ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN

CAMPUS MINISTRY ON RETENTION AND ACADEMIC

SUCCESS: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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A Dissertation

Presented to

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Doctor of Education

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by

Robert Mark Rasor

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APPROVAL SHEET

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PREFACE

When I graduated from Baylor University in 1982, I celebrated the fact that never again would I read something assigned to me. From that day forward, I would choose what to read. I was finished with formal education and had no intention of pursuing post-graduate studies. However, God had other plans for me.

In 2003 I began to feel a call to preach. God opened doors, and I started providing pulpit supply in and around Miami, Oklahoma. It took very little time for me to realize that I needed more formal education if I were going to stand in the pulpit and divide God's word. In January 2007, I started my journey toward a Master of Divinity at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. My attitude had changed 180 degrees. I now cherished the assigned reading. I had the privilege of sitting under the teaching of men who had dedicated their lives to preparing men and women to serve in the Kingdom. The journey was long, six and a half years, and in May 2013, I graduated (with honors). Once again my formal education was concluded. Yet not for long. Within six months I was missing the challenge of graduate studies. I began to look for a new challenge.

During the time I was earning my Master of Divinity, I had also experienced a career change. In 2012 I joined the executive administration of a small college in my home town. As I continued the search for a new challenge, God led me to the Doctor of Education program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I applied in late 2013, was accepted in spring 2014, and started seminar work in May 2014. The next thirty-four months were some of the most challenging and rewarding of my life.

Several individuals have contributed prominently in the accomplishments I

have made in the Ed.D. program. Among these are Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, Dr. Michael Wilder, and Dr. John David Trentham. Dr. Jones excoriated my first paper and then praised the re-write, offering great encouragement. Dr. Wilder tolerated incessant questioning about appropriate research methods and the application of statistics. Dr. Trentham persisted as I struggled to define my thesis and zero in on a meaningful project. I would not have finished without his supervision and guidance.

I absolutely must mention my cohort. They accepted this old accountant with no background in education with open arms and helped me gain a working knowledge of educational theory and spiritual formation. I am especially thankful for the help of JDS and JH (you know who you are). Their assistance in refining my critical analysis and writing process, and their encouragement were priceless. I am deeply indebted to them.

Finally, to my mother, two sons, and their families, thank you for always believing in me, loving me, and not letting me quit.

All glory to God.

<div align="right">R. Mark Rasor</div>

Miami, Oklahoma

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Each fall, millions of young people across the United States step onto college campuses to continue their formal education beyond high school. Many of them will have applied to, written essays for, and interviewed with the nation's best research universities. These students will have spent most of their adolescent lives preparing for post-secondary studies at their chosen institution. If they are in the top five percent of their high school class, the university may even have recruited them and offered scholarships to entice them.

Others have chosen a different path and applied for and been granted admission to a regional institution. Most of these students are academically ready for college but are not interested in the "elite" institutions.

Still others have chosen to attend a two-year college.[1] Of these students attending two-year colleges, many do not have the financial resources or the academic credentials necessary to attend a four-year institution.[2] Some will be first-generation college students. Some have no desire for a bachelor degree but understand that a high

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[1]For purposes of brevity, this paper will use the term "two-year college" to refer to those institutions which typically limit their offerings to certificates and associates degrees. These institutions do not offer bachelor degrees or post graduate degrees. Historically, these institutions have been referred to as "community colleges," "two-year colleges," and "junior colleges."

[2]The College Board's Trends in Higher Education reports that the average annual cost of tuition, fees, room, and board at a public four-year institution is $18,943. The average annual cost for public, two-year institutions is $11,052. While minimum ACT scores vary by college, many four-year colleges set the minimum ACT score in the mid 20's. Very few will accept students with ACT scores below 18. Many two-year colleges accept all applicants.

school diploma is inadequate for career advancement in our knowledge-based economy.[3]

For these students, the best option for continuing their education is quite often a two-year

college.

Regardless of the type of student or campus, new college students find

themselves facing new challenges. College students are expected to be much more

independent than high school students. For the most part, they must choose what classes

to take, when to take them, and from what professor. They must decide to go to class or

to not go to class. They must decide to turn in assignments or to not turn in assignments.

In short, they must decide to succeed or to fail. It is truly the student's choice. Many

students adapt quickly to the new paradigm and graduate. However, many do not. Many

find themselves falling behind, losing their way, and eventually failing one or more

classes. Repeated class failures lead to financial aid/academic suspension.[4] Many college

students will leave the college campus without the education they were pursuing. The

National Center for Education Statistics reports that nearly thirty percent of students

enrolled as first-time degree-seekers in the fall of one year do not enroll in classes in the

fall of the following year.[5] They simply drop out.

In light of this attrition, retention of first-time, full-time college freshmen has

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[3]Veronica A. Lotkowski, Steven B. Robbins, and Richard J. Noeth, "The Role of Academic and Non-Academic Factors in Improving College Retention: ACT Policy Report," ACT Office of Policy Research, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/college_retention.pdf.

[4]"Make Satisfactory Academic Progress," US Department of Education, accessed February 23, 2015, https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/staying-eligible#meet-basic-criteria.

[5]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 326.30, Retention of First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Level and Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted: 2006 to 2012," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_326.30.asp.

become a prevailing topic at higher education conferences across the United States.[6]

While attending these conferences, college administrators discuss numerous methods to

influence retention including remedial instruction, orientation classes, advisement,

tutoring, and student involvement in various campus organizations. In this study, I will

assess the impact, if any, of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry[7] by

students who begin their collegiate education at two-year institutions on their subsequent

retention, completion, and academic success.

Statement of the Problem

Many institutions of higher education are aggressively seeking ways to

improve student retention[8] and completion.[9] However, two-year colleges face some of the

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[6]A quick Internet search discovered more than two dozen conferences in 2015 devoted in total or in part to retention. These conferences are offered by organizations including The Higher Learning Commission, The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, Noel-Levitz Education Consultants, Educause, The Educational Policy Institute, and Academic Impressions.

[7]Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) is the most common name used for Southern Baptist ministries on college campuses today. Synonymous names include Baptist Student Union (BSU), Baptist Student Fellowship (BSF), and Baptist Collegiate Fellowship (BCF). For the sake of brevity, I used Baptist Collegiate Ministry throughout this work referring to Southern Baptist work on college campuses. However, when interviewees referred to the Baptist Student Union or BSU, I retained their words.

[8]The National Center for Education Statistics defines retention as "A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall. For all other institutions this is the percentage of first-time, degree/certificate-seeking students from the previous fall who are either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current fall." National Center for Educational Statistics glossary of terms, accessed February 1, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/index.asp?id=772.

[9]The term completion is used over graduation since many two-year colleges offer certificate programs in addition to degree programs. Upon completion of the certificate program, the student is awarded a certificate indicating completion of the prescribed course of study rather than a diploma.

greatest challenges in this area. Two-year colleges are traditionally open-admission[10] institutions requiring only a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate to gain admission.[11] These open-admission policies result in under-prepared students with significant academic deficiencies being admitted to college. In addition, two-year colleges are typically less expensive to attend. The average cost of attendance at a public, two-year college is forty percent lower than it is at a public, four-year institution.[12] These lower-cost institutions attract low-income, under-resourced students.[13] Even though federal, state, local, and institutional financial aid covers some of the cost of attendance,[14] many of these students have very limited resources to cover any additional costs.[15] Many are first-generation college students who, when they encounter

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[10]The National Center for Education Statistics defines open admission as, "Admission policy whereby the school will accept any student who applies." National Center for Educational Statistics glossary of terms, accessed February 1, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/?charindex=O.

[11]Marcia A. Roman, "Community College Admission and Student Retention," *Journal of College Admission* 194 (Winter 2007): 19.

[12]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 330.40, Average Total Cost of Attendance for First-time, Full-time Undergraduate Students in Degree-granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Control and Level of Institution, Living Arrangement, and Component of Student Costs: 2009-10 through 2012-13," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_330.40.asp.

[13]Kay McClenney, C. Nathan Marti, and Courtney Adkins, "Student Engagement and Student Outcomes: Key Findings from CCSSE Validation Research," Community College Survey of Student Engagement, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm.

[14]"Digest of Education Statistics, Table 331.30, Average Amount of Grant and Scholarship Aid and Average Net Price for First-time, Full-time students receiving Title IV Aid, and Percentage Distribution of Students, by Control and Level of Institution and Income Level: 2009-10 through 2012-13," The National Center for Education Statistics, accessed January 1, 2016, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_331.30.asp?current=yes.

[15]The Department of Education reports $5,775 as the maximum Pell grant a

difficulties, have no experienced family member to whom they can turn for support.[16]

These, and other factors, lead to two-year college retention rates of less than 59.0 percent

compared to four-year college retention rates of 78.8 percent.[17] Among the many good

reasons institutions must address these retention rates are two extremely important ones:

mission and funding.

Mission

Institutions of higher education exist to educate students. W. Norton Grubb

writes, "Our educational institutions are relatively specialized; presumably they can

concentrate on teaching and learning in ways that families, workplaces, and community

and political institutions no longer can."[18]

Historically, college education was reserved for the elite and only the most

academically prepared even considered college. Before admission, students were required

to show that they had a hunger to expand their knowledge, a chosen course of study, and

a plan to execute. The Journal of College Admission reported that in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, "prospective students at all major American colleges and

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student could receive in the 2016 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, accessed February 1, 2015, https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell). The maximum student loan amount for full-time freshmen was $5,500 (U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, accessed February 1, 2015, https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized). The average cost of attendance including tuition, fees, books, supplies, room and board was between $8,339 and $15,896 depending on living arrangements.

[16]Roman, "Community College Admission and Student Retention," 19.

[17]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 326.30, Retention of First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Level and Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted: 2006 to 2012," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_326.30.asp.

[18]W. Norton Grubb et al., *Honored but Invisible: An Inside Look at Teaching in Community Colleges* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1.

universities were examined as to their character, background, and demonstrated proficiency in Latin and Greek. Later, toward the end of the eighteenth century, a new requirement, a working knowledge of arithmetic, was added to Latin and Greek as a required subject for admission to college."[19] Students arrived on campus well prepared academically. However, the college culture began to change in the twentieth century.

In the early 1900's, public two-year colleges started forming. These colleges initially focused on liberal arts training. In the 1930's, community colleges began to offer job-training programs to address the widespread unemployment created during the Depression. Clearly, two-year colleges serve multiple purposes. They prepare students for the work force or for transfer to four-year colleges.

In the 1960's, the number of community colleges more than doubled with the opening of 457 new public community colleges. When I started my research, there were more than 1,160 community colleges in the United States.[20] Admission to these institutions is quite different. Grubb comments, "Because they are open-access institutions—without an admissions process requiring academic qualification—they have often been called 'second-chance' institutions providing a second crack at higher education for students whose motivation and performance in earlier schooling were inadequate to gain them admission to four-year colleges."[21]

With the proliferation of community colleges and federal student aid (see "The Higher Education of Act of 1965" in chap. 2), many high school graduates begin their college education at a community college. They have no real academic plan. They simply

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[19] Andrew V. Beale, "The Evolution of College Admission Requirements," *Journal of College Admission* 214 (January 2012): 21.

[20] "Community Colleges Past to Present," American Association of Community Colleges, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/history/Pages/pasttopresent.aspx.

[21] Grubb, *Honored but Invisible,* 3.

know that college follows high school. They use community college to find out what they want to do.[22] In addition, these students are less academically prepared than other college students. Professors face students who are ill prepared and have little idea what is expected from them.[23] Yet the mission of the college is to educate these students, regardless of the challenges and whether they are seeking employment skills or a bachelor degree.

There are good reasons administrators at two-year colleges should be interested in retention. Pascarella and Terenzini found that "initial attendance at a two-year (versus a four-year) institution reduced the likelihood of bachelor's degree completion by 15 to 20 percent."[24] However, Brain Surette reports that "possession of an associate's degree raised the probability of attending four-year college."[25] These findings reinforce the contention that two-year institutions serve an important role in our society today.

Funding

In August of 2012, the Center for Science, Technology, and Economic Development, SRI International, prepared an extensive report on educational funding for the Nevada Legislature. The report looked at all fifty states. They found that state appropriations for higher education are formula based in seventeen states and non-

[22]Grubb, *Honored but Invisible,* 4.

[23]Ibid., 7.

[24]Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students,* vol. 2*, A Third Decade of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 376.

[25]Brian J. Surette, "The Effects of Two-Year College on the Labor Market and Schooling Experiences of Young Men," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (June 1997): 20, accessed February 17, 2015, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=60928.

formula based in nineteen states. An additional fourteen states use a hybrid method.[26] SRI

International states, "Generally . . . both formula- and non-formula funding tends to be

driven by student enrollment."[27] An example of such funding can be found in the state of

Oklahoma's funding guidelines:

> In arriving at the needs of institutions, it is necessary to gather and consider information about such factors as functions and educational programs of the institutions, the *student enrollment* [emphasis added] of the institutions, faculty and staff manpower requirements, faculty salaries and the like.[28]

However, initiatives such as Achieving the Dream[29] and Complete College

America[30] are redirecting attention toward completion. These organizations have asserted

that the mission of institutions of higher education is not simply to enroll students but to

educate them. And these organizations are not the only ones looking at student success.

The U.S. Department of Education is looking more closely at student

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[26]"States' Methods of Funding Higher Education," 8, SRI International, accessed December 24, 2015, https://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/brochures/revised-sri_report_states_methods_of_funding_higher_education.pdf.

[27]Ibid.

[28]"Budget and Fiscal Affairs Manual,*"* Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, accessed November 30, 2015, https://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/2013/Chapter%204-2013%20final.pdf.

[29]"Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, Achieving the Dream now leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. Together with our Network of over 200 institutions of higher education, 100 coaches and advisors, 15 state policy teams, and numerous investors and partners working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia we are helping nearly 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams." "About Us," Achieving the Dream, accessed February 7, 2015, http://achievingthedream.org/about-us.

[30]"Established in 2009, Complete College America is a national nonprofit with a single mission: to work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations." "Our Work," Complete College America, accessed February 7, 2015, http://completecollege.org/about-cca/.

completion. As enrollment at public universities has grown, so has public funding. The

original Higher Education Act of 1965 appropriated seventy million dollars for student

financial aid.[31] The largest portion of this aid is now known as the Pell Grant and has

grown to nearly three billion dollars in 2014.[32] As funding increases, so does scrutiny.

The Department of Education requires schools be accredited to receive student financial

aid money. The department states, "The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education

provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of

quality."[33] Accrediting bodies have been established and asked to assess institutional

effectiveness by measuring many facets including student retention and completion.

Institutions failing to meet standards face the loss of Title IV funds.[34]

   State legislatures have also increased the focus on retention and completion.

Thirty-three states now use performance measures (retention, degrees/certificates granted,

etc.) to determine all or a portion of state funding to higher education institutions.[35]

Institutions are no longer measured strictly by how many students enroll. Rather, they are

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[31]Public Law 89-329, Sec. 401 (b), passed Nov. 8, 1965, accessed January 1, 2016, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg1219.pdf.

[32]"Federal Education Budget Project: Background and Analysis, Pell Grant Program," New America Foundation, accessed February 7, 2015, http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/federal-pell-grant-program.

[33]"Accreditation in the United States: Overview of Accreditation," U.S. Department of Education, accessed February 7, 2015, http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation.html#Overview.

[34]Title IV funds include Federal Family Education Loans, Direct Loans, Perkins Loans, Pell Grants, Academic Competitiveness Grants, National SMART Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study payments, U.S. "Student Aid Front2Back," Department of Education, accessed February 8, 2015, http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/site/front2back/programs/programs/fb_03_01_0030.htm.

[35]"Performance-Based Funding for Higher Education," National Conference of State Legislators, accessed February 3, 2015, http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/performance-funding.aspx.

measured by how many students complete their course of study and graduate.

College administrators know that the first step to graduating students is retaining students. Nearly twenty-eight percent of all college freshmen drop out before their sophomore year. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the drop-out rate jumps to forty-one percent of first-time freshmen enrolled in two-year colleges.[36] Faced with missional failure and the potential loss of funding, two-year colleges must find solutions to these problems.

