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An Examination of Academic Advising: How Satisfaction and Frequency of Advising Predict Degree Commitment Among Hispanic/Latino Students in Online Bachelor's Degree Programs

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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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Date 10 / 31 / 2022

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School of Educational Leadership

An Examination of Academic Advising: How Satisfaction and Frequency of Advising Predict Degree Commitment Among Hispanic/Latino Students in Online Bachelor's Degree Programs

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Shayne A. Futujma

November 2022

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Alexander Futujma. Daddy, your love and encouragement pushed me further in my education than I ever thought possible. Although you are no longer on this earth to witness my accomplishments, I know you are watching me from heaven. I love you, always and forever.

Acknowledgments

Dr. Sims: We have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly together during this process. You have been my support and my shoulder to cry on many times. I can never thank you enough for everything you have taught me. You are a beautiful, strong person, and it has been such a blessing to have you as my dissertation chair. When we began working together, you always told me, “How do you eat a dinosaur? One chunk at a time.” Well, Dr. Sims, I think I am officially full. Thank you for everything!

Dr. KK: Thank you for pushing me further than I ever thought I could go. When I thought I had given my best, you showed me that I still had better to give. Thank you for expecting nothing but my best work!

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Justin: I owe you so much for putting up with me throughout this process. I think you’ve had to listen to me cry and complain more than anyone. It has been a rough journey, but we finally made it. I love you, sugar!

Chloe: I would never have made it through my first year of college without you. You are living proof that campus connections can impact persistence decisions!

To my friends and family, thank you for your love and support! I feel like the wealthiest person in the world, knowing that I have such wonderful people in my life. I love you all!

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Abstract

Hispanic/Latino student enrollment in higher education has increased in recent years. However, persistence and dropout rates in higher education for Hispanic/Latino students are still an issue of great concern. Online degree programs are also on the rise, allowing some Hispanic/Latino students to attend college where there was no opportunity before. Although online programs are an excellent option for Hispanic/Latino students, their persistence and dropping out are also a concern, because Hispanic/Latino students are more likely to drop out of online courses than face-to-face. One of the resources that college students have access to is academic advisors, who serve as a source of support and encouragement. Therefore, it was essential to understand how interactions between Hispanic/Latino students and academic advisors influence persistence decisions when attending online undergraduate degree programs. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising appointments predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. A purposive sample of 87 participants completed online surveys. The results indicated that satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising appointments statistically significantly predicted degree commitment. These findings are significant to the field of academic advising and provide a greater understanding of how valuable academic advising services are in higher education.

Keywords: Hispanic, Latino, online programs, academic advising, undergraduate

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States is increasing, so is the number of Hispanics/Latinos enrolling in higher education institutions. Between the fall of 1976 and the fall of 2015, enrollment of Hispanic students in higher education rose from 4% to 17% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Between 2000 and 2017, Hispanic student enrollment at undergraduate degree-granting institutions saw a 14% increase (McFarland et al., 2019). These statistics are encouraging as Hispanic/Latino student enrollment continues to grow. One possible explanation for amplified Hispanic/Latino student enrollment in recent years is the growing availability of online courses (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Between 2003 and 2016, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in at least one online course rose from 13.4% to 38.4% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Jaggars (2014) found that students preferred online courses over face-to-face courses because of the "flexibility, convenience, and time efficiency" and "learning and interaction preferences" (p. 30).

Additionally, Kaupp (2012) reported that family, job, and personal responsibilities made it difficult for Latino students to enroll in face-to-face courses. The flexibility of online classes allowed Latino students to attend classes and maintain nonacademic responsibilities (Kaupp, 2012). Although online programs allow more Hispanic/Latino students to attend college, it is crucial to understand what factors impact Hispanic/Latino student persistence online.

Persistence is defined as "continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution" (National Student Clearinghouse, 2018, p. 11). According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2018), 73.9% of all students who started at an institution of higher education in the fall of 2016 persisted to the following fall of 2017. Among Hispanic students who started at an institution of higher education in the fall of 2016, 70.7% persisted to the

following fall of 2017 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2018). Why some Hispanic/Latino students persist, and others drop out is a continuing topic of great concern among higher education institutions and administrators. Current research studies of traditional, undergraduate two-year and four-year programs found many reasons Hispanic/Latino students do not persist. Some of these reasons include family responsibilities (Heredia et al., 2018; Saenz et al., 2018; Witkow et al., 2015), financial need (McDonough et al., 2015; Murphy & Murphy, 2018), feeling excluded on campus (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015; Ballinas, 2017; Pyne & Means, 2013), and experiences of racial microaggressions (Ballinas, 2017; Ellis et al., 2018; Hall, 2017; Hernandez & Villodas, 2018).

There are undesirable outcomes for Hispanic/Latino students who do not persist and leave higher education before degree completion. As Murphy and Murphy (2018) pointed out, Latinos that do not hold a bachelor's degree are more likely to experience negative consequences related to social and economic well-being. Social and economic well-being are equivalent to benefits received from gaining wealth (Robles, 2009). As Robles (2009) explained, a lack of education leads to employment that does not provide a living wage or advancement opportunities, making it impossible to accumulate wealth. The median annual earnings of Hispanics differ drastically based on educational attainment. Among Hispanics that held a bachelor's degree, the median annual earnings were $49,400 compared to $34,900 for Hispanics who held an associate's degree, $29,100 for Hispanics that completed high school, and $25,000 for Hispanics who completed less than high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a). Therefore, when Hispanic/Latino students leave higher education without a bachelor's degree, it negatively impacts their economic future. Additionally, Millea et al. (2018) pointed out that students leaving higher education before graduation experience "unrealized potential and

lower earnings over their working careers" (p. 309), thus, contributing to the potential adverse outcomes described by Murphy and Murphy (2018) and Robles (2009). Although research exists to understand why Hispanic/Latino students do not persist to bachelor's degree completion, it is an important topic worthy of further exploration.

Statement of the Problem

Among undergraduate students attending community college and trade programs in Washington State, Xu and Jaggars (2014) found that ethnic minorities (which included Hispanics) were less likely to persist to course completion when taking courses online. Similarly, Latino community college students in California who enrolled in online classes were twice as likely to withdraw than Latino students enrolled in face-to-face courses (Kaupp, 2012). Support systems such as institutional agents, family, and peers are essential to students' persistence in online programs. Institutional agents are individuals within an institution who have the status and authority to access available resources within their institution (McCallen & Johnson, 2019). Such agents include academic advisors, which provide students with knowledge and direction about academic and personal matters (Kuhn, 2008).

In online programs, researchers found that support systems positively impacted persistence. Beck and Milligan (2014) reported that effective academic advising and advisors are related to persistence among online students. Additionally, Heyman (2010) identified that continuous support from the institution impacts online students' persistence. Hart (2012) called for further research to understand how different support methods "strengthen the phenomenon of persistence for the online student" (p. 39). With the continued growth of online programs, Arbelo et al. (2019) and Johnson and Galy (2013) supported the need for further research to explore persistence among Hispanic/Latino students in online programs. Based on the recommendations

of Arbelo et al. (2019), Hart (2012), and Johnson and Galy (2013), further research is necessary to examine how interactions between Hispanic/Latino students and academic advisors influence persistence decisions when attending online undergraduate degree programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. Based on this study's findings, higher education institutions would better understand how academic advising methods impact Hispanic/Latino degree commitment in online programs. The following question guided this research study:

Research Question

RQ1: How do satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs?

H_0: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are not predictive of Hispanic/Latino student's degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

H_1: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are predictive of Hispanic/Latino degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic advising. The process of providing knowledge and information to student populations, which contributes to the successful navigation of higher education (Larson et al., 2018).

Attrition. Attrition occurs when one or more students leave higher education (i.e., drop out). Attrition is directly related to retention (Hagedorn, 2006).

Dropping out. Dropping out occurs when a student leaves higher education before degree completion (Hagedorn, 2006).

Hispanic/Latino. The terms Hispanic or Latino define "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (United States Census Bureau, 2018, para. 1).

Hispanic serving institution (HSI). A college or university with a total enrollment population of at least 25% Hispanic (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d.).

Online degree program. An online degree program is offered using the Internet and other web-based programming or software (Meyer, 2014).

Persistence. Persistence occurs when a student enrolls in the subsequent term or continues enrollment through degree completion. Persistence does not require a student to remain enrolled at the same higher education institution (Hagedorn, 2006).

Retention. Retention occurs when a student enrolls in the subsequent term or continues enrollment through degree completion. Retention requires that a student maintain enrollment at the same institution of higher education (Hagedorn, 2006).

Summary

Hispanic/Latino student enrollment in higher education continues to grow **(**National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Additionally, more Hispanic/Latino students enroll in online courses (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Compared to classroom instruction, all students, including ethnic students, are more likely to drop out of online courses (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). This study will help us understand how to increase academic persistence in online programs among Hispanic/Latino students through academic advising. The following

chapter reviews the existing literature, focusing on Hispanic/Latino students, online programs, academic advising, and persistence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As the population of Hispanics/Latinos continues to grow in the United States, so does the number of Hispanic/Latino students enrolled at higher education institutions. Thus, there is a continuing need for higher education institutions to understand Hispanic/Latino students' needs and work together to ensure persistence and academic success (Elliott & Parks, 2018). I begin the literature review by defining the term Hispanic/Latino and briefly discussing recent demographic trends of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States and Texas, where I conducted the study. Second, I define and describe online programs. Next, I define academic advising and provide a brief history. As an essential part of academic advising, I also explain, discuss, and analyze the two prominent academic advising approaches—prescriptive and developmental academic advising. Then I analyze and discuss current literature on academic advising in online programs and academic advising Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. Finally, I define persistence, discuss relevant theory, analyze current persistence literature, and discuss how academic advising affects online undergraduate persistence.

Literature Search Methods

I conducted a thorough search using the Abilene Christian University online library database and Google Scholar to find scholarly, peer-reviewed literature related to the current study. Search terms included *online, distance education, persistence, Hispanic students, Latino/a students, academic advisor, academic advising,* and other variations. I also reviewed the references and works cited in relevant scholarly peer-reviewed articles to locate additional literature associated with the current study's subjects.

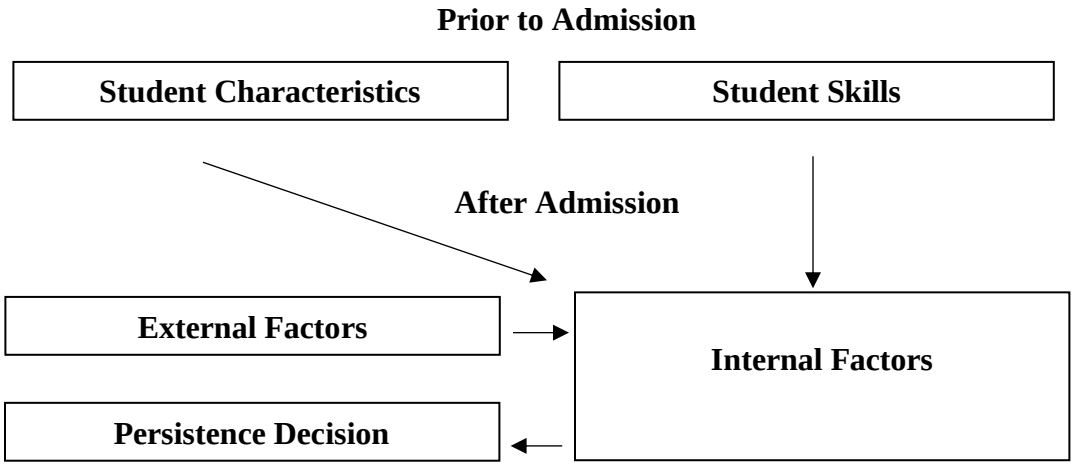
Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the current study is to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. I chose the composite persistence model as the framework for the current study because it explains the persistence decisions of students enrolled in distance education and online programs (Rovai, 2003). The composite persistence model focuses on factors prior to admission—characteristics and skills—and after admission—external and internal—impacting the student's persistence decision. Prior to admission, factors such as ethnicity and computer/information literacy can contribute to persistence decisions. After admission, prior to admission (ethnicity and computer/information literacy) and internal factors, such as academic advising and accessibility to services (i.e., the ability to access campus-based recourses/services while attending classes online), combine to influence the student's decision to persist or drop out. Figure 1 provides an overview of the composite persistence model.

For the current study, I only focused on the following factors: ethnicity, advising (i.e., satisfaction and frequency), and degree commitment (i.e., a student's persistence decision). Figure 2 provides an example of the relationship between ethnicity, satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising, and degree commitment in the current study.

Figure 1

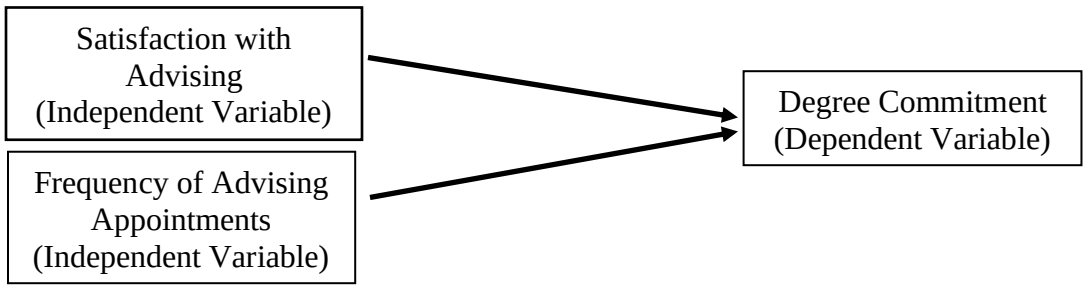
Composite Persistence Model



Note. Basic components of the composite persistence model. Adapted from "In Search of Higher Persistence Rates in Distance Education Online Programs" by Alfred P. Rovai, 2003, *The Internet and Higher Education*, *6*(1), p. 9. Copyright 2003 by Elsevier. Adapted with permission (Appendix A).

Figure 2

Relationship Between Variables in the Current Study



As a prior to admission factor, ethnicity is especially crucial to the current study, as it sought to understand persistence among Hispanic/Latino students. As students navigate through higher education, their experiences with various factors lead the student toward the decision to

persist or drop out. After admission, understanding a student's experiences (positive or negative) with advising, feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the institution, institutional commitment/noncommitment, and ability to access student services while attending online (i.e., advising) are imperative to the current study, which sought to examine how academic advising effects the persistence decisions of students enrolled in an online bachelor's degree program. The combination of prior to admission and after admission factors that form the composite persistence model provides a relevant framework that guides the current study. Based on the factors presented in the composite persistence model, I can focus the current study on how satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising impact degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students in an online bachelor's degree program.

