5-2009

THE EFFECT OF A SOPHOMORE YEAR EXPERIENCE ON-CAMPUS LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY: PARTICIPANTS’ SENSE OF MEANING IN LIFE, ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY, AND SATISFACTION

Shannon Finning-Kwoka
Clemson University

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations

Recommended Citation
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/1263

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
THE EFFECT OF A SOPHOMORE YEAR EXPERIENCE ON-CAMPUS LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY: PARTICIPANTS’ SENSE OF MEANING IN LIFE, ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY, AND SATISFACTION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka
May 2009

Accepted by:
Dr. Pamela Havice, Committee Chair
Dr. William Bridges
Dr. Tony Cawthon
Dr. Barbara Griffin
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore change in students’ self-reported sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution as a result of participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community in Fall 2008. Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development, Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement, and Tinto’s Model of Student Attrition provided the conceptual frameworks for this study.

The literature reviewed supported the need for a study of the effect of a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution as the foundation of this dissertation. The data collected and analyzed for this dissertation included pre and post-test responses to a modified version of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Schreiner, 2007b) from 77 participants (41% of the total population) in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

The study identified practically significant change on all items related to sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and commitment to academic major, suggesting that participation in the sophomore year experience, on campus, living learning community contributed to participants not experiencing anticipated decreases on these items associated with the sophomore slump. The findings suggested participants reported statistically significantly higher sense of purpose; academic self-efficacy (time
management, research and writing skills, confidence in being a good student); and, academic major certainty after participating in the living-learning community. Further, female participants reported statistically significantly higher understanding of meaning in life and quest for life purpose after participating in the living-learning community and African-American participants reported statistically significantly higher satisfaction with the amount of faculty contact they had during the fall semester. Based on the findings, recommendations for policy and programs were provided. The findings of this study filled a need in the literature for research on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing retention programs.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Nana Mary and my mother, Eileen, who both believed, from the moment I was born, that I could accomplish anything. My mom’s unwavering confidence and the knowledge that Nana Mary is my angel from above, have sustained me during this process. I also dedicate this dissertation to my husband and best friend, Michael, without whom this endeavor would not have been possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you will never adequately express my gratitude to you, Michael. Thank you for making this dream of mine a dream of ours and a reality. Your selfless decision and many sacrifices will undoubtedly provide the future we desire. Thank you for being the host for our PhD support gatherings and study groups, for never questioning my 2am brainstorming and being ‘tethered’ to my laptop, and for helping me regain my confidence at times in this journey when I thought I could not continue. You are the love of my life.

To my mom, Eileen, thank you for instilling confidence, perseverance, and a desire to have a positive impact on the lives of others in me. I am honored to be your daughter and humbled by your generosity. This journey would not have been possible without your constant presence and encouragement. Dad, thank you for challenging me to be my best self, for countless late night and early morning rides to and from Logan Airport when I desperately needed to see my family to recharge my batteries, and for patiently listening and trying to understand why student affairs is my passion. To my sisters, Lisa and Caitlin, thank you for understanding when I could not come home for birthdays and special events or respond to calls or emails in a timely fashion, and for not holding any of my ‘absences’ against me. To Madison and John, while you may not understand or appreciate how much your hugs, kisses, giggles, smiles, and phone calls have helped me, your unconditional love sustained me at so many junctures in this process – thank you for being the best niece and nephew I could ask for! To my extended family – Jill, Michael, Billy, Mike, Justin, and Josh – thank you for your patience and love throughout this process.
Now to my Clemson family. First and foremost, thank you to Tony Cawthon. Tony, I am honored and humbled by your mentorship and friendship. I only hope to positively affect half as many lives as you have in your career – thank you for loving, supporting, and challenging me when I needed it most. My life is richer for having you in it – you are forever a member of my family. I am also grateful to Pam Havice, my chair, from whom I have learned so much during this process, to Billy Bridges for helping me appreciate (and dare I say, love) statistics, and to Barbara Griffin for her constant, quiet support and encouragement – thank you all for being outstanding members of my dissertation committee!

To Wade, my southern brother, as much as I joke that you are the little brother I never wanted, I could not have done this without you. I have such ‘PhD love’ and admiration for you. Thank you in advance for a lifetime of friendship. To Kellye, Eddie, Lorraine, Monica, Bert, Mike, Guy, Daphne, and Bill – thank you for lightening my load and sharing the triumphs and sorrows of the past three years.

To Gail DiSabatino, Tina LeMay, SA executive staff, NSSP staff, Lynn Willett, Bill McDonald, all of my master’s students, and countless others – thank you for your genuine care and support. Finally, to Kathy Hobgood, and Rose Ellen Davis-Gross, thank you for your selfless commitment to helping me see this project through, often via late night and weekend emails. I vow to make you all proud and thank you for welcoming this little Yankee into your hearts and homes. Wherever the future takes Michael and I, we will take a piece of Clemson with us and know we are better for this experience.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Significance of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Hypotheses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Retention</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Socio-economic Status</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention by Enrollment Status and Choice of Major</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention by Place of Residence and Participation in Learning Communities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention by Academic Class</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore Attrition</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore Needs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore Retention Efforts</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Psychosocial Theoretical Frameworks</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinto’s Model of Student Departure</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (Continued)

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Research Design</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Living-Learning Communities at the Research Institution</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Treatment Variable - Sophomore Year Experience</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living-Learning Community Curriculum at the Research Institution</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of Data</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Research Hypotheses</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Relevant Literature</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Frameworks</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Findings</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Research Hypotheses</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications and Recommendations</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Sophomore Experiences Survey (adapted for study)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Author Permission to Utilize Sophomore Experiences Survey</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Sophomore Experiences Survey (original instrument)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: History of Living-Learning Communities at the Research Institution</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: SophoMORE Be MORE Calendar of the Year</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: Learning Outcomes of the SophoMORE Be MORE Living-Learning Community</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents (Continued)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H: Invitation to Participate in Study</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: Reminder Email Inviting Students to Participate in Study</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Map of Conceptual Framework for Research Study</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Gender</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Categories of Academic Majors</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Major</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of <em>Meaning in Life</em> questions</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of <em>Academic Self-Efficacy Scale</em> questions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Satisfaction questions</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Commitment to Academic Major question</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Commitment to Graduating from this Institution</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Gender</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Racial/Ethnic Group</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Major Category</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

There is a gap in research on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing retention programs. The purpose of this study was to explore change in students’ self-reported sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution as a result of participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community in Fall 2008.

Chickering’s (1969, 1993) Theory of Identity Development, Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement, and Tinto’s (1975) Model of Student Departure provided the conceptual framework for this study. Chickering’s (1993) psychosocial vectors of ‘achieving competence’, ‘moving through autonomy to interdependence’, ‘establishing identity’, and ‘developing purpose’ were given special attention because the tasks/crises encountered in these vectors, including competence in academic performance and interpersonal relationships, developing emotional and instrumental independence, identity formation and choosing a major and career, can be traced directly to the sophomore slump phenomenon. Participants’ results on pre- and post-test administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Schreiner, 2007b) were examined to determine if participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community contributed to sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction at the beginning and conclusion of the Fall 2008 semester.
Introduction

Background of the Study

Retention of college students remains a primary focus for institutions of higher education. Over the past two decades, much research regarding student success, retention and attrition has focused on first-year students (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). As such, institutions have developed comprehensive first year experience programs to help new students adjust to campus life, and these programs have significantly affected student success (Lipka, 2006; Schaller, 2005). By providing first-year students the support needed to successfully negotiate the transition to college, freshman year experience programs have positively affected retention rates at many institutions (Schaller, 2005). While retention of first-year students has improved at many colleges and universities nationwide, attrition during the second year has increased (The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2007).

The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange reported that 80.4 percent of freshmen enrolled in 2004 returned as sophomores the following year, but only 70.9 percent of those students were enrolled at their original institution as juniors in Fall 2006 (The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education reported that among all students who drop out of college, close to two-thirds as many drop out during the second year as their first year (Lipka, 2006). Noting this trend, researchers have recommended that more attention be paid to post-freshman retention (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Lenning & Mohonkern, 1986; Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Roney, 1986; Seale, 1984; Wilder, 1993).
Researchers have delineated that the reasons sophomores fail to return to the junior year are very different than reasons detailed for attrition from freshman to sophomore year. Attrition from sophomore to junior year was often linked to issues related to the ‘sophomore slump’ which includes but is not limited to: a) lack of sense of purpose; b) uncertainty about major and/or career plans; c) dissatisfaction with experiences at the university and/or personal relationships; d) reduced motivation; and e) declining academic performance (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schreiner, 2007a).

**Purpose and Significance of Study**

**Statement of Problem**

Increased calls for accountability in higher education have intensified the focus on retention and graduation rates (Tinto, 2006). Significant research exists on factors that contributed to college student retention in general and to persistence by gender, ethnicity, place of residence, enrollment status, academic major, and academic year, particularly on first-year students (Astin, 1975, 1993, 1996; Astin, Tsui, & Avalos, 1996; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Lewallen, 1993; Peltier, Laden, & Matranga, 1999; St. John, Hu, Simmons, Carter, & Weber, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980a, 1991; Stoecker, Pascarella, & Wolfe, 1988; Tinto, 1993, 2006). Recent studies have explored and preliminarily identified factors that contributed to attrition and retention of sophomores (Graunke, & Woosley, 2005; Lipka, 2006; Schaller, 2005; Wilder, 1993).

While research has identified challenges associated with sophomore year and post-freshman retention, a gap exists in the literature regarding interventions that are
effective in assisting sophomores in navigating challenges associated with their second year of collegiate study. Sophomore year experience programs must be carefully assessed and evaluated to identify retention efforts that assist students during this critical developmental period.

The rationale for this study was the gap in research on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing retention programs. Further, this study aimed to inform practitioners about interventions that may contribute to academic and/or social integration and persistence of sophomores by quantifying results of a pilot sophomore year on-campus living-learning community.

Purpose of Study

This study explored change in students’ self-reported sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the institution as the result of participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community at the research institution in Fall 2008. Non-zero change was measured via pre and post-test administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Schreiner, 2007b). Operational definitions were provided for sophomore, non-zero change, meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction, and living-learning community.

As the research institution strives to address the unique needs of sophomores on its campus to improve overall retention and academic success rates, a pilot sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community was launched in Fall 2008. The
primary goals of this community were to increase participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and overall experiences at the research institution. This study aimed to inform student affairs educators, academic affairs practitioners, and faculty about interventions that may contribute to academic and/or social integration and persistence of sophomores by quantifying results of a pilot sophomore year on-campus living-learning community.

Research Hypotheses

Primary research hypotheses for this study included:

- There will be no change in sense of the meaning in life score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the academic self-efficacy score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;
• There will be no change in commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

• There will be no change in commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

Secondary research hypothesis for this study is:

• Among sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, there will be no change in sense of the meaning in life, the academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores between August 2008 and December 2008 as reported by:
  o Gender
  o Racial/ethnic groups
  o Majors

Definitions

This research study used the following definitions:
1. Sophomore – The research institution defined sophomore as “first-time, full-time students in their second year of academic work at the research institution” (J. Murdock, personal communication, October 2, 2007)

2. Meaning of life – “the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one’s being and existence” (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006, p. 81)

3. Satisfaction – “fulfillment of a need or want” (Merriam-Webster, 2008)

4. Academic self-efficacy – a learner’s judgment about his or her ability to successfully attain educational goals (Bandura, 1977)

5. Non-zero change – change “not equal to zero” (TheFreeDictionary.com, n.d.)

6. Living-learning community – “a residential education unit in a college or university that is organized on the basis of an academic theme or approach and is intended to integrate academic learning and community living” (Midden, 2008)

**Study Limitations**

Limitations of this study included, but were not limited to: a) conducting the research at one institution, b) relying on self-reported data from members of the population, c) responses to survey administrations in August and December 2008 may be influenced by homesickness, exhaustion, and final exams, d) non-zero change may not be observed during a 15-week (one semester) period, and e) the population may or may not be representative of the sophomore population at the research institution. Students who ‘opted in’ this program were likely ‘early adopters’ of new initiatives and may be reflected in who participates in this pilot program – a further limitation of generalizability. Also, students at the research institution are asked to select a major when
they apply for admission which may further limit generalizability to institutions that allow students to enter the institution as ‘undecided’ students. Gahagan and Hunter (2006) address the need for institutions to define ‘sophomores’ according to the factors specific to their institutions. As this study defined sophomores as first-time, full-time students in their second year of academic work at the research institution, the results may not be applicable to institutions using a different definition of ‘sophomore’.

**Summary**

Extensive research on student retention and persistence of specific populations including women, students of color, and first-year students has been conducted over the past thirty years. Only recently have researchers begun to examine factors that contribute to attrition and retention of sophomores. This study sought to fill the need in the literature for research on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing retention programs. In support of the purpose and significance of this study, this chapter provided five primary research hypotheses and one secondary research hypothesis guiding the study in addition to operational definitions and limitations.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examined the literature relevant to the conducted study by focusing on: a) general retention; b) retention by gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status; c) enrollment status and choice of major; d) place of residence and participation in learning communities; e) retention by academic class; f) sophomore attrition; g) sophomore needs; and h) sophomore retention efforts. In addition, this study was framed around i) Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development (1969, 1993); j) Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984); and k) Tinto’s Model of Student Attrition (1975). The review of literature supported the need for the study of the effect of a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction as the foundation of this dissertation.

General Retention

Student retention is one of the most widely studied areas in higher education. While early studies, in the 1960s, identified retention as a reflection of individual motivation and attributes, student retention studies in the 1970s focused on the role of the institution, and the institutional environment, on students’ decisions to persist or leave (Tinto, 2006). Persistence is commonly understood as the result of a complex set of interactions occurring over a period of time (Woodard, Mallory, & DeLuca, 2001).

Research by Alexander Astin, Ernest Pascarella, and Patrick Terenzini focused on the critical role of involvement, or engagement, in student persistence, particularly of involvement during the first year of college. Terenzini and Wright (1987) suggested
student persistence is better explained by what happens to a student once they are on campus, rather than by what they were like prior to arrival. The more academically and socially involved students are, particularly with other students and faculty, the more likely they are to be retained and persist (Astin, 1984; Nora, 2002; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980a).

Astin (1975) suggested that factors contributing to students’ persistence indicated their involvement in college while factors contributing to students’ departure from college suggested a lack of involvement. Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found social integration was more strongly related to institutional commitment while academic integration was more strongly related to commitment to degree completion. Blecher, Michael, and Hagedorn (2002) reported initial educational aspiration significantly correlates to persistence along with academic ability, age, hours worked at a job, involvement, and socioeconomic status. Commitment to the college experience and possession of career aspirations have also been linked to persistence (Chickering, 1969; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Wilder, 1993). Socio-economic status has its strongest effect on completion of a bachelor’s degree (Astin, 1977, 1993a; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and students’ family support also contribute to persistence (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

High school grade point average and college admission test scores (SAT and ACT scores) have been consistently found as significant predictors of retention (Astin, 2005; Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Levitz, Noel, & Ritcher, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975, 1987;

Astin (2005) further indicated years of foreign language study, years of physical science study and hours per week spent studying and doing homework were predictors of degree completion. Students are also more likely to complete a degree if they are Jewish, female or White (Astin, 2005). Astin’s studies of 1975 and 1993 reported emotional health, attending religious services, expecting to perform volunteer work in college, living in a campus residence hall, and student versus research orientation of faculty showed positive effects on degree completion. Additional factors including amount and quality of student contact, quality of instruction, and ‘match’ between a student’s personal expectations and college reality have also been linked to persistence (Astin, 1993b; Beil, Reisen, Zea, & Caplan, 1999; London 1989; Milem & Berger, 1997; Nagda, Gregerman, & Jonides, 1998; Nora, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peltier, Laden & Matranga, 1999; Pascarella, Whitt, & Nora, 1996; Stoecker, Pascarella, & Wolfe, 1988; Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994; Tinto, 2006; Trippi & Baker, 1989; Zhang & Richarde, 1998).
Astin (1993a) indicated retention, or degree attainment, was enhanced by student involvement with peers and faculty, and the residential experience. Aitken (1982) suggested students who balanced allocations of time and effort between academic and social activities were most likely to be retained. Aitken’s work emphasized programs that integrate both academic and social experiences for students. Banning (1989) and Beal and Noel (1980) indicated once a student arrives on campus, the fit between the student and institution may determine whether the collegiate environment contributes to retention or attrition. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also emphasized the effect of grade performance on persistence and graduation. Astin (1993b) indicated institutional selectivity as the most important college characteristic affecting students’ chances of completing a bachelor’s degree. The institutional selectivity correlation almost equaled the correlation for high school grades, the strongest individual predictor of degree completion. Astin (1993a) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also reported retention was negatively impacted by institutional size and by working full-time or part-time off-campus as well as commuting.

Tinto (1993) associated persistence with learning, “the more students learn, the more likely they are to persist” (p. 131). Tinto also linked the development of communities committed to education and sense of commitment to peers, often fostered by collaborative/cooperative learning, and the institution to persistence (1975, 1987). A 1997 study by Milem and Berger found that early involvement with faculty and other students contributed to persistence and retention. Tinto and Russo (1994) reported that involvement in the classroom is a vehicle for involvement outside of the classroom.
Tinto (1990) detailed three important principles of institutional action that are hallmarks of effective retention programs: a) the principle of community; b) the principle of commitment; and c) concern for the education of students. Student engagement with peers as well as faculty are critical to their perception of community. Tinto (1990) stated that, “The research in this regard is quite clear, the frequency and perceived worth of interaction with faculty, especially outside the classroom is the single strongest predictor of voluntary student departure” (p. 36). Astin (1993a), Pascarella and Terenzini (1977, 1980b) and Tinto (1993) emphasized the impact of student-faculty interactions on persistence. The commitment of faculty to student engagement, and therefore retention, must also be mirrored by all members of the community. Retention efforts are most successful when genuine concern with student welfare is the rule, not the exception, across all members of an institution. Effective retention efforts are marked by intellectual and social growth of students, not retention alone; therefore, education is the primary principle for effective retention (Tinto, 1990). Retention programs must be cross-divisional, cross-campus efforts that seek different ways to engage and support students and promote their learning both in and outside of the classroom.