Current Status of the Research Problem

A survey of the current literature demonstrated a need for this research. Although several articles and books on retention and student success have been published,[37] there is considerable space for new research. One very promising area of research indicates that student involvement is a valid predictor of student outcomes. In 1975, Alexander Astin published the results of a longitudinal study of college dropouts titled *Preventing Students from Dropping Out.* This study became the root for the theory

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[36]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 326.30, Retention of First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Level and Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted: 2006 to 2012," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_326.30.asp.

[37]J. B. Berger and J. F. Milem, "The Role of Student Involvement and Perceptions of Integration in a Causal Model of Student Persistence," *Research in Higher Education* 40, no. 6 (1999): 641-64; A. F. Cabrera, S. M. La Nasa, and K. R. Burkum, "On the Right Path: The Higher Education Story of One Generation," *Research in Higher Education* 42, no. 2 (2001): 119-49; W. Norton Grubb et al., *Honored But Invisible: An Inside Look at Teaching in Community College* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Gary R. Pike, "The Effects of Residential Learning Communities and Traditional Residential Living Arrangements on Educational Gains During the First Year of College," *Journal of College Student Development* 40, no. 3 (May-June 1999): 269-84; Karen A. Myers and Cheryl L. Bailey, "Member Involvement in a Student Religious Organization: A Qualitative Analysis" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, CA, Nov. 1989).

he would title *Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education*.[38]

When publishing this theory Astin writes, "The factors that contributed to the student's remaining in college suggested involvement, whereas those that contributed to the student's dropping out implied a lack of involvement."[39] Astin's theory proposes that student involvement outside the classroom was a strong predictor of retention. He defines involvement as follows:

> Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students.[40]

Several researchers have used Astin's developmental theory as a foundation for additional research. However, most of the research has been conducted using students at four-year institutions. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement reports, "At most, 10 percent of all higher education research studies use community college samples."[41] As previously noted, the average student attending a two-year college is quite different from the average student attending a four-year college. With two-year college enrollment exceeding 6.7 million in 2014, the most recent data available when my research began, additional research utilizing samples from two-year colleges is clearly appropriate.[42]

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[38]Alexander W. Astin, "Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education," *Journal of College Student Development* 40, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 523.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., 518.

[41]Kay McClenney, C. Nathan Marti, and Courtney Adkins, "Student Engagement and Student Outcomes: Key Findings from CCSSE Validation Research," Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2001, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.ccsse.org/aboutsurvey/docs/CCSSE%20Validation%20Summary.pdf.

[42]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 303.70, Total Undergraduate Fall

Additionally, the research on student involvement has focused primarily on programs and organizations sponsored by the institution: place of residence, honors programs, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, athletic involvement, involvement in student government, etc.[43] There has been very little research focusing on independent organizations serving institutions of higher education such as campus ministries (see chap. 2). In this study, I assessed the impact, if any, of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) on student retention, completion, and academic success.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to assess the impact, if any, of student involvement in BCM by students who began their college education at a two-year college on student retention, completion, and academic success. I surveyed students who self-identified as involved in campus ministry. The survey gathered various data points concerning involvement, retention, and academic success. Due to a low response rate on the surveys, I was unable to draw a statistical conclusion. Therefore, I added a qualitative element to the study. I conducted interviews with eighteen students to develop a better understanding of the impact, if any, of the involvement in campus ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success.

Need for the Study

Significant research has been conducted at four-year institutions regarding the

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Enrollment in Degree-granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Sex of Student, and Control and Level of Institution: Selected Years, 1970 through 2025," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_303.70.asp?current=yes.

[43]Astin, "Student Involvement," 526.

correlation between involvement in student activities and student retention.[44] Two

decades of such research has undeniably shown that when students regularly engage with

other students, with faculty and staff, and with the subject matter they are studying they

are more likely to learn, to persist and to attain their academic goals.[45] Understanding the

importance of student involvement can be quite useful to administrators at all schools as

they develop programs to encourage student involvement.

Even though significant numbers of students enroll at two-year colleges, most

of the research has focused on four-year colleges. Data from the National Center for

Educational Statistics indicate that of the 17,292,787 undergraduate students in 2013,

6,714,485, thirty-nine percent, were enrolled in two-year colleges.[46] Generalizing results

from studies of four-year institutions to two-year colleges is ill advised for numerous

reasons.

Historically, two-year colleges were tasked with providing the first two years

of study toward a bachelor's degree.[47] Today, the mission has been increased to include

"vocational education, contract education for local employers, remediation of basic skills,

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[44]For studies regarding retention at four-year colleges, see Robert M. Carini, George D. Kun, and Stephen P. Klein, "Student Engagement and Student Learning: Testing the Linkages," *Research in Higher Education* 33 (2006): 571-93; Wesley R. Habley and Randy McClanahan, "What Works in Student Retention? Four-Year Public Colleges," accessed February 21, 2015, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED515398.pdf; Vincent Tinto, "Research and Practice of Student Retention: What Next?" *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice* 8, no. 1 (2006-2007): 1-19; George Kuh et al., "Unmasking the Effects of Student Engagement on First-Year College Grades and Persistence," *The Journal of Higher Education* 79, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 540-63.

[45]McClenney, Marti, and Adkins, "Student Engagement and Student Outcomes."

[46]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 303.70."

[47]Roman, "Community College Admission and Student Retention," 19.

and even community services."[48] Unlike students attending four-year institutions, many two-year college students have no desire to earn a bachelor degree. This factor differentiates students at two-year colleges from those at four-year institutions.

Two-year colleges have also been given the task of providing increased access to higher education for underserved populations. These underserved populations tend to include a high proportion of low-income, first-generation students.[49] Even with federal financial aid in the form of Pell Grants and student loans, these students must often contend with extremely limited resources.[50] It should be assumed that first-generation college students often arrive on campus with limited knowledge of what it will take to be successful in college.[51] Two-year college policies of open enrollment result in significant numbers of academically underprepared students. As many as one in five students find themselves enrolled in zero-level, remediation courses that must be successfully completed before beginning classes in their program of study.[52] These courses earn the student no credit toward their degree or certificate. They are designed to simply address academic deficiencies demonstrated by the student.

This lack of existing research and the significant differences between the institutions and the students they serve speaks to the need for this study. The aim of this study is to assess the impact, if any, of involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on retention, completion, and academic success for students who begin their college education at a two-year institution.

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[48]Roman, "Community College Admission and Student Retention," 19.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., 20.

[52]Dinah Sparks and Nat Malkus, "Statistics in Brief: First-Year Undergraduate Remedial Coursetaking: 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed February 15, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013013.pdf.

Benefit of Study

The study benefits at least three groups. First, for students enrolling at two-year colleges, this study provides useful information for potentially improving their academic retention and performance. In the challenging environment of college, students need to take advantage of every available resource. This study helps identify whether involvement in BCM could be one of those resources. Second, for the various BCM's, the results of the study may influence their decisions regarding program development and student engagement. Third, for two-year college administrators, the study highlights the importance of student involvement in general and specifically in the category of evangelical campus ministry. Based on the results of this study, administrators may choose to alter their relationship with campus ministries on their campuses.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this study is to assess the impact, if any, of involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on student retention and completion and of involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on academic success. The study will look specifically at students who began their college education at a two-year college.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at a two-year college on student retention/completion?

     a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing to their retention?

     b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing toward their subsequent completion or graduation?

2. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at a two-year college on academic success?

     a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year institution and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward passing

more classes?

b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward a higher grade point average (GPA)?

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENT LITERATURE

This research study will assess the impact of student involvement in Baptist
Collegiate Ministry (BCM) by students at two-year colleges on the retention, completion,
and academic success of those students. This literature review begins with a description
of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and its impact on higher education. It then moves to
an examination of student retention and the two most prominent theories in the field. The
review then turns to a discussion of Involvement Theory in general and, finally, examines
the lack of research surrounding campus ministry involvement in particular.

The Higher Education Act of 1965

On November 8, 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Higher
Education Act of 1965. The act had two stated goals. The first goal was to increase
college access by providing financial aid to individual students to cover the cost
attendance. The second goal was to improve academic success by providing grants to
institutions to help fund the cost of student support services.[1] The initial appropriation of
the act was $25 million in 1966 and $50 million for 1967 and 1968.[2] That appropriation
would grow with each reauthorization of the act. The reauthorization of the act in fiscal

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[1]Patricia M. McDonough and Amy J. Fann, "The Study of Inequality," in
Sociology of Higher Education: Contributions and Their Context, ed. Patricia J. Gumport
(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007): 73.

[2]Public Law 89-329, Sec. 401 (b), passed Nov. 8, 1965, accessed September
12, 2015, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg1219.pdf.

year 2015 exceeded $6.9 billion.[3]

The Higher Education Act has been very successful in accomplishing the first goal. The act recognized that, for many, the cost of attendance includes more than just tuition and fees. According to Sec. 472 of the act, cost of attendance includes tuition and fees, books, supplies, transportation, personal, misc., room and board, dependent care, study abroad expenses, disability expenses, employment expenses for co-op study and loan fees.[4]

With financial aid available to pay all of those expenses, college enrollment at both public and private colleges began to grow significantly. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports total enrollment for all United States post-secondary institutions to have been 5.92 million in the fall of 1965. The very next year enrollment grew by eight percent to 6.39 million. As the public became aware of the financial aid available and as institutions began to assist students in obtaining that assistance, enrollments continued to grow. By the fall of 1975, total enrollment at all United States post-secondary institutions had grown to 11.15 million students, an increase of eighty-eight percent.[5] That enrollment growth has continued with reported enrollment passing 19.98 million in 2015, the last year data is available.[6]

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[3]This information provided by the Department of Education, Higher Education Fiscal Year 2015 Budget request, accessed September 12, 2015, http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget15/justifications/t-highered.pdf.

[4]This information taken from the Department of Education Federal Student Aid website, accessed September 12, 2015, http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1415FSAHbkVol3Ch2.pdf.

[5]"Digest for Educational Statistics, Table 168, Total Fall Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education, by Control and Type of Institution: 1963 to 1993," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed September 12, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d95/dtab168.asp.

[6]"Digest for Educational Statistics, Table 303.45, Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-granting Postsecondary Institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and age of student: 2011, 2013, and 2015," National Center for Educational

Unfortunately, accomplishing the second goal has proven to be far more elusive. Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski comment, "By the end of the 1960's, retention was a common concern discussed on college and university campuses."[7] In a study published in 1971, Elaine El-Khawas and Ann Bisconti found the following:

> Among the 705,512 freshmen who enrolled at four-year colleges or universities in 1961, over half received a bachelor's degree within four years. A good many others did eventually complete their baccalaureate work; by 1971, four out of five had a bachelor's degree.
>
> Among the 1,309,524 1966 freshmen (a cohort including those enrolling at two-year colleges), just under half received a bachelor's degree within four years of college entry, but about 80 percent earned the bachelor's by 1971.[8]

These statistics indicate that prior to the enactment of the Higher Education Act of 1965, approximately 20 percent of entering college freshmen dropped out of college prior to completing their course of study.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that 64.9 percent of the first-time, postsecondary students starting at two-year colleges and 35.8 percent of those starting at four-year colleges in 2003 had not earned any degree by spring, 2009.[9] Clearly, since the initial authorization of the Higher Education Act, retention and completion rates have not moved in the desired directions.

Statistics, accessed February 25, 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_303.45.asp.

[7]Cynthia Demetriou and Amy Schmitz-Sciborski, "Integration, Motivation, Strengths and Optimism: Retention Theories Past, Present, and Future," in *Proceedings of the 7th National Symposium on Student Retention,* ed. R. Hayes (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma, 2011), 300-301.

[8]Elaine El-Khawas and Ann Bisconti, "Five and Ten Years After College Entry: 1971 Followup of 1961 and 1966 College Freshmen," *Ace Research Reports* 9, no. 1 (1974): 4.

[9]"Digest for Educational Statistics, Table 326.40, Percentage Distribution of First-time Postsecondary Students Starting at 2- and 4-year Institutions During the 2003-04 Academic Year, by Highest Degree Attained, Enrollment Status, and Selected Characteristics: Spring 2009," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed September 12, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_326.40.asp.

Since 1965, the Higher Education Act has been renewed several times. The most recent reauthorization in 2015 appropriates more than $6.9 billion for higher education programs.[10] In spite of this 4,120 percent increase in spending, retention rates have fallen. In light of these declining retention rates, researches have sought to discover why college students persist or, conversely, why they depart.

Theories on Retention and Departure

Following the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the study of student retention and departure developed into a significant field of research. This literature review will summarize several studies. However, the focus will be on two seminal works regarding causes of student retention and college departure: Alexander Astin's *Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education* and Vincent Tinto's *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Curse of Student Attrition*.

Pascarella and Terenzini

In their book, *How College Affects Students,* vol. 2*, A Third Decade of Research,* Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini synthesize more than 2,600 studies on college impact on students.[11] Chapter 8 of that work, "Educational Attainment and Persistence," is relevant to this study. The authors first look at the Between-College effects. In this section, the authors attempt to "identify the unique or net influence of attending different kinds of postsecondary institutions."[12]

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[10]This information provided by the Department of Education, Higher Education Fiscal Year 2015 Budget request, accessed September 12, 2015, http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget15/justifications/t-highered.pdf.

[11]Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students,* vol. 2, *A Third Decade of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), xi.

[12]Ibid.*,* 75.

Among other observations[13] regarding the impact of institution type, the authors found that "the most consistent evidence suggested that beginning pursuit of the baccalaureate degree at a four-year rather than a two-year institution confers an advantage of 15 to 20 percentage points in the odds of completing that degree within a given period of time."[14] In spite of this finding, the authors also found that "community college students who made the transitions to a four-year institution suffered no disadvantage (compared with similar students who first enrolled in a four-year school) on any of three measures of educational attainment (graduate from a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, aspire to attend graduate school, and enroll in graduate school)."[15] These studies indicate that efforts to increase persistence of two-year college students leads to greater four-year college graduation rates.

Pascarella and Terenzini conclude that "the impact of various institutional characteristics on persistence and educational attainment, although statistically significant and independent of other factors, tends to be small . . . . Other forces, both more profound and more proximal, appear to be at work."[16]

The other forces they observed are numerous and include academic performance (grades), programmatic interventions such as orientation classes and remediation classes, financial aid, interactions with faculty, interaction with peers, residence, involvement in learning communities, academic major, and academic and

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[13]In addition to comparing two-year and four-year institutions, the authors looked at state policies and system structure, institutional control, institutional size, institutional quality, institutional gender composition, and institutional racial-ethnic composition. This study will focus on their observations regarding two-year versus four-year institutions.

[14]Pascarella and Terenzini, *How College Affects Students,* 374.

[15]Ibid., 377.

[16]Ibid., 395.

social engagement.[17] The research tends to support the theory that each of these forces has some effect on persistence and educational attainment. However, the authors conclude, "Despite a large number of studies designed to test one persistence model or another, the findings are inconsistent, and the causal linkages remain obscure."[18]

Alexander Astin

Alexander Astin believed that the literature on student development available in the mid-1980s created "confusion and perplexity."[19] Accordingly, he sought to develop a new theory. He first published *Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education* in 1984. The theory appealed to him because it was simple, explained most of the empirical knowledge available at the time, embraced widely divergent principals of student development, and was useful to both theoreticians and practitioners.[20]

The theory "argues that a particular curriculum, to achieve the effects intended, must elicit sufficient student effort and investment of energy to bring about the desired learning and development. Simply exposing the student to a particular set of courses may or may not work."[21] While other theories studied feelings such as intention, isolation, and congruence, Astin refined the concept of involvement to focus on behavior rather than thoughts or feelings.[22] Astin's theory includes five postulates:

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[17]Pascarella and Terenzini, *How College Affects Students,* 396-428.

[18]Ibid.*,* 440.

[19]Alexander W. Astin, "Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education," *Journal of College Student Development* 40, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 518.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., 522.

[22]Ibid., 519.

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

2. Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum.

3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.