Hispanic/Latino Students

As the number of Hispanic/Latino students in higher education continues to grow, institutions must understand this growing student population. The United States Census Bureau (2018) defined the terms *Hispanic* or *Latino* as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (para. 1). Jones-Correa and Leal (1996) described the importance of understanding this diverse group of individuals, stating that

> when the terms Latino and Hispanic are used, more is implied than simply a common origin. There is the assumption that those sharing this origin share other commonalities as well: as shared experience of discrimination or perhaps common health maladies or a linguistic base. It is one thing, however, to use these terms descriptively to talk about a population with origins in a geographic area and another to assume that this population shares certain characteristics, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. (pp. 214–215)

Because the current study focused on Hispanic/Latino students attending higher education institutions in Texas, it is vital to understand Texas's Hispanic/Latino population. Of the top eight states with the highest number of Hispanic/Latino residents, Texas had the second-highest Hispanic/Latino population in the United States, with 9.5 million (19%); California was first, with 14 million (28%; Ennis et al., 2011). The second and sixth-highest Hispanic/Latino populations (236,091 and 649,121) are in South and West Texas towns, home to two higher education institutions selected for the current study. Among Hispanics/Latinos living in Texas, the top two countries of origin identified were Mexico (8 million) and El Salvador (223,000) (Ennis et al., 2011).

One of the most significant reasons students enroll in online courses is the flexibility online courses provide (Jaggars, 2014; Kaupp, 2012). Flexibility is crucial for Hispanic/Latino students attending online programs because it allows them to work, take care of family, and concentrate on personal matters while attending classes (Kaupp, 2012).

Online Programs

Among the literature, many terms identify online programs (Meyer, 2014). For example, distance education, web-based learning, e-learning, and online education are just a few (Meyer, 2014). Meyer (2014) defined online learning as a "fully online course that has been designed to be offered over the Internet and uses web-based materials and activities (grading, discussions) made possible by various course management systems or other software packages" (p. 6). Similarly, Allen and Seaman (2017) defined distance education as "education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously" (p. 6). For this study, I used the definition of online learning described by

Meyer (2014) because of its use of the term *fully online* and wide-ranging overview of online instruction methods.

As many students enroll in online programs, it is essential to separate fact from fiction. Allen and Seaman (2007) identified several falsehoods of online programs, or *urban myths* as they termed them:

> Online courses can be perceived as poorer quality; students are not as satisfied in an online course; faculty do not accept or value online instruction; students do not want online instruction, they would prefer a face-to-face course; it takes more time and effort for faculty to teach an online course; it is harder to evaluate an online course than a face-to-face course; students require more discipline to complete online courses; online learning is just a flash in the pan-—it will not be around for the long term. (p. 134)

Thirteen years later, online learning is thriving, although new myths exist. Most recently, Flavin (2019) identified and debunked a myth claiming that online students cannot build networks—connections with classmates, faculty, or advisors. The following section defines academic advising and its approaches. Then I provide an analysis and discussion of the current literature on academic advising in online programs and advising Hispanic/Latino students in online programs.

Academic Advising

Throughout the current academic advising literature, a universal definition of academic advising does not exist (Larson et al., 2018). Kuhn (2008) defined the practice of academic advising as the interaction between an institution and a student to provide guidance on academic and personal matters. In contrast, O'Banion (2013) described the purpose of academic advising as helping students with academic program selection relative to personal and occupational goals.

Larson et al. (2018) took a different approach and worked to craft a definition of academic advising using analytic induction. Larson et al. (2018) surveyed 72 individuals who work in the academic advising field and analyzed responses to construct a representative academic advising definition. Based on participant responses, Larson et al. (2018) crafted the following definition of academic advising: "Academic advising applies knowledge of the field to empower students and campus and community members to successfully navigate academic interactions related to higher education" (p. 85). Unlike other definitions, Larson et al. (2018) focused on the many facets of helping students navigate higher education rather than focusing on one or two aspects.

Both Kuhn (2008) and O'Banion (2013) described academic advising as guiding and helping students navigate their academic, career, and personal goals, which is the cornerstone of academic advising. However, Larson et al. (2018) went one step further by adding the word *empower.* Therefore, academic advising provides guidance and support. Still, it also gives the student, the campus, and the community power to navigate the various ups and downs in higher education and outside. Thus, I support Larson et al.'s (2018) definition of academic advising because it not only provides a holistic view, it empowers or provides students with the confidence and growing ability to navigate through academic, personal, and professional systems.

History of Academic Advising

Academic advising is a concept steeped in history, although its current look, feel, and purpose are far different from its humble beginnings (Frost, 2000; Kuhn, 2008). Although academic advising as a profession does not date back to higher education's early origins, it is essential to understand its evolution. Frost (2000) identified three periods relative to the history of academic advising. Those periods are higher education before academic advising was defined,

academic advising as a defined and unexamined activity, and academic advising as a defined and examined activity.

The first academic advising period that Frost (2000) described was higher education before academic advising was defined (1636 to 1870). During this period, America saw its first higher education institutions, one of which was Harvard. Unlike today's institutions, the first American colleges and universities did not have professional, administrative, or other support staff (Kuhn, 2008). The college or university president and faculty's role was to advise students on academic, intellectual, moral, and extracurricular matters (Cook, 2009; Kuhn, 2008). However, tensions grew between students and faculty as colleges and universities began to evolve (Frost, 2000). The second academic advising period that Frost (2000) described was academic advising as a defined and unexamined activity (1870 to 1970). Before academic advising was a defined activity, student and faculty tensions grew (Frost, 2000). In response to increasing pressures, some colleges and universities attempted to bridge the gap between students and faculty (Frost, 2000), while others sought new opportunities for student advisement methods (Kuhn, 2008). At this time, the term *student personnel* became associated with academic advising (Cook, 2009; Frost, 2000; Kuhn, 2008) as the American Council on Education defined a philosophy of student personnel programs, including advising services (Kuhn, 2008).

The final academic advising period that Frost (2000) discussed was academic advising as a defined and examined activity (1970 to present). According to Frost (2000), "by the late 1970s, academic advising had begun to resemble an organized profession" (p. 11). Solidifying the academic advising profession was the introduction of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in 1979 (Cook, 2009; Frost, 2000; Kuhn, 2008).

Although the late 1970s brought about monumental changes in academic advising, research articles in the early 1970s by authors, such as Crookston (1972), O'Banion, and others, described prescriptive and developmental advising approaches, which are still used in academic advising today. The following section provides a brief description of both prescriptive and developmental advising approaches and an examination of current advising literature.

Academic Advising Approaches

Prescriptive academic advising focuses on providing and distributing information related to institutional policy and procedure to students (Drake, 2015). Rather than focusing on a student's long-term needs and goals, prescriptive academic advisors focus on the here and now (Jeschke et al., 2001). Crookston (1972, 2009) referred to prescriptive advising as the traditional academic advisor/student relationship and compared it to a doctor and patient. In the simplest terms, Barbuto et al. (2011) described prescriptive advising as the advisor telling the student what to do. This relationship usually consists of the academic advisor assisting with course selection and registration (Harris, 2018).

Developmental advising moves away from the rigid structure of prescriptive advising by focusing on the whole student. According to Grites (2013), developmental academic advising is holistic, based on student growth and success, and is a shared activity. Furthermore, developmental advising is an approach that is fundamental to academic advising because it "enables academic advisors to accept each student . . . and assist each one in the coordination of a variety of experiences that results in the design of the most rewarding college experience" (Grites, 2013, p. 5). Although Crookston established the developmental advising approach over 50 years ago, its student-centered nature is still relevant to today's student populations (Gordon, 1994, 2019). As Crookston (1972, 2009) describes, developmental advising not only focuses on

personal and professional goals, but also “the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills” (p. 78).

Among the literature, opinions and findings differ between which academic advising method is superior—developmental or prescriptive. Research suggests that students more often receive and prefer developmental academic advising over prescriptive advising. Among first-year students, 87% received developmental advising, while only 13% received prescriptive advising (Harris, 2018). Cheung et al. (2017) also found that many students sought advisement from the central advising office rather than an advisor within their field of study because the central advising office used developmental advising practices. Interestingly, Eduljee and Michaud (2014) found that most students (91.2%) met with academic advisors for prescriptive advising (i.e., class selection and registration) but perceived academic advising as developmental (i.e., the academic advisor is respectful, caring, and encouraging).

The preferred advising method also differs among student characteristics such as age, classification, gender, and GPA (Byrd & Kerns, 2019; Christian & Sprinkle, 2013). Among age groups, Christian and Sprinkle (2013) found that more senior students preferred a collaborative (developmental) approach to advising, while younger students preferred a prescriptive approach, focusing more on course selection than collaboration. Conversely, Byrd and Kerns (2019) found that all students, freshmen through seniors, preferred developmental advising. However, freshman students reported receiving a lower level of developmental advising, closer to a prescriptive style.

Gender differences in academic advising preferences also exist. Researchers found that many female students preferred developmental advising (Byrd & Kerns, 2019), while male

students preferred prescriptive advising (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013). Male students were less interested in a collaborative (developmental) approach or receiving motivation and individualized advising than their female counterparts (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013). Another factor influencing academic advising preference is GPA, although research findings vary. Christian and Sprinkle (2013) found that students with a higher GPA preferred prescriptive advising, while Byrd and Kerns (2019) found that students with a higher GPA preferred developmental advising.

Based on the literature, student preferences between prescriptive and developmental academic advising approaches differ. Thus, the academic advisor must recognize the student's needs and expectations and match the appropriate academic advising method to those needs and expectations (Anderson et al., 2014). As Anderson et al. (2014) found, the academic advisor must match the student's expectations to the academic advising approach. In other words, if a student expects prescriptive advising, the academic advisor should tailor their advising approach to that student; no one method is best for every student. However, how do students understand or distinguish the differences between prescriptive and developmental advising unless prompted? As Teasley and Buchanan (2013) discovered when developing a standardized academic advising scale, "even though original research indicated that three subscales of perceptions (developmental, prescriptive, advisor traits) would aptly measure advising, undergraduates apparently lump many of these facets of advising together" (p. 12).

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. After reviewing the literature on prescriptive and developmental advising, I plan to support Teasley and

Buchanan's (2013) stance and not focus on one advising method over the other. Instead, I will focus on academic advising in general terms as a mixture of both prescriptive and developmental approaches.

Academic Advising in Online Programs

Much like students of face-to-face degree programs, online students need access to academic advising services (Raphael, 2006). Raphael (2006) found that two of the top-five-needed student services of online learners were related to academic advising. These two needs were "clear, complete, and timely information regarding curriculum requirements" and "access to individual academic advising" (para. 16). Raphael (2006) attributed robust academic advising services to online student success, and without it, online students would struggle. Therefore, it is essential to recognize what constitutes appropriate academic advising services for online students.

Based on the literature, students enrolled in online degree programs need academic advising services (Burns et al., 2019; Cross, 2018; Gravel, 2012; Milman et al., 2015; Raphael, 2006; Schroeder & Terras, 2015). Academic advising services provided to online students offer both prescriptive and developmental advising approaches (Burns et al., 2019; Gravel, 2012; Raphael, 2006). In other words, online students sought academic advising for registration and administrative purposes and gained a personal connection and relationship with their academic advisor (Burns et al., 2019; Cross, 2018; Raphael, 2006; Schroeder & Terras, 2015). An essential finding in the literature is that of online student's expectation of timely, prompt, and almost immediate responses to inquiries from the academic advisor (Cross, 2018; Raphael, 2006; Schroeder & Terras, 2015), which differed from students enrolled in a classroom and cohort program (Schroeder & Terras, 2015). Burns et al. (2019), Cross (2018), and Gravel (2012)

identified a need for further research related to the academic advising of online students. More specifically, Burns et al. (2019) suggested further research to examine the "unique needs" of students enrolled in online programs (p. 382). The current study focuses not only on online programs but also on Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. Therefore, the existing literature and its implications for further research support the current study.

Advising Hispanic/Latino Students in Online Programs

Remarkably, even with the large Hispanic/Latino population, I could not find substantial amounts of literature related to advising Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. I searched current, 2013–2020 full-text, peer-reviewed articles through the Abilene Christian University online library, including numerous databases, such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. I used the following search terms to locate articles related to this study, which included the following: *academic advising* and *Hispanic* or *Latino* and *online*. The search yielded 85,170 results. I also searched using the same criteria through Google Scholar. The search yielded 2,610 results. Although both searches yielded significant results, I could not locate articles that included all three search terms, making it challenging to examine the current literature on advising Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. However, I could locate several articles related to academic advising and online programs using the search terms *academic advising* and *online.* The search yielded 2,945 results. I quickly reviewed the results and narrowed down articles that only included the two search terms. Then, I searched each article for the words *Hispanic* or *Latino*, which resulted in several studies that included Hispanic or Latino students in the research sample.

One of the studies I found was conducted by Gravel (2012). Gravel (2012) concluded that one of the study's limitations was the small sample size compared to the large number of

students enrolled in online programs. Furthermore, Gravel (2012) expressed the need for effective academic advising programs and further research on student-advisor interactions in online programs. Based on my difficulty locating research studies related to academic advising in online programs, I support Gravel's (2012) assertions. Additionally, I found a study by Milman et al. (2015), which included a small sample of Hispanic/Latino students (9.4%). Although Milman et al. (2015) analyzed racial differences between specific categories, the researchers failed to examine academic advising. As a recommendation for further research Milman et al. (2015) recommended stratification of data to include further analysis of demographic differences. I support Milman et al.'s (2015) recommendation and agree that additional research is necessary to focus on ethnic disparities related to academic advising in online programs.

When discussing academic support services, which include academic advising, Milman et al. (2015) explained that "services may be critical to retaining students with distinctive support needs and those who are at risk for academic or personal reasons" (p. 61). Hispanic/Latino students in higher education face an abundance of obstacles, which include academic obstacles, such as they are underprepared for college and their first-generation status. In addition, they often face family obligations, and must navigate cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles (Murphy & Murphy, 2018). As Kaupp (2012) noted, many of these factors outline the reasons why Latino students enroll in online programs that provide increased flexibility to attend college while managing outside responsibilities.

