in favor of first year initiatives as opposed to long term initiatives represented by these organizations. Furthermore, the value of these organizations must be made known not only through continued research, but in student affairs reporting at each campus, student publications, and via publication and social media at the local and national student academic organization level.

Once these entities have been studied at the campus level and their role in retention initiatives defined, student affairs administrators and department chairs can then proceed to recruit student participants and faculty advisors, as well as encourage membership and

participation (both by students and faculty) thereby shoring up the sustainability of such organizations. Faculty could pursue the professional development opportunities these organizations provide through conference attendance and presentations. Increased participation rates would set the foundation for calls at the student affairs level for continued or increased funding for these groups and halt what appears to be perpetual cuts in this area. Institutional leaders would then be afforded the opportunity to develop marketing initiatives to student recruits based on levels of participation with the goal of increasing admissions and ultimately affecting retention rates.

All in all, the literature indicates that retention is or should be a campus-wide responsibility. In January 2015, Tinto was featured at a Retention Summit at West Virginia State University, a historically black university located near the capitol of West Virginia. He stated that retention efforts need to be “intentional, structured, and a coordinated course of action that brings together the actions of many people, programs, and offices across campus” (Tinto, 2015). He reiterated the importance of engagement, which was the focus of his initial studies many years ago: “Students want to be part of a community.” Tinto stated that retention is built upon four key principles, which include clear expectations, support (financial, academic, and social), assessment and feedback, and engagement. These statements mirror his earlier comments in 1993 when he called for a blending of assets, activities, and employees, which would allow institutions to meet their retention objectives (Tinto, 1993).

Clearly, Tinto has not changed his beliefs on the value of engagement, one of many applications germane to student academic organizations and ultimately retention. However, HBCU administrators do not appear to place the emphasis warranted for such organizations within the overall institutional retention plans. Given the administrator responses, to some they

appear to be something that students merely participate in to develop “leadership” and responsibility and have little to no effect on retention.

Additionally, Tinto indicates that institutional support (including financial) is a critical component for student success. According to the administrators surveyed, financial support continues to be a barrier for student success in their respective area. Such practices are counterintuitive to Tinto’s four part approach to retention and an obvious issue which needs to be addressed nationwide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A mixed-methods study represents the tip of the proverbial iceberg in relation to institutions of this nature. Each campus embodies a complex organism consisting of layers upon layers of moving parts and each part represents one piece of the whole. From Tinto’s perspective, each component works to collectively achieve the organizational mission. The question that remains is whether retention is an intentional part of that mission. For some student affairs administrators, this appears to be the case. For others, the answer is not clear. What is clear is that most administrators desire a role linked in some fashion to student success. Whether that evolves into a student being retained is not specified.

This study is but one layer; it is one impression of these historical institutions and their student affairs administrators. It is one indication of the many challenges faced on these campuses every day. Some institutions have not been able to stand up to the challenges, having yielded to decreased state appropriations, reduced enrollment, low endowments, competition from their non-black counterparts, and are now closed. Campus closures are a growing threat nationwide. In the midst of all these issues stands the student academic organization serving the

academic mission of these institutions to educate while serving the student affairs mission to engage. Remarkably, according to the literature, in certain instances they serve to retain students.

This was the case for the researcher who was inspired to conduct this study based on personal experiences with one such student academic organization as an undergraduate student. The organization provided a much needed link to campus that was otherwise missing. Later, the researcher became an advisor for a student academic organization, once again able to see the first-hand effect these organizations have in the lives of students. Recognizing that not everyone could see the benefits of affiliations with these organizations was a surprising result of this study. Noting how much the administrators lean toward one solution for retention issues (possibly a bandwagon philosophy rather than studied methodologies) was also surprising. The result is that additional research needs to be conducted in order to continue to peel back more of the institutional layers allowing greater insight into what is working and what is not in relation to retention. Does a singular retention formula exist for each campus? Does the unique culture on each campus require a multi-faceted approach? Could student academic organizations be but one solution (obviously overlooked while nationally studied but locally not applied)?

Due to the limited amount of research on HBCUs, studies like this one are valuable to contribute to the body of knowledge for these historical institutions. However, participation rates for this study were fairly low despite multiple attempts to build involvement. Initially, invitations to participate in the study were sent out via emails in three cycles every two weeks during late spring 2015. Midway through this process, personal phone calls to the student affairs administrators were also conducted. A second attempt to garner participation occurred during the summer of 2015. At this time, the process was repeated again. Return rates remained low.