**Retention by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Socio-economic Status**

Astin (1993a) and Tinto (2006) conducted extensive research on student persistence and attrition and allowed institutions to explore patterns of retention and attrition for students of different gender, race, ethnicity, and income. Early researchers studying retention argued students must break contacts with past communities to successfully integrate into college communities. In contrast, studies between 1980 –
present indicated that the ability to remain connected to families, churches, and past communities was essential to the persistence of many students, including women and students of color (London 1989; Nora, 2002; Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994; Tinto, 2006). Astin (1997) identified four variables that account for the majority of variance in retention: high school grades, admission test scores, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Gender was significantly related to student persistence in studies by Astin (1975), Astin, Korn and Green (1987), and Tinto (1987). Conversely, Reason (2001) found gender failed to be a significant factor. Peltier, Laden, and Matranga (1999) found gender was predictive of persistence with women more likely to persist than men. Astin’s longitudinal studies have consistently shown women are more likely than men to attain the bachelor’s degree (Astin, Tsui & Avalos, 1996). Further, Tinto (1987) indicated women leave institutions because of social forces, as opposed to academic ones, while men were more likely to persist until dismissed academically.

In their 1999 review of research on student persistence in college, Peltier, Laden and Matranga highlighted several studies that examined persistence. Peltier, Laden and Matranga (1999) found that gender, socioeconomic status, high school grade point average, college grade point average, and race/ethnicity as well as interaction between these variables were related to persistence. Variables related to high school achievement and race/ethnicity were statistically significant in several retention studies (Astin, 1997; Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2000). Race was identified as a significant predictor

Socioeconomic status and secondary school academic achievement had a direct effect on persistence of African-American men. For African-American women, selectivity, prestige of institution, college academic achievement, and being assigned roommates who were academically successful in high school and whose families had a higher income were factors that related to persistence (Stoecker, Pascarella, & Wolfe, 1988; Trippi & Baker, 1989). Davis (1991) found that increased interactions with peers and faculty, along with increased involvement in organized activities, led to a lower dropout rate for African-American students. Similarly, Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) reported that African-American students on predominantly White campuses who were more involved, socially and academically, were more likely to develop a positive racial identity and that involvement contributed to the retention of African-American students on these campuses. Hughes (1987) and Sedlecek (1987) both linked positive Black identity development with student persistence. In a study of an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), Nagda, Gregerman, and Jonides (1998) found low-achieving African-American students involved in the UROP program had a statistically significant lower attrition rate than low-achieving African-American students in the control group. Additionally, the program had an even more significant impact on sophomores than on first year students, suggesting faculty mentoring and interaction play a significant role in persistence among African-American sophomores (Nagda, Gregerman, & Jonides, 1998).
In a 1999 study of 150 college students at a large metropolitan university in California, Strage identified several factors that were positively correlated with persistence by race and ethnicity. Academic confidence was significantly predictive of persistence for White, Asian-American and Hispanic students while teacher rapport was positively correlated with persistence for White and Asian-American students. Leadership was positively correlated with persistence for White students and internal locus of control was predictive of persistence for Hispanic students.

Asian American and White students were most likely to be retained while other racial groups were less likely to be retained in studies by Astin (1997), Murtaugh, Burns and Schuster (1999) and Peltier, Laden and Matranga (1999). Further, Murtaugh et al. (1999) found Asian American students at Oregon State University in the early 1990s were less likely than White students to drop out of college when all other variables were held constant. Allen (1999) identified different variables significant in predicting retention of White students as compared with variables significant in predicting retention of students of color. First semester GPA, high school rank and desire to live near home were significantly related to persistence for both groups. Desire to finish college, opportunity to get a campus job were significant predictors of retention of students of color while White students’ persistence was attributed to parental education, academic self-efficacy, and financial aid in the forms of grants.

In a study of first-time freshmen, Berger and Milem (1999) found that being Black, the only entry characteristic that had a statistically significant effect on persistence, was the third largest negative predictor of persistence, trailing two measures
of non-involvement. African-American students in this study reported strong levels of institutional commitment upon entering the institution, but over two subsequent data collection points, were less likely to perceive the institution as supportive and thus persist.

Persistence of White women was related to degree aspiration, institutional selectivity, majoring in the social sciences, and family social status. Persistence of White men was related to family social status, degree aspiration and secondary school academic achievement (Stoecker, Pascarella, & Wolfe, 1988). In an analysis of data from Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys of 27,064 students from 433 different institutions, Lewallen (1993) found that being White was positively associated with persistence.

RetentionPolicy by Enrollment Status and Choice of Major

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that majoring in the social sciences or humanities enhanced persistence. Astin (1975, 1993a) reported probable majors in allied health professions, fine arts and engineering showed negative effects on degree completion. St. John, Hu, Simmons, Carter, and Weber (2004) found that African-American sophomores in business, health and engineering/computer science majors were more likely to persist than were those in other major fields.

In contrast, major fields were not significant for White sophomores, but White freshmen in social sciences, or who were undecided, were less likely to persist (St. John et al., 2004). Groccia and Harrity (1991) reported major uncertainty negatively impacts adjustment to college and contributes to attrition. Newton and Gaither (1980) and Titley
and Titley (1980) linked degree of uncertainty about career goals to attrition. Plaud, Baker, and Grocca (1990) linked degree of uncertainty to negative effects on academic achievement and academic adjustment. Lewallen (1993), however, found that undecided students did not persist at different rates than other students in college. Similarly, Pascarella, Smart, Ethington, and Nettles (1987) did not find a significant association between academic major and persistence.

Full-time enrollment and living on campus have also been linked to retention and persistence. A number of studies have linked full-time enrollment with persistence (Astin; 1996; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Lewallen, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980a).

Retention by Place of Residence and Participation in Learning Communities

Velez indicated that where a person lives had the largest significant effect on the probability of finishing college (1985). Astin (1993a), Lewallen (1993), and Velez (1985) reported retention is enhanced significantly for those students living in residence halls. Astin (1973, 1993a) and Chickering (1969) emphasized on-campus living helped students be more engaged in their academic environment. Astin (1997) found living in a residence hall during freshman year was the most important environmental characteristic associated with finishing college. Living in a residence hall during freshman year contributed 12 percent to a freshman’s chances of finishing college in Astin’s 1997 study.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and Tinto (1993) reported that, controlling for other predictors, students living in residence halls persisted and graduated at significantly higher rates than students who did not live on-campus. Blimling (1993) indicated on-campus students, particularly those living in residence halls, were more satisfied with
their overall college experience than were students who lived off-campus. Living on-campus provided students greater opportunities for social interaction and involvement with peers, faculty and communities, all of which have been linked to persistence (Ballou, Reavill, & Schultz, 1995). Students living in residence halls also reported greater personal and intellectual growth and cognitive development (Astin, 1993a; Bliming, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Schuh (2004) reported residence halls contributed to student learning by providing opportunities to be challenged by peers, to learn from one another, and to experience diversity. He further emphasized the success of well designed living-learning communities that integrate both academic and social experiences contribute to student development. Kanoy and Bruhn (1996) found freshman residents in a living-learning community achieved greater academic success than did a control group but retention rates showed no statistically significant differences. Significant research documents effective retention practices for freshmen, including living-learning communities and peer mentoring (Lipka, 2006; Schaller, 2005).

Tinto (1999, 1996) emphasized the significant opportunities provided by a wide range of learning communities including shared learning, connected learning, and shared responsibility. According to Tinto (1996), students in learning communities self-report being more satisfied in their first year of college and more satisfied students tend to persist beyond the first year. As students learn more and see themselves as academic and socially engaged, they persist at higher rates than students engaged in traditional settings and curriculum (Tinto, 1999). Further, learning communities not only contribute to retention of first-year students but also develop educational citizenship among students.
Tinto (1990) reported, “The essential point of first-year programs is not simply that they focus on new students but that they provide institutions with a way of responding to the important educational question of what new students need during their first year of college in order to grow and develop in subsequent years of college” (p. 47). Pascarella and Terenzini (1980a) found that when pre-enrollment characteristics were held constant, participation in a first-year learning community significantly contributed to persistence as well as students’ gains in measures of intellectual and personal development and sense of community. An extensive search for data on the effect of living-learning communities on post-freshman students yielded no results.

**Retention by Academic Class**

According to Chickering and Hannah (1969) and Tinto (1996), the majority of first-year withdrawals arise voluntarily, usually in spite of sufficient academic grade performance. In a 1966 study of non-returning freshman at 13 small colleges, Chickering and Hannah indicated emotional difficulties, dissatisfaction with faculty, absence of clear objectives, and values in opposition to those of the college were most often cited as reasons for withdrawal (1969). They further reported non-returning students lacked purpose, did not identify a sense of ‘fit’ with the college, and believed curricular offering and extracurricular activities were limited and did not suit the non-returning students’ needs.

In a study of the Fall 1988 freshman class at a large, southern urban institution, Cabrera, Nora, and Cataneda (1993) found the largest total effect on persistence to sophomore year was accounted for by intent to persist, followed by first year GPA,
institutional commitment, encouragement from family and friends, goal commitment, academic integration, finance attitudes, and social integration. Aitken (1982) identified student achievement of the minimal required GPA and actual GPA as the largest predictors in explaining retention of first-year students in a study of 892 freshmen at the University of Massachusetts in 1977. Student satisfaction with residential living experiences and academic experiences also explained retention of first-year students in this study (Aitken, 1982). Aitken also indicated the greater a student’s concern with family/personal problems, the less likely they were to persist and that activity involvement was not significant. The last finding is contradictory to the majority of research on freshman retention (Astin, 1984, 1993a, 1993b; Tinto, 1987, 1988). Factors linked to persistence of freshmen included academic and social experiences during the first few weeks of college that influence integration into the academic and social communities of the institution as well as commitment to the institution and to finishing college (Beil, Reisen, Zea, & Caplan, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983).

Tinto (1988, 1996) indicated students must become incorporated into the university community, both academically and socially, via relationships with fellow students as well as faculty to persist. Tinto’s work also emphasized the importance of student adjustment and engagement during the critical first six weeks of the semester. Tinto (1998) suggested the impact of involvement on persistence is greatest during the first semester of the freshman year, when the transition to college is not yet complete and personal affiliations are not formalized. Berger and Milem (1999) suggested that first-year students with values, norms, and established patterns of behavior that are congruent
with the dominant values, norms and established patterns of behavior at the institution, are more likely to persist. Institutions must find ways to ensure campus environments reflect the norms and values of a wider variety of students to improve retention for an increasingly diverse student body, particularly among traditionally-underrepresented groups (Milem & Berger, 1997).

Tinto (1999) detailed four academic conditions that support retention of first-year students: 1) information/advice; 2) support; 3) involvement; and 4) learning. Students are more likely to persist in environments that provide clear and consistent information (Chickering, 1969; Tinto, 1999). Institutions that provide personal, academic, and social support that is connected across all facets of the student experience encourage persistence. Tinto (1999) stressed the importance of academic advising and freshman seminars being an integral part of the first-year experience. Early-warning systems, extended orientation programs, mandated course placement, academic assistance, and career counseling were also recommended as important programs and services for first-year students (Tinto, 1990). Caison (2005) recommended academic support programs to bolster success of first-year students and specialized social support programs for first-generation college students and non-Asian minorities who may feel isolated in their academic pursuits.

Active involvement in learning and social activities, particularly when engaged with peers and faculty, increased student learning and persistence (Astin, 1996; Tinto, 1999). Berger and Milem (1999) in a study of first-year students, found early peer involvement strengthened perceptions of institutional and social support and ultimately
persistence. They also reported the converse to be true, early non-involvement results in students staying uninvolved throughout the year, being less likely to perceive the institution or peers as supportive, less likely to become integrated and, as a result, less likely to persist. Both Astin (1993a) and Tinto (1999) emphasized that the important condition which fosters student retention is learning.

Hendel (2001) examined the relative contribution of participation in a first-year seminar on student retention and satisfaction at a Research I, urban, public university. He found participation in a first-year seminar was not a significant predictor of retention into the second year and that participation had no direct effect on the satisfaction of first-year students (2001). Statistically significant differences were reported on 15 of 92 items on the Student Experiences Survey on items related to academic advising and sense of community (Hendel, 2001). As these items may contribute to academic and social integration, additional research may find results that indicate participation in first-year seminars do contribute to retention and/or satisfaction of freshmen. While gains have been realized in freshman to sophomore year retention, Tinto (1996) challenged institutions to more fully include faculty in retention programs and change the academic experience of students, particularly during the first year. Suggestions for reforming these programs were altering academic settings, including classrooms and laboratories, and creating learning communities for new students.

Tinto (1993) also suggested that important issues for first-year students may not be important issues for students at other stages in college. Pattengale and Schreiner (2000) said that the sophomore year may be a time in which students disengage from
academic life, thus creating an adverse effect on their grades and persistence. Recent research identified factors that may be linked to persistence of sophomores to junior year (Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000; Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Juillerat, 2000; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). Several factors related to satisfaction were identified including overall satisfaction with the college experience, learning and advising satisfaction, satisfaction with faculty and peer interactions, and satisfaction with relationships (faculty, peer, familial, and romantic). Additional factors included believing that tuition is a worthwhile investment, possessing sense of meaning/purpose, major/career certainty, having a strong sense of community at the institution (Schreiner, 2007a), possessing sense of self and meaning, and commitment to academic experiences and decisions (Schaller, 2005). Research has yet to conclusively link these factors and/or interventions designed to support these factors to persistence and retention.

**Sophomore Attrition**

Many researchers attributed attrition and decline in academic performance in second year students to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000; Gardner, Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Wilder, 1993). Freedman (1956) noted sophomores were the least satisfied of all academic classifications and coined the term “sophomore slump” in an article describing the stages of the college experience. He suggested the sophomore slump is defined by “a lack of inertia or disorganization” (Freedman, 1956, p. 22). Feldman and Newcomb defined sophomore slump as students’ dissatisfaction with college and/or their personal experiences at college (1969). Margolis
(1976) referred to the sophomore slump as a sophomore identity crisis involving a student’s social, academic, and personal self. Furr and Gannaway (1982) indicated the sophomore slump was descriptive of the confusion and uncertainty of students’ sophomore years. Gahagan and Hunter (2006) used sophomore slump to describe second-year students who are floundering academically, lack motivation and/or feel disconnected.

Lemons and Richmond (1987) hypothesized that the sophomore slump included career uncertainty, dissatisfaction in relationships, and an increased concern about paying for college. Graunke and Woosley (2005) suggested sophomore year is a time of moratorium when students seek to solidify their career decisions and personal goals while being given the least amount of support by their institutions. Sophomores are “stranded in non-man’s land; the novelty of college associated with being a freshman has worn off, and often sophomores are not far enough along in their academic program to assess accurately or feel a part of their major field” (Richmond & Lemons, 1987, p. 196). They were the first to hypothesize that psychosocial theory, more specifically Chickering’s theory of student development, could be used to describe and explain the sophomore slump phenomenon and to assist universities in meeting the unique needs of sophomores.

Frequently, components of the sophomore slump include doubts related to major/career interests and choice, dissatisfaction with personal relationships, and a heightened awareness of and concern for the financial aspects of one’s college education. In contrast to the freshman year, sophomores are no longer intrigued by the novelty of college and have not progressed in their academic program to a point where they can
accurately assess ‘fit’ with the major or feel a part of their major field. As a result, many sophomores experience dissatisfaction with their course of study. The sophomore slump frequently manifests itself as a general sense of apathy or indifference, discussions about changing majors, talk of leaving school to work, questions regarding transfer to another institution, and problems in personal relationships such as jealousy and criticism of another’s behavior or values (Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

Gohn, Swartz, and Donnelly (2001) explored second year student persistence via a case study approach and found a number of respondents reported significant frustration in defining how their abilities matched their career goals and majors. Sophomores who had not successfully negotiated the transition between high school and their freshman year (academically and socially) had lower self confidence about their ability to graduate. The authors speculated that lower self-confidence that persists through the second year may increase the likelihood of eventual attrition.

Pattengale and Schreiner (2000) and Graunke and Woosley (2005) indicated sophomore year may be a time when students disengage from academic life resulting in adverse effects on their grades and retention. Failure to achieve or maintain academic integration may result in sophomore attrition. Gohn, Swartz, and Donnelly (2001) reported declining grades, absenteeism, and lack of academic challenge may also contribute to sophomore attrition.

Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) stated, “the most acute manifestation of the sophomore slump is the premature dropping out of students who have not been able either to develop or attain satisfactory progress toward educational goals” (p. 89).
Decreased satisfaction has been linked to the dropout process for all college students and to sophomores specifically. Both Juillerat (2000) and Boivin, Fountain, and Baylis (2000) linked lower satisfaction levels in student life and academic experience with sophomore attrition.

In her research of students at private institutions, Juillerat (2000) sought to ascertain why sophomores withdrew from school. This research identified major selection, housing issues and tuition costs as major challenges for sophomores. Juillerat reported that sophomores: a) place high value on environments that promote intellectual growth; b) desire valuable course content and excellent classroom instruction; c) knowledgeable, fair, and caring faculty; d) approachable and knowledgeable advisers; e) tuition that is a worthwhile investment; f) adequate financial aid; g) a smooth registration process with a good variety of courses offered; and h) an enjoyable student experience.

Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that commitment to an academic major and meaningful interaction with faculty and staff were both significant predictors of academic success in the sophomore year and key factors affecting retention.