Unfortunately, Willging and Johnson (2003) found that minority students (including Hispanics) were likelier than White students to drop out of online programs. Increased dropout rates are why academic advisors need to work with Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs to ensure persistence. Ohrablo (2016) explained the significance of using the same

advising approaches for online students as face-to-face students while being mindful of their unique needs. Researchers also found that social interaction with institutional agents, such as academic advisors, is vital to student persistence in online programs (Arbelo et al., 2019; Beck & Milligan, 2014; Willging & Johnson, 2003). The following section will define academic persistence, examine persistence models, and analyze the current literature.

Academic Persistence and Retention

In higher education, persistence and retention are interchangeable (Hagedorn, 2006). However, both terms have different meanings. *Persistence* is "continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution," while *retention* focuses on "continued enrollment or degree completion within the same higher education institution" (p. 11). Hagedorn (2006) distinguished between persistence and retention by focusing on institutional and student forms of measurement in that "institutions retain, and students persist" (p. 6). Two other terms commonly used and sometimes misused in higher education are *dropout* and *attrition* (Hagedorn, 2006). According to Hagedorn (2006), a student is considered a dropout when the student does not meet goal completion—degree completion or graduation. However, students who drop out may return to higher education in the future at the same or a different institution to pursue the same or different degree (Hagedorn, 2006). While dropout results from nonpersistence, attrition results from low retention rates. Hagedorn (2006) described attrition as a reduction in the student population due to low retention rates. In other words, if many students drop out (low retention rates), the institution's attrition rate increases. The following section presents four retention models that seek to explain why students persist or drop out, followed by an examination and analysis of the current persistence literature.

Persistence and Retention Models

Undergraduate Dropout Process Model. In this model, Spady (1970) contended that the dropout process is best explained by an interdisciplinary approach involving an interaction between the individual student and his particular college environment in which his attributes (i.e., dispositions, interests, attitudes, and skills) are exposed to influences, expectations, and demands from a variety of sources (including courses, faculty members, administrators, and peers). (p. 77)

These interactions allow the student to assimilate into the academic and social systems of the institution. Thus, a student must successfully meet the social and academic demands of the college or university to achieve institutional commitment (Spady, 1970).

Institutional Departure Model. Tinto, in his institutional departure model (1975), argued that

> the process of dropout from college can be viewed as a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college during which a person's experiences in those systems (as measured by his normative and structural integration) continually modify his goal and institutional commitments in ways which lead to persistence and/or to varying forms of dropout. (p. 94)

In other words, institutional commitment (persistence) and dropout rate relate to the student's success or failure in navigating the academic and social systems encountered during the college experience. Much like Spady (1970), Tinto (1975) identified the many attributes, such as demographics, family background, pre-college experiences, that students bring when entering college. The student's attributes contribute to the student's ability to navigate and integrate into the institution's academic and social systems (Tinto, 1975). If the student is not committed to the

institution or completing educational goals and degree completion, they are more likely to drop out (Tinto, 1975).

Student Attrition Model. Like both Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975), Bean (1980) explained the importance of a student's background characteristics in interacting with the institution. Some of the background characteristics Bean (1980) focused on were performance, socioeconomic status, and residency (state of residence, distance to home, size of hometown), which differ somewhat from Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975). As the student interacts within the institution, both academically and socially, these interactions influence the student's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the institution (Bean, 1980). The higher the level of satisfaction the student has for the institution, the higher the level of institutional commitment and persistence. The higher the dissatisfaction the student has with the institution, the more likely the student will drop out.

Composite Persistence Model. Rovai (2003) more recently developed the composite persistence model to examine persistence among nontraditional and online students. When describing the composite persistence model, Rovai (2003) stated the following:

> [It] synthesizes the persistence models of Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Bean and Metzner (1985) with the skills required by online students (Rowntree, 1995; Cole, 2000), the special needs of distance education students (Workman & Stenard, 1996) and the requirement to harmonize learning and teaching styles (Grow, 1996) into a single composite model. (p. 8)

The composite persistence model focuses on different factors, such as student characteristics before admission (i.e., demographics, academic readiness/college preparedness), internal (i.e., academic/social integration, advising, student needs), and external (i.e., employment and family

responsibilities) experienced after admission to the institution. Rovai (2003) recommended that administrators in higher education use the composite persistence model to identify students at risk of dropping out. Administrators can also use the composite persistence model to identify any internal or external factors related to feelings of nonpersistence and apply appropriate intervention methods (Rovai, 2003).

Spady (1970), Tinto (1975), Bean (1980), and Rovai (2003) all described internal and external factors that lead to persistence or nonpersistence. The following section examines current literature on persistence among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs, focusing on persistence, institutional commitment, and dropout factors.

Hispanic/Latino Student Persistence in Online Programs

Like the search for literature related to Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs, I could not find substantial amounts of research related to Hispanic/Latino student persistence in online programs. I searched current, 2013–2020 full-text, peer-reviewed articles through the Abilene Christian University online library, including numerous databases, such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. I used the following search terms to locate articles related to this study, which included the following: *Hispanic* or *Latino and persistence* and *online*. The search yielded 1,051 results. Of the results, none of the articles contained all three search terms. When I removed the term *Hispanic or Latino* from the search terms, the updated search yielded 199,536 results. Based on the search results, I identified literature, including Hispanic or non-White students, in the sample population.

Consistent with prior research, Levy (2007) found that student satisfaction with an online course was related to the student's decision to complete or withdraw from the online course (Levy, 2007). Although demographic information was collected, Levy (2007) did not collect the

participant's race or ethnicity. Since Levy (2007) did not collect participant race/ethnicity data, I feel that Levy (2007) missed a significant opportunity to contribute to the current literature. Levy (2007) found no statistical difference between completers and non-completers based on demographics, such as gender, age, residency status, academic major, GPA, and hours worked per week. However, there is a possibility that statistical differences existed between racial/ethnic groups among completers and non-completers.

While satisfaction with an online course affects a student's decision to complete or withdraw, other factors also impact a student's decision making. Holder (2007) found that students who persisted scored higher in emotional support, self-efficacy (i.e., belief in self), and time/study management. Interestingly, Holder (2007) found that autonomous (independent) learners were likelier to drop out than persist. Much like Rovai (2003), Holder (2007) recommended that institutional agents, including administrators, academic advisors, and faculty, work to identify at-risk students and provide the necessary services, such as training and support, for the student to succeed. Additionally, Aragon and Johnson (2008) found that responses from non-completers fell into five categories: personal/time, course design/communication, technology, institutional issues, and learning preference. Aragon and Johnson (2008) reported that female students had a higher online course completion rate than males, attributing this to the convenience of online courses due to women's external family and personal responsibilities. Based on this finding, I felt it is necessary to examine racial differences further. However, Aragon and Johnson (2008) did not ask participants to specify their race.

Both Tinto (1975) and Bean (1980) discussed institutional commitment—a student's commitment to persist and complete a degree at the institution where they are enrolled. Beck and Milligan (2014) examined factors that influence the institutional commitment of students

enrolled in courses online. Of 839 participants, only 40 (5%) participants were Hispanic. Beck and Milligan (2014) found that a student's experiences, such as academic advising, collegiate stress, financial strain, strongly predicted institutional commitment. Although gender, ethnicity, age, and family (parents' education) variables were essential, these variables "are not amendable to intervention" (Beck & Milligan, 2014). However, student experiences are malleable (workable), allowing for academic advisors' use of interventions to increase attitudes of persistence and institutional commitment (Beck & Milligan, 2014).

Academic Advising and Hispanic/Latino Student Persistence in Online Programs

Tinto (2017) attributed persistence to motivation in that motivation encourages goal completion even when obstacles stand in the way. Thus, for students who persist to degree completion, a driving force must exist to push students toward the finish line. One motivational force that promotes student persistence is the relationship between the academic advisor and the student (Shiroma, 2015). As Shiroma (2015) found, students who had meaningful, supportive relationships with their academic advisors felt more motivated to succeed.

As previously stated, Aragon and Johnson (2008) found among White and non-White participants that responses from non-completers fell into five categories: personal/time, course design/communication, technology, institutional issues, and learning preference. One of the institutional problems participants identified was advisement. However, Aragon and Johnson (2008) did not elaborate on what role advisement specifically had on dropping out, for example, advisement to withdraw or student dissatisfaction with advising services received. Like Holder (2007), Aragon and Johnson (2008) suggested that academic advisors see the study results as an opportunity to provide appropriate advising services. In other words, if the advisor knows what

causes a student to dropout, the advisor can apply the necessary intervention to motivate and encourage the student to persist.

Beck and Milligan (2014) found that among participants (including Hispanics), student experiences with academic advising, collegiate stress, and financial strain were strong predictors of institutional commitment. In academic advising, advising effectiveness was a strong predictor of institutional commitment. Under advising effectiveness, students rated satisfaction, advisement, ease/ability to obtain answers, and effective communication. Beck and Milligan (2014) found that advising effectiveness had a statistically significant correlation to institutional commitment, academic integration, degree commitment, and other student experiences.

Although this study does not examine academic advising, its findings are relevant to academic advising/academic advisors. Glazier (2016) examined rapport building to improve retention and success in online classes. Participants of the study identified as White or non-White. Participants of the study were enrolled in two types of courses; one in which the instructor used rapport-building techniques and one in which the instructor did not. Glazier (2016) explained that students enrolled in classes in which instructors used rapport-building techniques were less likely to earn poor grades or withdraw from the course. When examining gender, Glazier (2016) found that female students responded more positively to rapport-building efforts than male students. Glazier (2016) also commented that rapport-building improves online retention and helps at-risk students. Since academic advising is related to online student persistence (Arbelo et al., 2019; Beck & Milligan, 2014; Willging & Johnson, 2003), academic advisors should consider using rapport-building to strengthen relationships with students to increase persistence.

Last, Arbelo et al. (2019) examined success factors among online Hispanic students. Arbelo et al. (2019) conducted this study at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with a Hispanic student population of over 75%. Based on the results, Arbelo et al. (2019) identified four themes that attributed to Hispanic student success online: independent learning, social interaction, faculty communication, and hybrid preference. Arbelo et al. (2019) continued by stating that "social structure in online learning is supported through campus-based connections" (p. 46), further affirming that social interactions with support services such as academic advising promote student success.

Although persistence and retention are often used interchangeably (Hagedorn, 2006), it is crucial to understand the subtle difference. Persistence is "continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution," while retention focuses on "continued enrollment (or degree completion within the same higher education institution" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 11). While researchers, such as Bean (1980), Spady (1970), and Tinto (1975), developed student persistence and retention models many decades ago, researchers such as Rovai (2003) are continuing to build and expand on such models. However, as I found, research related to the persistence rates of Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs is minute, which is consistent with Arbelo et al.'s (2019) recommendation that further research on the topic is necessary.

Among the existing literature, the reasons for persistence and dropout varied. Researchers reported that student satisfaction (Levy, 2007), high levels of emotional support, self-efficacy, and time/study management (Holder, 2007) were related to persistence. Meanwhile, personal/time, course/design/communication, technology, institutional issues, and learning preference were related to non-completion and dropping out (Aragon & Johnson, 2008).

Additionally, Beck and Milligan (2014) concluded that student experiences with academic advising, collegiate stress, financial strain were strong predictors of institutional commitment (i.e., whether a student persists or drops out). When addressing persistence issues, institutional agents such as academic advisors must provide intervention and other support services to increase student persistence attitudes (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Beck & Milligan, 2014; Holder, 2007). Among Hispanic students enrolled in online programs, Arbelo et al. (2019) discussed the importance of social interaction between the online student and the academic advisor to promote student success, which equates to persistence.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. The literature review began by defining the terms Hispanic/Latino, briefly describing the current Hispanic/Latino population and the importance of online programs to Hispanic/Latino students. I then reviewed literature that defined the meaning of online programs, narrowing the definition down to the current study. Next, I reviewed research that defined academic advising and academic advising approaches, and I also gave a brief history of the profession. Based on the literature, student's perceptions of academic advising approaches differed (Anderson et al., 2014; Byrd & Kerns, 2019; Cheung et al., 2017; Christian & Sprinkle, 2013; Eduljee & Michaud, 2014; Harris, 2018). However, I support Teasley and Buchanan's (2013) assertion that students receive both prescriptive and developmental advising, depending on the circumstances. Finally, I reviewed literature that has discussed academic advising in online programs, narrowing the discussion to advising Hispanic/Latino students in online programs. The current literature has

concluded that academic advising is essential to the success of students enrolled online (Burns et al., 2019; Cross, 2018; Gravel, 2012; Milman et al., 2015; Raphael, 2006; Schroeder & Terras, 2015). Although I could not locate sufficient literature related explicitly to advising Hispanic/Latino students in online programs, those studies which included small Hispanic/Latino populations reported that academic advising was central to student success online (Gravel, 2012; Milman et al., 2015).

The second section of the literature review began by defining the term persistence and clarifying terms, such as retention, dropout, and attrition. Then I discussed persistence and retention models, which provide a foundation for the retention literature. Next, I examined Hispanic/Latino student persistence in online programs, further narrowing the discussion to how academic advising contributes to persistence among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. Again, I could not find substantial literature specific to the Hispanic/Latino population enrolled in online programs. Researchers found various reasons why students persisted or dropped out (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Beck & Milligan, 2014; Holder, 2007; Levy, 2007). However, academic advising services improved students' persistence attitudes (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Arbelo et al., 2019) and institutional commitment (Beck & Milligan, 2014).

Based on the lack of literature on advising Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs and persistence decisions among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs, the current research study is not only necessary but crucial.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. Kaupp (2012) found that Latino students were twice as likely to withdraw from online courses than those enrolled in face-to-face courses. Thus, student support systems are essential to online persistence. One such support system includes academic advisors who provide guidance and knowledge about academic and personal matters (Kuhn, 2008). Therefore, I expected satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising were significantly and positively related to degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs. In this chapter, I begin by restating the research question and hypotheses. Then, I discuss the study's research design and methodology, population, sample, instruments, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Question

RQ1: How do satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs?

H_0: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are not predictive of Hispanic/Latino student's degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

H_1: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are predictive of Hispanic/Latino student's degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

Research Design and Methodology

I used a quantitative correlational survey design to understand how satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino

students enrolled in an online bachelor's degree program. For this study, I took a post-positivist approach. Ryan (2006) explained that "post-positivist research principles emphasize meaning and the creation of new knowledge and can support committed social movements, that is, movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice" (p. 12). The results of the current study contribute toward social justice for Hispanic/Latino students by increasing opportunities for degree completion.