Individuals in the student affairs office at West Virginia State University (the pilot institution) were called upon to touch base with their counterparts at the other HBCUs in an effort to increase participation levels. Invitations to participate in the study were sent one last time. Participation rates increased minimally, but represented more than a quarter of all student affairs administrators at HBCUs throughout the United States included in the study utilizing the White House Initiative list.

Given the lower participation rates, future attempts to include administrators at a high level such as the case of student affairs administrators might improve participation by scheduling personal interviews utilizing a specified survey tool. Individuals who participated in the study indicated that they provide a multitude of services to their institution, thus one can safely conclude that they remain tremendously busy in their work, which would limit time and attention to an online survey. By scheduling an appointment (either by phone or in person), return rates might improve significantly. Further, increasing the qualitative element to such studies might provide more depth of understanding. A smaller case study would provide in-depth information as to the individual campus retention plan, effectiveness of the plan, campus culture in regard to the plan, and overall health of the institution as a result of the plan.

While Ballard and Long (2004) hailed the notion of expanding roles for student affairs administrators, data from this study reveals that this is not always the case. It is possible that administrators may not have control of their role in regard to retention. Further research into the roles of such administrators may shed light on specific contributions to retention based upon their actual job title, job duties, and description.

Furthermore, as several historical black colleges and universities face threats of financial difficulty and possible closure such as South Carolina State University and Wilberforce University (Jacobs, 2015); retention efforts are paramount to survival. Future related research should focus on recruiting initiatives, the effects of branding in the face of increased competition from non-black institutions, and overall retention plans and their effectiveness. Considering the many similarities between African American students and rural students, including limited resources and support systems, individual student under preparedness, and first generation college student status (Elkins, 2014), future study into the role student academic organizations play in the lives of rural students may also provide additional clues to this type of organization's value as a retention technique.

Moreover, as spending cuts reverberate on campuses across the country, additional studies related to budgeting and retention may also prove insightful. This is truer today when states are spending 20% less per student than pre-2008 levels (Mitchell & Leachman, 2015). Looking at the relationship between budget cuts and increases in student fees versus services actually provided to students and at what level may also prove useful moving forward.

Last, as the number of non-traditional students increase on campuses nationwide (Bell, 2012) additional research needs to be conducted on the expanding roles of student academic organizations. How will they meet the challenges of engaging this growing population of students who face competition for their time and attention from work, family, and school? Their role in retention for this growing population of students needs further exploration.

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APPENDIX A



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
401 11th St., Suite 1300
Huntington, WV 25701

FWA 00002704
IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

November 21, 2014

Teresa Eagle, EdD
College of Education and Professional Development

RE: IRBNet ID# 667859-1
AT: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Eagle:

Protocol Title: [667859-1] A Case Study: The Perception of Higher Education Administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the Importance of Academic Student Organizations as a Retention Technique

Expiration Date: November 21, 2015
Site Location: MUGC
Submission Type: New Project APPROVED
Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire November 21, 2015. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Sherri Shafer.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B

Student Organization Perception Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect the perceptions of college student affairs administrators at Historically Black College and Universities in relation to student academic organizations and their effect on retention. *Student academic organizations are defined as those extracurricular activities that are registered with and sanctioned by a university, college or department and which fulfill the academic and personal interests of the student members. (Examples might include but are not limited to the Public Relations Student Society of America, American Chemical Society, or the Mathematical Association of America.)* Your participation is valuable and all information will be kept confidential.

In this section, please provide the information that applies to you:

1. Are you the chief student affairs officer at your school?
 - Yes
 - No
2. What is your current title? _____
3. How long have you served in your current position? _____ yrs. (round to whole)
4. How long have you worked in student affairs? _____ yrs. (round to whole)
5. What is the title of the individual or department has primary responsibility for your institution's retention strategy/plan? _____
6. What is the size of your institution based on full-time enrollment equivalents (FTE)?
 - Less than 5,000 students
 - 5,001 to 14,999 students
 - 15,000 to 30,000 students
 - Greater than 30,000 students
7. What type of institution?
 - Public
 - Private for profit
 - Private non- profit
 - Other _____
8. What is the highest degree that your institution offers?
 - Associate
 - Bachelor
 - Masters
 - Doctorate
9. What is the percentage of commuter students on your campus? _____ %
10. How many officially recognized **student academic organizations** are on your campus? (**This excludes athletics and Greek organizations**) _____
11. What is the approximate percentage of students who are members of an academic student organization? _____ %

12. What is the approximate percentage of your first to second year retention rates at your institution? _____ %

13. Over the past three years, has the percentage of first year to second year retention rate:

- Increased
- Decreased
- Remained the same

In this section, please indicate your opinion of the value of student organizations and retention initiatives.