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

5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.[23]

The implication of these postulates is that a student's time is viewed as a precious institutional resource. Astin observed:

> The theory of student involvement explicitly acknowledges that the psychic and physical time and energy of students are finite . . . . Here are the basic ingredients of a so-called "zero-sum" game, in which the time and energy that the student invests in family, friends, job, and other outside activities represent a reduction in the time and energy the student has to devote to educational development.[24]

The theory considers more than just class- and study-time. Each student must decide how to spend the twenty-four hours granted to them each day. How much time will the student devote to study, family, friends, recreation, etc.? Those decisions will have a significant impact on the student's future.

The theory has its basis in a study of college dropouts conducted in the early seventies. That study identified a positive correlation between involvement and student persistence. That is to say "the factors that contributed to the student's remaining in college suggested involvement, whereas those that contributed to the student's dropping out implied a lack of involvement."[25] Astin concluded that "nearly all forms of student involvement are associated with greater than average changes in entering freshman characteristics. And for certain student outcomes involvement is more strongly associated

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[23]Astin, "Student Involvement," 519.

[24]Ibid., 523.

[25]Ibid.

with change than either entering freshman characteristics or institutional

characteristics."[26] Astin then identified some specific forms of involvement and their

impact:

1. Place of residence – does the student live on-campus or off-campus?

2. Honors programs – does the student participate in honors programs?

3. Academic involvement – does the student exhibit good study habits and show interest in their courses?

4. Student-faculty interaction – does the student engage with faculty outside the classroom?

5. Athletic involvement – does the student participate in college athletics?

6. Involvement in student government – does the student participate in student government?

Each of these areas of student involvement demonstrated a positive correlation with

retention.[27] In other words, Astin's research indicated student involvement had a greater

impact on student retention and academic success than student characteristics such as

high-school GPA and socio-economic status or institutional characteristics such as

advisement policies and first-year experience courses.

Astin believes that the principal advantage of his theory "is that it directs

attention away from subject matter and technique and toward the motivation and behavior

of the student . . . . Thus, all institutional policies and practices—those relating to

nonacademic as well as academic matters—can be evaluated in terms of the degree to

which they increase or reduce student involvement."[28]

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[26]Astin, "Student Involvement," 524.

[27]Ibid., 524-6.

[28]Ibid., 529.

Vincent Tinto

Vincent Tinto's *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Curse of Student Attrition* was first published in 1987 with a second edition published in 1993. Tinto writes, "Drawn from studies of suicide and of rites of passage to community membership, the theory will provide a view of student leaving and institutional action which stresses both the limits of institutional action and the unique responsibility institutions share in the education of their students." [29] In this work, Tinto begins by asking several questions:

> First, we will ask what percentage of entering students complete their college degree programs within a six-year period. What proportion of those students complete their degrees within their first institution and what proportion transfer to another institution? To what degree do those proportions change when one extends the time period beyond six years? Second, we will inquire as to the degree to which rates of student departure vary for different groups of students and types of institutions. Do rates of departure vary for students of different sex, race, social origins, and ability? How do they vary for institutions of different levels (two- and four-year) and selectivity?[30]

He then begins an examination of entry of individuals into higher education. He comments, "Before we talk of departure, we must first speak of entry. Patterns of entry are necessarily related, in time, to eventual patterns of departure."[31] Tinto believed that to fully understand patterns of departure, one needed to first understand patterns of arrival. His study of entry patterns led him to study the composition of the entry population, composition of the whole student body, institutional characteristics, differences in retention between different types of colleges and programs of study, and gender and ethnic differences. At the end of these observations, he concluded, "At this point in our inquiry, at least, there does not appear to be any easy or simple way of characterizing student departure from higher education or of explaining its patterning

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[29]Vincent Tinto, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Curse of Student Attrition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

[30]Ibid., 7.

[31]Ibid., 8.

among different students and institutional settings."[32]

Having concluded that there is no easy way to characterize student departure, Tinto identifies causes for individual departure: intention, commitment, adjustment, difficulty, congruence, isolation, obligations, and finances.[33] Some students begin college with no intention of obtaining a degree. Some students find they lack the commitment required to earn a degree. Many students find significant difficulty in adjusting to a collegiate culture. Still other students find persistence in college too difficult. A student may experience an academic or social incongruence between themselves and the institution. Students who fail to integrate often experience feelings of isolation. Some students find themselves torn between obligations unrelated to their pursuit of a post-secondary degree. Finally, students may find they face financial hurdles which they are unable to overcome.

Tinto's primary assertion is that persistence in college is largely dependent on the student becoming integrated with the campus community:

> After passing through the stages of separation and transition, both of which tend to occur very early in the student career, the individual is faced with the task of becoming integrated, or . . . incorporated into the communities of the college. Having moved away from the norms and behavioral patterns of past associations, the person now faces the problem of finding and adopting new ones appropriate to the college setting. Though the person has passed the first hurdle, persistence is still not insured. Incorporation into the life of the college must follow.[34]

Tinto's theory has been widely discussed and tested in the decades that followed its publication and continues to garner respect from the academic community.

Development of the Theories

In the years following the publication of Astin and Tinto's theories, researchers

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[32]Tinto, "Leaving College," 33.

[33]Ibid., 85.

[34]Ibid., 98.

have continued to study student retention. Much of the research has focused on the various types of student involvement. Other researchers have looked for an understanding of the cause.

In 1991, George D. Kuh et al. published a work titled *Involving Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development Outside the Classroom.* They write, "The research is unequivocal: students who are actively involved in both academic and out-of-class activities gain more from the college experience than those who are not so involved."[35] These authors identified four reasons that warrant attention to out-of-class experience: college students spend the majority of their time in activities other than attending class or studying, peer groups exert significant pressure on student priorities, out-of-class activities provide the opportunity to gain skills not addressed in the classroom, and involvement in out-of-class activities contributes to a sense of community.[36]

Transitions, Marginality, and Mattering

In a paper published in 1989, Nancy K. Schlossberg offered some potential insight into the causal relationship between student involvement and student retention. In this paper she wrote,

> My work on transitions – events or nonevents that alter our lives – convinced me that people in transition often feel marginal and that they do not matter. Whether we are entering first grade or college, getting married, or retiring, we are concerned about our new roles. We wonder, will we belong? Will we matter? . . . We are often nagged by the question, do I belong in this new place?[37]

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[35]George D. Kuh, John H. Schuh, and Elizabeth J. Whitt, *Involving Schools: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development Outside the Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), xi.

[36]Ibid., 11-12.

[37]Nancy K. Schlossberg, "Marginality and Mattering: Key Issues in Building Community," *New Directions for Student Services* 48 (Winter 1989): 6-7.

Schlossberg asserts that the unfamiliarity experienced when people make transitions leads many people to also experience feelings of uncertainty. They do not know if they will become significant members of their new group or simply exist on the margins.

The move from high school to college is a good example of transition. Students leave behind friends and family with whom they have spent their entire lives. Many leave a class of one hundred (or less) and join a class of one thousand (or more). They leave the K-12 institution where many of them were guided every step of the way and join an institution where they are largely responsible for finding their own way. In many cases, nobody even knows their name. Finding a way to integrate with this new situation can be quite daunting. Schlossberg would most likely say these students are feeling marginalized due to the transition. This existence on the margins without experiencing social integration can easily lead a student to drop out of college.

Schlossberg contrasts marginality with mattering. Mattering is defined by sociologist Morris Rosenberg and his colleagues as "the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, [and] are concerned with our fate . . . ."[38] As we begin to feel that we matter, we are drawn in from the margins. The student whose club counts on him to bring the pizza experiences feelings of mattering. The student whose club elects her to the position of president experiences feelings of mattering. In short, everyone is somewhere on the continuum of marginality and mattering. Student involvement would appear to move individuals toward a sense of mattering.

Schlossberg asserts, "These polar themes of marginality and mattering connect all of us." [39] Feelings of marginality cause us to think about mattering. Feelings of

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[38]Morris Rosenberg and B. Claire McCollough, "Mattering: Inferred Significance to Parents and Mental Health Among Adolescents," *Research in Community and Mental Health* 2 (1981): 165.

[39]Schlossberg, "Marginality and Mattering," 5.

mattering ease us out of concerns about marginality. Joining a campus student

organization, living with other students in campus housing, playing on an athletic team,

or joining the band may help a student achieve a sense of mattering. Rather than the

daunting challenge of mattering to the entire campus population, the student can seek to

matter to a small group. By joining a smaller group of people that share many of the same

interests, the student may see a pathway to significance. These themes may partially

explain Tinto and Astin's theories.

Transition and Incorporation

In 1997, Jeffrey F. Milem and Joseph B. Berger conducted a study with the

intent to "further define the process of transition and incorporation as described by Tinto

and to specify mechanisms by which students form their judgments and perceptions

regarding the extent to which they 'fit' in the academic and social systems of their

institution."[40] The longitudinal study began with 1,343 participants in the first survey and

concluded with 1,061 in the third and final survey.[41] In the study they explored the

relationship between the two theories of Astin and Tinto. They suggested,

> Different students will invest varying amounts of energy in various "objects." In
> turn, we suggest that involvement in these behaviors will influence students'
> perceptions regarding the degree to which students think the institution supports the
> academic and social aspects of their experiences. In turn, these perceptions
> influence the likelihood that students will invest additional "energy" through their
> continued involvement. Moreover, we believe that subsequent involvement will
> influence the level of students' institutional commitment which inevitably
> influences whether or not student's become successfully incorporated into the
> college's social and academic systems.[42]

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[40]Jeffry F. Milem and Joseph P. Berger, "A Modified Model of College
Student Persistence: Exploring the Relationship between Astin's Theory of Involvement
and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure," *Journal of College Student Development* 38
(July/August 1997): 390.

[41]Ibid., 392.

[42]Ibid., 390.

Milem and Berger examined a cycle of behavior-perception-behavior as a potential

explanation for how students navigate through transition to either integration and

retention or isolation and departure.[43]

Their findings provide strong support for the relationship between early

involvement during the transition period and positive perceptions regarding their

experiences at the institution. Furthermore, those perceptions influence the nature and

extent of subsequent involvement at the institution.[44] They wrote, "Our findings suggest

that the extent to which students become involved during their first 6 to 7 weeks of a

semester are significantly related to whether they are likely to persist at the institution."[45]

Their study further confirmed Astin and Tinto's theories that student social involvement

and integration positively predicts institutional retention. Interestingly, they found that

academic integration did not predict institutional retention.[46]

Involvement and Integration

In a study published in 1999, Berger and Milem continued to develop an

integration of Astin and Tinto's theories. In this study, Berger and Milem sought to

expand understanding of "the relationship between behavioral involvement and

perceptual integration in the college persistence process."[47] The authors identified those

participants from the prior study who completed all three surveys and merged their data

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[43] Milam and Berger, "A Modified Model of College Student Persistence," 392.

[44]Ibid., 396.

[45]Ibid., 398.

[46]Ibid., 397.

[47]Joseph B. Berger and Jeffrey F. Milam, "The Role of Student Involvement and Perceptions of Integration in a Causal Model of Student Persistence," *Research in Higher Education* 40, no. 6 (December 1999): 642.

into one data-set. With this newly constructed data-set of 718 individuals, the authors were able to build on their previous work.[48] This study used seven sets of independent variables: (1) student background characteristics, (2) initial commitment, (3) mid-fall behavioral/involvement measures, (4) mid-fall perceptual measures, (5) mid-spring behavioral/involvement measures, (6) academic and social integration, and (7) subsequent commitment. The dependent variable measured was persistence from the freshmen to the sophomore year.[49]

Within the independent variables, the authors identified three measures of fall involvement: involvement with faculty, involvement with peers, and non-involvement. Each of the three was found to have a statistically significant correlation with perceptions of peer and institutional support. Non-involvement negatively impacts perceptions of institutional support and peer support. Peer involvement positively effects perceptions of institutional support and peer support while faculty involvement positively impacts perceptions of institutional support.[50] As with the previous study, this study finds that "early involvement in the fall semester positively predicts spring involvement and has significant indirect effects on social integration, academic integration, subsequent institutional commitment, and persistence."[51]

In 2004, W. S. Swail published *The Art of Student Retention: A Handbook for Practitioners and Administrators.* The work addresses three broad factors that influence retention: cognitive, social, and institutional. The first and last are outside the limitations of this study. However, one of the social factors Swail proposes is social integration. He writes, "The research field generally agrees about the importance of social integration

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[48]Berger and Milam, "The Role of Student Involvement," 646.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., 653.

[51]Ibid., 658.

with regard to student retention and the fact that students have a difficult time persisting when they are not socially integrated into campus life."[52]

Having accepted the validity of both Astin's theory of student involvement and Tinto's theory of student attrition, academic researchers began to study the efficacy of different types of student involvement. They looked for correlations between retention and various specific forms of student involvement; they studied athletes, dormitory residents, band members, student government members and many more. The following is a representative sample of that research.

Participation in Collegiate Athletics

Mickey C. Melendez published a study in 2006 regarding the influence of athletic participation on student adjustment. In his published paper, "The Influence of Athletic Participation on the College Adjustment of Freshmen and Sophomore Student Athletes," Melendez notes that "the literature regarding academic success and college adjustment of student athletes seems to be somewhat contradictory."[53] Based on the existing literature he identified three types of influences: positive, negative, and dual.

Under the potentially positive influences, Melendez noted that the literature suggests that many student-athletes found the transition to college eased by sport participation. Such participation is believed to promote certain developmental, social, emotional, and attitudinal experiences that ease this transition. However, the demands on time created by practice schedules and travel, the focus on athletic success over academic success, and the lack of interaction with the general student body were all seen as

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[52]W. S. Swail, *The Art of Student Retention: A Handbook for Practitioners and Administrators* (Austin, TX: Educational Policy Institute, 2004), 14.

[53]Mickey C. Melendez, "The Influence of Athletic Participation on the College Adjustment of Freshmen and Sophomore Student Athletes," *Journal of College Student Retention* 8, no. 1 (May 20062007): 42.

potential negative influences.[54] Finally, Melendez noted the potential dual influence of athletic identity:

> A strong athletic identity produced potential benefits including development of a salient sense of self, establishment of social networks, improved life management skills, and increased sport-related motivation. Potential costs included increased difficulty dealing with injuries, increased difficulty with sport career termination, and a potential hindrance to career development.[55]

Given this contradiction in the literature, Melendez proposed to answer the question, "How does athletic participation influence college adjustment?"[56]

Melendez distributed The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire packets to three hundred freshmen and sophomore students from four universities.[57] He received 207 usable responses. Of the responses, 101 were athletes and 106 were non-athletes.

The results of Melendez's study indicated that "student athletes reported higher scores on academic adjustment and general institutional attachment than their non-athletic peers. These findings were attributed to several factors including educational support systems tailored to the athlete, improvements in social and psychological support systems for the athletes, and mentoring of freshmen by more senior team members."[58] Most importantly, student-athletes have reported greater feelings of integration, satisfaction and institutional commitment.[59]

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[54]Melendez, "The Influence of Athletic Participation on the College Adjustment of Freshmen and Sophomore Student Athletes," 41.

[55]Ibid., 42.

[56]Ibid., 43.

[57]Robert W. Baker and Bohdan Siryk, *SACQ: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire: Manual* (Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services, 1999).

[58]Melendez, "The Influence of Athletic Participation on the College Adjustment of Freshmen and Sophomore Student Athletes," 47.

[59]Ibid., 49.

Residing on Campus

In a white paper published in fall 2008, Ray Gasser examines the impact of residence hall living on educational success and retention. Gasser begins by asking the question, "Is a student's academic success influenced by where he/she lives?"[60] He attempts to answer the question by examining housing data from the University of Idaho.

Gasser first examines cumulative and term grade point averages (GPAs) earned by first year students beginning with the fall 2003 semester and concluding with the spring 2007 semester. He found that in six of the eight semesters examined, students living in the residence halls had a higher term GPA than other first year students.[61]

Gasser also looked at retention rates. He observed, "Between fall 2004 and spring 2006, first-year students living in residence halls had higher retention rates on average by 3.25 percent than students not living in a residence hall. In fall 2006 and spring 2007, residence hall first-year students were one percent below the total first-year population for retention."[62]

Gasser notes that the University of Idaho describes itself as a residential campus. Only about ten percent of first-year students do not live in either university housing or fraternity/sorority housing. Living in these arrangements provides the student with access to opportunities that off-campus students do not enjoy. Gasser concludes that this access and the organizational structure of the living environments are a critical component of student academic success and retention.[63]

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[60]Ray Gasser, "White Paper: Educational and Retention Benefits of Residence Hall Living," University of Idaho, accessed July 31, 2015, http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/eng207-td/Sources,%20Links/Ed%20and%20Retention%20Gasser%20White%20Paper.htm, 1.