A quantitative research design was appropriate for my study because it allowed me to quantify large amounts of data, evaluate findings through statistical analysis, and generalize findings among my selected population (Goertzen, 2017). Additionally, a quantitative design allows future researchers to replicate the current study (Goertzen, 2017). Quantitative research design can also "determine relationships between variables and outcomes" (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018, p. 211). For example, in the current study, I determined if a predictive relationship existed between the predictor/independent variables' satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising and the outcome/dependent variable: degree commitment. Furthermore, quantitative research is beneficial for testing hypotheses developed before data collection and making predictions through data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I created two hypotheses for the current study before data collection, which I tested.

The current study also followed a correlational research design, which is congruent with quantitative research. A correlational research design was appropriate for the present study, as I sought to determine the relationship between variables (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Moreover, a correlational research design uses statistical measures to find relationships among variables (Ayiro, 2012). In the current study, I used statistical analysis to understand how satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment. Variables in correlational

research are not manipulated, nor does correlational research determine causality (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). In other words, the current study did not determine a cause-and-effect relationship between variables (i.e., satisfaction with advising, frequency of advising, and degree commitment).

Last, a survey design was appropriate for the current study as survey research "refers to the use of surveys to quantify, describe, or characterize an individual or a group" (Privitera, 2019, p. 226). Survey research provides a glimpse into the attitudes representative of the larger population (Check & Schutt, 2012). Consequently, survey research seeks to understand the human condition, providing copious amounts of data that inspire a call to action (Brewer et al., 2015). Thus, a quantitative correlational survey design fit my research study because it allowed me to answer my research questions, test my hypotheses, and contribute to the field of academic advising. The following sections provide the rationale for participant selection, data collection, and analysis.

Population

The current study's target population was Hispanic/Latino students attending four-year bachelor's degree-granting institutions in Texas who were enrolled in an online bachelor's degree program during the 2020-2021 academic year. For this study, a bachelor's degree program is considered online if it allows students to complete their bachelor's degree 100% online. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reported that in the fall of 2019, 528,117 students were enrolled in Texas public four-year colleges or universities (THECB, 2020). Of those, 202,797 were Hispanic or Latino (THECB, 2020). However, THECB did not distinguish between traditional, on-campus enrollment and enrollment in online programs or

record enrollment numbers for private higher education institutions. Therefore, I could not accurately estimate the population size for the current study.

Study Sample

The study sample included Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. I used nonprobability sampling to collect data for this study. Nonprobability sampling methods do not rely on the random selection of participants (Ruel et al., 2016). I used the nonprobability sampling method of purposive sampling to select a sample. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to require that participants have specific characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Knapp, 2014). Therefore, before beginning the survey, interested participants answered the following qualifying question: Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino? If the student answered *yes*, the participant was able to take part in the study. If the student answered *other*, they were disqualified.

To determine the sample size (*N*) necessary for data collection, I conducted a statistical power analysis using the software program G*Power (Faul et al., 2009). Based on the power analysis, the projected total sample size was $N = 68$. To account for outliers, incomplete surveys, or other problems, I sought a target sample size of 80. To reach the target sample size, I worked with faculty and staff at the study institutions, who distributed the survey invitation and subsequent emails to the sample population.

Materials/Instruments

I used three instruments in this study to collect data: the Academic Advising Questionnaire (AAQ; Teasley & Buchanan, 2013), a question about the frequency of academic advising that I developed, and the Degree Commitment scale (DC) of the College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ) (Davidson et al., 2015). I also used a demographic questionnaire based on

Teasley and Buchanan (2013) to collect gender, classification, and transfer status. As previously stated, researchers used English when surveying participants in quantitative studies of Hispanic/Latino student populations (Heredia et al., 2018; Hernandez & Villodas, 2018; Murphy & Murphy, 2018). Therefore, I did not seek special accommodations and administered all survey questions in English.

Academic Advising Questionnaire (AAQ)

The Academic Advising Questionnaire (AAQ) developed by Teasley and Buchanan (2013) was used to measure student satisfaction with their academic advising experience. The AAQ consists of 20 statements that describe the characteristics of academic advising appointments and their advisor. Participants responded to statements on the AAQ, such as "advising appointments are worth my time," "my advisor listens to what I have to say," and "my advisor is knowledgeable about course offerings." Participants responded to statements using a 7-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Teasley and Buchanan reported the alpha coefficient for the AAQ as .98. Therefore, the AAQ is a reliable scale. Permission to use the AAQ is provided in Appendix B. A copy of the AAQ is available in Appendix E.

Frequency of Academic Advising

I developed a question to determine the frequency of academic advising each participant had during the 2020-2021 academic year and through what modality. Modalities included phone, email, video conference (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, etc.), or face-to-face. Participants responded using a sliding scale ranging from 0 = *no appointments* to 100 = *100 appointments*.

Degree Commitment Scale (DC)-College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ)

The College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ) developed by Davidson et al. (2015) was used to measure student attitudes toward persistence. I only used the Degree Commitment (DC)

scale for this study, focusing specifically on students' attitudes toward degree commitment. The DC scale consists of six questions. Participants answered questions such as "how strong would you say your commitment is to earning a college degree" and "how strong is your intention to persist in your pursuit of the degree." Participants responded using a 6-point Likert scale. Responses vary based on the question, with 6 = *not applicable*. Davidson et al. (2015) reported the alpha coefficient of the DC scale as .76. Therefore, the DC scale is reliable. Permission to use the DC scale of the CPQ is provided in Appendix C. A copy of the DC scale is available in Appendix F.

Operational Definitions of Variables

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. This section provides an operational definition of each variable used in the present study.

Degree Commitment. Degree commitment is a dependent variable. Degree commitment refers to a student's intention or desire to continue their undergraduate education to graduation. For this study, I measured degree commitment using questions on the Degree Commitment scale of the CPQ, which measures a student's level of degree commitment. The CPQ is an ordinal level of measurement. Participants rate their degree of commitment using a 6-point Likert scale. Responses varied based on the question: 1 = *very supportive* to 5 = *very unsupportive*, 1 = *very strong* to 5 = *very weak*, 1 = *very disappointed* to 5 = *not at all disappointed*, 1 = *very certain* to 5 = *very uncertain*, 1 = *benefits far outweigh the costs* to 5 = *costs far outweigh the benefits* and 6 = *not applicable*. Responses are then converted to reflect "favorability scores" based on the participant's ratings 1 = +2 *very favorable*, 2 = +1 *somewhat favorable*, 3 = 0 *neutral*, 4 = –1

somewhat unfavorable, 5 = –2 *very unfavorable*. Items rated as "not applicable" are not scored. To calculate the mean for degree commitment, the converted scores (+2 through –2) are added together (factor total). Then, the number of applicable items is added together (applicable items total). Responses of *not applicable* are not included in the applicable items total. Finally, the factor total is divided by the applicable items total to produce the mean.

Demographic Information. I collected basic demographic information consistent with Teasley and Buchanan (2013), including gender, classification, and transfer status. I omitted ethnicity because it is a qualifying question for the current study. Each demographic question used a nominal level of measurement.

Gender Identity. Gender identity is a categorical variable. Participants responded by selecting their gender identity: 1 = *Male*, 2 = *Female*, 3 = *Transgender man/trans (man/female-to-male)*, 4 = *Transgender woman/trans (woman/male-to-female)*, 5 = *Genderqueer/gender nonconforming (neither exclusively male nor female)*, 6 = *Additional gender category (or other)*, 7 = *Decline to answer*.

Classification. Classification is a categorical variable. Participants responded by selecting their classification: 1 = *freshman*, 2 = *sophomor*e, 3 = *junior*, and 4 = *senior*.

Transfer Status. Transfer status is a categorical variable. Participants responded by indicating if they were a transfer student: 1= *yes* and 2 = *no*.

Frequency of Advising. Frequency of advising is an independent variable. Frequency of advising refers to the number of times a student meets with their academic advisor over an academic year. For this study, I measured frequency of advising using two survey questions I developed. Participants selected the number of advising appointments they had during the 2020-2021 academic year. Participants also selected the number of advising appointments they had

during the 2020-2021 academic year based on modality. These modalities included phone, email, video conference (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, etc.), and face-to-face. The frequency of advising question used a continuous level of measurement. Participants selected the number of meetings and modality from a sliding scale ranging from 0 = *no meetings* to 100 = *100 meetings*.

Satisfaction With Advising. Advising satisfaction is an independent variable. Advising satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction a student feels toward their academic advisor. For this study, advising satisfaction was measured by the AAQ, which measured student satisfaction with their academic advising experience. The AAQ is an ordinal level of measurement and consists of 20 statements that participants rated using a 7-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. The AAQ scores range from 20 to 140, with higher scores expressing greater satisfaction with advising and lower scores expressing dissatisfaction with advising.

Data Collection

Before I began data collection, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Abilene Christian University and completed any conditions required by the study institutions where I collected data (Appendix D). After I received approval, staff members from the study institutions distributed the survey invitation email through the institution's email server. All students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at the study institutions received a copy of the survey invitation email. The survey invitation email included the purpose of the study, a description of the survey process, a brief overview of the informed consent information, and the survey link. To collect and confidentially store survey data, I used the online survey platform, Qualtrics. I chose Qualtrics because it is a commercial web-based tool that is easy to use and provides confidential data storage. Students visited the Qualtrics survey

link provided in the survey invitation email. The first screen presented the informed consent. The informed consent provided the student with the study's purpose, a description of any risks and benefits associated with the study, privacy and confidentiality information, and relevant contact information. The student had to select "yes" at the end of the informed consent document if they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. If the student selected "no," the student was directed to a disqualification screen, which thanked them for their time and consideration.

Once the student consented to participate in the study voluntarily, they had to confirm eligibility by answering the qualifying question. On this page, students confirmed if they were Hispanic or Latino. If the student selected "yes," the student advanced to the next screen, which began with the AAQ. If the student selected "no," the student was directed to a disqualification screen and thanked for their time and consideration.

Participants who agreed to participate voluntarily were directed to the survey, which began with the AAQ. After participants completed the AAQ, participants answered questions about the frequency of their academic advising appointments. Upon completion of the frequency question, participants began DC questions from the CPQ. Upon completion of the CPQ, the following screen directed participants to the final survey section, which included demographic questions. I considered the survey complete once the survey was finished through the demographic questionnaire. Students were required to complete each item and could not move forward until all questions were answered.

Once participants completed the demographic questionnaire and selected "submit," participants could enter an incentive drawing. Participants who selected "yes" were directed to a new survey link where they entered their contact information. Participants who selected "no" were directed to a new screen, which thanked them for their study participation. Incentives

included $5, $25, and $50 Amazon digital gift cards. I randomly selected two email addresses each week during the survey period for the $25 and $50 Amazon Digital gift cards; I randomly selected winners and imported the names and email addresses from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel. Then I used the random function to choose two random participants. To modify things at one institution, I provided a $5 Digital Amazon gift card to the first 20 participants. Participants had to acknowledge whether they wanted to receive a gift card. Participants who selected "yes" were directed to a new survey link where they entered their contact information. Participants who selected "no" were directed to a new screen, which thanked them for their study participation. In both cases, I emailed each winner separately to give thanks and congratulations and provided them with the link to their digital gift card.

Data collection varied from two to four weeks, depending on the number of online bachelor's degree programs offered by the institution. Researchers (Munoz-Leiva et al., 2009; Saleh & Bista, 2017; Van Mol, 2017) found that follow-up email reminders increase response rates. Therefore, students received an email reminder at the beginning of weeks two and three of the survey. Students received a final email the day after the survey period closed to thank them for their study participation. Total email notifications did not exceed four (survey invitation, two follow-up reminders, and survey closure warning), as recommended by Munoz-Leiva et al. (2009).

Data Analysis

Before I began data analysis, I developed a codebook to identify and define each variable. A codebook was necessary to compile a list of variables and descriptions to ensure clarity and understanding of each variable in the data set (Knapp, 2014). Once my codebook was complete, I exported the data into SPSS, a computer software program used for statistical analysis. I then

reviewed each survey response for any outliers and incorrect or missing data. The case was removed for respondents who answered the qualifying question as other, since as respondent was disqualified from participating.

Additionally, if two or more scales (AAQ, frequency of advising, CPQ) on the survey were not completed, the case was removed because the data were incomplete and could not be used. Any outliers were reviewed to determine if the data were usable or not. If data were abnormal or highly inconsistent with other cases, it was examined to determine if it was usable or should be removed. After the data were free from any outliers, incorrect, or missing data, I began data analysis.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

To begin data analysis, I calculated descriptive statistics, including computing measures of central tendency, range, variability, and standard deviation for advising satisfaction, frequency of academic advising, and degree commitment to summarize data characteristics. Then, I determined survey instrument reliability in SPSS by completing a reliability analysis to calculate Cronbach's alphas.

Pearson's Correlation

I used Pearson's correlation, which was appropriate for continuous variables. Pearson's correlation determined if a negative or positive correlation existed between the independent variables (satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising) and the dependent variable (degree commitment). Although the variables satisfaction with advising (independent) and degree commitment (dependent) are ordinal variables, Pasta (2009) explained that it is acceptable to treat ordinal variables (i.e., Likert scales) as continuous. Pearson's correlation required the following assumptions: Variables must be continuous and paired, a linear and

bivariate relationship must exist, and no significant outliers should exist. Finally, I conducted a multiple regression analysis to calculate the degree to which the independent variables predicted the dependent variable.

Multiple Regression Analysis

I conducted a multiple regression analysis to calculate the degree to which the independent variables (satisfaction with advising and frequency of academic advising) predicted the dependent variable (degree commitment). To ensure multiple regression analysis was an appropriate statistical analysis for this study, it had to meet eight basic assumptions. The first two assumptions were met before data analysis began. The first assumption required a continuous dependent variable, and the second assumption required at least two or more independent continuous or nominal variables. The dependent variable (degree commitment) and one of the independent variables (satisfaction with advising) are ordinal variables. However, according to Pasta (2009), treating ordinal variables like Likert scales as continuous is acceptable. Therefore, both assumptions were met. The remaining six assumptions included testing for independence of observations, linearity, homoscedasticity and checking for multicollinearity, unusual points, and normality. I tested these assumptions after the multiple regression analysis was completed by examining the residuals. All assumptions were met and further discussed in Chapter 4.