14. My institution has a retention strategy/plan.

- I agree
- I agree somewhat
- I disagree somewhat
- I disagree
- Don't know

15. I believe that student academic organizations are a valuable retention tool.

- I agree
- I agree somewhat
- I disagree somewhat
- I disagree

16. Student academic organizations are an important part of retention efforts at my school.

- Very important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Of little importance
- Not important
-

17. Academic student organization membership has an effect on student dropout rates at my institution.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- Undecided

18. What is the basis for your answer to the item above (#18)? _____

19. Please rank the value of the following initiatives in relation to retention efforts at your school. (Use 1 being most valuable and 9 being least valuable):

- _____ Freshman Experience or first year course
- _____ Living Learning Communities
- _____ Student Academic Organizations
- _____ Non-academic Student Organizations (includes Greeks)
- _____ Athletics
- _____ Advising
- _____ Academic Support Services
- _____ Counseling
- _____ Other _____

20. What is your opinion of the overall effectiveness of your institution's retention strategy?

21. What do you perceive to be the biggest obstacle to your institution's retention strategy?

22. What is your opinion of using student academic organizations as a retention tool at your institution? _____

In this section, please provide feedback related to the financial support for student academic organizations on your campus.

23. Within the last five years at my school, financial support for all student activities has:

- Increased significantly
- Increased minimally
- Remained relatively unchanged
- Decreased minimally
- Decreased significantly

24. The budget for supporting student academic organizations at my school is in line with their effect on retention.

- I agree
- I agree somewhat
- I disagree somewhat
- I disagree

In this section, please rate your professional role in retention initiatives at your school.

25. I consider myself to be a critical participant in retention efforts at my school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

26. Briefly describe your role in the retention efforts at your institution.

27. Briefly describe what you believe your role in the retention efforts at your institution should be. _____

APPENDIX C

To: HBCU List
Send Date:
Link Type: Individual Link
Link Expiration:
Response Set: Use the active response set
From Address: noreply@qemailserver.com
From Name: Sherri Shafer
Reply-To Email: sshafer1@wvstateu.edu
Subject: HBCU Retention Survey
Message:

Dear Student Affairs Administrator,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "*A Case Study: The Perception of Higher Education Administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the Importance of Academic Student Organizations as a Retention Technique*" designed to analyze the student affairs administrator's perspective on the importance of academic student organizations as a retention technique at historically black colleges and universities. The study is being conducted by Dr. Teresa Eagle and Sherri Shafer from Marshall University and has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for Sherri Shafer.

This survey is comprised of 27 questions and should take less than 20 minutes to complete the survey. Your replies will be anonymous, so do not type your name anywhere on the form. There are no known risks involved with this study. While the intent of the study is for participants to remain anonymous, please be cautious not to identify yourself through the open ended questions. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose to not participate in this research study or to withdraw. If you choose not to participate you can leave the survey site. You may choose to not answer any question by simply leaving it blank. Once you complete the survey you can delete your browsing history for added security. Completing the on-line survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study you may contact Dr. Teresa Eagle at (304)746-8924, Sherri Shafer at 304-766-3382.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

By completing this survey you are also confirming that you are **18** years of age or older.

Please print this page for your records.

If you choose to participate in the study you will find the survey at-

Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${1://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
\${1://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
\${1://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