[61]Ibid., 5.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid., 6.

**Campus Co-Curricular Involvement
  and Academic Achievement**

In a study of full-time (12+ credit hours/semester) students entering college in fall 2002 and 2003, Dessa Bergen-Cico and Joe Viscomi looked for a correlation between attending campus events (athletic events, plays, concerts, intramurals, etc.) and higher GPA's. Their research identified a positive correlation between attendance at campus programs and GPA.[64] However, the researchers admit, "this study is *not* suggesting a causal relationship between co-curricular program attendance and higher academic performance: rather we have identified and described patterns of relationships and an association between co-curricular participation and GPA."[65] This study points to the need for continued research to determine if attendance at co-curricular events causes higher academic performance or is coincidental. The study is of great importance as Bergen-Cico and Viscomi also found a small number of highly involved students had the lowest GPA's. This could be an indication that there is a point of diminishing or even negative returns.

Religiosity

Butterfield and Pemberton studied the correlation between religiosity and retention in 2011. Among other questions, their study asked, what influence, if any, does affiliation in or involvement with campus-based religious organizations and perceptions of integration into institutional life have on whether a student remains enrolled at Idaho State University?[66] They found that "respondents who had enrolled in religion classes

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[64]Dessa Bergen-Cico and Joe Viscomi, "Exploring the Association between Campus Co-curricular Involvement and Academic Achievement," *Journal of College Student Retention* 14, no. 3 (2012-2013): 340.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Rex M. Butterfield and Cynthia Pemberton, "An Exploration of the Relationship between Religiosity and Retention," *Journal of College Student Retention* 12, no. 4 (2010-2011): 446.

and/or engaged in campus-based religious activities were more likely to be enrolled at ISU. It is possible, therefore, that engaging in on-campus religious-based classes can help with retention."[67]

Of all the research examined, Butterfield and Pemberton's work comes closest to looking for a correlation between involvement in campus ministry and retention. However, the intent of the research was quite different. Butterfield and Pemberton were more interested in the impact of attitudes about religion on retention. Their survey asked about religious beliefs and attitudes as well as how often the participant engaged in certain religious activities. The activities include attended a class on religion, spent time in prayer, meditated on sacred or religious writings, etc. Only one of the twelve activities addressed "on-campus student religious activity."[68] In addition, generalizing the findings is not possible due to the lack of diversity in the sample. All survey respondents were students at Idaho State University. Sixty percent of the respondents self-reported as members of the Latter Day Saints.

Satisfaction and Retention

In a study published in 2015, Sarah Strahan and Marcus Credé reported a relatively strong link between retention and satisfaction with college. Their study revealed that when considering whether or not to withdraw from college, the strongest factor of influence was the quality of social interactions with other students and faculty and the sense of community on campus, while the weakest factor concerned facilities and services."[69] The study indicates that facilities and services may initially draw students to

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[67]Butterfield and Pemberton, "An Exploration of the Relationship between Religiosity and Retention,"460.

[68]Ibid., 463.

[69]Sarah Strahan and Marcus Credé, "Satisfaction with College: Re-examining Its Structure and Its Relationships with the Intent to Remain in College and Academic

the campus, however, student satisfaction and retention is derived from involvement with other students and faculty. These findings support Astin's theory of social interactions with other students and faculty as an effectual facet of student involvement.

Summary

   The current research points toward a positive correlation between student involvement and retention, completion, and academic success. The research identifies a correlation between students becoming more involved and beginning to feel integrated with the campus community. This feeling of integration appears to correlate with greater satisfaction and feelings of identification with and commitment to the institution. These feelings appear to lead to greater retention rates and academic success. The information from this research is important and useful.

   However, much of the research looks at involvement from an indiscriminate viewpoint. No value judgements are made regarding the nature of the involvement. For example, there does not appear to be any distinction between involvement in student body government or in the LGBT club. In addition, there is little or no discussion of the value or lack of value in individuals pursuing meaning through involvement in various organizations or situations.

   In their paper, "The Relationship Between Personal and Collective Identity: A Narrative Analysis of a Campus Ministry Community," Eric Mankowski and Elizabeth Thomas note that the transition from living at home to living on the college campus may lead to significant changes in a person's identity. They write, "In parallel to this increasing physical independence, students may begin seeking greater psychological autonomy by considering new beliefs and values, and questioning those that guided their family's narratives."[70] With the stakes so high, a biblical understanding of mattering, of

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Performance," *Journal of College Student Retention* 16, no. 4 (2014-2015): 558.

   [70]Eric S. Mankowski and Elizabeth Thomas, "The Relationship between

significance, is relevant to this study.

A Biblical Understanding of Mattering and Significance

The Bible is not silent on the issue of mattering and significance. It informs readers regarding the nature of true significance. It also instructs believers in the correct way to pursue true significance and of threats to that pursuit.

The Bible does not view mattering or significance the way fallen man does. In fact, the Bible turns the world's view of significance upside down. The gospel of Mark reports the following story. "When He was in the house, He asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' But they were silent, because on the way they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest" (Mark 9:30-34). Matthew's gospel reports a similar story. "The mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something. 'What do you want?' He asked her. 'Promise,' she said to Him, 'that these two sons of mine may sit, one of Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom'" (Matt 20:20-21). Jesus' response to these desires for greatness and recognition was consistent. "Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all'" (Mark 9:35). True mattering, true significance is found in service to others.

Jesus frequently spoke against those who sought public significance. Matthew reports Jesus saying, "So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people . . . But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matt 6:2-3). Matthew continues, "Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people . . . but when you pray go into your private room, shut the door, and

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Personal and Collective Identity: A Narrative Analysis of a Campus Ministry Community," *Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 5 (2000): 518.

pray to your Father" (Matt 6:5-6).

The Scriptures repeatedly point us toward a significance that is far removed from that of the world. Paul writes,

> . . . for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:26-29).

As God's children we are to find our significance in Him, not in the world. Even so, we must live in the world.

The Scriptures offer considerable insight concerning with whom and with what people choose to involve themselves. They are warned that their associations influence them. In Deuteronomy God tells the nation of Israel, "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, because they will turn your sons away from them to worship other gods" (Deut 7:3-4). This is not some divine racism. This is God protecting His people from idolatry.

Proverbs tells readers, "The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov 13:20). The teachers of Israel knew that young men would be easily swayed by those with whom they associated. Proverbs goes on to say, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Prov 27:17).

Such instruction is not limited to the Old Testament. Paul writes to the Corinthian church, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Cor 15:13). "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness . . . . Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Cor 6:14-17).

The Bible advocates that men live in relationship; both with God and with others. It further stresses that choosing the right relationships in which to become involved is paramount to our spiritual well-being.

Campus Ministry as Student Involvement

One category of student involvement that has been largely overlooked is campus ministry. The *Journal of Community Psychology* published a study in September 2000 that supports the hypothesis that campus ministry can serve as an effective form student involvement. The authors of the study attempted to,

> analyze how a campus-based religious community provides psychological resources for its members to use in creating or maintaining personal and collective identity during their transition to the university context. This resource takes the form of a narrative account of the purpose, history, and activities of the community. This narrative helps members to answer questions such as, 'Who am I?' and 'What is my place in this world?'—questions that are the basis of constructing a life story and identity.[71]

The study concluded that student members of a religious community are able to create a set of shared stories about belonging and growing during the transition to a large university.[72] It is arguable that creation of such stories could lead to a sense of belonging and mattering.

Campus ministries are found on campuses nationwide. In 2007, John Schmalzbauer published "Campus Ministry: A Statistical Portrait." In this report, Schmalzbauer argues that organized religion is still very active on university campuses. He acknowledges that many mainline Protestant ministries experienced a period of decline in the 1960's and 1970's. However, he denies the assertion that campus life has become fully secularized.[73] He states, "Mainline Protestantism is no longer at the center of student religious life, but new organizations have rushed in to fill the religious

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[71]Mankowski and Thomas, "The Relationship between Personal and Collective Identity," 518.

[72]Ibid., 526.

[73]John Schmalzbauer, "Campus Ministry: A Statistical Portrait," Social Science Research Council, accessed July 31, 2015, http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Schmalzbauer.pdf.

vacuum."[74] The report then provides a statistical survey of student participation in campus ministry.

Mainline Protestant

Schmalzbauer identifies seven denominations as mainline Protestant: United Methodist, Presbyterian Church-USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Episcopal, Disciples of Christ, American Baptist Churches-USA, and United Church of Christ. He does not report student participation numbers but cites their "formidable presence in higher education."[75] These churches report a combined total of 1,828 campus ministry organizations.[76]

Evangelicals

Among the evangelical groups mentioned in Schmalzbauer's report are several parachurch organizations: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade, Great Commission Ministries, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Navigators, and Victory Campus Ministry. His study revealed more than 210,000 students were involved in these campus ministries.[77]

In addition to the parachurch organizations, several campus ministries are sponsored by conservative Protestant denominations: Assemblies of God Chi Alpha ministry, Presbyterian Church in America Reformed University Fellowship, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod ministries, and Southern Baptist Student Ministries. In 2006 these ministries reported student involvement by more than 273,000 students.[78]

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[74]Schmalzbauer, "Campus Ministry."

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

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Based on student participation in evangelical ministries alone, it is arguable that campus ministry plays an important role in higher education. Several studies concerning the impact of campus ministry and various outcomes have been conducted.

Morris Lynn Baker studied factors influencing intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions. His dissertation, completed in May 2003, posed the following questions:

1. In what ways is intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions affected by the demographic variables of a student's age, classification in school, gender, type of college attended, housing situation, and employment status?

2. What is the relationship of intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions and a student's role as an appointed leader in the local BSU?

3. In what ways is intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions affected by the participation of a student's friends in the BSU?

4. In what ways is intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions affected by a student's perception of and relationship to the BSU campus minister(s)?

5. What is the relationship between the local BSU's program emphases in the areas of discipleship, evangelism, fine arts ministries, leadership, missions, outreach, and worship, and a student's intensity of involvement in Baptist Student Unions?[79]

A study published in 2009 by the journal *Adolescence* examined the effect of spirituality and campus ministry on academic accomplishment in college students. Researchers at Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York, administered a questionnaire that included the Index of Core Spiritual Experiences,[80] a list of campus ministry activities, GPA, gender, and graduation date. The study found no correlation between spirituality or involvement in campus ministry and academic accomplishment.[81]

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[79]Morris Lynn Baker, "An Analysis of Selected Factors Influencing Students' Intensity of Involvement in Baptist Student Unions" (EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 4.

[80]Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Wood, *Measures of Religiosity* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1999), 360.

[81]Jessica Schubmehl, Stephen Cubbellotti, and William Van Ornum, "The

However, generalization of the study is limited. All participants were members of Marist College Campus Ministry, and no comparison to the general population was made.

In May of 2010, Evelyn J. Ashcraft studied the correlation of involvement in Texas Baptist Student Ministry and post-collegiate ministry activity. She asked the questions, "Do persons involved in Texas BSM during college years remain active in church and ministry post-graduation? Is there a relationship between BSM experience and ministry activity post-graduation?"[82] The results of the study revealed that more than 80 percent of BSM participants were involved in leadership, outreach, and missions, 92 percent were frequently involved in church activities and 60.7 percent served as church leaders after college graduation.[83]

As previously noted, Butterfield and Pemberton studied the correlation between religiosity and retention in 2011. This study, however, focused on the students' religious attitudes; not involvement in campus ministry. They were interested in determining if religiosity was a predictor of student retention.[84]

In light of the current literature on student involvement and the void of research regarding the impact of such involvement, a study of the impact, if any, of involvement in campus ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success is merited.

Effect of Spirituality and Campus Ministry on Academic Accomplishment in College Students," *Adolescence* 44, no. 174 (Summer 2009): 501-2.

[82]Evelyn Joyce Ashcraft, "An Examination of Texas Baptist Student Ministry Participation and Post-Collegiate Ministry Activity" (PhD diss., Dallas Baptist University, 2010), 14.

[83]Ibid., 135.

[84]Butterfield and Pemberton, "An Exploration of the Relationship between Religiosity and Retention," 446.

Baptist Collegiate Ministry

One such ministry that lends itself to study is Baptist Collegiate Ministry

(BCM). Dorothy Davis provides the following brief history of BCM:

> Baptist Student Unions (today more commonly called Baptist Collegiate Ministries)
> originated in the early twentieth century as independent student groups. As Baptist
> leaders began to appreciate the mission opportunity among college students, they
> created student departments at both the state and national level. Frank Hartwell
> Leavell served as the first director of the program at the Baptist Sunday School
> Board, beginning in 1921. The state conventions of Texas and North Carolina
> initiated student departments in 1919 and 1922 respectively. Baptist student work
> continued to develop, and the Baptist Student Union program flourished as more
> students began to attend college in the 1960s and 1970s. Today the Baptist
> Collegiate Ministries program continues to follow the founding objectives of the
> Baptist Student Union program by fostering Christian growth, outreach, and
> fellowship.[85]

Today, BCM's can be found on college campuses all over North America. The

website www.sbclife.net reported in October 2012, "Last year, more than 69,500 students

were *actively* involved in campus ministry on the 839 college and university campuses

across the United States and Canada where Southern Baptists and their Canadian Baptist

counterparts have a Baptist Collegiate Ministry."[86] These ministries are sponsored and

supported primarily by the state conventions and local churches.

BCMLife is a network of BCM's from across North America. They work

together to more faithfully accomplish their stated purpose. The National Collegiate

Ministry purpose statement of Baptist Collegiate Ministry reads, "To LEAD college

students and others in the academic community to faith in Jesus Christ, to DEVELOP

them as disciples and leaders, and to CONNECT them to the life and mission of the

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[85]Dorothy A. Davis, "Baptist Student Union Study Collection," Southern
Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN, accessed January 27, 2016,
http://www.sbhla.org/downloads/247.pdf).

[86]Roger S. Oldham. Baptist Collegiate Ministry, *SBCLife, Journal of the
Southern Baptist Convention,* accessed August 22, 2015,
http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2012/10/sla9.

church."[87] Baptist Collegiate Ministries attempt to fulfill their stated purpose in several

ways. Most BCM's offer the following activities to any who wish to participate:

> Large group worship. Most BCM's offer weekly large group worship services at least once a week. In these services, students are encouraged to participate and to lead to the degree that they are comfortable.

> Small group discipleship. Students are placed into smaller groups to study Scripture and discuss application.

> Community and social ministry opportunities. Students are encouraged to serve their campus and their community. Opportunities may include picking up litter, serving in a homeless shelter, painting a church or home, etc.

> Worldwide mission service opportunities. Many campus ministries sponsor mission trips to foreign countries.

> Student leadership development. Students are given multiple opportunities to serve in leadership positions of the organization.[88]

These activities are the basics offered by nearly every BCM. The BCMs on individual

campuses often offer a diversity of additional activities. While the primary purposes of

BCM's are spiritual, there appears to be an aspect of social integration present as well.

The structure and operation of BCM's make them an ideal platform for study through the

lens of Astin's theory of student involvement.

Research Hypothesis

Nationally, college enrollment continues to rise. Total fall enrollment in degree

granting, postsecondary institutions exceeded 19,977,270 students. Of those students, 34

percent, nearly 7,000,000, attended a two-year institution.[89] Although there has been

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[87]"About," BCMLife, accessed August 22, 2015, https://bcmlife.net/home/.

[88]"Campus Based Ministry," BCMLife, accessed August 22, 2015, https://bcmlife.net/campus-based-ministry/.