Ethical Considerations

Before I began data collection, I submitted all required Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) at Abilene Christian University. I also completed the Online Research Ethics course requirements and Protecting Human Research Participants Online training course. After receiving approval from Abilene Christian University, I submitted all required documentation (forms, ACU IRB approval, copies

of study instruments, proof of ethics training, and recruitment materials) to the corresponding IRB offices at the higher education institutions where I conducted my research study. The study institutions reviewed my documentation and determined that my research proposal met all ethical and institutional requirements. Since the study institutions approved my research proposal and IRB documents, I performed my research study.

As an ethical researcher, I followed all Abilene Christian University IRB and study institution IRB guidelines. I also followed the principles set forth by the Belmont Report, specifically, the principles of respect for persons and beneficence.

Respect for Persons

Respect for persons means that each participant is treated as autonomous while protecting those with diminished autonomy. Voluntary participation is vital to research, as researchers should not coerce or deceive participants into engaging (Polonsky & Waller, 2018). Thus, student participation in the current study was entirely voluntary. The survey invitation and informed consent explicitly stated the study's voluntary nature and explained the study's purpose, associated benefits and risks, and other pertinent information related to the study. Thus, students could make an informed decision of whether they choose to participate in the study or not. Before students could participate, they had to indicate that they read and understood the informed consent form and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Beneficence

Beneficence focuses on the tenet—do no harm. The Belmont Report stated that it is essential to "maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harm" (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979, p. 6). Based on the nature of the study, the benefits greatly outweighed any possible harm. The study did not subject participants to physical, social, legal, or

economic harm. The study's potential harm included psychological or emotional discomfort or stress, dependent upon the participants' experiences. For example, a survey question could make a participant uncomfortable or trigger a traumatic memory. However, based on the noninvasive variety of questions on the survey, the likeliness of that occurring was low. Another potential risk of harm was a data breach through the online survey platform Qualtrics or review/theft of records downloaded from Qualtrics to my personal computer or thumb drive. I did not collect any personal identifiable information from participants. Thus, keeping participant responses confidential and anonymous. The Qualtrics platform uses an HTTPS connection, data encryption, and secured user login to ensure participant data is kept secure throughout the study. Now that the study has been completed, any data collected and uploaded into SPSS is password protected and has an authentication process. I only used my desktop computer to review and analyze the data for the current study. My desktop computer is password protected and locked when not in use. I have also backed up any data collected and analyzed on a password-protected flash drive, which I keep in a locked drawer. I will maintain any data collected for this study for the required length of time identified by the ACU ORSP. Once the necessary time has passed, I will permanently delete all data from SPSS, my desktop computer, and my thumb drive. Then, I will permanently delete the survey and responses from the Qualtrics program.

Respondents who participated in the incentive drawing gave their full names and valid email address for notification purposes. However, this process was separate from data collection. Once participants completed the survey, they received a question prompt asking if they wanted to participate in the drawing. If the participant selected "no," they received a message thanking them for participating, and the survey was concluded. If the participant selected "yes," a new window opened, which provided a new survey link that allowed the participant to enter their

name and email address for entrance into the incentive drawing. Thus, I could not link the participant's survey submission to the email address listed on their incentive drawing entry. I stored all names and email addresses received for the incentive drawing on my desktop computer, which is password protected and locked. I also kept a backup file on my thumb drive, password protected and secured in a locked drawer when not in use. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity in survey research, Polonsky and Waller (2018) recommended having the organization distribute survey documents or other information to the participants. I enlisted the help of extended university staff to distribute survey information: survey invitation and informed consent. Therefore, I did not have access to the names or emails of potential participants.

Researcher Role and Positionality

I have been an academic advisor for over five years. First, at a small, private, four-year faith-based institution, followed by two large, public, four-year Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), all located in Texas. I have only advised and directly worked with students, staff, and faculty associated with on-campus, face-to-face programs in all my advising roles. Therefore, I do not have any stake, relationship, or connections with any online degree program students, staff, or faculty at the study institutions. Therefore, there is no risk of conflict of interest between me and the study institutions or bias, implicit or otherwise.

As a White woman studying the Hispanic and Latino population, I must explain my positionality. Positionality describes the researcher's social or political attitude in the study environment (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Additionally, positionality affects the research process, from developing the research problem to publishing findings (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Before my role as an academic advisor, I worked for over five years as a career advisor for the federal Job Corps program, assisting youth and adults from low socioeconomic

backgrounds, many being Hispanic or Latino. My job was to find my assigned students gainful employment after earning their high school diploma or High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE) and learning a skilled trade. During my time at Job Corps, I witnessed the adversity and inequity faced by my Hispanic and Latino students.

Being married to my college sweetheart, a Hispanic man, we have discussed our lives thoroughly, from childhood and adolescence to our experiences as first-generation college students. While I understand that my experiences growing up and attending college as a White student are drastically different from those of Hispanic and Latino students, I am culturally empathetic to those students' experiences. In my professional role as an academic advisor, I understand that each student is different and has specific needs. Therefore, as academic advisors, we must understand those needs and do what we can to help each student succeed. As a doctoral student, I have the power to use my research for the greater good by conducting research to provide academic advisors with further knowledge and ways to assist our Hispanic and Latino students from acceptance to graduation.

Assumptions

I assumed that all participants would honestly identify their ethnicity to the best of their ability. Since survey responses are confidential and anonymous, I assumed that participants would answer questions about their academic advisor, academic advising experiences, frequency of academic advising, and degree commitment honestly and to the best of their ability.

Limitations

One limitation and potential threat to the study's internal validity was respondent behavior. Although participant responses were confidential and anonymous, participants may have responded differently based on several factors. Podsakoff et al. (2003) noted several

common method biases, such as social desirability, leniency biases, and transient mood state, affecting participant responses. For example, a participant might respond positively to the survey because it is socially desirable rather than selecting answers representing their true feelings. Another limitation and potential threat to the study's external validity is the generalization of the research study findings. In other words, how the research findings would extend to the entire population (Allen, 2017). The study's participants were from public and private, brick-and-mortar, four-year higher education institutions in Texas that participate in an online bachelor's degree program. Therefore, the results may only generalize Hispanic/Latino populations at similar higher education institutions.

Delimitations

The current study has the following delimitations. First, it only focused on a few Texas public and private four-year higher education institutions. Second, potential study participants were limited to online degree programs. Last, I only used quantitative research methods (survey research), the AAQ, frequency of advising questions, CPQ, and a demographic questionnaire. Although I identified delimitations to the current study, they do not affect its robustness.

Summary

The purpose of the current study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. I used a quantitative correlational survey research design to conduct the study, using the AAQ and CPQ survey instruments, frequency of academic advising questions, and a demographic questionnaire. Survey research was appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to describe population attributes in numerical terms (Creswell, 2014). Before data collection and participant

selection, I followed the guidelines required by Abilene Christian University's IRB and any conditions of the study institutions. Participants received an email from institutional staff, which introduced the study and provided informed consent information and the survey link. Once the data collection process was complete, I compiled all data and conducted the necessary statistical analysis using SPSS software. In the following chapter, I describe in detail the results of the current study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs at four-year higher education institutions in Texas. The following chapter focuses on the results and findings of the current study. I begin by discussing the study population, sample, and data collection process. I present the descriptive statistics for participant demographics, their ethnicity, gender, classification, and transfer status, and each variable: advising satisfaction, frequency of academic advising, and degree commitment. Then, I addressed each research question and the hypotheses, which were tested using Spearman's correlations and multiple regression analysis. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the study findings.

Study Population and Sample

The target population for the current study was Hispanic/Latino students attending public and private four-year bachelor's degree-granting institutions in Texas, who were enrolled in an online bachelor's degree program during the 2020-2021 academic year. Per the power analysis conducted using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009), a sample size of 68 was required. I selected four-year public and private higher education institutions in Texas, which had large populations of Hispanic/Latino students and had a least one online bachelor's degree program as sites for data collection. Faculty and staff at the data collection sites used the university email system to send survey invitations and reminder emails to potential study participants. Emails were sent to approximately 1,204 potential participants. Respondents had to identify as Hispanic or Latino to participate in the survey.

Surveys remained open between two to four weeks, depending on the institution's response rates and size. At the conclusion of the data collection period, 87 responses were received. Of those responses, 14 were incomplete, because respondents did not complete two or more scales, and four were disqualified, because they reported their ethnicity as Other, leaving 71 valid responses. Because a sample size of 68 was required, and 71 valid responses were received, I concluded data collection. Table 1 outlines each institution where data collection occurred, whether it was an HSI, public or private institution, the number of students emailed, the total number of respondents, and the total number of valid responses. I collected data from five institutions, four of which served Hispanics. Surveys remained open between two to four weeks, depending on response rates. Further discussion of obstacles experienced during the data collection phase is discussed under Limitations in Chapter 5.

Table 1

Data Collection by Institution

Institution	*HSI*	Public/Private	Students emailed	Total responses	Valid responses
1	Yes	Public	889	57	43
2	Yes	Public	132	15	15
3	Yes	Private	6	1	1
4	Yes	Public	71	3	3
5	No	Private	106	11	9
Total			1204	87	71

Data Cleaning and Preparation

Once all data were collected, I imported the raw data from each institution into SPSS directly from Qualtrics. Surveys in Qualtrics were separated by institution. Therefore, I downloaded each one individually. Then, I copied the raw data from each data file from institutions 2 through 5 and pasted them into the largest data file, institution 1, to form a single

data file. In total, there were 87 collected surveys. I reviewed each survey case for outliers and incomplete data. Four cases reported their ethnicity as Other, which disqualified them from participating in the study. Therefore, I removed them from the data set. Six cases reported their ethnicity as either Hispanic or Latino but did not complete any other questions on the survey. Therefore, I removed them from the data set. Five cases did not complete the frequency of advising appointments scale, advising appointment type (modalities) scale, and degree commitment scale. Therefore, they were removed. One case did not complete the degree commitment scale. Consequently, it was removed.

In addition, three cases were identified as outliers. Two cases responded that they met with their academic advisor a total of 15 and 20 times, respectively. One case responded that they met with their academic advisor 46 times, 44 by phone, 41 by email, 50 by email, and 87 face-to-face. Since these numbers are highly irregular compared to other respondents, I felt it was necessary to exclude them from the analysis of frequency of advising only. After 16 cases were removed, 71 usable surveys remained. Once I completed the data cleaning and preparation process, I began to analyze the data.

Presentation of Findings

Descriptive Statistics of Demographics and Academic Status

The demographic variables in the current study are gender identity, major, classification, and transfer status. Given the need to include additional institutions in the study, I decided not to examine majors since the number and type of majors available varied significantly among institutions. Students had to identify as either Hispanic or Latino to participate in the current study. Students that identified as Other were disqualified. Out of 87 responses, only four respondents selected Other. Table 2 outlines the frequency and percentage of participants by

ethnicity. Most participants (93%) identified as Hispanic (*n* = 66), while only 7% (*n* = 5) identified as Latino. The United States Census Bureau (2018) defined Hispanic or Latino as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (para. 1). Therefore, it is up to the individual to decide whether they identify as Hispanic or Latino. Table 3 outlines the frequency and percentage of participants by gender identity. Not surprisingly, most participants (62%) identified as female (*n* = 44). Only 36.6% (*n* = 26) identified as male, and only 1.4% (*n* = 1) declined to answer.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	*f*	%
Hispanic	66	93.0
Latino	5	7.0
Total	71	100.0

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics by Gender Identity

Gender identity	*n*	%
Male	26	36.6
Female	44	62.0
Transgender man/trans (man/female-to-male)	0	0.0
Transgender woman/trans (woman/male-to-female)	0	0.0
Genderqueer/gender nonconforming (neither exclusively male nor female)	0	0.0
Additional gender category (or other)	0	0.0
Decline to answer	1	1.4
Total	71	100.0

Table 4 outlines respondents' academic status, including their classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and if they were transfer students. The findings are divided between lower- (freshman and sophomore) and upper-division (junior and senior) classification statuses. Freshmen and sophomores each comprised 8.5% (*n* = 6), while juniors made up 31% (*n* = 22)

and seniors 52.1% (*n* = 37). Respondents were also asked to provide their transfer status. Most students (70.4%) reported that they were transfer students (*n* = 50), while only 29.6% reported that they were not transfer students (*n* = 21).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics by Academic Status

Academic status	*f*	%
Classification		
Freshman (0–29 hours)	6	8.5
Sophomore (30–59 hours)	6	8.5
Junior (60–89 hours)	22	31.0
Senior (90 or more hours)	37	52.1
Transfer Student		
Yes	50	70.4
No	21	29.6

In summary, respondents were primarily Hispanic (93%), identified as female (62%), completed over 90 or more credit hours (senior, 52.1%), and were transfer students (70.4%).

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

The dependent variable for the current study was degree commitment. The independent variables for the current study were satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising. Table 5 outlines the descriptive statistics for each variable. Degree commitment (dependent variable) had a mean score of 1.37, with a minimum score of –1 (*very unfavorable*) and a maximum score of 2 (*very favorable*). The standard deviation for degree commitment was .59, with skewness of –1.10 (negative skew) and kurtosis of 1.23. Satisfaction with advising (independent variable) had a mean score of 5.97, with a minimum score of 3 (*somewhat disagree*) and a maximum score of 7 (*strongly agree*). The standard deviation for satisfaction with advising was .93, skewness of –1.31 (negative skew) and kurtosis of 1.65. Frequency of advising (independent variable) had a mean score of 3.43, with a minimum score of 1 (*one appointment*) and a maximum score of 10

(*10 appointments*). The standard deviation for frequency of advising was 2.30, with skewness of 1.50 (positive skew) and kurtosis of 2.10. Skewness should fall between 1 and –1. Degree commitment (–1.10), satisfaction with advising (–1.31), and frequency of advising (1.50) had skewness slightly outside of the normal range. Next, I examined the kurtosis of each variable. Kurtosis should fall between 2 and –2. Degree commitment (1.23) and satisfaction with advising (1.65) fell within the appropriate range, while frequency of advising (2.10) was slightly outside of the desired range.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	Min.	Max	*SD*
Degree Commitment	71	1.37	–1	2	.59
Satisfaction w/Advising	71	5.97	3	7	.93
Frequency of Advising	68	3.43	1	10	2.30

Note. *N* = number of observations, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation.

Table 6 outlines the correlations between the variables. Based on Pearson's correlation, there was a statistically significant small positive correlation between degree commitment and satisfaction with advising: $r(68) = .27$, $p = .02$. In addition, there was no statistically significant correlation between degree commitment and frequency of advising: $r(65) = –.04$, $p = .70$.