APPENDIX D

WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES PRESIDENTS/CHANCELLORS

Alabama

Alabama A&M University

Alabama State University

Bishop State Community College

Concordia College

C.A. Fredd Campus of Shelton State Community College

Gadsden State Community College

Lawson State Community College

Miles College

Oakwood University

Selma University

J. F. Drake Technical College

Stillman College

Talladega College

Trenholm State Technical College

Tuskegee University

Arkansas

Arkansas Baptist College

Philander Smith College

Shorter College

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Delaware

Delaware State University

Howard University

University of the District of Columbia

Florida

Bethune-Cookman University

Edward Waters College

Florida A&M University

Florida Memorial University

Georgia

Albany State University

Clark Atlanta University

Fort Valley State University

Interdenominational Theological Center

Morehouse College

Morehouse School of Medicine

Morris Brown College

Paine College

Savannah State University

Spelman College

Kentucky

Kentucky State University

Louisiana

Dillard University

Grambling State University

Southern University System

Southern University and A&M College

Southern University at New Orleans

Southern University at Shreveport

Xavier University of New Orleans

Maryland

Bowie State University

Coppin State College

Morgan State University

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Michigan

Lewis College of Business

Mississippi

Alcorn State University

Coahoma Community College

Hinds Community College

Hinds Community College-Utica

Jackson State University

Mississippi Valley State University

Rust College

Tougaloo College

Missouri

Harris-Stowe State University

Lincoln University

North Carolina

Barber-Scotia College

Bennett College

Elizabeth City State University

Fayetteville State University

Johnson C. Smith University

Livingstone College

North Carolina A&T State University

North Carolina Central University

St. Augustine's College

Shaw University

Winston-Salem State University

Ohio

Central State University

Wilberforce University

Oklahoma

Langston University

Pennsylvania

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

Lincoln University

South Carolina

Allen University

Benedict College

Claflin University

Clinton Junior College

Denmark Technical College

Morris College

South Carolina State University

Voorhees College

Tennessee

American Baptist College

Fisk University

Knoxville College

Lane College

LeMoyne-Owen College

Meharry Medical College

Tennessee State University

Texas

Huston-Tillotson University

Jarvis Christian College

Paul Quinn College

Prairie View A&M University

Saint Philip's College

Southwestern Christian College

Texas College

Texas Southern University

Wiley College

Virginia

Hampton University

Norfolk State University

Saint Paul's College

Virginia State University

Virginia Union University

Virginia University of Lynchburg

West Virginia

Bluefield State College

West Virginia State University

U.S. Virgin Islands

University of the Virgin Islands

APPENDIX E

Verbatim Responses to Question 18 Student Affairs Administrator perception of the effect of membership in a student academic organization on dropout rates (n=19)

The more students that are involved in both social and academic clubs and organizations the higher their retention. These clubs specifically assist in keeping academically talented students enrolled.

We do not currently have any academic organizations but is currently planned for implementation

Need data

We have no data to verify

I checked rarely, but are you asking if student participation in academic organizations can possibly be the reason students dropout?

Low number of academic organizations, limited funding, advising incidents, etc

In my assessment, students do not normally dropout due to inability to secure memberships in academic organizations.

We have a higher graduation rate of students who are members of an academic organization those that do not.

student engagement

This area has not been assessed to determine impact on retention and graduation.

I'm not sure if that is the only factor.

It does not any effect, because these organizations play a great role in helping students.

Academic student organizations instills leadership and pride in students

I am a member of the enrollment management team

There are other factors that prevent a student from returning.

NSSE Student Engagement Inventory

Do not have data to answer decisively

Data has not been collected

APPENDIX F

Verbatim Responses to Question 20 Administrators opinion of the overall effectiveness of your institution's retention strategy (n=25)

Moderate effectiveness
Not sure this is a fair question for me to answer since I am the person responsible for retention. However, I feel that our plan is good and having the right people on the bus in key areas to assist with retention such as finances, academics, social, psychological, career, spiritual and administrative has been great!
Needs improvement but is in its initial stage
Poor
Excellent
In progress
We can do much better!
Need improvement
It is reviewed every six months and we try new initiatives to serve students' needs.
Intrusive intervention
The retention statistics would suggest that the effectiveness is limited and needs to be improved
We currently do not have a clearly delineated retention strategy; it is everyone's responsibility to strive to retain student
Current retention strategy is still in its formative stages, so it requires more time to be highly effective.
Effective
Rank 4 out of 9 with 1 being most effective
We need to implement a new strategy, as I do not believe we have consistent buy-in from the campus community.
really needs to be improved
It is not the best to many hands with people who do not know.
It could be much better..
Good
Our strategy is simple "students first"1
Marginal could be a lot better
Good
Adequate
Developing

APPENDIX G

Verbatim Responses to Question 21 Administrators perception of the biggest obstacle to his/her institution's retention strategy (n=25)