[89]"Digest for Educational Statistics, Table 303.45, Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-granting Postsecondary Institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and age of student: 2011, 2013, and 2015," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 25, 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_303.45.asp).

considerable study in the area of retention, very little of this research has been conducted using two-year college students as the population.[90]

In the years following Astin's publication of *Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education* in 1984 and Tinto's publication of *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Curse of Student Attrition* in 1987, researchers have examined the impact of numerous types of student involvement on retention and academic success. However, there is a gap in the research concerning student involvement in a campus ministry.

Most of the studies reviewed support a positive correlation between student involvement and retention and academic success. Therefore, the hypothesis of this research was that students will perceive a positive impact from student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success.

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[90]Kay McClenney, C. Nathan Marti, and Courtney Adkins, "Student Engagement and Student Outcomes: Key Findings from CCSSE Validation Research," Community College Survey of Student Engagement, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter describes the methods and procedures that were employed for this research study, which assessed the impact of student involvement in evangelical campus ministry, specifically Baptist Collegiate Ministry on student retention and academic success. It includes explanations of the research questions, design overview, population, sample, delimitations, limitations of generalization, and instrumentation.

Statement of the Problem

Institutions of higher education continue to struggle with retention/completion and academic success of students. The problem is greatest at two-year colleges. These colleges experience drop-out rates greater than 40 percent.[1] If these colleges are to continue to receive funding and to accomplish their mission of educating students, they must find ways to improve retention, completion, and academic success.

Research has indicated that student involvement beyond the classroom has a positive correlation with retention, completion and academic success. However, very little research has been conducted on the population of students who began their college education on the campus of a two-year college. Even less research has been done regarding involvement in a campus ministry.

The problem of this study was to assess the impact, if any, of student

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[1]"Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 326.30, Retention of First-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Level and Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted: 2006 to 2012," National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed February 1, 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_326.30.asp.

involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) on student retention, completion, and academic success. The study focused on students who began their college education at a two-year college.

Research Question Synopsis

1. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges on student retention/completion?

    a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing to their retention?

    b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing toward their subsequent completion or graduation?

2. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at a two-year college on academic success?

    a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year institution and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward passing more classes?

    b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward a higher grade point average (GPA)?

Research Purpose Statement

The intent of this study was to assess the impact, if any, of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success of students who began their college education at a two-year college.

Design Overview

I ultimately chose a mixed method study to assess the impact of student involvement in campus ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success. The study focused on students who began their college career at a two-year college.

When describing mixed methods studies, Creswell and Plano Clark wrote,

> As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problem than either approach alone.[2]

I initially designed a quantitative study to assess the correlation, if any, between the independent variable of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry and the dependent variables of student retention, completion, and academic success. The study utilized a survey to gather data on student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry, current and expected future enrollment status or completion of study, and academic success as measured by grade point average and successful course completion.

Assuming a population of 28,000, a research sample of 379 would deliver a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of 5 percent. After numerous attempts to gather surveys, I received only eighty qualified surveys. Based on the inadequate number of surveys, I modified the design to include a qualitative element.

Qualified respondents to the survey were invited to participate in a follow-up interview by telephone. Eighteen agreed to do so. I provided a website where they could schedule a day and time for the interview.

I then conducted the follow-up interviews to ascertain further insights and to qualify the quantitative data collected via the survey. In the follow-up interviews I focused on individual perceptions concerning the impact of involvement in campus ministry on their college careers.

Population

The population of this study consisted of college students who began their college education at a public two-year college and were involved in Baptist Collegiate

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[2]John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 5.

Ministry. The total population number for students involved in BCM's during any given year in the states sampled is estimated to be approximately 28,000.[3]

The state of Arkansas supports 11 four-year colleges and 22 two-year colleges. Enrollment at the four-year institutions was 97,977 (65 percent) in 2014.[4] Enrollment at the two-year colleges was 53,377 (35 percent).[5] The state director of campus ministry estimates 2,500 students were involved in BCM. The state of Kentucky supports 7 four-year colleges and the Community and Technical College system. This system includes 16 colleges. Total enrollment in the four-year institutions was 128,178 (61 percent) in 2014. Enrollment in the Community and Technical College system was 80,073 (39 percent).[6] The state director of campus ministry estimates 5,000 students were involved in BCM.

The state of Mississippi Higher Education system includes 8 four-year colleges and 15 community colleges.[7] Enrollment at the four-year institutions was 79,704 (53 percent) in 2014. Enrollment at the two-year colleges was 71,834 (47 percent).[8] The state

[3]I spoke with the state directors of campus ministry for five states. These directors estimated student involvement numbers conservatively as follows: Arkansas, 2,500; Kentucky, 5,000; Mississippi, 2,500; Oklahoma, 5,000;, and Texas, 13,000.

[4]At the time the study was being designed, 2014 was the most complete data available from each of the selected states.

[5]"Fall Enrollment by Academic Year and Institution," Arkansas Department of Higher Education, accessed December 24, 2015, https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/publications/Enrollment_Fall_AY_2014-2015.pdf

[6]"Full and Part-Time Enrollment by Institution and Level –P Public Institutions," Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, accessed December 24, 2015, http://cpe.ky.gov/data/reports/HeadcountbyLevelPublic200616.pdf.

[7]"Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation," Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation, accessed February 11, 2016, http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca/downloads/MCCAApprovedSchoolList.pdf.

[8]"Fall 2013 Enrollment Report," Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities, accessed February 11, 2016, http://www.mississippi.edu/research/downloads/MAC2016NEW.pdf.

director of campus ministry estimates 2,500 students were involved in BCM.

The state of Oklahoma Higher Education system includes 15 four-year institutions and 14 two-year colleges. Total enrollment at the four-year institutions was 133,255 (56 percent) in 2014. Enrollment at the two-year colleges was 104,321 (44 percent).[9] The state director of campus ministry estimates 5,000 students were involved in BCM.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reports that the state of Texas supports 38 universities and 54 community/technical colleges.[10] Enrollment in the universities was 603,598 (46 percent) in 2014. The 54 community/technical colleges had enrollment of 712,478 (54 percent).[11] The director of campus ministries reported that The Baptist General Convention of Texas supports BCM's on 120 campuses.[12] The state director of campus ministry estimates 13,000 students were involved in BCM.

I estimated the number of students involved in BCM's on two-year campuses by using the enrollment ratio and estimates total students involved in BCM's on two-year campuses to be 13,220.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in both sections of the study. Creswell and

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[9]"A Ten-Year Comparison of Annual Headcount Enrollment, Unduplicated Within Institution, 2004-05 to 2013-14," Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, accessed December 23, 2015, http://osrhe.edu/studies-reports/enrollment/Trends/10-yr-comparison-annual-hc-0607-1516.pdf.

[10]Data taken from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website, accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Institutions.cfm,.

[11]Data taken from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website, accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/9085.PDF?CFID=58431595&CFTOKEN=35978560.

[12]The 120 includes BCM's on independent institution campuses.

Clark state, "Purposeful sampling in qualitative research means that researchers intentionally select (or recruit) participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored in the study."[13] In the quantitative section, I purposefully selected students who started their college education at a two-year college and who were involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM). I contacted the state directors of campus ministries in five states and requested that they distribute links to the survey to the campus ministers at the various colleges in the states previously mentioned. The state directors were also asked to encourage the campus ministers to distribute the survey link to any students who had participated in their ministry in the 2013 through 2016 academic years.

I continued to use purposeful sampling in the qualitative section of the study. Survey responses were analyzed to obtain as much variety as possible in the sample that was interviewed. Variety was measured by observing several factors including current academic status, number of credit hours earned, degree of participation in campus ministry, geographic location, etc. In the follow-up interview, I assessed student perceptions regarding the impact their involvement in campus ministry had on their retention, completion, and academic success.

Delimitations

1. The sample was delimited to students who began their college education by attending state-supported, two-year colleges. I am particularly interested in this understudied population.

2. The sample was delimited to students involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministries. I have limited access to other types of campus ministry.

3. The sample will be delimited to students who began their college education during the 2013 through 2016 academic years.

4. The sample will be delimited to students who began their education in the states of

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[13]Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research,* 173.

Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. I have limited access to other states.

Limitations of Generalization

As a result of the intentional delimitation of the study, there are some limitations to the generalization of findings.

1. The findings from this research may not be generalizable to students who begin their education at a four-year institution. Characteristics of students who begin their education at four-year institutions are measurably different than those of students who begin their education at a two-year college.

2. The findings from this research may not be generalizable to all campus ministries. There are noticeable differences in the various campus ministries.

3. The findings from this research may not be generalizable to all college campuses in all geographic locations. There are measurable cultural differences in different geographic locations.

4. The findings from this research may not be generalizable to private institutions of higher education.

Quantitative Survey Instrument

I was unable to find existing instrumentation appropriate for the research question. Accordingly, I developed and published a survey on www.surveymonkey.com to gather data (see appendix 4, p. 97). Along with an email letter requesting student participation, students were provided a link to the survey and instructions on how to participate.

The survey includes five parts: Participation Request and Permission Form, Demographic Information, Student Involvement, Academic Status, and Follow-up.

The Participation Request and Permission Form provides participants the opportunity to check one of two boxes indicating they agree or do not agree to the use of their responses. They are also asked to provide their name and email address. The Demographic Information section requests information regarding age, gender, housing, employment, religious affiliation, school(s) attended, and hours completed. The Student Involvement section requests information concerning the nature and frequency of student

involvement in various areas. The Academic Status section gathers information regarding classroom success, future enrollment expectations and overall grade point average.

Quantitative Data Collection

I requested the assistance of Dr. Brian Combs, Collegiate Evangelism Strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, David James, Director of College + Young Leaders Team of the Arkansas Baptist Convention, Chris Lowry, Campus Ministry Specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Bruce McGowan, Director of Campus Ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Jennie Taylor, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Each of these individuals has agreed to support this project by forwarding a request for participation to the individual campus BCM directors in their respective state (see appendix 1, p. 94).

The request for participation was forwarded to the individual campus BCM directors with a request that they forward a request for participation to any student who was involved in the BCM where they served at any time during the 2013-2016 academic years. As a small token of appreciation for their assistance, I offered a $10 Amazon gift card to any director from whom at least 10 completed student responses were received (see appendix 2, p. 95).

With the assistance of the state directors and the campus ministers, participation requests were distributed to students in 5 states. Prospective participants were directed to a link to the survey hosted at surveymonkey.com. In order to encourage participation, all students who submit a completed survey by midnight May 31, 2016 were entered in a drawing for one of two Surface Tablets. (see appendix 3, p. 96).

I received several responses from the states of Arkansas and Mississippi. I received very few responses from the other states.

When taking the survey, several students indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. These students were contacted by email to request a follow-up

interview. Eighteen students or former students responded and granted me a telephone interview. The interview followed a six-question protocol and gathered student perceptions of the impact of involvement in campus ministry on retention, completion and academic success.

Quantitative Data Analysis

All responses were reviewed to determine if they met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Questions 10 through 13 on the survey concern what school the respondent attended as a first-time freshman. Question 11 asks if the school is two-year or four-year. A response of four-year disqualified the survey from inclusion in the study. Question 17 concerns student involvement during the first two years of college. A response of never regarding participation in the BCM disqualified the survey from inclusion in the study.

The second step in data analysis consisted of searching the data for trends. Question 17 offered the respondent five choices for identifying the frequency of involvement in nine different activities: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Once or twice per semester, and Never. Question 19 offered the responded five choices for identifying their agreement or disagreement with seven statements regarding BCM involvement: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree. Question 20 offered the respondent five choices regarding the number of courses passed: 1 to 5 courses, 6 to 9 courses, 10 to 13 courses, 14 to 17 courses, and 18+ courses. Question 21 offered the respondent five choices regarding courses that were not completed with a passing grade: 1 to 3 courses, 4 to 6 courses, 7 to 9 courses, 10 to 12 courses, and 13+ courses. Questions 22 through 25 requested the respondent choose True or False. A response of True to any one of questions 22 through 24 indicated positive retention or completion of studies. A response of True to question 25 indicates negative retention (the student has withdrawn from higher education prior to completing their program of study).

Qualitative Instrument

The follow-up interview includes six core questions (see appendix 5, p. 102). Based on the student's answers, I asked additional questions to gain additional insight into student perceptions. I conducted three pilot interviews. Based on an analysis of the pilot interviews, I made no changes to the questionnaire. However, I did make minor revisions to the interview techniques.

Qualitative Data Collection

Several of the survey respondents indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. After analyzing the survey data, I emailed the qualified respondents and requested a follow-up interview. Eighteen respondents agreed to do a follow-up interview. These students were contacted by phone and interviewed. I obtained permission to record the interview and transcribed the interviews at a later date.

Evaluate Findings and Draw Conclusions

As previously noted, the response rate to the surveys was inadequate to conduct statistical analysis. However, I was able to look for significant data points within the survey data gathered. These data points were then used to inform the follow-up interviews.

The interviews were designed to gain an understanding of student perceptions relative to the research questions. The survey responses were particularly useful in adding meaning to the interview responses. For example, a student living at home with their parents will perceive the campus experience quite differently than a student living in the dorms. A student beginning their college education at the age of 24 will perceive their college experience quite differently than one beginning at the age of 18.

After combining the data gathered from the surveys with the data gathered from the interviews, I was able to formulate answers to the research questions. Those answers then led to implications for several parties interested in student retention,

completion, and academic success. Those answers and the implications are presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter reports the analysis of data collected through the completed www.surveymonkey.com surveys and the follow-up interviews with participants. The research protocol is summarized to show the steps taken to answer the research questions. The chapter addresses the research questions, the trends identified, my conclusions, and concludes with an evaluation of the research design.

Compilation Protocol

I developed a survey on the website www.surveymonkey.com (see appendix 4, p. 97). I emailed requests for assistance (see appendix 1, p. 94) to the state directors of campus ministries in the states of Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. These directors were asked to forward assistance requests to each of the BCM campus ministers in their state (see appendix 2, p. 95). Finally, the campus ministers were asked to forward an assistance request to students (see appendix 3, p. 96) who had participated in their campus ministry during academic years 2013 through 2016. The assistance requests included a brief description of the research being conducted and a hyperlink to the survey. I was seeking approximately 380 qualified, surveys.

As a result of the low survey response rate from some of the states, I repeated the requests to the state directors. Continued low response led me to request the email addresses of several campus ministers and directly request their assistance. Although this effort brought additional surveys, the total of eighty qualified surveys received was still insufficient to achieve the confidence level desired. Accordingly, I have identified significant data points in the data but do not assert statistically significant findings.

Due to receiving an inadequate number of surveys, I developed an interview protocol (see appendix 5, p. 102) to gain additional insights with regards to the research questions. Interviews were conducted by telephone, recorded, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Upon completion of the transcription, I reviewed the responses seeking to identify common perceptions among the interviewees.

Survey Results

I received 145 survey responses in total. However, fifty-two surveys were disqualified because the respondents did not begin their college education at a two-year college. Another thirteen were disqualified for failure to answer questions considered critical to the study. The remaining eighty surveys were considered acceptable and included in the analysis.

Demographic Data

Several demographic factors have been identified as impacting retention. Participants in the survey provided answers to seven such demographic questions. These demographic questions included (1) age, (2) classification in school, (3) gender, (4) current housing, (5) enrollment status, (6) employment status, and (7) religious affiliation.

The first demographic requested was years of age (table 1). Respondents were given 6 choices: (1) 18, (2) 19, (3) 20, (4) 21, (5) 22, and (6) 23+.

Table 1. Age of responding students

Age	Frequency	Percentage of responses
18	9	11.2
19	25	31.3
20	9	11.2
21	14	17.5
22	8	10.0
23 or over	15	18.8
Total	80	100.0

The second demographic requested in the survey was gender (table 2). Respondents were given two choices: (1) Male or (2) Female.

Table 2. Gender of responding students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Female	47	58.8
Male	33	41.2
Total	80	100.0

The third demographic requested in the survey was classification in school (table 3). Students were given six choices: (1) Freshman, (2) Sophomore, (3) Junior, (4) Senior, (5) Graduated, and (6) Other.