Boivin, Fountain and Baylis’ (2000) study of 60 students who left a small liberal arts college in Michigan during or after their sophomore year over a two year period, found these students often cited issues related to the institution itself and the institution’s ability to meet their expectations as the reason for their departure. The challenges identified by these sophomores included not having committed to a specific major yet knowing what they were not interested in or good at doing, and not being given leadership opportunities or ways of becoming more involved with faculty similar of those
offered to upper-level students. Further, having successfully handled personal transition issues in the first year, many students were keenly aware of what higher education ‘ought’ to be doing for them (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000). These challenges may result in students evaluating the adequacy of the institution and determining it does not meet their needs (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000).

Sophomore Needs

To prevent sophomore attrition, institutions need to conduct needs assessments of sophomores and to identify ongoing programs, services and support for sophomores; otherwise, existing efforts to curtail freshman attrition may only be successful in postponing attrition to the second year of study (Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000). Researchers suggested that sophomores are at an important developmental point with needs that differ from students at other levels, needs that are largely overlooked by institutions of higher education (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Schaller, 2005). The critical issues in the sophomore year appear to be that of developing a sense of meaning and purpose - about one's education, one's career and one's life goals. The sophomore year represents a critical phase which impacts the intellectual, identity, and decision making aspects of personality development (Wilder, 1993). Financial hardships, academic concerns, and questions about future goals and aspirations can become daunting issues for many sophomores (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Graunke and Woosley (2005) suggested sophomores may become increasingly distant from the university community and more engaged in individual activities because of lack of connection to majors, limited campus leadership opportunities, and lack of attention from faculty and staff. The second
college year is marked with new choices, new responsibilities and new problems to solve, including choosing a major, questioning parents’ values, and searching for meaning and closeness to other students, making it a time of self-doubt, vulnerability and uncertainty for many students (Coburn & Treeger, 1997).

In her 2005 study about how students fare in their second year of college, Schaller found students existed in or moved through four stages: a) random exploration, b) focused exploration, c) tentative choices, and, d) commitment in three areas of their lives: a) how they viewed themselves, b) how they viewed their relationships, and, c) how they viewed their academic experiences and decisions. The majority of sophomores in her study were in the ‘focused exploration’ stage and expressed frustration with themselves, their relationships and their academic experiences. For sophomores to become self-directed, understand themselves and make decisions based on internal connections and careful examination of options, they need to spend considerable time and expend considerable effort in this stage to avoid allowing parents, peers, and old notions of themselves to make decisions for them.

Sophomores may not have found a major and those that have, may have few interactions with faculty in their major (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000). In addition, most sophomores have not had opportunities for campus leadership and receive little attention from student affairs (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000). Thus, while current research confirmed sophomores have some of the greatest needs and highest expectations of any class of students, sophomores
are virtually ignored by both academic and student affairs (Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000).

Specific needs of sophomores are linked to the factors contributing to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon. Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) suggested these factors included, but were not limited to: a) inadequate academic advising and career planning; b) low levels of academic and social integration; c) insufficient levels of out-of-class interaction with faculty; d) lack of a sufficient number of major classes and the resultant failure to begin a process of intellectual engagement in the major; and e) the withdrawal of classic first-year experience support initiatives before students have become appropriately committed and intellectually engaged to ensure persistence and graduation. Further, sophomores needed encouragement to take responsibility for their learning (Schaller, 2005).

Taken collectively, the increased expectations in these areas parallel the personal developmental needs of sophomores: the need for achieving competence, developing autonomy, establishing identity, and developing purpose (Juillerat, 2000). To ensure successful degree completion and goal attainment, it may be that the sophomore year is too early to wean students off the specialized attention they were receiving as first-year students (Gardner, Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Juillerat, 2000).

**Sophomore Retention Efforts**

Researchers emphasize that the sophomore year is a unique experience, and as a result, colleges should not simply extend their freshman programs as a way to nurture sophomores. Lemons and Richmond (1985) indicated the most important factor in
helping students overcome the sophomore slump is personal attention from a residence hall staff member or other concerned individual. Furr and Gannaway (1982) suggested that students experiencing the sophomore slump should be asked to identify problem areas and develop an action plan for change. As part of the process, students should define sources of dissatisfaction and examine the ways in which they have dealt with the problem, listing personal alternatives for implementing change and selecting one of the alternatives from that list and following through with it.

Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) and Schaller (2005) emphasized the responsibility of colleges and universities to address the key sophomore year developmental and academic outcomes deliberately and intentionally in learning environments and programs. Lipka (2006) and Schaller (2005) suggested designing learning environments that guide sophomores in ongoing, structured exploration of themselves and the world by teaching sophomores to engage in self-reflection, pushing them to plot their own courses. There is a need to give priority to and create programs that enable sophomores to enhance their certainty regarding their choice of academic major by discovering more about their academic and career interests. Such programs can help them connect coursework to major, career and life goals, and to improve their relationships with faculty by providing opportunities for positive faculty interactions, both within and outside of the traditional academic environment (Furr & Gannaway, 1985; Gardner, Pattengale, & Schreiner, 2000; Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Schaller, 2005).
Tinto (2006) further elaborated on the critical role faculty play in student retention. Faculty actions, particularly in the classroom, are essential to support institutional efforts to enhance student retention, yet their involvement is often limited (Tinto, 2006). Gohn, Swartz, and Donnelly (2001) and Wilder (1993) encouraged institutions to work toward strengthening their advising programs for all students while promoting developmental advising, career exploration, improved degree audit systems and long-term planning for its sophomores. Beal and Noel (1980) suggested advising contacts should extend beyond information acquisition as students are seeking personal relationships as well as professional advice when making these contacts. Further, the advising relationship should provide for personal fulfillment, meaningful interaction, and career exploration. Similarly, Gahagan and Hunter (2005) indicated a caring adviser can make a significant difference for sophomores struggling with academic and/or personal issues.

Caison (2005) echoed the importance of strong academic support programs and emphasized the need for institutions to strive to foster a supportive social community to include information about financial aid opportunities to increase student awareness of resources. These programs are critical for minority and first-generation students who may feel isolated in their academic pursuits. Graunke and Woosley’s (2005) findings suggested institutions create programs that a) enable sophomores to enhance their certainty regarding their choice of academic major by discovering more about their academic or career interests; b) improve their relationships with faculty by providing opportunities for positive faculty interactions, both within and outside of the traditional
academic environment; and, c) ultimately increase their chances of success at their current institution.

Several studies emphasized curricular strategies to improve sophomore retention. Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) believed a key issue for sophomores is increasing their level of intellectual engagement in order to sustain the high expectations of the first year. They further recommended, “a coherent, sequenced core curriculum containing common courses designed specifically for the sophomore year” (p.92). Gohn, Swartz, and Donnelly (2001) suggested increased academic challenge and outside preparation as well as providing all sophomores the opportunity to take at least one course in their planned major by their third semester at the university. Boivin, Fountain, and Baylis (2000) also provided specific curriculum recommendations for sophomores including providing significant cross-cultural learning experiences and opportunities to process these experiences through meaningful mentoring relationships.

At Stanford University, a Sophomore College program began in 1995. The intensive curricular approach utilized in this program, a two and a half week session of eight seminars with 10 students per seminar that meet for two hours each morning in early September before the academic year begins, has fostered significant relationships between students and faculty. Many courses feature hands-on activities, field trips, and dinners at faculty homes and provide sophomores intensive give-and-take opportunities to engage in dialogue and create knowledge with their faculty member and peers. Several students credited the experience as the ‘best experience’ or the ‘greatest program at Stanford’ (Manuel, 1996). The strategies employed at Stanford: a) personalized attention,
b) meaningful interactions with faculty and students, c) increased challenge, and d) the continued search for meaning and purpose translate well into the co-curricular experience.

Many curricular strategies may also be applied to co-curricular settings. Schaller (2005) advocated for giving sophomores responsibility for their own learning and teaching them to engage in self-reflection through study abroad, service learning, internships and other active learning opportunities. Schaller (2005) also suggested requiring sophomores to reflect on curricular and co-curricular activities so they begin learning from their mistakes. She further emphasized the importance of encouraging new relationship building during the sophomore year through student organizations and small groups to allow sophomores to expand their friendships and see new relationships as informed choices based upon their self-reflection. Mentoring and individual attention should form the backbone of programmatic efforts in the sophomore year with residence life used as a vehicle for these efforts, according to Lemons and Richmond (1987).

Gahagan and Stuart (2005) suggested institutions committed to realizing retention gains for sophomores a) create committees to explore institution-specific needs of sophomores and experiences of sophomores on their campuses; b) extend support programs beyond first-year initiatives by modifying existing support programs for sophomores; c) create institutional traditions for sophomores; and d) develop a culture that emphasizes evaluation and assessment. As early as 1979, sophomore committees and retention initiatives arose on college campuses. In 1979, The College of William and Mary accepted a proposal from a second year sophomore to counteract the sophomore
slump at the college (Morgan & Davis, 1981). The student identified feeling alone, not receiving specialized attention, lack of contact with faculty, and lack of community in residential living as elements of the sophomore slump. A sophomore board was formed and implemented a sophomore newsletter, sophomore game day, and programs to help students choose majors via a midwinter coffee house.

At William Jewell College (WJC), the director of sophomore year programs is highly interventionist, reaching out to sophomores identified by faculty and/or staff members who may be struggling academically or socially (Winslow, 2006b). WJC also offers a sophomore class weekend retreat with emphasis on academic advising, developing and nurturing relationships with students, faculty and staff and providing a capstone service experience. The college also requires sophomores to create academic enhancement plans, addressing desired academic and co-curricular outcomes for their collegiate experience, which they submit to and discuss with academic advisors.

Winslow (2006a) reported on sophomore year initiatives at several additional colleges and universities. The University of Denver offers a series of workshops and sponsors a conference with experts who talked to sophomores about issues from career worries to personal finance concerns. Green Mountain College has an adviser-led outreach program to assist students in declaring their majors and held a two-day sophomore retreat focused on helping students choose a major, find an internship, and connect to campus services. Texas Christian University’s Transitions program focuses on helping sophomores understand the long-term effects of decisions during their second
year. University of the South hosts a welcome back dinner for sophomores featuring a catered meal and interaction with mentors.

According to the University of South Carolina’s National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition Website (Cox & Tobolowsky, n.d.), more than 300 institutions offer sophomore year initiatives, but Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) suggested many of these initiatives are “relatively recent and largely lacking in sufficient assessment evidence to make any kind of claim of effectiveness in terms of utility and impact” (p. 91). While it is too early to determine the impact on retention and graduation rates of sophomore-specific initiatives at many institutions, some gains have been realized. Azusa Pacific introduced a sophomore year program in 2000 and sophomore-to-junior retention increased from 80% to 88% by 2005 (Lipka, 2006). Beloit College has connected their sophomore year retreat to not only retention but also graduation gains. Beloit reported a graduation rate of 87% for students in the Class of 2004 who participated in their sophomore year retreat as compared with a 68% graduation rate for students who did not attend this retreat (Lipka, 2006).

Armed with these recommendations, models of successful interventions and initial claims of success of sophomore programs, institutions must move forward to not only implement programs but also make them sustainable. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) and Schaller (2005) encouraged institutions to be self-critical and maintain an open mind to alternative strategies to deal with ever-changing circumstances. Several best efforts in first-year programming and a few highlighted sophomore-year programs have seen retention gains. It is critical for institutions to extend efforts to sophomores, the
"'middle children’ who may have gotten off to a good start but who may never reach alumni status if they are not better nurtured and better served” (Juillerat, 2000, p. 29).

Additional study of the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon must be undertaken to provide more complete data and research describing the phenomenon and interventions that successfully address the factors associated with it. Specifically, Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) recommended further exploration of sophomore student experiences at public colleges and universities based on dissatisfaction with advising, faculty availability, and accessibility of student services reported by sophomores at these institutions.

Researchers have identified challenges associated with sophomore year and post-freshman retention. The rationale for this study was to begin to fill the gap in the literature on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing these programs.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

**Overview of Psychosocial Theoretical Foundation**

Psychosocial theorists examine the *what*, or *content*, of development including but not limited to how to define themselves, their relationships with each other, and their purpose in life (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DeBrito, 1998). Development occurs across the life span in a series of age-related, sequential stages driven by internal biological and psychological changes that interact with environmental demands. This interaction often results in dissonance associated with developmental crises and creates a need to resolve issues. Evans, Forney, and Guido-DeBrito (1998) stated that, “How people resolve each
crisis influences how they view themselves and their place in their environment and also affects in a cumulative way how they resolve tasks at a later stage” (p. 33). Psychosocial theories explain the psychosocial issues individuals face at various points in their lives.

Several psychosocial student development theories provide a rationale for or an explanation of or can be applied to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon. Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development (1969, 1993), Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984), and Tinto’s Model of Student Departure (1975) will frame this study. Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development (1969, 1993) was based on Erickson’s (1968) Theory of Human Development. Erickson (1968) proposed that conflicts around identity issues may be intensified as individuals are forced to make decisions about career plans, value judgments and life-style preferences. Such decisions greatly affect sophomores.

**Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development**

Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development includes seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of identity. Chickering (1969) used vectors of development, rather than stages, because each vector has direction and magnitude and vectors may interact with one another. Further, students move through vectors throughout their college careers at different rates and may revisit vectors as they reexamine issues through which they had previously worked. Vectors build upon each other, but are not rigidly sequential, and lead to greater complexity and integration as the tasks of each vector are addressed. This theory considers intellectual, interpersonal and ethical aspects of development.
Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors provide a comprehensive overview of psychosocial development during the college years. The vectors of this theory are:

Developing Competence
Managing Emotions
Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence
Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
Establishing Identity
Developing Purpose
Developing Integrity

The characteristics of each vector are presented below. The vectors of developing competence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, establishing identity and developing purpose are given special attention because the tasks/crisis encountered in these vectors are directly related to the sophomore slump phenomenon.

Developing Competence

Developing competence addresses intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. Competence entails confidence that one can manage what comes and achieve goals successfully. Interpersonal competence includes working effectively with others and developing communication and leadership skills. Intellectual competence involves acquisition of knowledge related to intellectual and cultural development and critical thinking and reasoning skills (Chickering, 1969). For freshman students, competence is achieved by breaking away from familial ties and home and succeeding academically. Lemons and Richmond (1987) repeated that sophomore students are no
longer satisfied with these standards of competence because of the absence of concrete
criteria for success and differing expectations of themselves, their peers, and their
parents. Students who do not achieve competence through academic performance,
athletic abilities, or development of strong interpersonal relationships (through
organizations or affiliations) often feel ineffective and dissatisfied. A sense of
incompetence may result in feelings of insecurity or apathy and low self-esteem.

Managing Emotions

Managing emotions involves developing the ability to recognize, express and
control the full range of their emotions. Chickering (1969) initially identified emotions
related to aggression and sexual desire, while his later work with Linda Reisser (1993)
addressed the emotions of caring, optimism, inspiration, anxiety, anger, shame, guilt, and
depression.

Moving Through Autonomy Toward Independence

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence addresses developing
emotional independence (no longer needing constant approval and reassurance from
others), instrumental independence (becoming self-directed) and interdependence
(awareness of interconnectedness with others) (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Emotional
independence often begins during high school as students renegotiate relationships with
their parents and is clearly seen when students leave for college. Emotionally
independent students no longer seek out or need continually reassurance or approval.
Instrumental independence, the ability to cope and care for one’s self, involves an
individual’s willingness to choose his/her own path and move from one place to another
to accomplish desired outcomes. The final component of this vector, interdependence, is when individuals recognize they cannot act alone in the world and must integrate all elements of their lives (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Lemons and Richmond (1987) noted the problems associated with this vector for students struggling with the sophomore slump are primarily related to emotional and instrumental independence. Students who fail to break parental ties may find their autonomy impaired. Students who experience difficulties with this task, especially when combined with other developmental challenges, are often overwhelmed and resort to dropping out, stopping out, or transferring to less expensive institutions (Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

In Chickering’s 1969 theory, this vector was called Freeing Interpersonal Relationships and followed the establishing identity vector. In the revised theory (1993), this vector includes development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance and appreciation of differences as well as capacity for intimacy and lasting relationships.

Establishing Identity

Establishing identity focuses on development of a stable, realistic, positive self image. Identity includes comfort with physical self, gender and sexual orientation, sense of cultural heritage, strong self-concept, self-acceptance, and self-esteem particularly in light of feedback from others (Chickering, 1969). According to Lemons and Richmond (1987), identity formation “is the cumulative product of the events, feelings, actions and perceptions that shape us into unique individuals” (p. 16). Establishing a stable identity is the central task of Chickering’s theory and the most critical developmental task during
collegiate years. While identity development continues throughout individuals’ life spans, establishing identity is essential for future growth and development across other vectors for college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Sophomores who experience difficulties with tasks in other vectors may be negatively impacted in their identity development.

Developing Purpose

Developing purpose entails intentionally assessing interests and options related to vocational and personal interests and lifestyle issues. Chickering (1969) stated, “Many young adults are all dressed up and don’t know where to go, they have energy but no destination” (p. 150). Choosing a major and, subsequently, a career is a central task in developing purpose while in college. The stress related with these choices is often compounded by expectations of parents, advisors and peers (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). For sophomores, this pressure is intense as students typically must make major choices and related decisions regarding career interests during their sophomore year. While avocational interests and lifestyle decisions also contribute to developing purpose, sophomores are typically most focused on and concerned with decisions related to vocational interests.

Developing Integrity

Developing integrity involves humanizing and personalizing values to increase congruence between values and behaviors. In developing congruence, authentic actions are balanced by a sense of responsibility for self and others (Chickering, 1969). While most sophomores have yet to address developmental tasks associated with developing
integrity, a number of Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors associated with college student
development are particularly relevant when considering the ‘sophomore slump’
phenomenon (Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Wilder, 1993).