Students lack of financial resources
Technology. We have policies, procedures and practices in place but we work hard and not smart as our software packages for retention are not up and running yet.
Sticking to the plan
Poorly designed systems and academic policies
I am not aware of significant obstacles.
Campus buy in
Limited resources, enhanced technology infrastructure and embracing customer service!
Total Campus Involvement
All stakeholders do not participate which causes many students to fall through the cracks of not being served.
Fiscal resources
I believe that the critical areas listed above have leadership and staff that are not effective and not subject to change or termination.
Our biggest obstacle is that currently we do not have a person designated to run an effective retention program.
Faculty buy-in is the biggest obstacle to the university's retention strategy.
Getting everyone on board.
Student preparedness for seminary
Communication, and a strategy.
The biggest obstacle is personnel who can devote time to retention only efforts.
The people who are over it and the lack on knowledge
Being informed of the problems student have after they drop out.
It seems to be working right now.
Lack of adequate funds for students.
Finances and Personnel
Funding/Staffing
Student's ability to afford to continue matriculation
Early Alert System - faculty buy in

APPENDIX H

Verbatim Responses to Question 22 Administrators opinion of using student academic organizations as a retention tool at their institution (n=26)

Not certain it would add tremendous support because of the financial challenges our students face.

I think its a must.

Academic Organizations need implementation here

Excellent

I think it is very important to student life.

Excellent strategy

I believe it can help.

Would have a positive affect of retention

I feel participation in student organizations helps students to be responsible, accountable and demonstrate leadership skills.

No opinion, have not proven to very effective

I believe it is a valuable resource that has great potential if utilized correctly.

In my opinion, student academic organizations could be vital in helping to address retention at this institution; however, I would have to give this more thought.

I believe it is a valuable tool for student engagement.

I think its good

Helpful in conjunction with student and community life: possibly connect with vocational preparation

I am open, but we need to examine how to best utilize student academic organization to impact retention efforts.

I will use any Avenue that is beneficial to retaining students.

This will be great, but much training have to be done for these groups.

Student academic organizations are great retention tools

I think we use them currently.

They are helpful but have minimal impact on whether a student stays or leaves.

I think it would be a great tool to use.

This is a great strategy

It would call for changing campus culture and the perception of these organizations

A very highly successful tool, once we get the student connected/involved in the academic organization

Valuable

APPENDIX I

Verbatim Responses to Question 26 Student affairs administrator's perceived role in retention efforts (n=25)

Counseling, advising, teaching, student activities
As Vice President for Student Success, I am also the key retention officer.
Rebuilding a university after the threat of closing 1 year earlier, I have helped increase the retention by approx. 20%
Overseeing student affairs related activities
Act as a point of intervention when students may be ready to leave school.
Member of enrollment management team participating in strategy development
My role is to ensure that my areas of responsibility work collaboratively to support the academic mission of the university.
Direct counseling with students on a daily basis.
I mentor students, serve as ADA coordinator, attend most student organization meetings and maintain an open door policy.
Chief Retention Officer
I supervise key student affairs areas that are integral to the retention model. I have a professional background in effecting change in this area.
As the chief conduct officer here, it's my responsibility to educate students about how poor social behaviors can negatively impact our retention rate.
As a (identifier removed) Achievement Program instructor my primary role is to facilitate student persistence through degree completion at the institution.
Lead retention person
Chief student advisor along complaint/dispute resolutions. Helping students resolve problems in a manner that is respectful and attentive to their personal and corporate processes.
I ensure the Division of Student Affairs maintains services and programs that complement academic programs and services. Programs and services need to be intrusive and intentional.
In my division we provide counseling and tutorial services
I am very actively involved in the academic and non-academic organizations. When I know students have problems, I try to inspire them and encourage them to remain in school.
Providing space to house our residential students, creating a safe environment, creating co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, creating opportunities for the commuter students
Assistant VP of Academic Affairs for Undergraduate Programs
AVP for Student Affairs/ Dean of Students- Primarily making the campus environment safe, conducive to learning and providing services that support the overall mission of the university.
I sit as a member of the retention committee and have input on the retention plan
Collaborations with Academic Affairs, learning communities in the residence halls
Support and extracurricular activities and experiences
Leadership

APPENDIX J

Verbatim Responses to Question 27 Student affairs administrator's perception on what their role in retention efforts should be (n=24)