Table 3. School classification

Classification	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Freshman	26	32.5
Sophomore	21	26.2
Junior	14	17.5
Senior	9	11.3
Graduated	7	8.8
Other	3	3.7
Total	80	100.0

The fourth demographic requested related to place of residence as a first-time freshman (table 4). Respondents were given three choices: (1) live with parents, (2) live in on-campus housing, and (3) live in off-campus housing.

Table 4. Housing status

Housing Status	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Live with parents	49	61.3
On-campus housing	20	25.0
Off-campus housing	11	13.7
Total	80	100.0

The fifth element of demographic data requested was enrollment status (table 5). Respondents were given three choices: (1) part-time, (2) full-time, and (3) not currently enrolled.

Table 5. Enrollment Status

Enrollment Status	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Part-time	8	10.0
Full-time	64	80.0
Not currently enrolled	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

The sixth demographic requested was employment status (table 6). Respondents were given five choices: (1) unemployed, (2) part-time on campus, (3) full-time on campus, (4) part-time off campus, and (5) full-time on campus.

The seventh demographic requested was religious affiliation (table 7). The respondents were given ten choices: (1) Baptist, (2) Catholic, (3) Church of Christ, (4) Evangelical Christian, (5) Episcopal, (6) Lutheran, (7) Methodist, (8) Presbyterian, (9) other, and (10) none. The largest group (66) reported they were Baptist.

Table 6. Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage of responses
Unemployed	25	31.2
Part-time on campus	15	18.8
Full-time on campus	0	0.0
Part-time off campus	27	33.7
Full-time off campus	13	16.3
Total	80	100.0

Table 7. Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Frequency	Percentage of Responses
Baptist	64	80.0
Catholic	1	1.2
Church of Christ	0	0.0
Evangelical Christian	3	3.8
Episcopal	0	0.0
Lutheran	0	0.0
Methodist	1	1.2
Presbyterian	0	0.0
Other	11	13.8
None	0	0.0
Total	80	100.0

Qualifying Data

Following the demographic data, the survey requested several elements of data to qualify and more clearly categorize the respondents. Respondents were asked to provide the following information: (1) school attended as a freshman, (2) number of semesters at this school, (3) school type (two-year or four-year), (4) school affiliation (public, Evangelical, mainline Protestant, Catholic, or other), (5) school currently attending, (6) number of semesters at this school, (7) school type (two-year or four-year), and (8) school affiliation (public, Evangelical, mainline Protestant, Catholic, or other). My intent was to look for significant differences in the various categories. Due to the limited response rate, such analysis was not possible.

Student Involvement Data

I asked respondents to indicate the frequency of their involvement in six common campus activities: (1) student government, (2) honors programs, (3) faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, (4) student clubs, (5) intercollegiate athletics, and (6) intramural athletics. Each of these six activities have been identified in chapter two as having a positive impact on student retention. In addition to these activities, I asked about the frequency of involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) or other campus ministry. I had intended to isolate students who were involved in the BCM or other campus ministry yet not involved in any of the other areas and then compare their experiences with those involved in multiple areas. Due to the limited response rate, such analysis is not meaningful.

Student involvement was assigned an ordinal value through the following process. First, I counted the number of campus activities in which the respondents indicated they were active. This yielded a value of 0 to 6. Each frequency response was assigned a value: (1) never = 0, (2) once or twice per semester = 1, (3) monthly = 2, (4) weekly = 3, and (5) daily = 4. The values were then summed and the sum was divided by

the number of activities. For example, if the respondent indicated they were involved in honors program monthly, faculty-student interaction outside of class weekly, and intermural activities weekly, their involvement average would be calculated as (2+3+3)/3 or 2.67.

I asked respondents to indicate the frequency of their involvement in BCM also. The same scoring method was then applied. These scores were used to better understand the impact of student involvement in campus activities/BCM and retention/academic success.

Retention Data

I measured retention by asking about enrollment status (table 8). Respondents who indicated they were not planning to enroll were considered to not be retained. Respondents who indicated they had earned their degree or certificate, were enrolled, or were planning to enroll were considered retained.

Table. 8 Future enrollment status

Current status	Frequency	Percentage
Not planning to enroll	3	3.8
Planning to enroll	28	35.0
Enrolled	37	46.2
Degree or certificate earned	12	15.0
Total	80	100.0

Academic Success Data

I measured academic success in three areas: (1) number of classes passed, (2)

number of classes not passed, and (3) grade point average.

Respondents were asked to report the number of classes they had completed with a passing grade (table 9). Respondents were given five choices: (1) 1 to 5 courses, (2) 6 to 9 courses, (3) 10 to 13 courses, (4) 14 to 17 courses. (5) 18 + courses.

Table 9. Number of classes with a passing grade

No. of courses with a passing grade	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	7	8.9
6-9	9	11.4
10-13	14	17.7
14-17	9	11.4
18+	40	50.6
Total	79	100.0

Respondents were also asked to report the number of classes they had not received a passing grade (table 10). Respondents were given three choices: (1) 0 classes, (2) 1 to 3 courses, and (3) 4 to 6 courses.

Table 10. Number of classes with a non-passing grade

No. of courses with a non-passing grade	Frequency	Percentage
0	18	22.5
1-3	58	72.5
4-6	4	5.0
Total	80	100.0

Finally, respondents were asked to report their current grade point average (table 11). Respondents were given five choices: (1) less than 2.00, (2) 2.00 to 2.49, (3) 2.50 to 2.99, (4) 3.00 to 3.49, and (5) 3.50 to 4.00.

Table. 11 Grade point average

Grade Point Average	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2.00	2	2.5
2.00 to 2.49	3	3.8
2.50 to 2.99	10	12.5
3.00 to 3.49	18	22.5
3.50 to 4.00	45	56.2
No GPA Reported	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Baptist Collegiate Ministry Involvement

I asked respondents to identify agreement or disagreement with seven statements about involvement in the BCM. The respondents were given five response choices for each statement: (1) strongly agree – 5 points, (2) agree 4 –points, (3) neither agree nor disagree - 3 points, (4) disagree – 2 points, and (5) strongly disagree – 1 point. The survey responses were then averaged to develop a sense of the importance of each of the seven statements about involvement. The statements were as follows:

1. When I attended a Baptist Collegiate Ministry event, I was an active participant (engaged in conversation, participated in worship and fellowship, joined in games, etc.)

2. I frequently went to the BCM to study.

3. I frequently went to the BCM to relax and spend time with friends.

4. I served in a leadership position with the BCM.

5. I volunteered or was assigned responsibility to work on something that the BCM needed to have done.

6. When at the BCM, I felt welcome and included.

7. My involvement at the BCM made me feel more a part of the campus community.

The average scores are reported in table 12.

This data was used to complement the frequency of involvement in BCM score. While frequency of involvement is a reasonable measure of the value placed on involvement, it is not a comprehensive measure. Some students who highly value involvement may be precluded from daily or weekly involvement due to class and/or work schedules. I weighed these factors in my analysis.

Table. 12 BCM involvement average score

Statement:	Ave. Score
I was an active participant	4.6
I frequently studied at the BCM	3.9
I frequently went to the BCM to relax and spend time with friends	4.5
I served in leadership	3.8
I volunteered or was assigned work	4.0
I felt welcomed and included	4.7
BCM made me feel more a port of the campus community	4.6

Interview Results

I contacted each of the qualified survey respondents by email and invited them to participate in a telephone interview. Those interested were asked to visit an internet-based scheduling site (www.acutiyscheduling.com) and schedule a time for me to call. All respondents who completed the telephone interview received an Amazon E-gift card. Eighteen respondents completed the interview process.

I used a six-question interview protocol to guide the interviews (see appendix 5, p. 102). Based on the answers to these questions, I probed for additional information. All telephone interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Question 1: Describe Your Initial Feelings Upon Arrival on Campus.

The responses to this question fell into one of three groups. Four of the interviewees indicated that several of their high-school friends were attending the same college they were attending. They expressed no negative feelings regarding the transition.

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This group made the following comments when describing their initial feelings upon arrival on campus:

I didn't have a problem transitioning.

I was always comfortable.

It was actually a really, really nice transition.

For these students, the transition from high-school to college was very similar to the transition from junior to senior. Although they were attending different classes in a different location, many of the people around them were familiar. They already had relationships formed and these relationships gave them a sense of belonging in their new academic setting.

Five of the interviewees expressed excitement regarding the transition to college. Each of these individuals arrived on the campus and immediately formed new relationships which gave them a strong sense of belonging. These interviewees made comments like,

I went there to play baseball. I was surrounded by all these other guys. We all had the same interest anyway.

I love meeting new people. That was fun.

This group of interviewees expressed confidence and an adventurous spirit. None of them indicated they experienced any sense of marginality. Either they were thrust into a group that forced them to develop relationships or they forced themselves to develop those relationships on their own.

Nine of the interviewees indicated that they knew either very few people or no one on campus when they first arrived. I interpreted this to mean that they had no close relationships with other students on the campus. These interviewees made the following comments when describing their initial feelings upon arrival on campus:

Obviously, you know you're [going to] be a little anxious, a little nervous.

I was kind of apprehensive.

I definitely felt out of place, and nervous. And very reluctant to branch out and talk to people.

I was more scared.

I would say for the first little bit; it was kind of an outsider feeling.

So, I was really nervous about how that was going to play out.

These phrases are the language of people who feel that they are on the margins of a culture. According to Schlossberg, people in transition often feel marginalized and unable to integrate with their new culture. The research of Astin and Tinto would indicate that these students easily drop out of college if they do not quickly integrate with a group on or near the campus.

Question 2: Describe How Your Involvement in BCM Influenced Those Feelings.

Twelve of the interviewees responded that they became involved at the BCM very early in their first semester. Although the frequency of involvement varied from daily to weekly, each of the interviewees attached great value to their involvement.

Two of the interviewees who had responded that several of their friends from high-school were also attending the same college as they were, indicated that they joined the BCM very quickly. Three of the interviewees who responded that they made friends easily also reported that they joined the BCM early in their college career. Doing so contributed to both the quantity and quality of their relationships. They made comments such as,

I went the first week . . . and got to know a lot of people there.

You could get involved at the BSU, you could seek God. So I knew I wanted to do that.

It was exciting to be around people again who had a thirst for God.

For these interviewees, joining the BCM expanded their circle of relationships beyond the ones they brought with them. Since they experienced very little difficulty in their

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transition, involvement in BCM did not have a great impact on their initial feelings.

Seven of those who responded they knew very few people or no one when they arrived on campus also reported that they got involved in BCM very early in their first semester. For these interviewees, the BCM provided an opportunity to integrate with a group of like-minded people. It was not the only opportunity, however, it was perceived as a positive opportunity. Interviewees made the following comments:

I knew I could integrate well in that scene.

It was nice to be in an environment with fellow Christians.

The person I met, he was very welcoming, he was really cool.

Many students feeling marginalized and disconnected perceived the BCM to be a place they could start new relationships and connect with people like themselves.

However, the experience was not always perfect. More than one interviewee responded that their first visit was less than positive. These interviewees made comments like,

It was very awkward.

You have all these people who have been there for a year or two so they know everybody. So I wasn't totally comfortable.

Clearly feelings of marginality can and do exist even within the BCM. If those students who are already a part of the BCM are not intentional in welcoming and involving new students, new students may find it difficult to integrate.

Question 3: How Did Your Involvement in BCM Help You Integrate into Campus Life?

As we moved to question three, the responses became more specific to the individual answering and to the specific BCM of which they were a part. Most interviewees indicated that involvement in BCM neither helped nor hindered their integration into campus life. However, a couple of interviewees related a different story.

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When asked if his involvement in BCM helped him to integrate into general campus life, one interviewee responded,

> Yes, to an extent. Being on that particular campus I feel like the BSU was more involved on that campus than other campuses I've been on. So I guess to a certain extent for on-campus resident, BSU was like kind of a cool thing to do.

He went on to describe a unique relationship between the college and the BSU.

Another interviewee responded that the BCM at the two-year college was not on campus and that involvement there probably hindered greater campus involvement. However, the BCM at her four-year school was right in the heart of campus and effectively ministers to a large cross section of students. Accordingly, involvement at that BCM led to greater integration on the campus as a whole.

Another interviewee had a unique perspective on this question. He expressed that his leadership position directly resulted in his becoming more involved in the campus life of his college. He related it as follows:

> I think it did, it gave me a stronger sense of identity to kind of cling on to, instead of being a nobody on campus. I was a person who was involved with BSU leadership so, it gave me this feeling of authority that I could go into the campus and make connections with people, one because I have a responsibility to do that being on BSU leadership and two, just having that platform behind me was encouraging to get into the student body and to build those relationships.

It appears the impact of BCM involvement on integration with the general campus is dependent on the specific individual and the specific BCM.

Question 4: How Did Your Involvement
in the BCM Contribute to Your Academic
Success?

Responses to this question indicated diverse perspectives. Nine interviewees felt that involvement in the BCM neither contributed nor detracted from their academic success. Although they acknowledged an impact on their college experience, they perceived no impact on their academic success.

Two interviewees noted a negative impact on their academic success. One of

the two reported their involvement in the BCM to be weekly, the other, daily. In their response to the question, both indicated that at times, their involvement became a distraction from school work.

Seven interviewees considered their involvement in BCM to have improved their academic success. Some reported that the BCM simply provided a place to study and to collaborate with classmates. Others reported that through their involvement in the BCM they found clarity in their career and education direction.

One student found involvement at the BSU to be, "a time where you could just relax and take a break from [the hectic pace] of school…a good time to just be encouraged, and go back and finish what you were doing, or kind of have that extra energy, last push, or perseverance just to keep going."

Question 5: How Did Your Involvement in the BCM Contribute to Your Transition from the Two-year College to the Four-year Institution?

Twelve of the eighteen interviewees had completed their study at the two-year college and transferred to a four-year institution. Of these twelve, seven either did not get involved in BCM when they transferred or felt that involvement in BCM had no impact on their transition to the four-year institution.

Two interviewees reported negative experiences when they transferred. These interviewees both reported that they were involved in their BCM on a daily basis at the two-year college. Further they reported being very attached to their fellow students at the two-year college. This attachment to their BCM at the two-year college made the process of integrating with the BCM students at the four-year difficult. These interviewees made comments such as,

> So I try to go and sit or do work or something but it was hard to try and meet new people.

> Transitioning was really hard. It wasn't all their fault though because I was super

attached.

The transition from two-year college to four-year institution can be just as difficult as the transition from high-school to college.

However, three interviewees reported that involvement in the BCM had a positive impact on their transition from the two-year college to the four-year institution. These individuals reported that while at the two-year college they either developed relationships that carried over to the four-year institution or made contacts that subsequently developed into relationships when they arrive at the four-year institution. When answering this question, these interviewees made the following comments:

> Yes. Because a lot of friends I made from the [two-year college] BSU transferred to [the four-year institution] too.

> Huge, huge help. Okay. I already have a community base at the college I'm going to transfer too.

> So when we did transition I knew more people at the BSU at [the four-year institution] just because BSU offered a way to meet those people before I went there.

Question 6: Is there Anything Else You Would Like to Share Regarding Your Involvement in BCM?

Question 6 provided a great deal of insight into student's perceptions of how involvement in BCM impacted their college career. In this portion of the interview, I gave the interviewee the freedom to speak about anything they chose. A few key themes developed over the course of the interviews.

The first theme that developed was community. Eleven of the eighteen interviewees reported that they found a sense of community at the BCM. Some of the comments they made include,

> There's a support system there.

> So you are just trying to kind of find your place to fit in . . . you want to have people that you're connected to.

> I feel like at that age, you're shoved out of your house and when you go back home

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you don't feel like you belong in the youth group but you don't quite feel like you belong with older folks.

But I think I just had to find family with [the] BSU. They definitely are family.

Having any type of support system, you don't realize how much it can help you.

Obviously as a Christian, it was nice to be in an environment with fellow Christians. And that helped me feel, again, like I was where I was supposed to be.

As young people leave the security of home and the familiarity of high school and their family church, they sense a need to establish a new support community. For most of these interviewees, the BCM provided that community.

The second theme that developed was discipleship. While not every interviewee used the word, nearly every interviewee referred to discipleship in one way or another. Some of the comments made include,

It's important for a person on campus to find a mentor, to find someone that can walk with them on their journey.