For many sophomores, ‘developing competence’ is particularly salient as many
students achieve competence through recognition of academic performance and/or
interpersonal relationships. Wilder stated “Students who do not obtain academic
recognition or recognition of competence in one or more of these areas often feel
ineffective and dissatisfied, thus contributing to the sophomore slump” (1993, p. 20).
Lemons and Richmond (1987) concluded that four of Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors
are significant during the developmental period associated with the sophomore slump:
‘developing competence,’ ‘developing autonomy,’ ‘establishing identity,’ and
‘developing purpose’. Failure or inability to successfully navigate these vectors may
result in attrition.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

The most basic tenet of Astin’s theory of student involvement (1984) is that the
more students are involved in both academic and social aspects of the collegiate
experience, the more they learn. This theory is rooted in a longitudinal study of college
dropouts that attempted to identify factors in the college environment that significantly
affect students’ persistence in college. Astin’s research suggested involvement
contributed to persistence while student attrition implied a lack of involvement.

According to Astin (1984), “student involvement refers to the amount of physical
and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 297).
Student involvement takes on many forms, including but not limited to commitment to academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty, staff and administrators. With significant involvement in college, students will experience greater amounts of learning and personal development.

The student involvement theory (Astin, 1984) has five basic postulates:

1) Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects;

2) Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum;

3) Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features;

4) The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program; and

5) The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

The theory of student involvement emphasizes active student participation in the learning process. Astin (1984) suggested student involvement emphasizes giving additional attention to passive or unprepared students. Astin’s theory encourages educators to “focus less on what they do and more on what the student does: how motivated the student is and how much time and energy the student devotes to the learning process” (1984, p. 301). The theory of student involvement suggests the most precious institutional resource may be student time, which is finite. This theory provides a unifying construct that can help focus the energies of faculty, staff and administrators
on a common objective – increasing student involvement to improve student learning (Astin, 1984).

Tinto’s Model of Student Departure

In 1975, Tinto first developed an institutional model of dropout behavior, the Model of Student Departure. In this model, Tinto (1975) described college dropout as “an outcome of a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the institution (peers, faculty, administration) with such experience coming to bear on the individual’s commitment to college completion and commitment to the institution” (p. 94). Tinto (1975, 1993) theorized that students’ attributes (academic ability, gender, and race), precollege experiences (high school grade point average, and academic and social expectations), and family backgrounds (social status, values, and expectations) influence their initial commitment to the institution and their educational goals. Tinto (1975) postulated integration into the academic system of the institution most directly affects goal commitment while social integration most directly relate to a person’s institutional commitment. Given individual characteristics, prior experiences, and commitments, the model argues the individual’s integration into the academic and social systems of the college most directly relates to his/her persistence at the institution. Greater commitment and integration lead to a greater likelihood that an individual will be retained.

As students become more academically and socially integrated into the culture of the institution, their goal commitment increases. The greater the commitment to the goal of degree completion, the more likely a student will persist. Similarly, if students are not
able to successfully integrate into the academic or social communities at their institution, their goal and institutional commitments diminish resulting in a greater likelihood of departure. Tinto emphasized sufficiently high commitment to the goal of college completion, even with minimal levels of academic and/or social integration and therefore minimal institutional commitment, might not lead to dropout from the institution. Similarly, with limited commitment to degree completion, an individual can be adequately integrated into the social aspect of an institution but still dropout because of poor academic integration. Conversely, an individual may be well-integrated into the academic domain of an institution but drop out because of insufficient integration into the social life of the institution (Tinto, 1975).

Two dimensions of academic integration, according to Tinto, are described as: a) the student’s ability to meet the institution’s academic standards and b) the congruency between the student’s intellectual development and the prevailing intellectual expectations and climate of the institution. Tinto posited the concept of student-faculty interaction, both in-class and out-of-class activities with faculty members as a method of facilitating the development of meaningful relationships between students and their professors, as a form of academic integration. Social integration also addresses both levels of integration and degrees of congruency between the individual and his/her social environment. Social integration typically occurs via co-curricular activities, information peer groups, and interactions with faculty and administration at the institution (Tinto, 1975).
Tinto modified his model in 1998 to include findings from more than 20 years of research on attrition. In his revised model, he focused on the combined retention efforts of academic and student affairs units by creating learning communities and exploring the dynamics of traditional classrooms. Tinto encouraged institutions to consider implementing learning communities that enable students to participate in group classes as a cohort to provide a shared, collaborative learning experience.

Forces that shape departure during the first year of college are qualitatively different from those that mold departure in the latter years of college. The first six months of college are an especially important period in student persistence (Tinto, 1988). Drawing on Van Gennep’s ‘Rites of Passage’, Tinto (1988) argued the longitudinal process of student departure can be envisioned as made up of distinct stages through which new students must typically pass during their college careers. The ‘Rites of Passage’ includes three stages: a) separation, b) transition, and c) incorporation. Each stage has its own ceremonies and rituals. Separation involves an individual’s separation from past associations. The transition stage occurs when individuals begin to interact in new ways with members of new groups into which membership is sought. Incorporation involves taking on new patterns of interactions with members of the new group and establishing full membership in the new group.

Tinto (1988) argued the process of institutional departure may be impacted by the varying problems students encounter in attempting to successfully negotiate these three stages: a) separation, b) transition, and c) incorporation. He also suggested that institutions can significantly assist new students in dealing with conditions that are...
inherent to the stages of separation and transition in the college career. Social interactions are most often the vehicle through which integration occurs, and social interactions include relationships with peers, faculty and staff. Failure to socially integrate may result in feelings of isolation and thus lead to departure. The longitudinal process of student departure can be seen as being marked by the difficulties individuals experience in making either and/or both the social and intellectual adjustment to the formal and informal academic and social life of the new communities of the college (Tinto, 1988).

Tinto (1988) emphasized lack of integration, which has been posited elsewhere as a primary cause of student departure, is not necessarily a reflection of an absence of incorporation alone. It may also result from an inability of students to separate themselves from past associations and/or to make the transition to new ones. He further suggested institutions should consider employing public rituals and ceremonies as part of their retention programs to assist new students in making the transition to the social and academic life of the institution (1988). Rituals and ceremonies can help cement personal bonds between students and faculty that are critical foundations for community membership.

Chickering’s (1969) Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development, Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development, Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement, and Tinto’s (1975) Model of Student Departure provided the theoretical frameworks for this study. Chickering’s (1969) Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) revised Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development were most appropriate to describe and explain the
sophomore slump phenomenon, factors that contribute to sophomore attrition, the unique needs of sophomores, and existing sophomore retention efforts. Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement provided the conceptual framework to explore sophomores’ desire for more satisfying, meaningful relationships with peers and faculty and significant academic and social involvement. Finally, Tinto’s (1985) Model of Student Departure was most appropriate to explore factors that contribute to sophomore attrition.

Summary

This chapter explored the relevant literature in the following areas: a) general retention; b) retention by gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status; c) enrollment status and choice of major; d) place of residence and participation in learning communities; e) retention by academic class; f) sophomore attrition; g) sophomore needs; h) sophomore retention efforts. Additionally, a review of salient constructs of i) Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development (1969, 1993); j) Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984); and k) Tinto’s Model of Student Attrition (1975) was provided. Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development, Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement, and Tinto’s Model of Student Attrition provided the conceptual frameworks for this dissertation which sought to describe and explain the sophomore slump phenomenon, factors that contribute to sophomore attrition, the unique needs of sophomores, and existing sophomore retention efforts.

Literature has delineated academic and social integration, support in selecting a major and academic advising, out-of-class interactions with faculty, and leadership opportunities as factors that align with the key challenges of the sophomore year –
developing a sense of meaning and purpose of one’s education, career and life goals. These factors affect retention and persistence of sophomores at four-year institutions. The literature reviewed in this chapter supports the need for a study of the effect of a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction as the foundation of this dissertation. This study explored the effect of a new sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community program, designed to address the key developmental tasks of sophomore year and sophomores’ needs, on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising and their collegiate experiences overall.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to examine change in students’ self-reported sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the institution as the result of participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community at the research institution in Fall 2008. Non-zero change was measured by scores on pre- and post-test administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Schreiner, 2007b) from participants in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community in Fall 2008.

Five primary research hypotheses guided this study as follows:

- There will be no change in the sense of the meaning in life score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the academic self-efficacy score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research
institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

Additionally, one secondary hypothesis informed this study as well:

- Among sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, there will be no change in sense of the meaning in life, the academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores between August 2008 and December 2008 as reported by:
  - Gender
  - Racial/ethnic groups
  - Majors
Overview of Research Design

The researcher conducted a pre-experimental design study. A pretest-posttest design includes a pretest measure followed by a treatment and a posttest for a single group (Cresswell, 2003). Because the researcher had access to one intact group who opted to participate in the pilot sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, she was unable to randomly assign sophomores to groups. Participants self-selected to participate in this community to have access to additional resources and programs to assist in their success at the research institution. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), the success of a treatment in a one-group, pretest-posttest design is “determined by comparing pretest and posttest scores” (p. 251).

This study merited a one-group pretest-posttest design because it “involves a single group that is pretested \(O\), exposed to a treatment \(X\), and posttested \(O\)” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 251). Cautions related to this type of design include: 1) if participants score significantly better on the posttest than the pretest, it cannot be assumed the improvement is due to the treatment, 2) history and maturation are not controlled, 3) testing and instrumentation is not controlled, and 4) statistical regression is not controlled (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). While these threats to validity must be considered and controlled for, the one-group pretest-posttest design controls for more threats to validity than one-shot case studies do and is most appropriate in social science research where it is not possible to create a control group for comparison (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006).
History of Living-Learning Communities at the Research Institution

The institution for this study is a mid-sized, doctoral-intensive, public, land-grant university in the Southeast, United States. The research institution provides on-campus housing for 42% of its student population on an annual basis including a comprehensive living-learning community for all first-year students (Common Data Set, 2008). In 2007-2008, 47.9% of sophomores at the research institution lived in on-campus housing.

There is an extended history of living-learning communities at the research institution. An in-depth description of living-learning communities at the research institution is provided in Appendix D.

Independent Treatment Variable - The Research Institution’s Sophomore Year Experience Living-Learning Community Curriculum

The independent variable in this study was the sophomore year experience program’s on-campus living-learning curriculum. This curriculum included unifying events for all participants, small group programs and one-on-one meetings with resident assistants/resident directors. The focus of the curriculum was on academic advising and faculty connections, career development and certainty, and community development.

Other independent variables including gender, race/ethnicities, and major were analyzed in this study. The dependent variables in the experiment were self-reported scores of: a) sense of meaning in life, b) academic self-efficacy, c) satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and their experiences at the research institution as a whole, d) commitment to academic major, and e) commitment to graduating from the research institution in August 2008 and December 2008.
The mission of the sophomore year experience living-learning community’s, SophoMORE Be MORE, curriculum at the research institution is to encourage and support sophomore students in exploring and making successful academic, personal, and career decisions while learning about themselves and their larger life purpose (reference pending). The curriculum for the sophomore year experience living-learning community is grounded in Schaller’s (2005) theoretical model of sophomore development. Schaller (2005) postulated sophomores progress through four phases of development: random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitments. The curriculum capitalizes on these transitions and facilitates movement through these stages. Schaller (2005) suggested the sophomore year is about ‘internal’ transitions, as compared with the ‘external’ transitions of the first year of college.

Based on Schaller’s theoretical framework, the curriculum focuses on 1) intentional engagement with faculty through faculty dinners at the community, emeritus faculty interactions, and specific outreach to members of the community from faculty engaged in undergraduate research experiences; 2) reality based career development; 3) strengths definition through StrengthsQuest™ assessment tool; 4) reflections on connections and relationships in the university required e-Portfolio system; and 5) service learning and leadership development opportunities. A month-by-month overview of the curriculum is provided in Appendix E. An overview of activities and foci scheduled during the duration of this study are detailed below.

Faculty and academic advisors were engaged in this community at several critical junctures during the academic year. Faculty were invited to a large scale event at the
community in October, focused on helping students connect with faculty personal and/or research interests in an informal setting and an undergraduate research symposium in December to recruit sophomores to participate in undergraduate research experiences. Academic advisors also played a significant role in the community. An academic success workshop was held in August and events focused on ‘finding a fit with academic advising’ for decided and exploratory students were held in October.

Highly trained junior and senior-level resident assistants and a resident director were instrumental in facilitating the SophoMORE Be MORE living-learning community curriculum at the research institution. In August, resident assistants met individually with each participant in this community for a general check-in, to review the sophomore year experience living-learning community curriculum, and engage in discussions about the academic success plan participants will develop with their academic advisor over the course of the year. The resident director and resident assistants provided participants with log-in information for StrengthsQuest™ in September, and in October one-on-one meetings with each participant, resident assistants facilitated discussions about how to use the results of StrengthsQuest™ in their daily life, both academic and social. The residence life staff also collaborated with participants in the SophoMORE Be MORE community to plan and implement beginning and end-of-semester unifying events in efforts to recognize accomplishments and develop stronger integration in and connections with peers in this community.

Career counselors and staff from the study abroad office were also closely involved with participants in this living learning community. The Career Center
sponsored an exploring majors and careers workshop in September and an introduction to internships program in late November/early December. Both programs occurred in the residence hall community, as opposed to in the career center. Staff from the study abroad office conducted introduction to study abroad activities in the living-learning community in late November/early December. Each of these educationally purposeful activities has associated learning outcomes detailed in Appendix F.

Participants

Sample Size and Composition

The population for this study was 188 sophomores at the research institution who opted to live in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community for the Fall 2008 semester. The researcher endeavored to study the experiences of all members of this population to learn more about the effectiveness of the program across gender, race/ethnicity, and major. All members of the population were invited to participate in this study and a total of 77 participants (41% of the population) responded and comprised the sample. As an extension, the demographics of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community population and the sample were compared to demographics of all sophomores at the research institution. Demographic information was obtained from the university’s institutional research fact book, to examine representativeness of the population and sample (gender, race/ethnicity, major) to ascertain what generalizations can be made from the results. If the population is demographically representative, generalizations to sophomores on this campus who would ‘opt into’ this type of program may be made.
Instrumentation

Quantitative data was collected for each member of the sample in both August and December 2008 via the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Schreiner, 2007a) (Appendix A). The Sophomore Experiences Survey captures information about engaged learning, mind set, academic self-efficacy, hope, meaning in life, satisfaction, interactions, activities and demographic data. Schreiner combined the following existing instruments to be included in the Sophomore Experiences Survey: Engaged Learning Index; Academic Self-Efficacy Scale; Hope Scale; and the Meaning of Life Questionnaire. The instrument has a coefficient alpha reliability of .90. The Engaged Learning Index’s alpha is .88, the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale’s is .88, the Hope Scale’s is .88, and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire’s is .72. The faculty interaction scale’s alpha is .80.

As for validity, factor analysis supports each of the scales, and the Engaged Learning Index correlates highly with learning satisfaction and successfully discriminates between student populations that have been established in the literature as more and less engaged (Schreiner, 2007b). Additional data was collected as a professional service to the research institution’s division of student affairs and department of university housing for supporting this research effort.

For the purpose of this study, the original Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix C) was adapted. Dr. Laurie Schreiner, author of the Sophomore Experiences Survey, granted permission for the adaptation of the survey for this study (Appendix B). The adapted version of the Sophomore Experiences Survey is provided in Appendix A.
This version includes items from the *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* and the *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* as well as satisfaction items. The *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* contains eight items. Responses for each question are on a seven point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Very Untrue of Me” and 7 indicating “Very True of me”. The *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* includes ten items. Responses for each question are on an eight point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Definitely False” and 8 indicating “Definitely True”. The adapted version of the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* does not include items from the *Engaged Learning Index*, Mindset Items, *Adult Hope Scale* items, Degree Aspirations items, High School Performance items, or questions related to assessment of current college performance, participation in service learning courses during college, or participation in a learning community during college.

The adapted *Sophomore Experiences Survey* contained 42 questions and 6 demographic items. Questions 2 and 5 related to commitment to the institution and graduating from the research institution. Questions 1, 3, 4, and 6 were included at the request of the research institution. Responses for questions 1-6 were on a five point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicating “Strongly Agree”. Questions 7 – 14 are from the *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale*. Responses for questions 7-14 were on a seven point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Very Untrue of Me” and 7 indicating “Very True of Me”. Items from the *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* are included as questions 15-24 on the adapted survey. Responses for questions 15-24 were on an eight point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Definitely False” and 8 indicating “Definitely True”. Faculty-student interaction items were included as questions 25-29 on
the adapted survey. Responses for questions 25-29 were on a five point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Never” and 5 indicating “Frequently”. Questions 30-34 are satisfaction items. Responses for questions 30-34 were on a five point Likert scale with 1 indicating “Very Dissatisfied” and 5 indicating “Very Satisfied”. Questions 35-41 were included at the request of the research institution. Responses for questions 35-41 were on a five point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “Not Involved at All” and 5 indicating “Very Involved”. Question 42 asked about certainty of major decision. Responses for question 42 were on a four point Likert Scale, with 1 indicating “Very Unsure” and 4 indicating “Very Sure”. Six demographic questions were also included. The demographic questions requested information on gender, age, race/ethnicity, transfer status, major, and travel outside of the U.S. since entering college. Completion of the Sophomore Experiences Survey took approximately 15 minutes for each administration.

Table 1: Map of Conceptual Framework for Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Research Hypotheses</th>
<th>Related</th>
<th>Theoretical Components of Research Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60
There will be no change in the:

- Sense of meaning in life score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;
- Academic self-efficacy score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;
- Commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community; and
- Commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

Table 1 (Continued)

- Commitment to graduating from the research institution score between
August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community; and

- Satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

There will be no change in the:

- Commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community; and

- Satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

---

**Data Collection**

The director of residence life at the research institution provided a list of student emails of participants in the sophomore year experience living-learning community to the researcher. The researcher assigned random identifiers to each participant in the sophomore year experience living-learning community to be able to conduct matched
pair t-tests to compare pre- and post-test results on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey*. Personal identifiers were not linked to results and were maintained confidentially. Further, there was no risk that disclosure of responses could be potentially damaging to students’ reputation, employability, or financial standing. The questions asked on the survey also posed no risk whatsoever and contained no sensitive information of any kind.