Table 6

Correlations Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3
Satisfaction w/Advising (Independent Variable)		.271*	.294
Degree Commitment (Dependent Variable)	.271*		–.047
Frequency of Advising (Independent Variable)	.294	–.047	

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 outlines the statements listed on the Academic Advising Questionnaire (AAQ) and the mean and standard deviation for each statement. Respondents rated each statement using a 7-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Mean

scores ranged from 4.62 to 6.45. Mean scores of 5.0 or higher (majority) indicate that the respondent had a positive advising experience. Conversely, the lowest mean score of 4.62 suggested some uncertainty related to the advisor's overall concern for the student.

Table 7

Mean and Standard Deviation of Academic Advising Questionnaire Responses

Statement	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Advising appointments are worth my time.	71	1	7	6.13	1.15
My advisor listens to what I have to say.	71	3	7	6.32	0.85
My advisor is knowledgeable about course offerings.	71	2	7	6.15	1.05
My advisor has helped me develop a long-term education plan.	71	2	7	5.90	1.43
My advisor is prepared for my advising appointments.	71	2	7	6.31	0.96
My advisor is concerned about my overall development as a student.	71	1	7	4.62	2.11
My advisor considers my interests and talents when helping me choose courses to take.	71	1	7	5.27	1.66
After my advising appointments, I feel that every course in my new schedule has a purpose.	71	1	7	5.63	1.56
My advisor makes sure that I get the best possible educational experience.	71	1	7	5.73	1.42
My advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements.	71	2	7	6.18	0.99
If my advisor does not know the answer to one of my questions, he/she makes the effort to connect me to someone who does.	71	2	7	6.10	1.09
My advisor encourages me to speak freely in our appointments.	71	2	7	6.17	1.04
I am given the time I need during my academic advising appointments.	71	1	7	6.14	1.06
My advisor and I work together as a team.	71	1	7	5.85	1.39
My advisor acts in a professional manner.	71	3	7	6.45	0.84
I can trust my advisor.	71	2	7	6.07	1.12
I feel like I will graduate in a reasonable amount of time thanks to my advisor's planning.	71	1	7	5.94	1.44
I would recommend my advisor to a friend.	71	1	7	6.08	1.27
My advisor is ethical.	71	1	7	6.24	1.12
I find academic advising appointments to be a positive experience.	71	1	7	6.11	1.31

As part of the frequency of advising, I wanted to understand appointment types and the frequencies of those appointment types over the 2020-2021 academic year. Respondents were

asked to report the number of times they met with their academic advisor by phone, email, video conference (Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams), and face-to-face. Table 8 outlines the mean number of appointments, range, and standard deviations by each type: phone, email, video conference, and face-to-face. Most respondents, 76.1% (*n* = 54), reported having phone appointments, followed by email at 50.7% (*n* = 36), video conference at 18.3% (*n* = 13), and finally face-to-face at 7.1% (*n* = 5). As previously reported, the mean frequency of advising was 3.43 (*SD* = 2.30).

Table 8

Frequency of Advising by Appointment Type

Type	*n*	Range	*M*	*SD*
Phone	54	20	2.41	3.13
Email	36	50	3.41	7.76
Video Conference (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, etc.)	13	6	0.43	1.13
Face-to-Face	5	7	0.16	0.86

Instrument Reliability

I completed a reliability analysis in SPSS to calculate Cronbach's alpha for each scale to determine survey instrument reliability. An alpha coefficient of .70 or higher is desired for each survey instrument to ensure reliability. Table 7 shows Cronbach's alpha for each survey instrument. First, I examined the AAQ. The AAQ consisted of 20 statements that participants rated using a 7-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Teasley and Buchanan (2013), the authors of the AAQ, reported an alpha coefficient of .98. My reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's alpha was .95, which is consistent with Teasley and Buchanan (2013). Therefore, the AAQ is a reliable survey instrument.

Next, I examined degree commitment (DC), which is a six-item scale from the CPQ. Participants responded to six statements by rating their degree commitment using a 6-point

Likert scale. Responses vary based on the question: 1 = *very supportive* to 5 = *very unsupportive*, 1 = *very strong* to 5 = *very weak*, 1 = *very disappointed* to 5 = *not at all disappointed*, 1 = *very certain* to 5 = *very uncertain*, 1 = *benefits far outweigh the costs* to 5 = *costs far outweigh the benefits* and 6 = *not applicable*. Davidson et al. (2015) reported an alpha coefficient of .76 on the DC scale. My reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's alpha was .67. Although the alpha coefficient was slightly less than the desired score of .70, it will not negatively affect the study results.

Multiple Regression and Testing for Assumptions

A multiple regression analysis aims to predict the dependent variable based on the independent variables (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Multiple regression required that eight assumptions be met before running the analysis. I address each assumption beginning with assumptions one and two related to variable type. Assumption one required that the dependent variable must be continuous. Although the dependent variable (degree commitment) is ordinal, Pasta (2009) noted that it is acceptable to treat ordinal variables as continuous. Therefore, assumption one was met. Assumption two required that two or more variables are continuous or nominal. Satisfaction with advising is ordinal; however, I treated it as continuous per Pasta (2009). The second independent variable, frequency of advising, is continuous. Therefore, assumption two was met.

Independence of Observations. Assumption three was that independence of observations existed. In other words, does a correlation exist between residuals (Laerd Statistics, 2015). A Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.83 revealed that there was independence of residuals. Thus, the assumption was met.

Linearity and Homoscedasticity. Assumption four required a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, both collectively and independently. Assumption five required homoscedasticity. Figure 3 illustrates the scatter plot of the studentized residuals and unstandardized predicted values. Figure 4 shows the partial plot between degree commitment and satisfaction with advising, while Figure 5 illustrates the partial plot between degree commitment and frequency of advising. Visual inspection of the scatterplots revealed both a linear relationship and the existence of homoscedasticity. Thus, the assumptions were met.

Figure 3

Studentized and Unstandardized Residuals Scatter Plot: All Variables

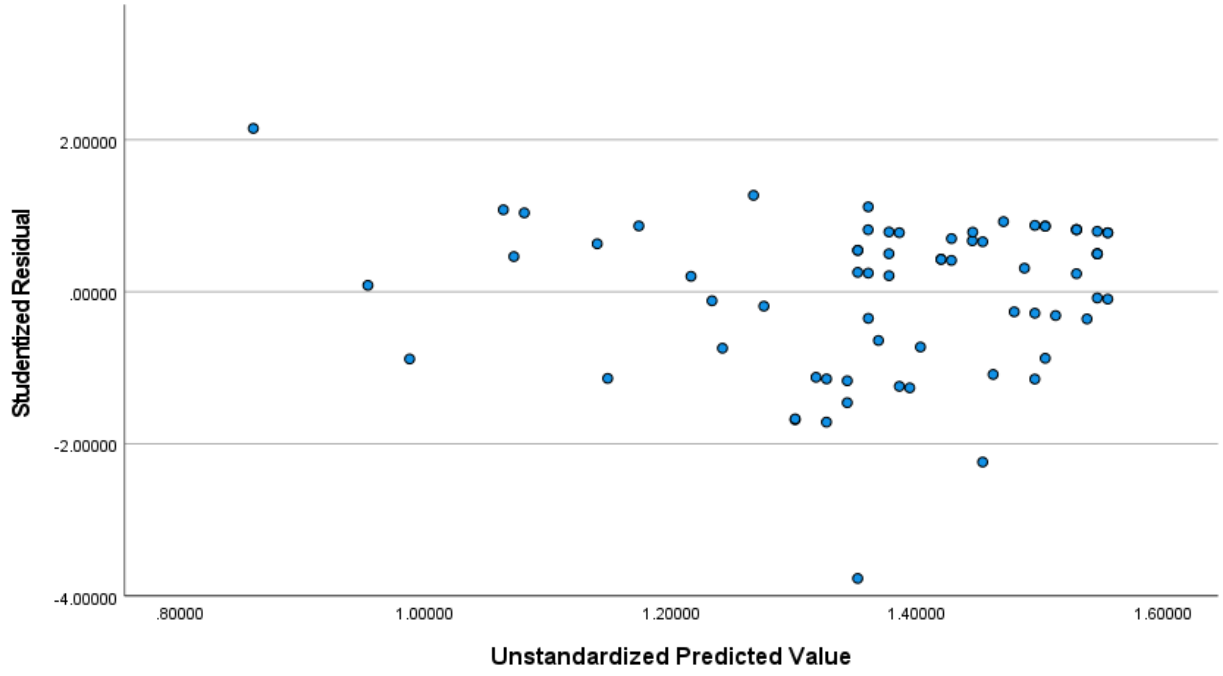


Figure 4

Degree Commitment and Satisfaction With Advising Partial Plot

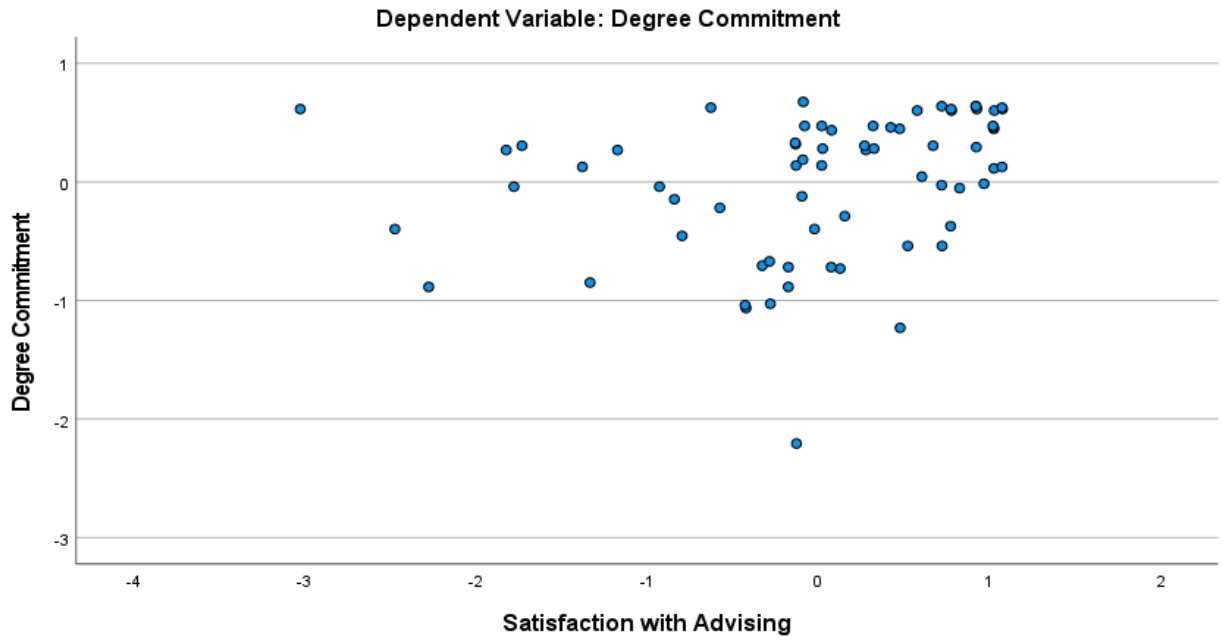
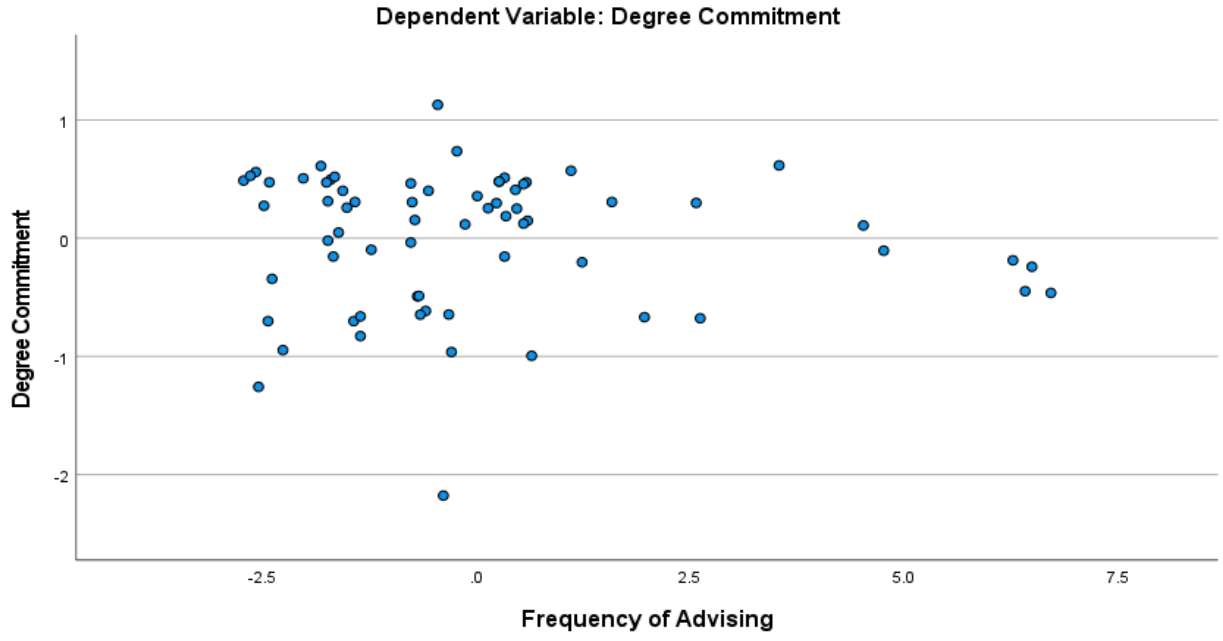


Figure 5

Degree Commitment and Frequency of Advising Partial Plot



Multicollinearity. Assumption six requires that multicollinearity is not present. Multicollinearity refers to independent variables that are highly correlated (Muijs, 2016). Tolerance values less than .01 and a VIF greater than 10 indicate collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2014). The value of tolerance was .983. Therefore, multicollinearity did not exist, and the assumption was met.

Unusual Points and Outliers. Assumption seven required inspection for unusual points and outliers. Before beginning the statistical analysis, I removed cases 32, 40, and 81 from the frequency of advising scale due to inconsistent scores. Additionally, I previously inspected case 45 of the degree commitment scale and concluded that it was not irregular. Next, I checked for leverage points. A visual inspection of the leverage values revealed that all values were less than 0.2, which is safe, according to Huber (1981). Finally, I checked for influential points. No values greater than one existed based on visual inspection of the Cook's distance values. Thus, the assumption was met.