When I left home I left my system of discipleship and mentoring that I had in place.

But one girl, she kind of like, disciple me. She was older, she looked after me.

I have had multiple years now of accountability and discipleship because of being involved at the BSU.

With the new freedom found at college, these students appreciated the need for continued discipleship and accountability.

The third theme that developed concerned the discovery of God's call. Several students reported that because of their involvement at the BCM, they learned what God wanted for them. For some, it was simple obedience. For others, it was life altering change of focus.

Two interviewees reported that when they first arrived on campus, they were partying and hanging out with the wrong crowd. Several weeks into the semester these two individuals began to frequent the BCM. While there, each rediscovered their faith. They summarized it like this:

There is this moment when I realized you don't have to go out and party. You don't

have to drink. There's Godly people here at the BSU that you can hang out with.

I kind of figured out who I am. I think it was really crucial for me to get involved with campus ministry because when I first came in, I guess I was kind of secretly on the fence of whether or not I really wanted to follow Jesus.

The individual making the second statement went on to complete a Masters of Divinity and is currently seeking God's will for him in ministry.

Another interviewee reported that being a part of the BCM gave them a sense of purpose. Their involvement in the BCM reinforced their focus and desire to serve God wherever He placed them. One respondent said,

It helps being aware of how God can use you and letting Him do what He needs to do in you.

Several of the interviewees took advantage of mission opportunities offered through the BCM. Two went to China over the Christmas break. One went to the Philippines over the summer break. Another reported spending two summers in Southeast Asia. Still another spent two summers in Thailand. These interviewees made comments such as,

But because of . . . seeing how important missions was to the heart of God and how much it affected other people, that's kind of what I decided to base my life and base my life on, so that gave me direction, I guess, in what I wanted to do.

And those experiences have really impacted me and helped me decide that I would spend my life living abroad, overseas somewhere. And so, since I have made that decision [I have decided] to pursue a degree in ministry for the purposes of being a missionary.

And [God] was just like, 'you're going to China next Christmas, and you're gonna share the Gospel with those people.' And that really . . . it just dictated the rest of my life to this day.

One individual reported that after spending two summers in Thailand, the focus of their life shifted from herself to others.

I mean, I really, I just want to do missions. So when I graduate I would love to do the Journeyman program for two years. But eventually I want to work with Tiny Hands International.

For many of the interviewees, involvement in BCM lead to a discovery of who

they were in Christ and what God had planned for their lives.

Summary of Findings

Due to the low number of responses to the survey request, I was unable to draw definitive statistical conclusions. However, the survey results provided useful information in analyzing the interview results. Based on the survey results, I was able to better understand responses from the interviewees. For example, knowing that a student lived with their parents and commuted to school would help explain why they were involved weekly rather that daily. I used both sets of data in analyzing the findings. The following is a summary of that analysis.

Research Question 1: What is the Correlation, if any, between Student Involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Two-year Colleges and Student Retention?

As a general rule, the respondents do not think in terms of retention or completion. While actively enrolled, most students believe they will eventually complete their studies. Only one respondent indicated that they ever seriously considered dropping out of school. The remaining 17 interviewees were all very focused on completing their program of study. This heavy weighting toward retained students is likely due to selection bias. Students seriously considering dropping out are most likely disengaged and would not have received an invitation to participate. The survey responses included only three students who had discontinued their college education prior to completing their studies. I was not able to interview any of these three students.

However, interviewee responses indicate that they perceived that their involvement in the BCM led to greater integration and a strong sense of community with fellow believers. They described these relationships that formed from this integration using words like community, family, and support system. Although the respondents did

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not attribute a direct correlation between these relationships and their retention or completion, they did attach great value to them. I believe that these relationships are extremely valuable to their college experience and do contribute positively to initial retention and subsequent completion.

Research Question 2: What is the Correlation, if any, between Student Involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Two-year Colleges and Academic Success?

The correlation between involvement and academic success is less clear. The largest group of respondents, nine, perceived that involvement in BCM neither helped nor hindered their academic success. Two respondents perceived that their involvement detracted from their academic success. For these respondents, the issue was one of time management. However, seven respondents perceived that their involvement in BCM contributed positively to their academic success. They cited networking opportunities, accountability, discipline, and educational focus gained from their involvement

I believe that involvement in BCM may or may not lead to greater academic success depending on the student. Students who tend to be disciplined and focused may find their involvement at the BCM to be a useful resource in their academic pursuits. However, less disciplined and less focused students may find the BCM offers too many distractions to be helpful.

Evaluation of Research Design

The present research design was satisfactory. The originally proposed study was quantitative only and limited to data gained from the survey. However, the response rate was insufficient for my purpose. Therefore, the research method was modified. The completed study is a sequential, mixed method study incorporating quantitative and qualitative elements. There are strengths and weaknesses to this research that merit

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recognition.

Strengths of the Research Design

The research was designed collect data from current and recent students who have been or are still involved in BCM while enrolled at a two-year college. The plan used a top-down approach to reach this population. I first requested assistance from the state directors of campus/student ministry in five states. These directors were asked to request the assistance of the campus directors in reaching the appropriate students. This design provided a valid attempt to draw a significant sample from the population of students. However, the plan was successful in only two of the five states leading to a response of eighty qualified surveys. This sample was insufficient to develop statistically supportable conclusions. This insufficiency led me to modify the design to include a qualitative element.

Although the survey response was insufficient for statistical analysis, it was quite useful. The survey responses provided a sample base from which to draw the purposeful sample for the qualitative portion of the data collection. Furthermore, the quantitative portion of the data collection provided me with data which proved very useful in analyzing the qualitative data gained from the interviews.

The qualitative portion of data collection utilized a set of six core questions asked of every interviewee. Based on the answers to these core questions, I was able to probe deeper into the interviewee's perceptions of the impact of their involvement in campus ministry on their college experience. By combining the two sets of data, I was able to gain insight into the students' perceptions about the research questions.

Weaknesses of the Research Design

The response rate to the quantitative survey proved to be a significant weakness. In one of the states, campus ministries are physically housed primarily on the

campuses of four-year institutions. These ministries then serve the two-year colleges. The lack of a physical presence on the two-year college campus may have adversely effected the survey response. In another state, the invitation from the state director was not passed on to the campus directors until after the semester end. Once students leave campus and ministry activities wind down, communication with the students because less effective.

The low response rate is problematic for two reasons. First, to perform reliable statistical analysis, I required 380 qualified surveys. Such a response rate would allow me to perform a regression analysis on the data and compare those results to similar statistical results for the general population of the various states.

Second, the qualified respondents were almost exclusively students who had retained or completed with only three respondents reporting they had ended their studies prior to completion. I had asked campus ministers to encourage all students who had been active in their ministry during the 2013 – 2016 academic years to participate in the survey. I believed they would have enough valid email addresses to contact many of them. I believe that campus ministers in at least two states published the request to their active members only. Past students who were no longer involved in their ministry for whatever reason may not have received an invitation to take the survey. The study design also neglected ethnicity, race, and gender. Each of these are factors with potential impact on retention, completion, and success.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Researchers Alexander Astin, Vincent Tinto et al. have asserted that various forms of student involvement are positively correlated with student retention, completion, and academic success. In the existing literature, researchers have studied involvement in numerous areas including student government, honors clubs, athletics, etc. They have also studied the impact of housing choices and employment status. The vast majority of their studies have focused on students at four-year institutions.

The intent of this study was to look for a similar correlation between student involvement in campus ministry, specifically Baptist Collegiate Ministry, by students enrolled at two-year colleges. This chapter restates the research purpose and research questions, presents the research implications, the research applications, the research limitations, and ideas for further research.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe the correlation, if any, between involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry and student retention and completion and between involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry and academic success. The study will look specifically at students who began their college education at a two-year college.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at a two-year college on student retention/completion?

    a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing to their retention?

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b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement as contributing toward their subsequent completion or graduation?

2. What is the impact, if any, of student involvement in a Baptist Collegiate Ministry at a two-year college on academic success?

a. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year institution and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward passing more classes?

b. Do students who begin their college education at a two-year college and who are involved in Baptist Collegiate Ministry perceive that involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry contributed toward a higher grade point average (GPA)?

Research Implications

The implications of this research are presented below. The following list is a summary of the implications derived from my evaluation of the analysis of findings:

1. Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges provides students an effective way to integrate with other students on the campus.

2. Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges may contribute to academic success.

3. Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges does not contribute to a smoother transition to the four-year institution.

4. Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges provides opportunities for discipleship.

5. Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges contributes significantly to the student's process of self-discovery.

Research Question 1 Implications

Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges provides students an effective way to integrate with other students on the campus. Student perceptions support a positive impact from involvement in BCM on retention and completion.

Schlossberg's research presented in chapter 2 asserts that a lack of

relationships in a new environment can lead to feelings of marginality or not mattering. These feelings place students at a higher risk to drop out. However, Schlossberg further asserts that integrating with a group of peers often overcomes those feelings of marginality. The research of Astin and Tinto also presented in chapter two, compliments Schlossberg's research. They assert that student involvement beyond the classroom leads to integration and to greater retention.

In this present research, nine of the eighteen respondents interviewed, reported that they knew few or no people on campus when they arrived. This situation places them at a higher risk of feeling marginalized. Seven of the nine who reported that they knew few or no people on campus when they arrived also reported they became involved at the BCM early in the semester. They went on to report they made lots of friends and developed relationships with people of the same mindset. The interviewees spoke of their friends at the BCM as family and as a support group. They mentioned that those relationships helped them continue when they felt like giving up. This is the language of integration.

The findings indicate that there is a positive impact from involvement in the BCM on retention and completion at the two-year college.

Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges does not contribute to a smoother transition and integration at the four-year institution. Student perceptions do no support a positive impact from involvement in BCM and an easier integration at the four-year institution.

I discovered that many students involved in BCM at the two-year college do not continue that involvement at the four-year institution. Various reasons were given including lack of time and dissatisfaction with the BCM at the four-year institutions.

Several respondents indicated that as they moved into upper-level courses, the demands on their time grew and they had less time available for other involvement.

Others indicated that the BCM at the four-year institution was large and hard to integrate into. Finally, one admitted to being overly attached to their BCM back at the two-year college.

Research clearly suggests that students struggling with transition are at greater risk of withdrawing. Accordingly, the findings indicate that BCM directors on both two- and four-year campuses are missing an opportunity to have a positive impact on the transition of students from the two-year colleges to the four-year institutions. This opportunity will be further discussed in the applications section of this paper.

Research Question 2 Implications

Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges can contribute to academic success. Student perceptions support a direct correlation between involvement in BCM and academic success for many students.

Some students indicated their involvement neither helped nor hindered their academic success. These students also reported no issues integrating upon arrival on campus. Most of them also had a predetermined degree when they arrived. I believe that, for this type of individual, student involvement is not critical to academic success. These individuals appear to be driven more by factors external to the campus environment.

Two students indicated their involvement in BCM led to lower grades. I believe these students are outliers and that there is no direct correlation between involvement and academic failure. I observed that some college students initially struggle to find the right balance between studies and activities.

Seven students indicated that their involvement in BCM definitely resulted in better academic performance. Some attributed it to student networks developed at the BCM. Others attributed it to the encouragement they received there. However, most of them attributed it to a discovery of purpose found through their involvement at the BCM. This involvement often led them to a previously unidentified career path. Once they had

settled on a career path, their academic performance improved.

The findings indicate that it is very likely that appropriate involvement in BCM can lead to greater academic success for many students. The relationships formed at the BCM may become a valuable resource for students as they progress through their college experience.

Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges provides opportunities for discipleship. As noted in chapter 2, Eric Mankowski and Elizabeth Thomas assert that the transition from living at home to living on the college campus may lead to significant changes in a person's identity. Students may find any number of challenges to the values and beliefs with which they were raised. As college campuses become more and more liberal, these challenges will only increase. Several students indicated their involvement in BCM provided a replacement for the discipleship lost when they left home. Although most students reported being active in a local church or returning home for church regularly, they also reported taking part in weekly Bible studies at the BCM. They further indicated they were discipled by and entered into accountability partnerships with people they met at the BCM.

Effective, comprehensive Christian discipleship goes far beyond teaching spiritual disciplines. It also includes the development of a Christian worldview. BCM directors have a unique opportunity to shape students' worldviews. They can help students see the importance of education and how advancing their education can bring glory to God. Such an understanding may lead to greater academic success as students see greater value in their educational efforts

Student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry at two-year colleges contributes significantly to the students' discovery of God's call on their lives. One student reported that he found a community where he did not need to party and drink to enjoy himself. Another learned that he could live out his Christian life in a secular career.

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Several students reported that they found new education and career paths as a result of participating in activities sponsored by the BCM. One reported he discovered how to live out Christianity in a secular career. Another discovered a call to student work and followed graduation by enrolling in seminary. Many participated in summer or Christmas missions and discovered a call to missions. Through the corporate Bible study, discipleship, and service to others, these students discovered that God had very specific plans for them. Countless students arrive on the campuses of two-year colleges with little or no directions. BCM's have an opportunity to help find a God-honoring direction.

Several students reported that this newfound call on their lives resulted in a refinement of their educational decisions. Quite often they changed their major field of study and enrolled in classes that had new relevance to them. Along with that refinement and new relevance came greater effort and better performance.

Research Applications

This study assessed the impact of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry by students attending two-year colleges on retention and completion as well as on academic success. Student perceptions lead me to believe it is highly likely that such student involvement has a positive impact on retention, completion, and academic success for many students. This section addresses applications of this present research for three groups: (1) students, (2) campus ministries, and (3) college administrations.

Research Application for Students

The transition from high school to college is difficult for many students. Many of them move from their public school where they know and are known by many people to a campus where they know and are known by very few. This situation leads many students to a feeling of isolation and makes them more susceptible to leaving college prematurely. There is a significant body of research asserting that student involvement

outside the classroom helps students integrate and overcome this feeling of isolation. New students should be aware that getting involved beyond the classroom improves their chances of successfully completing their college program of study. This is especial true for students who begin their education at a two-year college.

Christian students should be aware that one place to find such involvement is the BCM. Every student interviewed spoke positively of their involvement in BCM. Some felt it helped them integrate with other students. Some felt it helped the succeed academically. Some felt it helped guide them to a career choice. All felt it provided a place of support and encouragement.

BCM's also offer students numerous leadership opportunities. In many BCM's, directors design their programs to be almost entirely student led. Students are given the opportunity to lead Bible studies, praise and worship teams, drama teams, and service projects, etc. Based on my conversations with the interviewees, those students who accepted leadership positions at their BCM felt strongly that the leadership experience contributed to their success, both in and beyond college.

Research Application for the BCM Directors

The potential ministry of the BCM goes beyond Bible study and fellowship. The impact of BCM on students can be increased considerably by embracing a greater mission. These ministries actually have the opportunity to contribute positively to students' college success. However, it is not automatic.

This research indicates that these ministries need to be inviting. Many students do not automatically seek out the BCM when they get to campus. Most of the students interviewed made their first visit to the BCM because another student or the director personally invited them. Many college campuses feature orientation programs to start the fall semester. Freshmen and transfer students are introduced to available campus

activities and resources. BCM directors should participate in these events whenever possible.

BCM directors should develop programs to draw students to their fellowship and they should do so early in the semester. Most college students crave social activity. BCM directors can capitalize on that craving by offering social events on or near campus.

While it is never too late to connect with students, early involvement in the BCM will help students integrate quicker. Integration may be easier earlier in the semester when many in the group are new as opposed to later when many relationships are already established. It may also help students avoid some of the bad choices offered on many college campuses.

This research further indicates that the BCM needs to be welcoming. They must reach out to visitors and help them feel included in the fellowship. Students who visit and find themselves outside of the group do not often return for a second visit. Directors and student leaders need to design their programs in ways that encourage students on the margins to move into the middle and get involved. All students, believers and non-believers, should be made to feel welcome when they attend.

This research also showed that they need to provide spiritually healthy alternatives to other organizations/activities on campus. Leaving home for college offers new freedom to many students. College campuses offer numerous ways to express that freedom. As previously stated, many students crave social engagement. The BCM can and should offer alternatives to the less healthy social engagement activities on and around campus. It must be a place where believers find Christian fellowship.