Survey responses on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* were invited from all 192 members of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community at the research institution during the first week of the Fall 2008 semester (August 17-20) and the last week of the semester, prior to exams, (December 1-5). A total of 77 participants (53.6% of the total population) responded to invitations to participate and comprised the sample. Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained for this study. The approval letter from IRB is included in Appendix G. Members of the community were given consent forms during floor meetings and asked to participate and complete this survey via their laptops during or immediately following a floor meeting. An email invitation to participate in this study was sent to all members of the population, immediately following floor meetings, with a link to the survey (Appendix H). The email specified that participation in this study was voluntary and contained a link to the survey. By clicking on the link, students indicated their willingness to participate in the survey. One week after the floor meetings, the researcher sent an email to non-responders requesting they participate in the study and complete the survey (Appendix I). On December 1, all sophomore year experience living-learning community participants who completed the pre-test survey were sent an email invitation to participate in the post-test
administration of the survey (Appendix H). This email specified that participation is voluntary and contained a link to the survey. By clicking on the link, students indicated their willingness to participate in the survey. Responses were collected via SurveyMonkey.com™ at participants’ leisure.

Data encryption provided by SurveyMonkey.com™ ensured the security of participant responses. All data was compiled in real-time in an online, password-protected reporting site. Only the researcher had access to the results. Data will be stored in the password-protected reporting site for approximately one year after data collection was completed. After one year, the data will be purged.

Utilization of SurveyMonkey.com™ to collect survey responses allowed students to complete the pre and post-survey at their convenience in their location of choice. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) identified several benefits and challenges associated with Web-based data collection procedures. Benefits associated with Web-based surveys included: a) speed of data collection, b) elimination of costs associated with postage for mailed paper-based surveys, c) reduction in invalid or incomplete surveys, and d) elimination of time to transfer written responses to an electronic format. Challenges associated with Web-based surveys included: a) access to computers and the Internet for some populations, b) concerns related to security of data to prevent corruption or violations of participant confidentiality, and c) need for researcher to have access to Web-based survey development and data collection tools.

The challenges identified by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) were minimized by the researcher for this study. The researcher had significant experience utilizing
SurveyMonkey.com™ in survey creation and data collection. SurveyMonkey.com™ provides significant protections for data security and only the researcher and primary investigator had access to the SurveyMonkey.com™ account. The participants in this study were sophomores living in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, and all were required to purchase laptops by the institution. Students have access to wireless Internet free of charge throughout campus.

Data Collection Procedures

The timeline for data collection procedures was:

- The director of residence life provided email addresses for participants in the sophomore year experience living-learning community, SophoMORE Be MORE, on August 13;
- The researcher created random identifiers for each participant in the sophomore year experience living-learning community and entered the identifiers into SurveyMonkey.com™ to link individual participant’s pre- and post-test responses on the Sophomore Experiences Survey;
- The researcher attended all five floors meetings for the SophoMORE Be MORE living-learning community between August 17-20, 2008 to distribute consent forms and ask participants to participate in this study;
- An email inviting students to participate in this study was sent immediately following each floor meeting, between August 17-20, 2008 (Appendix H);
- A follow-up email was sent to non-responders on August 24, 2008 inviting students to participate in the study (Appendix I);
An email inviting students who participated in the pre-test administration of the Sophomore Experiences Survey to participate in the post-test administration of this survey for this study was sent on December 1, 2008;

A follow-up email will be sent to non-responders on December 8, 2008, inviting students to participate in the study; and

Data analysis commenced December 13, 2008.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Release 15.0 (SPSS, 2006). Because of the design employed, matched pair \( t \) tests were performed for each scale on the pre-test and post-test administrations, correcting for random student-to-student variation, to evaluate non-zero change in scores on each scale. Matched pair \( t \) tests were used “to determine whether, at a selected probability level, a significant difference exists between the means of two matched, or non-independent, samples (or between the means for one sample at two different times” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 355). Additionally, specific subsets of questions were examined, also using matched pair \( t \) tests, to see if responses to questions on pre-test and post-test represented a non-zero change.

Pre-test and post-test scores for individual questions and sub-scales were analyzed for males and females utilizing matched pair \( t \) tests to determine how they differ, as were pre-test and post-test scores for individual questions and subscales for different race/ethnicity groups. Finally, pre-test and post-test scores for individual questions and sub-scales were analyzed for the three major categories utilizing ANOVAs. Analysis of
variance is best used to “determine if there is significant difference between the means of three or more groups (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 223). The researcher was interested in determining if the overall change on a group of questions or a single question was consistent for males/females, different races/ethnicities, and different major categories.

The primary hypotheses examined were if shifts from pre-test to post-test were observed in participants in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on self reported scores on a) sense of meaning in life, b) academic self-efficacy, c) satisfaction, d) commitment to academic major, and e) commitment to graduating from the research institutions pre- and post-test. The secondary hypothesis explored consistency in the shifts on meaning in life scale (and/or other scales and groups or individual questions as well) by a) gender, b) race/ethnicity, and c) major.

**Summary**

The research design for this study included pre and post-test data collection for the purpose of examining non-zero change in participants self reported scores’ in a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community during the Fall 2008 semester. This study sought to address five primary research hypotheses and one secondary research hypothesis. The sample for this study was 77 participants (41% of the total population) in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Sophomore participants completed the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Schreiner, 2007b) in August and December 2008 via an online survey that included demographic information, academic-self efficacy questions,
meaning in life questions, satisfaction questions and additional questions not included in this study. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, matched pair $t$-tests, and ANOVAs.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This study explored change in students’ self-reported scores on sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution as the result of participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community in Fall 2008. The researcher collected data via the Sophomore Experiences Survey, administered online using SurveyMonkey™. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, independent and matched pair t-tests, and ANOVAs. The study was guided by five primary research hypotheses and one secondary research hypothesis.

Primary research hypotheses for this study included:

- There will be no change in sense of the meaning in life score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the academic self-efficacy score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research
institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

Secondary research hypothesis for this study was:

- Among sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, there will be no change in sense of the meaning in life, the academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores between August 2008 and December 2008 as reported by:
  - Gender
  - Racial/ethnic groups
  - Majors
Description of Data

The study population consisted of all members (N=188) of the SophoMORE BeMORE living learning community at the research institution. All members of this community received email invitations to participate in this study. One hundred three students participated in the pre-test administration in August 2008 and were invited to participate in the post-test survey administration in December 2008. Seventy-seven students completed both the pre-test and post-test surveys and comprised the study sample (n=77). The sample represented 41% of the study population.

Demographics of Participants

The final portion of the survey asked participants to provide demographic information. The data collected included: (a) gender, (b) race/ethnicity, and (c) major. At the request of the research institution, demographic information was also collected on age, transfer status, and travel outside of the U.S. since entering college. A description of the demographic variables relevant to this study (gender, race/ethnicity, and major) is provided below.

Gender

The gender percentages for the sample were not significantly different from the percentages in the entire population based on a Chi square test ($X^2=2.855$, $P=.091$). Females comprised 45.5% (n=35) of the sample and men comprised 54.5% (n=42) of the sample. Table 1 provides a visual representation of the percentage differences between the sample and the living-learning community population.
Table 1. Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sample Frequency</th>
<th>Sample Percentage</th>
<th>Population Frequency</th>
<th>Population Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race/Ethnicity

The race/ethnicity ratio for the sample was not significantly different from the percentages in the entire population based on a Chi square test ($X^2=0.002$, $P=.965$). African-American students comprised 7.8% (n=6) of the sample, White/Caucasian students comprised 92.2% (n=71) of the sample. Asian or Pacific Islander students comprised 0.0% (n=0) of the sample. Table 2 provides a visual representation of the percentage differences between the sample and the living-learning community population.

Table 2. Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sample Frequency</th>
<th>Sample Percentage</th>
<th>Population Frequency</th>
<th>Population Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major

The distribution of majors in the sample was not significantly different from the distribution of majors in the entire population based on a Chi square test ($X^2=1.534$, $P=.465$). The researcher compressed the data on majors into three categories (arts and
sciences, business and professional studies, and education and allied studies) because there were few respondents in each of the 99 different majors offered by the research university (Table 3). For the purpose of this study, majors were categorized as follows:

Table 3. Categories of Academic Majors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Category</th>
<th>Majors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>Agriculture, Arts and Humanities Undeclared;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences – Undeclared;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animal and Veterinary Sciences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applied Economics and Statistics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biochemistry;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biological Sciences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemistry;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication Studies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer Science;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental and Natural Resources;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Science;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geology;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graphic Communications;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modern Language – Spanish;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Science;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-rehabilitation Sciences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-veterinary Medicine;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production Studies in Performance Arts (Theatre);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wildlife and Fisheries Biology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and</td>
<td>Agricultural Mechanization and Business;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
<td>Architecture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceramic and Materials Engineering;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemical Engineering;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Engineering;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer Information Systems;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction Science and Management;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental and Natural Resource Management;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Engineering;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 3 (Continued)

| Industrial Engineering;                     |
| Language and International Trade;           |
| Mechanical Engineering;                     |
| Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management (Community Recreation, Sport and Camp Management, Professional Golf Management, Travel and Tourism, and Turfgrass Management); and |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and Allied Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Education;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Science (Health Promotion and Education, and Pre-professional Health Studies);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management – Therapeutic Recreation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education – English; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arts and Sciences students comprised 46.8% (n=36) of the sample. Business and Professional Studies students comprised 38.9% (n=30) of the sample. Education and Allied Studies students comprised 14.3% (n=11) of the sample. Table 4 provides a visual representation of the percentage differences between the respondents and the living-learning community population.
Table 4. Living-Learning Community Sample and Population by Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Professional</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Research Hypotheses

Primary Hypothesis One

Research hypothesis one stated there would be no change in sense of meaning in life scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Using SPSS (SPSS, 2006), matched pair $t$ tests were conducted for pre-test and post-test responses from 77 respondents to the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A) for all ten items from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The results of the matched pair $t$ tests were to: 1) reject research hypothesis one for question 16, and 2) fail to reject research hypothesis for questions 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A), derived from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The hypothesis test results suggested a statistically significant increase in question 16. No statistically significant change was noted in questions 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24. Table Five provides detailed results of analysis of responses to questions 15-24.
Table 5: Statistical Analysis of *Meaning in Life* questions (questions 15-24 on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Means (+/- Standard Error)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 I understand my life’s meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.81 (+/- .22)</td>
<td>6.05 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 My life has a clear sense of purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.00 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>6.42 (+/- .18)</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.44 (+/- .27)</td>
<td>5.64 (+/- .26)</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 I am always looking to find my life’s purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.55 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>5.69 (+/- .26)</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.30 (+/- .20)</td>
<td>6.38 (+/- .20)</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 I have discovered a satisfying life purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.91 (+/- .22)</td>
<td>6.05 (+/- .22)</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.21 (+/- .26)</td>
<td>5.38 (+/- .29)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 I am seeking a purpose or mission in life</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.58 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>5.78 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 My life has no clear purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.40 (+/- .20)</td>
<td>2.29 (+/- .23)</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 I am searching for meaning in life</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.53 (+/- .27)</td>
<td>4.87 (+/- .30)</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant at 0.05 Alpha level
Primary Hypothesis Two

Research hypothesis two indicated there would be no change in the academic self-efficacy scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair $t$ tests were conducted for pre-test and post-test responses from 77 respondents to all seven items derived from the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (questions 7-14 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey) see Appendix A. The results of the matched pair $t$ tests were to 1) reject research hypothesis two at the 0.05 Alpha level for questions 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14, and 2) to fail to reject research hypothesis two for items 8, 9, and 12 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A). Table Six provides detailed results of analysis of responses to questions 7-14.
Table 6: Statistical Analysis of *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* questions (questions 7-14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks</td>
<td>5.36 (+/- .14)</td>
<td>5.77 (+/- .14)</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I know how to take notes</td>
<td>5.60 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>5.81 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.057**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I know how to study to perform well on tests</td>
<td>5.48 (+/- .11)</td>
<td>5.66 (+/- .16)</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am good at research and writing papers</td>
<td>5.29 (+/- .16)</td>
<td>5.70 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am a very good student</td>
<td>5.75 (+/- .11)</td>
<td>6.00 (+/- .09)</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>.026*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I usually do very well in school</td>
<td>5.96 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>6.06 (+/- .08)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I find academic work interesting and absorbing</td>
<td>5.05 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>5.35 (+/- .14)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am very capable of succeeding at this institution</td>
<td>6.35 (+/- .11)</td>
<td>6.56 (+/- .07)</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.031*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at 0.05 Alpha level

**Statistically significant at 0.10 Alpha level

The hypothesis test suggested improvement in questions 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14 and no improvement in questions 9 and 12. The hypothesis test result for question 8 requires further discussion. The P-value was .057; therefore, at an Alpha level of 0.10 we would reject research hypothesis two for question 8. This suggests that participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community may have had a
possible effect on participant responses to question 8. The choice of using an Alpha level of 0.10 on question 8 was, in this instance, because the researcher was concerned with a Type II error (i.e., deciding that participation in the community had no effect when, in fact, there was a slight effect).

**Primary Hypothesis Three**

Research hypothesis three indicated there would be no change in satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising and ‘experience at the institution as a whole’ scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. The results of the matched pair $t$ tests were to fail to reject primary hypothesis three at the 0.05 Alpha level for questions 31, 32, and 34 on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A). Table Seven provides detailed results of analysis of responses to questions 31, 32, and 34.
Table 7: Statistical Analysis of Satisfaction questions (questions 31, 32, and 34)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far</td>
<td>4.14 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>4.09 (+/- .11)</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year</td>
<td>3.66 (+/- .13)</td>
<td>3.75 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year.</td>
<td>3.60 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>3.86 (+/- .13)</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.057*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at 0.10 Alpha level

The hypothesis test suggested no improvement in questions 31 and 32. The hypothesis test result for question 34 requires further discussion. The P-value was .057; therefore, at an Alpha level of 0.10 we would reject research hypothesis three for question 34. This suggests that participation in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community may have had a possible effect on participant responses to question 34. The choice of Alpha of 0.10 was, in this instance, because the researcher
was concerned with a Type II error (i.e., deciding that participation in the community had no effect when, in fact, there was a slight effect).

**Primary Hypothesis Four**

Research hypothesis four indicated there would be no change in commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. A matched pair $t$ test was conducted for pre-test and post-test responses from 77 respondents to the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A) for the question related to commitment to academic major, question 42. The result of the matched pair $t$ test was to reject research hypothesis four for question 42 on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A). Table Eight provides detailed results of analysis of responses to question 42.

**Table 8: Statistical Analysis of Commitment to Academic Major question (question 42)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>How sure are you of your major?</td>
<td>3.23 (+/- .12)</td>
<td>3.69 (+/- .06)</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at 0.05 Alpha level

The hypothesis test result suggested a statistically significant increase in question 42.

**Primary Hypothesis Five**

Research hypothesis five indicated there would be no change in commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year
experience on-campus living-learning community. The result of the matched pair t test was to fail to reject primary hypothesis five. The matched pair t test suggested no statistically significant change in question 5 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey. Table Nine provides detailed results of analysis of responses to question 5.

Table 9: Statistical Analysis of Commitment to Graduating from this Institution question (question 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This is the institution I intend</td>
<td>4.69 (+/-</td>
<td>4.70 (+/-</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to graduate from</td>
<td>.07)</td>
<td>.08)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Hypothesis

The secondary research hypothesis indicated that the impact of the institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A) subscales (sense of the meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores) would be consistent among the different genders, race/ethnicities, and/or majors. To address this hypothesis, differences in pre-test and post-test responses were calculated for each respondent (n=77) for each question on the Sophomore Experiences Survey. The differences were used as a measure of the impact of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. The differences were compared across genders using
independent samples $t$ tests, across race/ethnicities using independent samples $t$ tests, and across majors using analysis of variances (ANOVAs).

Gender

The results of independent samples $t$ tests were to 1) reject the secondary research hypothesis at the 0.05 Alpha level for questions 15 and 18, and 2) to fail to reject the secondary research hypothesis based on gender for questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 34, and 42 based on gender on the Sophomore Experiences Survey. The hypothesis test results suggested statistically significant changes in questions 15 and 18 and no statistically significant change in questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 34, and 42. Table Ten provides detailed results of analysis of responses to all study questions based on gender.
Table 10: Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This is the institution I intend to graduate from</td>
<td>.06 (+/- .13)</td>
<td>-.02 (+/- .10)</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks</td>
<td>.17 (+/- .24)</td>
<td>.50 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I know how to take notes</td>
<td>.23 (+/- .23)</td>
<td>.19 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I know how to study to perform well on tests</td>
<td>.23 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>.14 (+/- .23)</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am good at research and writing papers</td>
<td>.26 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>.55 (+/- .19)</td>
<td>-.918</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am a very good student</td>
<td>.23 (+/- .20)</td>
<td>.26 (+/- .16)</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I usually do very well in school</td>
<td>.17 (+/- .19)</td>
<td>.05 (+/- .17)</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I find academic work interesting and absorbing</td>
<td>.29 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>.31 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am very capable of succeeding at this institution</td>
<td>.20 (+/- .18)</td>
<td>.21 (+/- .13)</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I understand my life’s meaning</td>
<td>.74 (+/- .36)</td>
<td>-.17 (+/- .23)</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>.039*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My life has a clear sense of purpose</td>
<td>.60 (+/- .31)</td>
<td>.26 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>.54 (+/- .38)</td>
<td>-.10 (+/- .38)</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>t value</td>
<td>p value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am always looking to find my life’s purpose</td>
<td>.80 (+/- .38)</td>
<td>-.40 (+/- .39)</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>.29 (+/- .27)</td>
<td>.10 (+/- .20)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have discovered a satisfying life purpose</td>
<td>.23 (+/- .35)</td>
<td>.07 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant</td>
<td>.60 (+/- .33)</td>
<td>-.19 (+/- .43)</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I am seeking a purpose or mission in life</td>
<td>.40 (+/- .45)</td>
<td>.02 (+/- .33)</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>My life has no clear purpose</td>
<td>.29 (+/- .33)</td>
<td>.45 (+/- .33)</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am searching for meaning in life</td>
<td>.43 (+/- .42)</td>
<td>.26 (+/- .35)</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far</td>
<td>.06 (+/- .19)</td>
<td>-.14 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year</td>
<td>.14 (+/- .23)</td>
<td>.05 (+/- .18)</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year</td>
<td>.40 (+/- .25)</td>
<td>.14 (+/- .21)</td>
<td>.779</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>How sure are you of your major?</td>
<td>.43 (+/- .15)</td>
<td>.48 (+/- .13)</td>
<td>-.242</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at 0.05 Alpha level
Hypothesis test results suggest the impact of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on questions 15 and 18 was inconsistent based on gender. Hypothesis test results suggest a consistent impact on gender with questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 34, and 42.