Normality. The final assumption is normality. Figure 6 shows the histogram of the regression standardized residuals, and Figure 7 shows the P-P plot of standardized residuals. Visual inspection of the histogram and P-P plot illustrated normality. Thus, the assumption was met.

Figure 6

Histogram of Regression Standardized Residuals

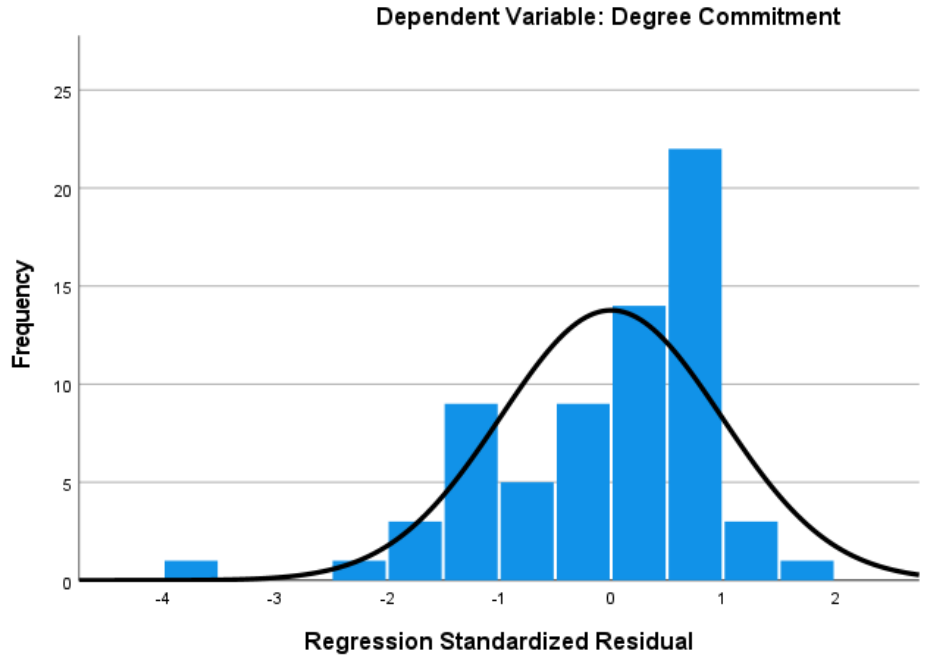
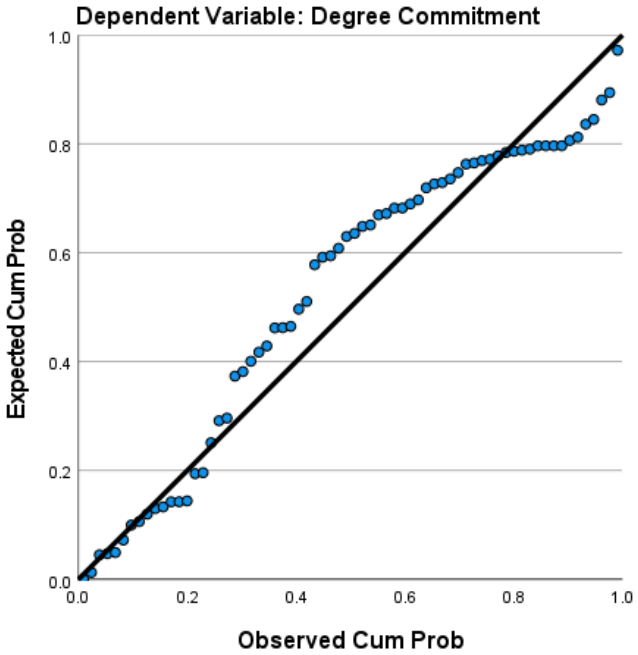


Figure 7

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals



Hypothesis Testing

The following research question and hypotheses guided the current study:

RQ1: How do satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs?

H_0: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are not predictive of Hispanic/Latino student's degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

H_1: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are predictive of Hispanic/Latino degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

Multiple regression was run to predict degree commitment based on satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising. The multiple regression model did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment: $F(2, 65) = 2.437$, $p = .09$. The reported R^2 for the model was 7.0%, with an adjusted R^2 of 4.1%, which indicated a small effect size, according to Cohen (1988). Table 9 outlines the regression coefficients, standard errors, and significance. Individually, satisfaction with advising positively, statistically, and significantly predicted degree commitment: $p = .03$. The slope coefficient for satisfaction with advising was $b = .167$, which meant that for every unit increase in satisfaction with advising, there was a .167 increase in degree commitment: $p = .033$. Frequency of advising did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment: $p = .50$. The slope coefficient for frequency of advising was $b = –.021$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was partially rejected since satisfaction with advising was predictive of degree commitment. Additionally, the hypothesis was partially accepted since satisfaction with advising was predictive of degree commitment, but frequency of advising was not.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Results for Degree Commitment

Degree commitment	*b*	*SE b*	*b**	R^2	ΔR^2	Sig.
Model				.070	.041	
Constant	.447	.461				.336
Satisfaction	.167	.077	.262			.033
Frequency	.021	.031	–.081			.506

Note. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE b* = standard error of the coefficient; *b** = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; ΔR^2 = adjusted R^2, Sig. = significance.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the study population and sample, data cleaning, and preparation procedures and concluded with a discussion of the study findings. A total of 87 surveys were collected, leaving 68 surveys after data cleaning: removing incomplete surveys and outliers. Most respondents were Hispanic, female, had 90 or more credit hours (senior classification), and were transfer students. Each survey instrument used in the current study met or was slightly lower than the required Cronbach's alpha of at least .70 and, therefore, was reliable. A multiple regression analysis was run to predict degree commitment based on satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising. The multiple regression model did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment. However, satisfaction with academic advising positively, statistically, and significantly predicted degree commitment. Additionally, frequency of advising did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment. Thus, the null hypothesis was partially rejected, and the hypothesis was partially accepted. In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings, study limitations, and recommendations for practical application and further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Research shows that minority students, including Hispanic/Latino students, are less likely to persist to course completion in online courses (Xu & Jaggars, 2014) and more likely to withdraw from online courses (Kaupp, 2012). Academic advising is proven to increase persistence (Kuhn, 2008), especially in online programs (Beck & Milligan, 2014). However, little research exists to measure the impact of academic advising on Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs. Current research (Arbelo et al., 2019; Hart, 2012; Johnson & Galy, 2013) supports the need to investigate further persistence among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online programs.

A quantitative study was conducted to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment. Data were collected from public and private four-year higher education institutions in Texas. A multiple regression analysis revealed satisfaction with academic advising positively, statistically, and significantly predicted degree commitment: $p = .03$. Conversely, frequency of advising did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment: $p = .50$. The current chapter will discuss the present study's findings, study limitations, implications for academic advising, and recommendations for practical application and future research.

Discussion of Findings

Multiple regression analysis was completed to determine if satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predicted degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs.

The following research question and hypotheses guided the current study:

RQ1: How do satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising predict degree commitment among Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in online bachelor's degree programs?

H_0: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are not predictive of Hispanic/Latino student's degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

H_1: Satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising are predictive of Hispanic/Latino degree commitment in online bachelor's degree programs.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that the regression model did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment. Upon individual analysis, satisfaction with advising positively, statistically, and significantly predicted degree commitment. However, frequency of advising did not statistically and significantly predict degree commitment. Thus, the null hypothesis was partially rejected, and the hypothesis was partially accepted since satisfaction with advising predicted degree commitment. Researchers have documented the need for academic advising services in online degree programs (Burns et al., 2019; Cross, 2018; Gravel, 2012; Milman et al., 2015; Raphael, 2006; Schroeder & Terras, 2015), and the current study reaffirms the need for academic advising services in online bachelor's programs. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature by showing just how vital satisfaction with advising services are, as high-quality academic advising services increase student degree commitment (persistence).

Satisfaction With Advising

In the current study, participants were asked to respond to statements concerning their advisor and the advising services they received. As outlined in Chapter 4, most students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor listened to what they had to say, their advisor was concerned about their overall development, made sure they got the best

possible educational experience, were trustworthy, professional, and ethical, and that their advising appointments were a positive experience. Additionally, most students agreed or strongly agreed regarding statements related to their academic advisors' knowledge of course, schedule planning, and graduation requirements. In their study, Schroeder and Terras (2015) identified the following academic advising needs; program knowledge, trust, seeing the student as an individual, and the importance of advising. Students reported how much they valued and appreciated the academic advising they received and expressed just how critical academic advising was to their academic success and persistence (Schroeder & Terras, 2015).

Additionally, Raphael (2006) found that online students reported a strong need for precise and comprehensive advising concerning degree requirements. Although the current study did not seek to identify the specific academic advising needs of students, the AAQ touched on those particular needs determined by Schroeder and Terras (2015) and Raphael (2006). As expected, students responded positively to statements related to those identified needs, for example, my advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements, reaffirming the impact of satisfaction with advising on degree commitment.

Specifically related to satisfaction with advising, Cross (2018) found that quick response times, knowledge of degree programs and academic policies, and helpfulness of the advisor were associated with positive advising experiences, while barriers such as personality and behavior resulted in negative advising experiences. This finding is consistent with the current study, as most students reported a sense of satisfaction in these areas. Furthermore, conflicts with personality or behavior between the advisor and the advisee may explain why a few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements about their advisor or advising appointments (i.e., I find academic advising appointments to be a positive experience). Aragon and Johnson

(2008) identified institutional mistakes, which included advisement, as a reason for noncompletion. This finding is consistent with the current study, as an unknowledgeable or inaccurate advisor can negatively impact a student's attitude toward degree completion.

When students have meaningful, supportive relationships with their academic advisors, their motivation to succeed increases (Shiroma, 2015). Building rapport (Glazier, 2016) and ensuring advisors provide effective advising services (Beck & Milligan, 2014) are just a few ways to increase satisfaction with advising. Additionally, campus-based connections promote success (Arbelo et al., 2019), reaffirming why student satisfaction with academic advising is essential to degree commitment.

Frequency of Advising

The current study found that frequency of advising did not statistically significantly predict degree commitment. This result could be interpreted as quality over quantity of advising appointments. Ohrablo (2018) noted that the amount of contact an advisor has with a student does not accurately represent the advisor's impact on the student. Additionally, Ohrablo (2018) offered that student feedback, quality of student interaction/engagement, and accuracy/thoroughness are more significant measures of advising services. In the current study, the mean number of appointments was 3.04. Most respondents reported meeting with an advisor between one and four times during the academic year. Among first-year students, Fosnacht et al. (2017) reported one to three meetings per school year, with approximately 10% having no meetings. In a study of online undergraduate students, Kuhn and Garcia (2020) reported that most students (78.73%) had either never met with their advisor or had only interacted with their advisor for less than an hour. The number of reported meetings in the current study is consistent with the findings of Fosnacht et al. (2017).

Although the current study did not find a statistically significant relationship between frequency of advising and degree commitment, Swecker et al. (2013) found that students on academic probation who met with an advisor three or more times were returned to good academic standing at a higher rate than those that did not. Miller et al. (2019) reported that the odds of student persistence increased each time they met with an advisor. Additionally, Smith and Allen (2014) found a connection between "attitudes predictive of success" (p. 60) and more frequent meetings with advisors. Furthermore, Eduljee and Michaud (2014) found that students who had a higher frequency of appointments with their advisors and spent more time in their academic advising appointments reported higher satisfaction with advising.

The research findings of Swecker et al. (2013), Smith and Allen (2014), and Miller et al. (2019) suggest that frequency of advising can positively or negatively impact a student's level of degree commitment, which differs from the current study, as no predictive relationship was found. However, the findings of Eduljee and Michaud (2014) are consistent with the present study—frequency of advising was related to satisfaction with advising, which in turn predicts degree commitment.

Measuring frequency of advising was crucial to the present study to determine the number of advising appointments Hispanic/Latino online students attended during the academic year. Although frequency of advising did not have a statistically significant relationship with degree commitment, the study revealed that Hispanic/Latino online students attended at least one advising appointment during the academic year, which can make all the difference.

Limitations

The current study had several limitations. First, the present study was only focused on collecting data from higher education institutions in Texas. Only using higher education

institutions in Texas may generalize the Hispanic/Latino student populations at similar institutions. Hispanic/Latino students in other states attending online programs may have different experiences than those reported in the current study. Additionally, the current study only focused on brick-and-mortar colleges and universities. Thus, student experiences may differ between brick-and-mortar colleges and those that are 100% fully online (remote) that do not have physical campuses.

Next, the use of survey research methodology causes a potential threat to the study's internal validity through respondent behavior. Podsakoff et al. (2003) identified several common method biases (i.e., social desirability, leniency biases, transient mood state). For example, if a respondent is friends with their advisor, they may rate them higher than they deserve (leniency bias). Even though participants were notified that their responses were anonymous in the survey email invitation and on the informed consent form, method biases can still exist.

Last, the most significant limitation of this study was the number of survey responses. At first, the study sample only included one higher education institution in Texas with a large Hispanic/Latino population and many online bachelor's degree programs, which would provide enough respondents to meet the required sample size of 68. Wu et al. (2022) reported that the average response rate for surveys in education was 44%. I anticipated that data collection would take approximately three weeks to meet or exceed the necessary sample size of 68. Although the survey was sent to 889 participants, the response rate was only 6.41% after three weeks. Therefore, I had to expand data collection to additional sites within Texas. Expansion to other sites required researching institutions to determine the size of their Hispanic/Latino student population and if the institution offered online bachelor's degree programs. Then, I had to contact each institution and meet any IRB requirements, which took between two and three

weeks, depending on the process and staff availability. The response rate of the four other higher education institutions totaled 9.52% (n = 315). Between the original and expended data collection, I met the required number of respondents. The sender could be one possible reason for lower response rates in the current study. In the present study, email senders included administration, academic advisors, and faculty. As Saleh and Bista (2017) found, students were more likely to open emails from organizations they are a part of or people they know. Students were also more inclined to complete surveys sent by their colleagues or faculty/program leadership (Saleh & Bista, 2017).

Although the current study had several limitations, those limitations did not negatively impact the robustness of the study.

Implications

The current study found that satisfaction with advising predicted degree commitment. Research combining academic advising practices related to Hispanic/Latino students (and other minorities) enrolled in online programs is limited, leaving researchers (Arbelo et al., 2019; Hart, 2012; Johnson & Galy, 2013) calling for additional investigation into these areas. Therefore, the current study was vital to expand research in higher education programs.