Same as above
As Vice President for Student Success, I am responsible for student engagement, retention and graduation rates.
Implement academic organizations, implement funding for student activities
Same as above
Ensuring that students have enough support both academic and financial to remain in school.
Role is ok
Work closely with my colleagues to remove barriers to student success. Galvanize resources to improve student experience. Ensure our facilities are state of the art and that my departments are operating within best practices of student affairs.
Be a positive influence on students development.
Just what they are now; total involvement in student activities to keep them student-driven and being available to students at all times.
Same
I believe that I should co-chair or chair the retention committee.
Consistent with the statement above.
My current role in the university's retention efforts is satisfactory .
Exactly what it is
As above described
I believe my role is to work with other divisions, especially academic affairs, to ensure our goals and outcomes are aligned to provide the programs and services our students need to succeed.
I wish I could offer additional funding to academic support groups.
See above
Creating opportunities for students to enjoy their college experience. Internships and co-op opportunities in addition to what I stated above.
Assisting students to overcome obstacles in their way.
My role should be as indicated earlier.
Same as above
Collaborations across the campus
Leadership

VITA

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Education

Doctor of Education, Leadership Studies, May 2016.
Marshall University Graduate School, South Charleston, WV

Education Specialist, December 2011.
Marshall University Graduate School, South Charleston, WV

Master of Arts, Journalism, December 1994.
Marshall University, Huntington, WV. Minor in Education.

Bachelor of Arts, Journalism, May 1993.
Marshall University, Huntington, WV. Minor in Political Science.

Teaching Experience

- Speech Communication
- Radio Broadcasting/Announcing
- Television Production
- Broadcast Writing
- Mass Communications
- Journalism/Broadcasting History
- Media Theory
- Media Law
- Media Management
- Senior Capstone
- Portfolio Development
- Freshman Experience & Adult Transitions

Related Experience

Administration

Director- Regents Bachelor of Arts January 2014- Present
President- Alpha Epsilon Rho (national) March 2014- Present
Chair- Department of Communications and Media Studies May 2010-
December 2013

Teaching

Assistant Professor, Department of Communications, West Virginia State University, Institute, WV

August 2006- Present

Adjunct, Department of Communications, West Virginia State University, Institute, WV

August 2004- May 2006

Work Experience

February 1998 - August 1998

Media Consultant

October 1992 - July 1996

Reporter/Photographer WSAZ-TV 3

August 1993 – December 1994

Radio Station Manager/Graduate Assistant
WMUL- FM

June 1992 – August 1992

News Intern WOWK-TV 13

Publications:

Shafer, S. (2010). Building public speaking skills across the curriculum. *The International Journal of Learning*, 17(2), 279-284.

Shafer, S. (2009). Promoting communication skills in the classroom. *The Education Digest*, 74(6), 48.

Conference Presentations:

Gaming and Education: A First-hand Look at a Net-Gen College Student, EdMedia 2012 in Denver, Colorado, June 2012

Public Speaking 911, Marshall University Doctoral Seminar, October 16, 2010

Building Public Speaking Skills Across the Curriculum, Virtual presentation to the 17th Annual International Learning Conference in Hong Kong, July 2010

Public Speaking 911, West Virginia National Guard Family and Youth Volunteer Workshop, April 23-25, 2010

Building 21st Century Communication Skills in the Classroom: The Administrators Role. Co-presented with Dr. Teresa Eagle, October 25, 2008. 49th Annual Conference, Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration

Research:

A Case Study: The Perception of Higher Education Administrators
Of the Importance of Academic Student Organizations as a Retention Tool
(Dissertation)

Pending Research:

Gaming and Education: An Exploratory Case Study of the Perception of Video
Gamers and the Educational Process (with Dr. Ali Ziyati)

Certifications:

Certified Master Prior Learning Assessor December 2015

Certified Student Organization Advisor June 2015

Applying the QM Rubric (Online Teaching) 2012

Grants

Honors Council Grant Program 2014, Association of College Honor
Societies: \$1,000

Online Course Development Grant (OnCode) 2015: \$1,500

DegreeNow Access & Success Subgrant 2015: \$6,000

Honors/Affiliations

Alpha Epsilon Rho & National Broadcasting Society, 1993 - Present

Honors/Awards

Advisor of the Year, NBS-AERho, 2010-2011

1st Place in Television Photography, 1994 Society of Professional Journalists

2nd Place in Television Feature, 1994 Society of Professional Journalists