Race/Ethnicity

The results of independent samples t tests were to 1) reject the secondary research hypothesis at the 0.05 Alpha level for question 32, and 2) to fail to reject the secondary research hypothesis at the 0.05 Alpha level for questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 34, and 42 based on race/ethnicity on the Sophomore Experiences Survey. The hypothesis test results suggested a statistically significant change in question 32 and no statistically significant change in questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 34, and 42. Table Eleven provides detailed results of analysis of responses to all study questions.
Table 11: Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Racial/Ethnic Group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Caucasian/White</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This is the institution I intend to graduate from</td>
<td>-.17(+/- .54)</td>
<td>.03(+/- .08)</td>
<td>-.356</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks</td>
<td>.17(+/- .40)</td>
<td>.37(+/- .17)</td>
<td>-.457</td>
<td>.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I know how to take notes</td>
<td>-.17(+/- .65)</td>
<td>.24(+/- .43)</td>
<td>-.609</td>
<td>.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I know how to study to perform well on tests</td>
<td>.33(+/- .80)</td>
<td>.17(+/- .17)</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am good at research and writing papers</td>
<td>.67(+/- .80)</td>
<td>.39(+/- .16)</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am a very good student</td>
<td>.67(+/- .33)</td>
<td>.21(+/- .13)</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I usually do very well in school</td>
<td>.00(+/- .26)</td>
<td>.11(+/- .14)</td>
<td>-.386</td>
<td>.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I find academic work interesting and absorbing</td>
<td>.33(+/- .42)</td>
<td>.30(+/- .16)</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am very capable of succeeding at this institution</td>
<td>.17(+/- .17)</td>
<td>.21(+/- .12)</td>
<td>-.218</td>
<td>.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I understand my life’s meaning</td>
<td>1.3(+/- .99)</td>
<td>.15(+/- .21)</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My life has a clear sense of purpose</td>
<td>1.00(+/- .97)</td>
<td>.37(+/- .18)</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>1.00(+/- 1.4)</td>
<td>.13(+/- .27)</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am always looking to find my life’s purpose</td>
<td>.83 (+/− 1.3)</td>
<td>.08 (+/− .29)</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>.50 (+/− .85)</td>
<td>.04 (+/− .17)</td>
<td>.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have discovered a satisfying life purpose</td>
<td>−.17 (+/− 1.3)</td>
<td>.17 (+/− .20)</td>
<td>−.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant</td>
<td>1.2 (+/− 1.2)</td>
<td>.08 (+/− .29)</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I am seeking a purpose or mission in life</td>
<td>.83 (+/− 1.5)</td>
<td>.14 (+/− .27)</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>My life has no clear purpose</td>
<td>1.7 (+/− 1.4)</td>
<td>−.27 (+/− .22)</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am searching for meaning in life</td>
<td>.83 (+/− 1.4)</td>
<td>.30 (+/− .27)</td>
<td>.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far</td>
<td>.17 (+/− .91)</td>
<td>−.07 (+/− .11)</td>
<td>.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year</td>
<td>1.5 (+/− .56)</td>
<td>−.03 (+/− .14)</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year</td>
<td>.67 (+/− .62)</td>
<td>.23 (+/− .17)</td>
<td>.692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis test results suggested the impact of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on question 32 was inconsistent based on race/ethnicity. Hypothesis test results suggested a consistent impact on race/ethnicity with questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 34, and 42.

Major

Analysis of variances (ANOVAs) resulted in failure to reject the secondary research hypothesis based on major. Results of the hypothesis test indicated that the impact of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community was consistent for all three major categories (Arts and Sciences, Business and Professional Studies, and Education and Allied Studies) on questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 34, and 42 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A). Table Twelve provides detailed results of analysis of differences in responses by major category to all study questions.
Table 12: Statistical Analysis of Differences in Responses by Major Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This is the institution I intend to graduate from</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I know how to take notes</td>
<td>.880</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I know how to study to perform well on tests</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am good at research and writing papers</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.708</td>
<td>.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am a very good student</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I usually do very well in school</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I find academic work interesting and absorbing</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am very capable of succeeding at this institution</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I understand my life’s meaning</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>My life has a clear sense of purpose</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am always looking to find my life’s purpose</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>T Stat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have discovered a satisfying life purpose</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I am seeking a purpose or mission in life</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>My life has no clear purpose</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am searching for meaning in life</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.587</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>How sure are you of your major?</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

The study included the collection of data from 77 participants in the research institution’s on-campus sophomore year experience living-learning community in Fall 2008. The 77 valid responses on pre- and post-test administrations of the *Sophomore*
Experiences Survey (Appendix A) represented 41% of the total living-learning community population. A majority of respondents were Male (63.8%), White/Caucasian (91.2%), and enrolled in Arts and Sciences majors (46.8%).

The data collected were normally distributed and without outliers. Matched pair $t$-tests were used to analyze data and respond to five primary research hypotheses and two parts of the secondary hypothesis. ANOVAs were used to analyze data and respond to the third part of the secondary hypothesis. Non-zero change at the 0.05 Alpha level was reported on the following items: a) primary hypothesis one (question 16); b) primary research hypothesis two (question 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14); c) secondary research hypothesis based on gender (questions 15 and 18); and d) secondary research hypothesis based on race/ethnicity (question 32).
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the conducted study and provides an explanation of the findings. This chapter includes: a) an overview of relevant literature; b) the theoretical frameworks for this study; c) a summary of findings; d) discussion pertaining to the five primary research hypotheses and the secondary research hypothesis; e) conclusions; f) limitations and delimitations of this study; g) implications and recommendations related to study findings; and h) recommendations for future research.

Overview of Relevant Literature

Significant retention research focused on the critical role of involvement, or engagement, in student persistence, particularly of involvement during the first year of college (Astin, 1993a; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980a, 1991). Commitment to the college experience and possession of career aspirations have also been linked to persistence (Chickering, 1969; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Wilder, 1993). Self-efficacy (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), identity (Astin, 1993a; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980a, 1991) and sense of purpose (Astin, 1993a; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) are also significant predictors of student retention.

Astin (1993a) indicated retention, or degree attainment, was enhanced by student involvement with peers and faculty, and the residential experience. Tinto also linked persistence to the development of communities committed to education and sense of commitment to peers, often fostered by collaborative/cooperative learning, and the
A 1997 study by Milem and Berger found that early involvement with faculty and other students contributed to persistence and retention. Pascarella and Terenzini (1977, 1980b) and Tinto (1993) emphasized the impact of student-faculty interactions on persistence.

Extensive research explored the effect of gender, race/ethnicity, and major on retention and persistence. Gender was significantly related to student persistence in studies by Astin (1975), Astin, Korn and Green (1987), and Tinto (1987). Peltier, Laden, and Matranga (1999) and Astin, Tsu and Avalos (1996) reported women were more likely to persist than men. Race was identified as a significant predictor of retention in studies by Astin (1997), Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster (1999) and Peltier, Laden, and Matranga (1999). Asian American and White students were more likely to be retained than students in other racial groups. Academic confidence was significantly predictive of persistence for White, Asian-American and Hispanic students in studies by Astin (1997), Murtaugh, Burns and Schuster (1999) and Peltier, Laden and Matranga (1999). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that majoring in the social sciences or humanities enhanced persistence. Astin (1975, 1993a) reported probable majors in allied health professions, fine arts and engineering showed negative effects on degree completion. The effect of place of residence on retention has also been studied extensively.

Astin (1993a), Lewallen (1993), and Velez (1985) reported retention is enhanced significantly for those students living in residence halls. Schuh (2004) reported the success of well designed living-learning communities that integrate both academic and social experiences contribute to student development. While Pascarella and Terenzini
(1980a) identified first-year living-learning communities as one of many factors that contribute to the persistence of first-year students, research has yet to link post-freshman living-learning communities with persistence.

Tinto (1993) suggested that important issues for first-year students may not be important issues for students at other stages in college. Pattengale and Schreiner (2000) said that the sophomore year may be a time in which students disengage from academic life, thus creating an adverse effect on their grades and persistence. Recent research identified factors that may be linked to persistence of sophomores to junior year. These factors include possessing sense of meaning/purpose, major/career certainty, commitment to academic experience and related decisions, overall satisfaction with the college experience, advising satisfaction, satisfaction with faculty and peer relationships, (Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000; Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Juillerat, 2000; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Schreiner, 2007a). Research has yet to conclusively link these factors and/or interventions designed to support these factors to persistence and retention.

Many researchers attributed attrition and decline in academic performance in second year students to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000; Gardner, Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Wilder, 1993). Lemons and Richmond (1987) hypothesized that the sophomore slump included career uncertainty, dissatisfaction in relationships, and an increased concern about paying for college. Richmond and Lemons (1987) were the first to hypothesize that psychosocial theory, more specifically Chickering’s theory of student development, could be used to describe
and explain the sophomore slump phenomenon and to assist universities in meeting the unique needs of sophomores.

Researchers suggested that sophomores are at an important developmental point with needs that differ from students at other levels, needs that are largely overlooked by institutions of higher education (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Schaller, 2005). Specific needs of sophomores are linked to the factors contributing to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon. Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) suggested these factors included, but were not limited to: (a) inadequate academic advising and career planning; (b) low levels of academic and social integration; (c) insufficient levels of out-of-class interaction with faculty; d) lack of a sufficient number of major classes and the resultant failure to begin a process of intellectual engagement in the major; and e) the withdrawal of classic first-year experience support initiatives before students have become appropriately committed and intellectually engaged to ensure persistence and graduation.

Gardner, Pattengale, and Schreiner (2000) and Schaller (2005) emphasized the responsibility of colleges and universities to address the key sophomore year developmental and academic outcomes deliberately and intentionally in learning environments and programs. Graunke and Woosley’s (2005) findings suggested institutions create programs that a) enable sophomores to enhance their certainty regarding choice of academic major by discovering more about their academic or career interests; b) improve their relationships with faculty by providing opportunities for positive faculty interactions, both within and outside of the traditional academic environment; and, c) ultimately increase their chances of success at their current
institution. Initiatives must incorporate assessment methodologies and evidence to make
claims of effectiveness in terms of utility and impact (Gardner, Pattengale, & Schreiner,
2000).

The literature reviewed in this study detailed the challenges associated with
sophomore year and post-freshman retention. Further, the literature review identified a
gap in the research for exploring the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors
contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing these
programs. The latter is the rationale for conducting this study.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Several student development theories provide a rationale for, an explanation of, or
can be applied to the ‘sophomore slump’ phenomenon. Chickering’s (1969) Theory of
Psychosocial Identity Development, Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Theory of
Psychosocial Identity Development, Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement, and
Tinto’s (1998, 1975) Model of Student Departure provided the theoretical frameworks for
this study. These theories were applied to describe and explain the sophomore slump
phenomenon, factors that contribute to sophomore attrition, the unique needs of
sophomores, and existing sophomore retention efforts. Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student
Involvement provided the conceptual framework to explore sophomores’ desire for more
satisfying, meaningful relationships with peers and faculty and significant academic and
social involvement. Finally, Tinto’s (1985) Model of Student Departure was most
appropriate to explore factors that contribute to sophomore attrition.
The research hypotheses in this study sought to test: a) sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, commitment to academic major, and commitment to graduating from the research institution based on Chickering’s Theory of Psychosocial Identity Development (1969, 1993); b) commitment to academic major, commitment to graduating from the research institution and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising and experiences at the institution as a whole based on Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984); and, c) commitment to graduating from the research institution and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising and experiences at the institution as a whole based on Tinto’s Model of Student Attrition (1975).

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors provide a comprehensive overview of psychosocial development during the college years. The vectors of 1) developing competence; 2) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; 3) establishing identity; and, 4) developing purpose were given special attention because the tasks/crises encountered in these vectors are directly related to the sophomore slump phenomenon. Developing competence addresses intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. Competence entails confidence that one can manage the challenges and situations they are faced with and achieve goals successfully. Lemons and Richmond (1987) suggested sophomore students are no longer satisfied with standards of competence identified for freshman students because of the absence of concrete criteria for success and differing expectations of themselves, their peers, and their parents. Students who do not achieve competence through academic performance, athletic abilities, or development of strong interpersonal relationships (through organizations or affiliations) often feel ineffective
and dissatisfied. A sense of incompetence may result in feelings of insecurity or apathy and low self-esteem.

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence addresses developing emotional independence (no longer needing constant approval and reassurance from others), instrumental independence (becoming self-directed) and interdependence (awareness of interconnectedness with others) (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Lemons and Richmond (1987) noted the problems associated with this vector for students struggling with the sophomore slump are primarily related to emotional and instrumental independence. Students who fail to break parental ties may find their autonomy impaired. Students who experience difficulties with this task, especially when combined with other developmental challenges, are often overwhelmed and resort to dropping out, stopping out, or transferring to less expensive institutions (Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

Establishing identity focuses on development of a stable, realistic, positive self image. Establishing a stable identity is the central task of Chickering’s theory and the most critical developmental task during collegiate years. Sophomores who experience difficulties with tasks in other vectors may be negatively impacted in their identity development.

Developing purpose entails intentionally assessing interests and options related to vocational and personal interests and lifestyle issues. For sophomores, the pressure associated with these choices is intense as students typically must make major choices and related decisions regarding career interests during their sophomore year.
The most basic tenet of Astin’s theory of student involvement (1984) is that the more students are involved in both academic and social aspects of the collegiate experience, the more they learn. Astin’s research suggested involvement contributed to persistence while student attrition implied a lack of involvement. Student involvement takes on many forms, including but not limited to commitment to academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty, staff and administrators.

Tinto argued that an individual’s integration into the academic and social systems of the college most directly relates to the student’s persistence at the institution. Tinto (1975) postulated integration into the academic system of the institution most directly affects goal commitment while social integration most directly related to a person’s institutional commitment. Greater commitment to and integration into an institution lead to a greater likelihood that an individual will be retained. Tinto modified his model in 1998 to include findings from more than 20 years of research on attrition. In his revised model, he focused on the combined retention efforts of academic and student affairs units by creating learning communities and exploring the dynamics of traditional classrooms. Tinto encouraged institutions to consider implementing learning communities that enable students to participate in group classes as a cohort to provide a shared, collaborative learning experience.

The use of Chickering’s theory (1969, 1993), Astin’s Theory (1984), and Tinto’s model (1975, 1998) in this study provided the conceptual frameworks to examine the effect of a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on
participants’ academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life, and satisfaction. Academic self-efficacy is closely tied to Chickering’s vectors of developing competence and establishing identity. Sense of meaning in life is linked to Chickering’s vectors of establishing identity and developing purpose. Satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the institution as a whole are linked to Astin’s tenets and Tinto’s integration postulates. Finally, commitment to academic major and commitment to graduating from the research institution are tied to Chickering’s vector, Astin’s tenets, and Tinto’s integration postulates. Both the literature review and theoretical frameworks suggest that failure to maintain or enhance academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life or levels of satisfaction during the sophomore year may be linked to attrition.

The research hypotheses explored change in a) sense of meaning in life scores, b) academic self-efficacy scores, c) satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores, d) commitment to academic major scores, e) commitment to graduating from the research institution scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. The study also explored change in sense of the meaning in life, the academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores between August 2008 and December 2008 as reported by: a) gender, b) racial/ethnic groups and c) major categories.
Summary of Findings

Demographics

The study population consisted of all members (N=188) of the SophoMORE Be MORE living learning community. Seventy-seven students (n=77) completed both the pre-test and post-test surveys and comprised the study sample. The sample represented 41% of the study population. The data collected from the sample included: (a) gender, (b) race/ethnicity, and (c) major.

The distribution of genders, race/ethnicities, and majors in the sample was not significantly different from the distribution of genders, race/ethnicities, and majors in the population based on chi square tests. Males accounted for 54.5% (n=42) of the sample and females comprised the remaining 45.5% (n=33) the sample. The majority of respondents self-identified their race/ethnicity as White Caucasian, 92.2% (n=71), with African-American students comprising 7.8% (n=6) of the sample.

A majority of respondents self-reported a major in the Arts and Sciences major category, 46.8% (n=36). Business and Professional Studies students comprised 38.9% (n=30) of the sample, and Education and Allied Studies students comprised 14.3% (n=11) of the sample.

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to explore change in students’ self-reported sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution as a result of participation
in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community in Fall 2008.

The five primary research hypotheses in this study were:

- There will be no change in sense of the meaning in life score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in the academic self-efficacy score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in commitment to academic major score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community;

- There will be no change in commitment to graduating from the research institution score between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by
sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community.