In closing, the composite persistence model (Rovai, 2003) was the theoretical framework that guided the current study. The composite persistence model focuses on student characteristics before and after admission to higher education, impacting their persistence decision. The present study focused on ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino) as the before-admission factor, satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising as internal factors, and degree commitment as the persistence decision. The current study results confirm the composite persistence model, as the internal

factors (satisfaction with advising and frequency of advising) predicted a student's persistence decision (degree commitment).

Recommendations for Practical Application

The current study reaffirms the importance of a positive advisor-advisee relationship. When students are satisfied with their academic advising experience, it positively increases their attitude toward degree commitment. The following will offer recommendations for practical application at higher education institutions.

Advisors Must Understand the Needs of Their Student Populations

Academic advisors help students by providing a plethora of knowledge related to institutional policies and procedures, educational and professional goal setting, and how to navigate through the college experience. Additionally, academic advisors provide support, kindness, empathy, inclusivity, and sometimes a shoulder to lean on. Academic advising differs from institution to institution regarding how students are assigned and what advising models and methods are used. Although several advising methods exist, one size does not fit all. What one student feels is a satisfactory advising appointment, another may feel is unsatisfactory. It is essential that academic advisors need to understand the differing needs of their students. Therefore, continued assessment of academic advising practices is recommended to ensure that advising centers grow and change, just as their student populations do. Some recommendations for assessment include holding focus groups or sending out surveys.

Murphy and Murphy (2018) explained that Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students face many academic, personal, and cultural obstacles. Therefore, it is recommended that advisors stay current with current literature and research. Recommendations include professional development opportunities that offer industry-specific training. Although conferences are an excellent way for

advisors to keep well-informed about changing student populations and appropriate advising methods, advising centers do not need to break the bank to provide opportunities to their advisors. Low or no-cost options for professional development are available. These include in-house training, guest speakers (that require little to no fee), and free online or virtual training offered by state and national academic advising organizations such as the Texas Academic Advising Network (TEXAAN) or the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).

Advisors Must Form Positive Relationships With Their Students

Aside from understanding their student populations, building positive relationships with advisees is crucial. One important way to build rapport with students is through trust. Trust was essential to advising satisfaction in a study of online students (Schroeder & Terras, 2015). In the current study, most students reported that they trusted their advisors. It is recommended that advisors are professional, prepared for their appointments, provide accurate information, and follow through on any action items to ensure trust. It is also highly recommended that if an advisor tells a student they will do something, that the advisor follows through with their promise. If the advisor does not follow through, the student is less likely to trust them in the future and could potentially spread this distrust among other students. Thus, the student's satisfaction with advising would decline.

Additionally, the accuracy of information is essential. Students trust that their advisor provides them with accurate information. It is recommended that advisors keep up to date with institutional policies, procedures, and changes to provide accurate information to their students. It is also important to note that it is okay if an advisor does not have the answer. Sometimes it is necessary to follow up with other staff to find the answer. However, this loops back into trust and ensuring the advisor follows up with the student to provide the answer. Before each

semester, advisors should ensure that all their handouts, pamphlets, weblinks, departmental contact information, and other important information they may provide to students are updated. It is also recommended that departments meet to discuss any updates in policies and procedures so that advisors are up to date with these changes and can provide accurate information.

Another recommendation for building rapport with students is for academic advisors to provide a safe and inclusive space for students to feel welcome and comfortable. In other words, a space conducive to a conversation between the advisor and advisee. For fully online students, the option to attend an advising appointment on campus with their advisor may not be possible. Therefore, a virtual or phone appointment may be necessary. For virtual advising appointments, Wang and Houdyshell (2021) recommend that advisors turn on their cameras to "increase social presence and enhance student emotional and cognitive engagement" to build rapport (p. 50). Advisors should also conduct themselves professionally online (i.e., dressed appropriately, have a professional background) to give a positive first impression (Wang & Houdyshell, 2021).

Additionally, Schroeder and Terras (2015) found in a study of online students that "students operationalized quality in advising largely by the personable attributes of the advisors and consistent incidences of fulfilled advisor responsibility" (p. 48). Before meeting with students, it is recommended that advisors take a quick minute to ensure that their appearance and workspace are professional, whether the meeting is face-to-face or virtual. Taking a short minute to tidy one's desk could mean the difference between a student being satisfied or unsatisfied with their advising experience. Additionally, before each semester, advisors should do some light housekeeping to spruce up their workspace to ensure it is inviting (in person and online). Some examples could include adding a succulent to your desk, an updated picture of your family or pet, or finding new (professional) Zoom backgrounds.

Advisors Must Ensure Quality Over Quantity of Advising Appointments

As the current study found, frequency of advising was not predictive of degree commitment. However, satisfaction with advising was. During peak academic advising seasons, such as new student orientation and registration, advisors must see large numbers of students each week to accommodate the needs of their student populations. Typically, these advising sessions are prescriptive and transactional, focusing only on course selection. Unfortunately, these prescriptive advising appointments do not allow much room for academic advisors to build the rapport and trust necessary for students to have satisfactory advising experiences. As previously noted, Ohrablo (2018) explained that the amount of contact an advisor has with a student does not accurately represent the advisor's impact on the student. However, the quality of student interaction, engagement, accuracy, and thoroughness are more significant measures of advising services (Ohrablo, 2018). Therefore, advisors must focus not only on prescriptive advising but also on relationship building during these peak seasons.

It is recommended that advisors aspire to make the most out of each appointment, no matter how short or frequent they may be. A satisfactory advising appointment starts and ends with a positive greeting and a smile, making the student feel welcome and encouraged to return. When advisors take those extra few moments to ask how the student is doing and actively listen to what the student has to say, it lets the student know that you have a genuine interest in them and their success. Additionally, it may be time for advisors to move away from fast-paced prescriptive advising and focus on a more relational approach. As previously recommended, continuous assessment is necessary to improve academic advising services. Because the quality of advising is vital to satisfaction with advising, it is critical for advising centers to listen to what

students have to say about the advising services they receive if the advising center hopes to improve.

These recommendations are designed to help academic advisors grow in their profession and build positive relationships with their students, increasing their satisfaction with advising and, thus, increasing their degree commitment. Academic advisors are essential for higher education institutions and contribute immensely to student persistence to graduation. By understanding the needs of diverse student populations, keeping current with advising research and literature, building rapport and trust with students, and focusing on quality over quantity, academic advisors can increase students' satisfaction with advising appointments and improve their quality.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is necessary to expand on the findings of the current study. One opportunity for future research is to expand the study to higher education institutions outside of Texas. The current study only focused on brick-and-mortar higher education institutions in Texas. Future research could include higher education institutions in other states or countries and 100% online (remote) programs.

Additionally, the current study only used quantitative research methods. Although valuable data was collected and reported, contributing significantly to the current research and literature, a mixed-methods or qualitative study could expand upon the current findings. By using a mixed-methods or qualitative research approach, respondents would have the opportunity to explain why they responded a certain way. For instance, in the current study, many students responded positively concerning questions about their academic advisors. Having a greater comprehension of why the respondents felt that way would provide more in-depth knowledge to

assess what academic advisors are doing right or wrong. Also, it would allow for greater insight into frequency of academic advising appointments. In other words, why did one student need to see their academic advisor four times over the academic year while another felt it was only necessary to see their academic advisor once?

Although the current research study sheds light on how satisfaction with advising and frequency of academic advising predict degree commitment, additional research can help build on this information. Further research on this topic is not only necessary but will continue to help institutions of higher education recognize how vital academic advising services are to degree commitment and persistence.

Summary

In the United States, enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students increased from only 4% in the fall of 1976 to 17% in the fall of 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Additionally, Hispanic/Latino enrollment in online courses increased from 13.4% in 2003 to 38.4% in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). Although Hispanic/Latino student enrollment is up, nonpersistence still plagues higher education. In fall of 2016, only 70.4% of Hispanic/Latino students persisted to the following fall semester (National Student Clearinghouse, 2018), and I advocate that higher education can do better. Based on this study's findings, ensuring that Hispanic/Latino students are satisfied with their advising experiences is one lever that higher education can use to increase persistence and thus improve graduation rates. Moreover, quality of advising is more predictive than quantity. Therefore, this study affirms how vital academic advising services are to minority students, specifically those that are Hispanic/Latino.

By meeting the needs of Hispanic/Latino students, specifically in online degree programs, academic advisors and other student affairs practitioners can continue to enhance and provide the services necessary for student success. Hispanic and Latino students who do not persist to graduation are more likely to experience undesirable outcomes associated with social and economic well-being (Murphy & Murphy, 2018), such as fewer job opportunities and lower wages and earnings (Millea et al., 2018; Robles, 2009). Academic advisors make a difference in student's lives by providing the support and knowledge necessary to persevere and persist to graduation. Persisting to graduation will open the door for Hispanic/Latino students to obtain meaningful employment, living wages, and repeated opportunities for advancement, leading to continued success in their professional and personal lives.

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v1.10

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Appendix B: Permission to Use the AAQ

myACU powered by Google

Shayne Futujma [redacted]

Academic Advising Scale

Shayne Futujma [redacted] Sat, Apr 11, 2020 at 7:30 AM
To: [redacted]

Good morning Marilee,

My name is Shayne Futujma and I am a current Doctor of Organizational Leadership student at Abilene Christian University. My dissertation topic is Hispanic Student Persistence in Online Education. As an Academic Advisor, my interest is in how we as advisors positively impact the persistence of Hispanic students. Currently, I am working on my Concept Proposal, which includes the tentative methodology. In my search for a survey instrument, I came across your article "Capturing the Student Perspective: A New Instrument for Measuring Advising Satisfaction", I am writing to ask if this scale has an official name and also, if I can have your permission to use this scale in my research? At this time, I am only working on my Concept Proposal, so I will not conduct any actual research for some time (probably closer to 2021). I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter. If you have any questions about my research, please let me know. I hope that you and your family are safe and healthy during this time.

--
Shayne Futujma
Abilene Christian University
Ed.D Student

Marilee Lukefahr [redacted] Mon, Apr 13, 2020 at 10:53 AM
To: Shayne Futujma [redacted]
Cc: Erin Buchanan [redacted]

Hello! Thanks for reaching out. We'd be happy for you to use our survey instrument in your research! We never really came up with an official name for it, unfortunately. We'd love to see the finished product when you're done!

Sincerely,
Marilee Lukefahr (Teasley)

Appendix C: Permission to Use the Degree Commitment Scale of the CPQ

myACU powered by Google

Shayne Futujma [redacted]

Request to use CPQ V2 - Degree Commitment

2 messages

Shayne Futujma [redacted] Tue, Feb 23, 2021 at 5:25 PM
To: [redacted]

Good evening Dr. Davidson,

My name is Shayne Futujma and I am a current doctoral student, working on my dissertation. I would like to request your permission to use the Degree Commitment questions in CPQ V2 for my research. Please let me know if this is permitted.

Thank you,

--
Shayne Futujma
Abilene Christian University
Ed.D Student

Bill Davidson [redacted] Wed, Feb 24, 2021 at 10:44 AM
To: Shayne Futujma [redacted]

Hi Shayne,
Yes, you have my permission to use the questions for Degree Commitment on the CPQ in your doctoral research. I am attaching a document that might help your research endeavors.
Best wishes,
Bill

William B. Davidson, PhD
Retired Professor of Psychology
Angelo State University (1993-2019)
University of South Carolina - Aiken (1975-1993)
[redacted]

Appendix D: IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

August 31, 2021

Shayne Futujma
Department of Educational Leadership
Abilene Christian University

Dear Shayne,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "An Examination of Academic Advising: How Satisfaction with Advising and Frequency of Advising Appointments Predict Degree Commitment Among Hispanic/Latino Students in an Online Bachelor's Degree Program",

(IRB# 21-089)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix E: Academic Advising Questionnaire (AAQ)

1. Advising appointments are worth my time.

Strongly Disagree /Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

2. My advisor listens to what I have to say.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

3. My advisor is knowledgeable about course offerings.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

4. My advisor has helped me develop a long-term education plan.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

5. My advisor is prepared for my advising appointments.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

6. My advisor is concerned about my overall development as a student.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

7. My advisor considers my interests and talents when helping me choose courses to take.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

8. After my advising appointments, I feel that every course in my new schedule has a purpose.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

9. My advisor makes sure that I get the best possible educational experience.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

10. My advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

11. If my advisor does not know the answer to one of my questions, he/she makes the effort to connect me to someone who does.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

12. My advisor encourages me to speak freely in our appointments.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

13. I am given the time I need during my academic advising appointments.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

14. My advisor and I work together as a team.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

15. My advisor acts in a professional manner.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree /Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

16. I can trust my advisor.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

17. I feel like I will graduate in a reasonable amount of time thanks to my advisor's planning.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

18. I would recommend my advisor to a friend.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree /

Strongly Agree

19. My advisor is ethical.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

20. I find academic advising appointments to be a positive experience.

Strongly Disagree / Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree / Neutral / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree

Appendix F: College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ)

1. How supportive is your family of your pursuit of a college degree, in terms of their encouragement and expectations?

very supportive/somewhat supportive/neutral /somewhat unsupportive/very unsupportive/not applicable

2. At this moment in time, how strong would you say your commitment is to earning a college degree here, or elsewhere?

very strong/somewhat strong/neutral/somewhat weak/very weak/ not applicable

3. When you think of the people who mean the most to you (friends and family), how disappointment do you think they would be if you quit school?

very disappointed/somewhat disappointed/neutral/ not very disappointed/ not at all disappointed/not applicable

4. There are so many things that can interfere with students making progress toward a degree, feelings of uncertainty about finishing are likely to occur along the way. At this moment in time, how certain are you that you will earn a college degree?

very certain/somewhat certain /neutral/somewhat uncertain/very uncertain/not applicable

5. After beginning college, students sometimes discover that a college degree is not quite as important to them as it once was. How strong is your intention to persist in your pursuit of the degree, here or elsewhere?

very strong/somewhat strong/neutral/somewhat weak/very weak/ not applicable

6. When you consider the benefits of having a college degree and the costs of earning it, how much would you say that the benefits outweigh the costs, if at all?

benefits far outweigh the costs/ benefits somewhat outweigh the costs/benefits and costs are equal/costs somewhat outweigh the benefits/costs far outweigh the benefits/not applicable