The secondary research hypothesis for this study was:

- Among sophomore participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community, there will be no change in sense of the meaning in life, the academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores between August 2008 and December 2008 as reported by:
  
  - Gender
  - Racial/ethnic groups
  - Majors

There were significant findings for a) primary hypothesis one, b) primary hypothesis two, c) primary hypothesis four, d) secondary hypothesis based on gender; and, e) secondary hypothesis based on race/ethnicity. The significant question for primary hypothesis one was question 16, My life has a clear sense of purpose (p=.013). Primary hypothesis two had five questions with significant findings: a) question 7, I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks (p=.007); b) question 10, I am good at research and writing papers (p=.005); c) question 11, I am a very good student (p=.026); d) question 13, I find academic work interesting and absorbing (p=.025); and e) question 14, I am very capable of succeeding at this institution (p=.031). Additionally,
primary hypothesis four, question 42, How sure are you of your major?, was significant (p=.000).

Two questions from the secondary research hypothesis based on gender were significant: question 15, I understand my life’s meaning (p=.039); and, b) question 18, I am always looking to find my life’s purpose (p=.029). Finally, the secondary research hypothesis based on race/ethnicity had one significant question, question 32, Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year (p=.041).

Discussion

Research hypothesis one indicated there would be no change in sense of meaning in life scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair t tests indicated a statistically significant change for question 16, My life has a clear sense of purpose (p=.013). Results suggest participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community had greater clarity in their life’s purpose at the end of the fall semester. While the results of matched pair t tests for questions 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 did not indicate a statistically significant difference between mean scores of participants between the August 2008 and December 2008 administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A), mean responses to each of these questions indicated improved sense of meaning in life, just not statistically significant improvement.

Research hypothesis two indicated there would be no change in academic self-efficacy scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the
research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair t tests indicated a statistically significant change for: a) question 7, I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks (p=.007); b) question 10, I am good at research and writing papers (p=.005); c) question 11, I am a very good student (p=.026); d) question 13, I find academic work interesting and absorbing (p=.025); and question 14, I am very capable of succeeding at this institution (p=.031). Results suggest participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community had increased confidence in time management skills, research and writing skills, general academic self-efficacy, interest in academic work, and confidence in being successful at the research institution at the end of the fall semester. While the results of matched pair t tests for questions 8, 9, and 12 did not indicate a statistically significant difference between mean scores of participants between the August 2008 and December 2008 administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A), mean responses to each of these questions indicated improved academic self-efficacy related to note taking, test performance, and overall academic performance, just not statistically significant improvement.

Research hypothesis three indicated there would be no change in satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising and ‘experience at the institution as a whole’ scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair t tests indicated no statistically significant change for questions 31, 32, and 34 on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A). Yet, mean responses to question 32, Rate
your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year, and question 34, Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year, indicated improved satisfaction related to amount of contact with faculty this year and satisfaction with advising experiences this year, respectively, just not statistically significant improvement. Mean responses to question 31, Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far, indicated decreased satisfaction related to overall experiences at the research institution at the end of the fall 2008 semester when compared with perceptions of overall experiences at the research institution at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester.

Research hypothesis four indicated there would be no change in commitment to academic major scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair $t$ tests indicated statistically significant change for question 42, How sure are you of your major? ($p=.000$). Results suggest participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community had increased commitment their academic majors at the end of the fall semester.

Research hypothesis five indicated there would be no change in commitment to graduating from the research institution scores between August 2008 and December 2008 reported by participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community. Matched pair $t$ tests indicated no statistically significant change for question 5, This is the institution I intend to graduate from, on the
Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A). While the results of matched pair $t$ tests for question 5 did not indicate a statistically significant difference between mean scores of participants between the August 2008 and December 2008 administrations of the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A), mean responses to question 5 indicated increased commitment to graduating from the research institution at the end of the fall 2008 semester, just not statistically significantly increased commitment.

The secondary research hypothesis indicated that the impact of the institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on the Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A) subscales (sense of the meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores) would be consistent among the different genders, race/ethnicities, and/or majors. Examination of changes in scores on Sophomore Experiences Survey (Appendix A) subscales (sense of the meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores) among different genders suggest statistically significant differences for question 15, I understand my life’s meaning, (p=.039), and question 18, I am always looking to find my life’s purpose, (p=.029). Results suggest female participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community had greater understanding of their life’s meaning and increased focus on finding their life’s purpose at the end of the fall semester.
Examination of changes in scores on *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A) subscales (sense of the meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores) among different racial/ethnic groups suggest statistically significant differences for question 32, Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year, (p=.041). Results suggest African-American participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community had greater satisfaction with the amount of contact they had with faculty this year when compared with Caucasian participants at the end of the fall semester.

Examination of changes in scores on *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A) subscales (sense of the meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising or experience at the institution as a whole, commitment to academic major, or commitment to graduating scores) among different majors suggest no statistically significant differences among different major categories on any of the questions on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A). Results suggest the impact of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community was consistent for all three major categories (Arts and Sciences, Business and Professional Studies, and Education and Allied Studies) on all questions on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A).
Conclusions

While research suggests the sophomore year is marked by struggle with sense of purpose (Schaller, 2005), general dissatisfaction (Lemons & Richmond, 1987), apathy (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006), lack of confidence (Gohn, Swartz & Donnelly, 2001), and lack of certainty in academic major (Graunke & Woosley, 2005), the results of this study suggest participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community entered their sophomore year with high levels of academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life, satisfaction, commitment to academic major and commitment to the institution. Further, participants in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community reported finishing the fall 2008 with higher levels of academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life, satisfaction, commitment to academic major and commitment to the institution. It is important to note that only changes on questions 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, and 42 were statistically significant. However, responses on remaining questions showed practical significance though not statistical significance.

Results of this study contradict research findings that suggest sophomores are unsatisfied with advising, struggle with their commitment to academic majors, lack academic self-efficacy, and question their meaning in life/life purpose. Boivin, Fountain, and Baylis (2000), Feldman and Newcomb (1969), Freedman (1956), Gardner, Pattengale and Schreiner, 2000, Lemons and Richmond (1987), and Juillerat (2000) reported sophomores were unsatisfied with academic advising. The results of this study suggest participants in the sophomore year experience living-learning community had moderate
levels of satisfaction with their advising experiences at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester. Further, at the end of the fall 2008 semester, participants reported statistically significant increases in satisfaction with their advising experiences, in direct contrast with the research findings cited above. Similarly, research suggested sophomores often struggle with commitment to their academic major and/or career uncertainty (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000; Coburn & Treeger, 1997; Furr & Gannaway, 1982; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Gardner, Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Graunke and Woosley, 2005; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Margolis, 1976; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner, 2007a; Wilder, 1993). The results of this study suggest participants were ‘somewhat sure’ to ‘very sure’ of their major at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester and reported statistically significant increased certainty with their academic major in December 2008.

The results of this research study suggest participants in the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community possessed moderate levels of academic self-efficacy in August 2008. Participants reported statistically significant gains in academic self-efficacy related to time management, note taking, being good at research and writing papers, overall confidence in abilities as a student, finding academic work interesting and absorbing, and believing they were capable of succeeding at the institution in December 2008. These findings contradict research studies by Coburn and Treeger (1997), Gahagan and Hunter (2006), and Gardner, Pattengale and Schreiner (2000). Likewise, the findings of this study contradict other studies that found sophomores struggled with their meaning in life (Boivin, Fountain & Baylis, 2000; Coburn & Treeger, 1997; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner, 2007a;
and Wilder, 1993). Participants in this study indicated the statement, ‘My life has a clear sense of purpose’, was somewhat true of them at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester and reported statistically significantly higher agreement with the same statement in December 2008.

Female participants in this research study reported statistically significantly higher sense of meaning in life and life purpose. Results of this research study suggest the impact of the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on female participants was greater on two measures related to sense of meaning in life, ‘understand my life’s meaning’, and ‘I am always looking to find my life’s purpose’. These findings are consistent with research that links gender to student persistence and degree attainment (Astin, 1975; Astin, Korn & Green, 1987; Peltier, Laden, & Matranga, 1999; and Tinto, 1987). The findings suggest further research is needed to identify opportunities that contribute to higher levels of sense of meaning in life for sophomore men.

The results of this research study suggest the impact of the research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on participants was inconsistent based on race/ethnicity related to satisfaction with the amount of contact with faculty this year. Many studies have identified race/ethnicity as a significant predictor of retention in studies (Astin, 1997; Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999; and Peltier, Laden, & Matranga, 1999). The findings of this study suggest that participation in this community enhanced African-American participants’ satisfaction with faculty contact, a significant result. While the findings of this study cannot be attributed to the
effect of the curriculum and on-campus residence of the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning environment alone, they offer hope for institutions interested in these initiatives.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

The research design for this study included several delimitations. The study was conducted at one institution, a mid-size, public, land-grant institution in the Southeastern United States. Further, the study relied on self-reported data from members of the population. Survey data was collected during the first and last weeks of the Fall 2008 semester and responses may have been influenced by homesickness, exhaustion, and/or final exams.

There were three limitations in this study. The study sample included 77 members of the population (41%); a larger sample may have counterbalanced the statistical non-significance for other questions within the research hypotheses. Because the majority of members of the study population opted into the population itself may or may not be representative of the sophomore population at the research institution. Finally, pre-test scores on the *Sophomore Experiences Survey* (Appendix A) were high on the whole when Likert Scales for each subscale are examined, which allowed little room for statistically significant change on the post-test administration.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Sophomore students have unique developmental needs that, when unmet, may contribute to the growing trend of sophomore attrition. To address these needs, institutions must implement population-specific, evidence-based initiatives (Tobolowsky
& Cox, 2008). The research institution’s sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community addressed: a) issues related to sense of meaning in life via several career development initiatives; b) academic self-efficacy via administration of StrengthsQuest™, counseling and advising related to identified strengths to improve academic and interpersonal confidence, and academic skills workshops; c) satisfaction via focused efforts to afford participants increased opportunities for faculty, peer and community interactions; and, d) commitment to academic majors via targeted career development workshops and programs. Findings of this study suggest these interventions had a positive impact on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction as well as commitment to their academic majors. Based on the results of this study, academic affairs and student affairs practitioners should consider implementing policies and similar programs to better support sophomore student success.

The findings of this dissertation study suggest institutions, in particular the research institution, consider implementing the following policies and programs.

Policies:

- Require all sophomores to live on-campus;
- Require all sophomores to complete StrengthsQuest™ in advance of registering for classes their fourth semester;
- Require academic advisors and career counselor to utilize StrengthsQuest™ results in advising and counseling sessions with sophomores;
• Require sophomore students who attempt to change their major to complete one or more career testing instruments and related counseling to clarify commitment to major and/or life purpose/meaning prior to making change; and,

• Formally recognize faculty service activities in sophomore living-learning communities/residence halls to promote faculty engagement beyond the classroom with sophomore students.

Programs:

• Institutionalize sophomore year experience initiatives and provide clear, consistent and timely messaging about initiatives to sophomores and their families;

• Expand spaces available in sophomore living-learning communities/residence halls;

• Provide academic skills programs in sophomore residence halls/living-learning communities to promote academic self-efficacy;

• Implement sophomore class unifying events to afford sophomores increased opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with their peers;

• Identify meaningful opportunities for faculty engagement in out-of-class activities to promote meaningful relationships, clarification of academic majors, sense of commitment to the institution, and sense of meaning in life/purpose;

• Provide developmental academic advising and personalize career counseling to sophomores to improve satisfaction with advising services and enhance their
understanding of and connection and commitment to academic disciplines and career options;

- Expand engaged learning opportunities to include targeted leadership development and civic engagement for sophomores to enhance sense of meaning in life and connections to peers, faculty, staff and the institution as a whole;

- Incorporate reflection activities into sophomore programs and events, including but not limited to academic advising, career counseling, study abroad, service learning, internship programs, to promote intellectual growth and clarification of sense of meaning in life and purpose; and,

- Identify and promote significant leadership and mentor experiences for sophomores to further develop institutional commitment and meaningful connections with fellow students, faculty and staff.

The findings of this study fill a gap in research on the impact and utility of interventions focused on factors contributing to retention of sophomores and strategies for fully implementing retention programs. While several researchers identified specific needs of sophomores and types of interventions in place to attempt to address these needs, none explored the effect of specific interventions on critical sophomore needs.

This study explored the effect of a sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community on participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and satisfaction with faculty interactions, academic advising, and experiences at the research institution. The intent of this study was to contribute to the understanding of the impact
and utility of sophomore year experience interventions and allow the researcher to
delineate policy and programmatic recommendations for institutional consideration.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides the foundation for several future studies. The findings
indicated that participants in the sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning
community reported enhanced academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life,
satisfaction and commitment to academic major in December 2008. Future studies should
compare change in pre-test and post-test results from study participants with members of
the entire sophomore population, controlling for motivation and other variables that may
impact self-reported scores for these two groups. This type of study will allow
researchers to further isolate the impact of the curriculum of the living-learning
community participants’ sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy, and
satisfaction. Researchers should also investigate the effect of participation in the
sophomore year experience on-campus living-learning community utilizing data collected
for the research institution but not analyzed for this study including the contribution of
involvement in student organizations and/or financial concerns on academic self-efficacy,
meaning in life, and/or satisfaction and, ultimately, persistence.

The nature of quantitative research limited the depth of information collected. A
qualitative follow-up study would allow researchers to investigate how specific
interventions contributed to, or failed to contribute to, sense of meaning in life, academic
self-efficacy and satisfaction. Qualitative information would allow researchers to more
fully describe both the needs of sophomores and how targeted interventions impact their
development. Specifically, for participants who reported a statistically significant change in academic self-efficacy, sense of meaning in life, and/or satisfaction, a qualitative study could explore what factors, both in the living-learning curriculum and beyond the living-learning community, contributed to changes. Additionally, a qualitative study would allow sophomores to help researchers identify new areas of research.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Sophomore Experiences Survey (adapted survey for this study)

In order to better understand the experiences of students in their second year of college, we would like for you to please respond to each of the sections below.

Please rate your agreement with each of the items by using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” (SD) and 5 indicating “strongly agree” (SA).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am confident that the amount of money I’m paying for college is worth it in the long run.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I intend to re-enroll at this institution next year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I enjoy talking to my professors about what I’m learning in class</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I like to learn about myself</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This is the institution I intend to graduate from</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following best describes YOU?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very Untrue Of Me</th>
<th>Very True Of Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I know how to take notes.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I know how to study to perform well on tests.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am good at research and writing papers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am a very good student.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I usually do very well in school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I find academic work interesting and absorbing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am very capable of succeeding at this institution.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To what extent are each of the following statements true of you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Definitely False</th>
<th>Definitely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. I understand my life’s meaning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My life has a clear sense of purpose.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

120
18. I am always looking to find my life’s purpose. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
19. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
20. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
21. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
22. I am seeking a purpose or mission in life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
23. My life has no clear purpose. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
24. I am searching for meaning in life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

For each of the following items, please report how often you have engaged in each activity during your sophomore year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Met with a professor during office hours.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed career plans or goals with a professor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met informally or socially with a faculty member outside of class or office hours.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed academic issues with a faculty member outside of class or office hours.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with your academic advisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate your agreement with each of the items by using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 indicating "very dissatisfied" and 5 indicating "very satisfied".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the amount you are learning in college so far?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with your peers this year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you have had this year.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please respond to the following questions about activities on campus. How involved are you in any of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all Involved</th>
<th>Very Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student organizations on campus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership of student organizations on campus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
37. Fraternity or sorority. 1 2 3 4 5
38. Community service. 1 2 3 4 5
39. Campus events and activities. 1 2 3 4 5
40. Student government. 1 2 3 4 5
41. Peer mentoring or leadership programs. 1 2 3 4 5

Finally, please tell us a little about yourself. Your answers will be grouped with those of other students to help us better understand our students. No individual information will be reported for any reason.

Gender: ___ female ___ male  
Age: ______

Race/ethnicity __ African-American __ American Indian/Alaskan Native  
__ Asian-American/Pacific Islander __ Caucasian/White  
__ Hispanic __ Multiracial

Are you a transfer student ___yes ___no

What is your major? (drop down menu of all CU majors)

42. How sure are you of your major?  
___Very Unsure ___Somewhat Unsure ___Somewhat Sure ___ Very Sure

Have you traveled outside the U.S. since entering college? ___no ___ for two weeks or less ___ for more than two weeks

122
Appendix B

Author Permission to Utilize Sophomore Experiences Survey

-----Original Message-----
From: Laurie Schreiner [mailto:lschreiner@apu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, January 22, 2008 1:00 AM
To: Shannon Finning-Kwoka
Subject: RE: Interest in using National Sophomore Survey for dissertation research

Shannon,
I'm so sorry for the delay in getting back to you on this! Our students have been in residence these past two weeks and everything else in my life gets put on the back burner then.

It's fine for you to use what I am now calling the Sophomore Experiences Survey in your dissertation. You're also welcome to pull out what you'd like to use as the pretest and posttest and ignore the rest :)

The instrument as a whole has a coefficient alpha reliability of .90. The Engaged Learning Index's alpha is .88, the Academic Self-Efficacy scale is .88, the Hope scale is .88, and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire is .72. The faculty interaction scale alpha is .80. As for validity, factor analysis supports each of the scales and the Engaged Learning Index correlates highly with learning satisfaction and successfully discriminates between student populations that have been established in the literature as more and less engaged. If you are particularly interested in the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, you can access validity info about it in an article by its authors (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2005).

Because some of the scales on the survey are based on existing scales in the public domain, there is no charge for using the instrument. Enjoy!

Let me know if you need anything further. Do you need a copy of the instrument?
Best wishes,
Laurie

From: Shannon Finning-Kwoka [mailto:SKWOKA@exchange.clemson.edu]
Sent: Wed 1/9/2008 8:29 PM
To: Laurie Schreiner
Subject: Interest in using National Sophomore Survey for dissertation research

Hi Dr. Schreiner,
Happy New Year! I hope this message finds you well!

I am writing to you, as promised during our conversation at the National Conference on Students in Transition, regarding my dissertation research.

I am in the process of drafting my prospectus for my committee and am interested in exploring use of the National Sophomore Survey instrument as a pre- and post-test measure for sophomores participating in our pilot sophomore year experience living learning community in Fall 2008.

I wanted to ask your opinion about using this instrument as a pre- and post-test measure - I am most interested in ascertaining if students' responses to 'meaning in life' and 'faculty/student interaction' items as these are the focus of the curriculum for this community at present time.

I also wanted to ask if you have information that you can share regarding reliability and validity as well as about cost for this instrument. We have 270 students registered for this community and I would like to administer as both a pre- and post-test instrument.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of these questions and continued support of my efforts. I was so inspired by your keynote address at SIT - thank you for all you do to advance research in this area!

Warmest regards,
Shannon

Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka
Research Assistant
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
Division of Student Affairs
Clemson University
800 University Union
Clemson, SC 29634
(864)508-2135
sfinnin@clemson.edu
Appendix C

Sophomore Experiences Survey (original instrument)

In order to better understand the experiences of students in their second year of college, we would like for you to please respond to each of the sections below.

The college/university you attend (drop-down menu can be created)
Did you transfer here? __ yes ___ no

Please rate your agreement with each of the items by using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43. I am learning a lot in most of my classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I often discuss with my friends what I’m learning in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I regularly participate in class discussions in most of my classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. It’s hard to pay attention in many of my classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something else in my life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. I ask my professors questions during class if I do not understand something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. In the last week, I've been bored in class a lot of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Sometimes I am afraid to participate in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I usually think about how the topics being discussed in class might be connected to things I have learned in previous class periods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Often I find my mind wandering during class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. When I am learning about a new idea in a class, I think about how I might apply it in practical ways.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Sometimes I get so interested in something I'm studying in class that I spend extra time trying to learn more about it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I am confident that the amount of money I'm paying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for college is worth it in the long run.

59. I intend to re-enroll at this institution next year.  

Which of the following best describes YOU?

60. I know how to schedule my time to accomplish tasks.  
   Very Untrue  
   Very True  
   Of Me  
   Of Me

61. I know how to take notes.  
62. I know how to study to perform well on tests.  
63. I am good at research and writing papers.  
64. I am a very good student.  
65. I usually do very well in school.  
66. I find academic work interesting and absorbing.  
67. I am very capable of succeeding at this institution.

To what extent are each of the following statements true of you?

68. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.  
69. I understand my life’s meaning.  
70. I energetically pursue my goals.  
71. My life has a clear sense of purpose.  
72. There are lots of ways around any problem.  
73. I am looking for something that makes my life meaningful.  
74. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.  
75. I've been pretty successful in life.  
76. I am always looking to find my life’s purpose.  
77. I meet the goals that I set for myself.  
78. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.  
79. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.  
80. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.  
81. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.  
82. I am seeking a purpose or mission in life.  
83. My past experiences have prepared me well.
for my future.
85. My life has no clear purpose. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
86. I am searching for meaning in life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Please respond to the following questions about activities on campus. How involved are you in any of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all Involved</th>
<th>Very Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87. Student organizations on campus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88. Leadership of student organizations on campus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89. Fraternity or sorority.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90. Community service.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91. Campus events and activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92. Student government.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93. Peer mentoring or leadership programs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the following items, please report how often you have engaged in each activity during your sophomore year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94. Met with a professor during office hours.</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95. Discussed career plans or goals with a professor.</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96. Met informally or socially with a faculty member outside of class or office hours.</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97. Discussed academic issues with a faculty member outside of class or office hours.</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98. Met with your academic advisor.</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, please tell us a little about yourself. Your answers will be grouped with those of other students to help us understand our students better. No individual information will be reported for any reason.

Are you the first in your immediate family to attend college? ___ yes ___ no

Gender: ___ female ___ male

Age: ______

What is the HIGHEST degree you see yourself obtaining at some point in your life?
___ none ___ bachelor’s ___ teaching credential ___ master’s degree ___ doctorate ___ medical or law degree
Do you live on campus? ___ yes ___ no

Are you a student athlete? ___ yes ___ no

Race/ethnicity ___ African-American ___ American Indian/Alaskan Native ___ Asian-American/Pacific Islander ___ Caucasian/White ___ Hispanic ___ Multiracial

Please insert the number of hours you work per week on ___ and off ___ campus in paid employment.

How sure are you of your major?
___ Very Unsure ___ Somewhat Unsure ___ Somewhat Sure ___ Very Sure

How often have you participated in service learning courses in college?
___ Not at all ___ one course ___ more than one course

Have you participated in a learning community in college? ___ yes ___ no

How many courses have you dropped or withdrawn from since beginning college?
___ none ___ 1 ___ 2-3 ___ 4-5 ___ 6 or more

Have you traveled outside the U.S. since entering college? ___ no ___ for two weeks or less ___ for more than two weeks

How satisfied are you with the amount you are learning in college so far?
___ very dissatisfied ___ dissatisfied ___ neutral ___ satisfied ___ very satisfied

Rate your overall satisfaction with your experiences on this campus so far:
___ very dissatisfied ___ dissatisfied ___ neutral ___ satisfied ___ very satisfied

Rate your satisfaction with the amount of contact you have had with faculty this year:
___ very dissatisfied ___ dissatisfied ___ neutral ___ satisfied ___ very satisfied

Rate your satisfaction with your peers this year:
___ very dissatisfied ___ dissatisfied ___ neutral ___ satisfied ___ very satisfied

Rate your satisfaction with the advising experiences you had this year:
___ very dissatisfied ___ dissatisfied ___ neutral ___ satisfied ___ very satisfied

Compared to your first year of college, has this year been:
___ much worse ___ worse ___ about the same ___ better ___ much better

When you chose to enroll in this institution, was it your first choice? ___ yes ___ no

128
Student ID (if you want to track students or add their GPA and retention info)
Appendix D

History of Living-Learning Communities at the Research Institution

In an interview on April 29, 2008, the associate vice president for student engagement at the research institution provided a detailed history of living-learning communities at the research institution. In her role, she oversees University Housing, New Student and Sophomore Programs and the Office of Community and Ethical Standards in addition to serving as the retention and engagement partner with Academic Affairs. A member of the Division of Student Affairs since 1980, the associate vice president has served as an area coordinator, assistant director, associate director and director in residence life before becoming executive director of university of housing before accepting her current role. Throughout her career at the research institution, she has been highly involved in professional organizations.

Initially, living-learning communities were not referred to as ‘living-learning communities’, but they were deemed ‘first year programs’. Initial planning for the first-year program felt counter-intuitive to members of her staff as they desired to have freshmen men around upper class men, as opposed to living only with other freshmen. Based on the overwhelming success of colleagues at other institutions, detailed at regional and national conferences and in the literature, the institution decided to pilot a freshman-year program in fall 1999. During the pilot program, three floors of a female residence hall and two floors of a male residence hall were designated as first-year program floors. These first-year living experiences offered additional academic-focused programming and first year program mentors for students, in addition to traditional
resident assistants. Initial results on the success of the first year program reflected that the grade point ratio (GPR) differential for freshman participants in the first year program as compared to their counterparts in traditional residence halls was statistically significant. The overwhelming success, based on GPR and then retention made the senior administration encourage University Housing to change how they ‘did housing’ for freshmen.

Until the pilot first year program in 1999, freshman housing was ‘de facto’ housing. On-campus housing assignments were made based on seniority so freshmen often were placed in the least desirable spaces which made programming for this population difficult. Following the success of the pilot program, University Housing designated particular halls as ‘freshman halls’ and were able to accommodate 80-85% of freshmen, other than athletes or other students who requested alternative campus housing, in these halls. The University Housing staff, particularly the residence life staff, worked successfully to make first year programs, later named ‘living-learning communities’ work. From the inception of the pilot program, University Housing believed that faculty ‘buy-in’ for programs was needed for them to truly be successful. Staff worked to pique faculty interest in living-learning communities. Resident assistants were encouraged to offer ‘in-house’ programming featuring faculty including ‘fireside chats,’ but these efforts were met with limited faculty interest. Housing provided peer mentors, study rooms, and blocked sections of the freshman seminar program to students in living-learning communities, but many efforts seemed superficial to housing staff, simply a ‘step-up’ from theme housing. Yet, students in living-learning communities continued to
outperform peers who did not participate in living-learning communities in terms of GPR and retention. Division leaders in student affairs and university housing reached out to academic deans and associate deans to try to solidify partnerships for living-learning communities, but efforts were less than successful, until two faculty members suggested a living-learning community on their own volition.

Concurrently, two faculty members, one in Engineering, and one in Business, approached the housing office staff to discuss opportunities for living-learning communities. From this meeting, an interdisciplinary living-learning community, First Class, was born. Students from the colleges of business and behavioral science and engineering were able to live and take academic classes together. In their final freshman seminar project, they were required to work in cross-disciplinary teams to design and market a toy. This community was highly successful for a number of years, as measured by GPR and retention, much because of the investment of the two faculty members. Over time, the living-learning community morphed to meet the changing needs of students and now business offers a dedicated living-learning community for their students while engineering has focused efforts on Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) and Residents in Science and Engineering (RISE).

When asked about the most successful living-learning communities at the research institution, the associate vice president quickly highlighted three programs: a) First Class; b) Civics and Service House; and c) Women in Animal and Veterinary Science (WAVES). As detailed previously, First Class was the first interdisciplinary
living-learning community born of faculty inspiration and commitment. This commitment cannot be underestimated or duplicated.

The Civics and Service house is interdisciplinary in the truest sense. The community is focused on making the world a better place. Community members understand the value of service and community membership and want to define their lives outside of class by service. This living-learning community has strong academic leadership and has been a strong program since its inception. It is highly selective, students must apply to be members of the community and is a mutually-beneficial partnership of academic and student affairs. WAVES is the most recent addition to living-learning communities at the research institution and is based on the premise of WISE. Again, this community features strong leadership from academic affairs via academic advisors in these disciplines.
### Appendix E

**SophoMORE Be MORE Calendar of the Year (2008 – 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Random Exploration</th>
<th>Focused Exploration</th>
<th>Tentative Choices</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Nov/Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training on each module</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>Unifying Social Event</td>
<td>RA 1:1 Meetings w/residents (assigned topic: General check in and SYE, Introduction to the academic success plan)</td>
<td>Administer Sophomore Experiences Survey (December 1 - 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>Exploring Careers/Majors (presented by MCC)</td>
<td>Study Abroad Fair walk-over</td>
<td>Introduction to domestic &amp; international Internships (MCC), study abroad, CCINT and Co-op (locate presenters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Administer Strengths Instrument (early Sept)</td>
<td>RA 1:1 Meetings w/residents (assigned topic: Using Strengths in daily life)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising &amp; Faculty Connections</td>
<td>Academic Success Workshop (Casey &amp; Elaine)</td>
<td>Large Scale Event with Faculty Invites (Goal of informal knowing as individuals but within structure)</td>
<td>Finding a “fit” with advising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

188 students, 5 RA’s working a total of 100 hours per week

1Gray cells are activities this study will investigate
Appendix F

Learning Outcomes of the SophoMORE Be MORE Living-Learning Community

Learning outcomes for the living-learning community are as follows:

A) Community Development Learning Outcomes: 1) Students will become a functioning and successful member of the SophoMORE Be MORE community. Students will meet several residents in their building and will form meaningful relationships with at least 5 members of their building. Students will attend kick-off functions at the beginning of each semester to meet all/other members of the community. Students will learn and operate within community standards. 2) Students will self-identify at least one peer group in which they can be/are involved that supports their educational success plan. Students will learn about several organizations on campus as well as opportunities for involvement. Students will become involved in at least one student run organization. Students will explore supplemental instruction opportunities. Students will form one study group per semester.

B) Strengths Identification via StrengthsQuest™: 1) Seventy-five percent of participants in the SophoMORE Be MORE living learning community will be able to detail three or more strengths indentified in their October one-on-one meeting with their Resident Assistant. 2) Seventy-five percent of participants in the SophoMORE Be MORE living learning community will be able to articulate how they will use these strengths in academic advising/career planning activities in their October one-on-one meeting with their RA.
C) Career Development: 1) As a result of participating in the *Exploring Careers/Majors Workshop*, students will be able to articulate realistic self-appraisal based on assessments of values, skills and abilities. Seventy-five percent of participants who complete a Discover Inventory will demonstrate an understanding of their interests, skills and work values by identifying their Holland Code. Seventy-five percent of the participants will be able to demonstrate an understanding of their interests, skills and work values by choosing potential career areas and majors that fit within this Holland Code. Seventy-five percent of the participants will articulate their work values and how their values affect their career choice. 2) As a result of participating in the *Introduction to Domestic and International Internships Workshop* students will learn how to find an internship and how this experience will benefit them. Seventy-five percent of the workshop participants will be able to identify two Career Center resources to find internships. Seventy-five percent of the workshop participants will be able to identify 2 benefits that can be gained by completing an internship.

D) Academic Support and Advising: 1) By the end of the Spring Semester, seventy-five percent of community members will relay via survey that they: a) Can name their academic advisor – the person that student would ask questions about classes and curriculum. b) Have created short term (next semester) and long term (through graduation) academic plans, with input from academic advisor. c) Know where to find Gen Ed competencies (Undergraduate Announcements). d) Can use Blackboard to create electronic portfolio(s) and tag Gen Ed
competencies. e) Understand the concept of Creative Inquiry and know online resource to find potential mentor.
Appendix G

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

From: Rebecca Alley [mailto:RALLEY@exchange.clemson.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2008 3:42 PM
To: havice@CLEMSON.EDU
Cc: sfinnin@CLEMSON.EDU
Subject: Your IRB protocol # IRB2008-122, entitled "The effect of a sophomores-only living learning community..."

Dear Dr. Havice:

The Chair of the Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your proposed amendment to the protocol identified above using Exempt review procedures. A determination was made on April 25, 2008 that the proposed activities involving human participants continue to qualify as Exempt from continuing review under Category 1, based on the Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46). You may begin to implement this amendment.

Please remember that no change in this research proposal can be initiated without prior review by the IRB. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) immediately. Please notify the ORC when your study is completed or terminated.

Good luck with your study and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Rebecca L. Alley, J.D.
IRB Coordinator
Office of Research Compliance
Clemson University
223 Brackett Hall
Clemson, SC 29634-5704
ralley@clemson.edu
Office Phone: 864-656-0636
Fax: 864-656-4475

From: Daniel Harris [mailto:DHARRI2@exchange.clemson.edu]
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2008 8:43 AM
To: sfinnin@CLEMSON.EDU
Subject: Validation of IRB application #IRB2008-122 "The effect of a sophomores-only living learning community..."
Ms. Finning-Kwoka,
The Chair of the Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) validated the proposal identified above using Exempt review procedures and a determination was made on April 9, 2008 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt from continuing review under Category 1 based on the Federal Regulations. You may begin this study.

Please remember that no change in this research proposal can be initiated without prior review by the IRB. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately. The Principal Investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of validated protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) if your study is completed or terminated.

Attached are documents developed by Clemson University regarding the responsibilities of Principal Investigators and Research Team Members. Please be sure these are distributed to all appropriate parties.

Good Luck with your study and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Daniel Harris
IT Coordinator
Office of Research Compliance
223 Brackett Hall
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-5704
dharri2@clemson.edu
Phone: 864-656-1450
Fax: 864-656-4475
www.clemson.edu/research/orcSite/indexComply.htm
Appendix H

Invitation to Participate in Study

Sender: Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka

Subject line: Request to Participate in Sophomore Experiences Survey

Dear Student Name,

I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study titled “The effect of a sophomores-only living learning community on participants' sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction”. The purpose of this study is to compare your sense of meaning in life, satisfaction at Clemson University and confidence in academic abilities at the beginning and end of your fall 2008 involvement in the SophoMORE Be MORE living-learning community. Data may be used by different departments to improve the quality of the education, programs and services offered by Clemson. We are conducting the survey among participants in the SophoMORE Be MORE living learning community only.

This study involves completing an online questionnaire. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, such that refusal to participate will not involve penalty or loss of benefits. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Completion of the survey will take approximately 15 minutes and all information collected will be kept confidential. Data will be maintained on a secure website or computer that is password protected.

There are no known risks associated with this project. You will receive no direct benefit from participation, however the result of this research and your participation may be of significant value to the Clemson community.

All collected data will be stored on password-protected computer servers. Presentations or publications of the study will be based on grouped data and will not reveal your identity.

When you are ready to complete the survey, either click on the link below or copy and paste it into your Web browser.

To participate in the survey, please go to: INSERT WEB LINK

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Shannon Finning-Kwoka at Clemson University at 864.508-2135. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864.656.6460.
Thank you very much for helping with this important study.

Sincerely,

Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka
Clemson University, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership (Higher Education)
Appendix I

Reminder Email Inviting Students to Participate in Study

Sender: Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka
Subject line: Request to Participate in Sophomore Experiences Survey

Dear Student Name,

Last week I sent you an e-mail inviting you to participate my dissertation research study titled “The effect of a sophomores-only living learning community on participants' sense of meaning in life, academic self-efficacy and satisfaction”. The purpose of this study is to compare your sense of meaning in life, satisfaction at Clemson University and confidence in academic abilities at the beginning and end of your fall 2008 involvement in the SophoMORE Be MORE living-learning community. If you have already completed the survey, please accept our sincere thanks. If you intend to complete the survey, please do so in the next day or two. When you are ready to complete the survey, either click on the link below or copy and paste it into your Web browser.

INSERT WEB LINK

I am especially grateful for your help with this important study.

Sincerely,

Shannon M. Finning-Kwoka
Clemson University, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership (Higher Education)
REFERENCES


Nora, A. (2002). The depiction of significant others in Tinto’s “Rites of Passage”: A reconceptualization of the influence of family and community in the persistence process. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 3*, 41-56.