BCM's and local congregations should enter in to partnership. Many students fail to join with a local church while in college. The BCM becomes their surrogate congregation. An intentional partnership between local churches and the BCM could significantly impact student participation in the local church.

The BCM should seize opportunities to help students discover God's call on their lives. I believe this opportunity goes far beyond Bible study and worship. Several students reported that they discovered God's call on their life while participating in activities sponsored by the BCM. These activities included local ministries, state conferences, foreign missions, etc. Activities sponsored by the BCM should reveal that God calls us to service in secular as well as ministry careers. Accountants, lawyers, nurses, and missionaries are all called to serve God in their work.

BCM directors at two-year colleges should work with directors at four-year institutions to help students transition between institutions more easily. At a minimum, with student permission, they could share the contact information of transfer students. In some cases, they could coordinate visits to the receiving campus.

Research Application for College Administrators

Two-year college administrators are tasked with increasing retention and graduation by several stakeholders. Students and their families want to know they can reasonably expect to complete their college education. State boards of higher education exist for the sole purpose of advancing education within their state. The federal government spends billions of dollars to assist the middle and lower economic classes achieve the dream of a college degree.

College administrators spend amazing amounts of time and money looking for and testing methods to improve retention and graduation. Supporting campus ministries on their campus is a-no cost way to positively impact both of these measures. Administrators would serve themselves and their students well by promoting campus ministries along with other clubs and organizations. They could do so in several ways.

Many colleges offer orientation days for new freshmen and transfer students. These events usually include presentations by various organizations on campus.

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Administrators could invite campus ministries to make presentations about their ministries.

Some campus ministries struggle to operate without a facility. Administrators could make meeting space available on campus during hours when such space is unused. Student Union buildings and dormitories typically feature common areas ideal for student gatherings. Many organizations face hurdles in utilizing such space. Recognizing the positive contribution of campus ministries, administrators can lessen those hurdles for them.

Communicating with college students can be challenging. Administrators should allow campus ministries to post approved communications on college information sites. Student body government quite often includes representation from the various clubs and organizations on campus. Campus ministries could be allowed to have representation in the student government.

Research Limitations

In addition to the limits of generalization addressed in chapter 3, the findings and conclusions presented in this research study should be considered in light of the followed limitations:

1. I was unable to reach significant numbers of students in three of the states defined in the research prospectus. The majority of data was obtained from students in Arkansas and Mississippi.

2. I was unable to reach significant numbers of students who had withdrawn from college prior to completing their course of study. The perceptions reported in the findings of this study are exclusively those of students who have retained and/or completed their college education.

3. The conclusions reached in this study were based primarily on the analysis of data performed by myself. My subjectivity may have unduly influenced the reported conclusions. Additional research could expose the nature and degree of such influence.

Further Research

This study represents the first known research study on the impact of student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry on retention and completion and on academic success by students who started their college education at a two-year college. Additional research is merited as follows.

A longitudinal study of the impact of involvement in campus ministry on student retention, completion, and academic success is needed. Such a study could identify cohorts of freshmen who are involved in the BCM and follow them throughout their entire college career. Cohorts could be selected from various institutions including two-year, four-year, public, private, open enrollment, and restricted enrollment. Data gathered from the cohorts could be compared to data already collected by the institutional research departments of the various institutions, the state boards of higher education, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, and other educational research agencies. Such a study would be extremely useful in identifying any correlation between involvement in campus ministry and retention, completion, and academic success.

An exemplar study of campus ministries at two-year colleges would also be useful. Such a study could identify best practices for campus ministry programs. Areas of interest might include campus ministry director best practices, recruiting and retaining participants, leadership development, service/mission involvement, interaction with local congregations, interaction with campus administration, interaction with other campus ministries, etc.

A study is needed among first-time freshmen regarding how they choose to become involved or to not become involved in campus ministry. Additionally, a study concerning why students end their involvement in campus ministry would be useful. Such studies would be useful to campus ministry directors in designing their programs.

A study similar to this one focused on the additional factors of race, ethnicity, and gender would be useful. Future research could also compare first generation students

to students with a family history in higher education and students who accept leadership positions in campus ministry.

Conclusion

Baptist Collegiate Ministries enjoy a unique opportunity with college students at public, two-year institutions. Even though they are not sponsored by the colleges they serve, most campuses accept their presence. This acceptance provides a substantial opportunity for Southern Baptists to influence the students attending these institutions. Yet such influence does not happen without intentionality.

First, just as the lost do not typically seek out the church, new college students quite often do not seek out the BCM. In some cases, students are not even aware the BCM exists. Directors and the students involved must be intentional in inviting new students into their fellowship. When new students come, they must be intentional in making these new students feel welcome and part of the fellowship. When they do so, they have an opportunity to help students integrate into college life. Such integration leads to retention and completion.

Second, BCM directors must understand the opportunity goes far beyond offering a weekly Bible study, a free lunch, and some good fellowship. College students often find their beliefs and values challenged in numerous ways when they become students at a public college. The BCM can and should be a place of refuge, support and encouragement as well as a place of discipleship and accountability. Students who find a such a place are more likely to succeed. The ministry that acknowledges this role will have the opportunity to impact college students in immeasurable ways.

Third, college students must decide how they will interact with and in the culture in which they live. The BCM that sees this decision has the opportunity to mold that decision making process.

APPENDIX 1

LETTER REQUESTING STATE DIRECTOR
ASSISTANCE

Hello. My name is Mark Rasor. I am a student in the Doctor of Education (EdD) program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. I have completed my seminar work and am now moving into the research and writing mode.

I have chosen to study the impact of student involvement on retention and academic success. I am attempting to build on the theories of Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto. The specific area of involvement at which I am looking is the Baptist Collegiate Ministry. The specific population in which I am interested is students who began the college education at a two-year college. Neither this area of involvement nor this population have received much attention in the previous research.

I am reaching out to you for assistance. As the state director of campus ministry (or other title as appropriate), I would like to ask you to forward my request for participation (attached) on to the campus ministers across Oklahoma (or other state as appropriate). It is my hope that, with your endorsement, I will receive a better response rate.

In return for your assistance, I will gladly share my findings and my conclusions with you.

Please copy rrasor072@students.sbts.edu when emailing the request to the individual campus directors. This will allow me to better determine the response rates to the survey requests.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached as follows:

Phone: 918-320-9528   Email: rrasor072@students.sbts.edu

My faculty supervisor is Dr. J. D. Trentham. If you have questions for him, you may email him at jdtrentham@sbts.edu

Thank you for advance for your assistance.

God Bless

APPENDIX 2

LETTER REQUESTING CAMPUS DIRECTOR
ASSISTANCE

Hello. My name is Mark Rasor. I am a student in the Doctor of Education (EdD) program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. I have completed my seminar work and am now moving into the research and writing mode.

I have chosen to study the impact of student involvement on retention and academic success. I am attempting to build on the theories of Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto. The specific area of involvement at which I am looking is the Baptist Collegiate Ministry. The specific population in which I am interested is students who began the college education at a two-year college. Neither this area of involvement nor this population have receive much attention in the previous research.

I am reaching out to you for assistance. As the director of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry on your campus (or other title as appropriate), I would like to ask you to forward my request for participation (attached) and survey link to any student who has been active in your ministry since the Fall of 2011. It is my hope that, with your assistance, I can reach and receive a response from a significant number of students who began their education on a two-year campus and participated in campus ministry.

In return for your assistance, I will gladly share my findings and my conclusions with you.

Please copy rrasor072@students.sbts.edu when emailing the request to students. This will allow me to better determine the response rates to the survey requests.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached as follows:

Phone: 918-320-9528   Email: rrasor072@students.sbts.edu

My faculty supervisor is Dr. J. D. Trentham. If you have questions for him, you may email him at jdtrentham@sbts.edu

Thank you for advance for your assistance.

God Bless

APPENDIX 3

LETTER REQUESTING STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Hello. My name is Mark Rasor. I am a student in the Doctor of Education (EdD) program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. I have completed my seminar work and am now moving into the research mode.

I have chosen to study the impact of student involvement on retention and academic success. I am attempting to build on the theories of Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto. The specific area of involvement at which I am looking is the Baptist Collegiate Ministry. The specific population in which I am interested is students who began the college education at a two-year college. Neither this area of involvement nor this population have received much attention in the previous research.

I am reaching out to you for assistance. The BCM director on your campus has identified you as someone with some involvement at the BCM and has forwarded you this email. As a student who has had some involvement in the Baptist Collegiate Ministry, I would like to ask you to complete a short survey. The survey asks questions regarding demographics, participation in various student activities, specific participation in the Baptist Collegiate Ministry, and current/future plans for your college education.

All students who COMPLETE the online survey by May 15, 2016 and include a valid email address will be entered into a drawing. Two students will be selected to receive a SURFACE PRO 3 with 64GB/2GB RAM/Wi-Fi + 4g LTE.

The survey can be completed at www.surveylink.com.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached as follows:

Phone: 918-320-9528
Email: rrasor072@students.sbts.edu

Thank you for advance for your participation (and good luck in the drawing).

God Bless

APPENDIX 4

SURVEY: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN BAPTIST
COLLEGIATE MINISTRY, ENROLLMENT
STATUS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine if a correlation exists between student involvement in Baptist Collegiate Ministry and student persistence/retention and/or academic success. The research specifically considers students who began their college education within the two-year college context. The research is being conducted by Mark Rasor for purposes of a dissertation project. In the research, you will be asked to complete an online survey concerning aspects of your involvement in various campus activities and of your academic status. Any information you provided will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or your name be identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this survey and checking the appropriate box, entering your name, and entering your email address, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

□ I agree to participate   □ I do not agree to participate

Name: _____

Email: _____
   * Students who provide a valid email address will be entered in the drawings for the
   Surface tablets and receive a copy of the results. Your email address will not be
   shared, sold, or distributed in any way.

Please answer each question with the ONE response that best represents your

experiences, perceptions, and attitudes.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Personal:

Age:	18	19	20	21	22	23+
Gender:	Female	Male				
Classification in School:	Fresh. (0-30 hrs.)	Soph. (31-60 hrs.)	Junior (61-90 hrs.)	Senior (91+ hrs.)	Graduate	Other
Housing status as a freshman:	With Parents	On-Campus	Off-Campus			
Current Enrollment Status:	Not enrolled	1 to 11 credit hours	12+ credit hours			
Employment Status:	Unemployed	Part-Time	Full-Time			
Circle your religious affiliation:	Baptist	Episcopal	Methodist	Catholic	Other	
	Evangelical Christian	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Church of Christ	None	

Institutional:

School attended as a freshman:					
Number of semesters at this school:					
School Type:	Two-Year	Four-Year			
School Affiliation:	Public	Evangelical	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Other
School currently attending:					
Number of semesters at this school:					
School Type:	Two-Year	4-Year			
School	Public	Evangelical	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Other

Affiliation:

(Evangelical includes Assemblies of God, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Southern Baptist, et al. Mainline Protestant includes United Methodist, Presbyterian Church-USA, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, et al.)

STUDENT INVOLVMENT:

Please indicate which of the following activities you were involved in during the first year of college and the frequency of your involvement:

Student Government:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Honors Program:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Faculty-Student interaction outside the classroom:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Student Clubs:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Intercollegiate Athletics:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Intramural Athletics:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Baptist Collegiate Ministries:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Other Campus Ministry:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never
Attend a local church:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	1x per Semester	Never

When I attended a Baptist Collegiate Ministry event, I was an Active participant

(engaged in conversation, participated in worship and fellowship, joined in games, etc.)

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]

Strongly Disagree

I frequently went to the BCM to study.

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]

Strongly Disagree

I frequently went to the BCM to relax and spend time with friends.

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]

Strongly Disagree

I served in a leadership position with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry.

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]
Strongly Disagree

I volunteered or was assigned responsibility to work on something that the BCM needed
to have done.

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]
Strongly Disagree

When at the BCM, I felt welcome and included.

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]
Strongly Disagree

My involvement at the BCM made me feel more a part of the campus community:

[ ] Strongly Agree   [ ] Agree   [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree   [ ] Disagree   [ ]
Strongly Disagree

ACADEMIC STATUS:

During the first two years of college, in how many courses did you receive a passing
grade (A, B, C, D, P, S)

[ ] 5 or fewer [ ] 6   [ ] 7   [ ] 8   [ ] 9   [ ] 10 [ ] 11 [ ] 12 [ ]13   [ ] 14 [ ] 15
[ ] More than 15 (please specify how many)

During the first two years of college, in how many courses did you NOT receive a
passing grade (W, W/F, F, I)

[ ] 1   [ ] 2   [ ] 3   [ ] 4   [ ] 5   [ ] More than 5

I have completed my program of study and received my degree or certificate.

[ ] True   [ ] False

I have not completed my program of study and am taking classes full-time (12+ hours per
semester) or will resume taking classed full-time next semester.

[ ] True   [ ] False

I have not completed my program of study and am taking classes part-time (1-11 credit

hours per semester) or will resume taking classes part-time next semester.

[ ] True   [ ] False

I have not completed my program of study and am not currently taking classes or

planning to take classes next semester.

[ ] True   [ ] False

My current cumulative grade point average is:

[ ] Less than 2.0   [ ] 2.00-2.49   [ ] 2.50-2.99   [ ] 3.00-3.49   [ ] 3.5-4.00

My enrollment status for next semester is:

[ ] Enrolled   [ ] Planning to enroll   [ ] Not planning to enroll   [ ] Graduated

FOLLOW-UP

Would you be willing to participate in a short telephone interview to provide additional

information to the researcher (your answer will not influence your chance to win one of

the Surface tablets)?

[ ] Yes   [ ] No

If yes, at what telephone number and at what time can you be most conveniently

contacted?

Phone number: _____

Weekday: [ ] 10:00am to 12:00pm   [ ] 12:00pm-5:00pm [ ] 5:00pm-9:00pm

Saturday: [ ] 10:00am to 12:00pm   [ ] 12:00pm-5:00pm [ ] 5:00pm-9:00pm

Sunday: [ ] 1:00pm to 5:00pm   [ ] 7:00pm-9:00pm

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you answered all questions, provided a valid
email, and submitted the survey by midnight May 31, 2016, you will be entered in a
drawing to win one of two MicroSoft Surface Tablets. The winner will be notified in
July, 2016.

APPENDIX 5

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interviewees will be contacted by email first to arrange for a telephone interview. During the telephone interview, the researcher will ask open-ended questions designed to determine if a correlation exists between involvement in campus ministry and student retention.

First-time college students often find the transition from high school to college to be quite difficult. In fact, many find the transition so difficult that they struggle to pass classes and to continue through to graduation. They often site an inability to integrate with other students. However, many students have indicated that various types of student involvement have contributed to their ability to integrate into campus life and to complete a successful transition. The purpose of this discussion is to explore your personal experience and the impact, if any, of involvement in BCM on your transition.

Questions to be asked.

1. Describe your initial feelings upon arrival on campus.
2. Describe how your involvement in BCM influenced those feelings.
3. How did your involvement in BCM help you integrate into campus life?
4. How did your involvement in the BCM contribute to your academic success?
5. How did your involvement in the BCM contribute to your transition from the two-year college to the four-year institution?

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your involvement in BCM?

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING THE IPACT OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN
CAMPUS MINISTRY ON RETENTION AND ACADEMIC
SUCCESS: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Chair: Dr. John David Trentham

This thesis is a continuation of the Student Involvement Theories proposed by
Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto. The examination of involvement in a campus
ministry and the examination of students who began their college careers at a two-year
institution of higher learning represent the unique contribution of this study. Retention
and academic success are challenges faced on most college campuses. The problem is
especially acute on the campuses of two-year institutions. Students, parents of students,
and college administrators are all seeking ways to improve retention and academic
success. This sequential, mixed methods study assessed the impact of student
involvement in a campus ministry, primarily Baptist Collegiate Ministry, on retention,
completion and academic success. Students who began their college education on a two-
year college campus and who were involved in the Baptist Campus Ministry were asked
to complete a survey regarding the degree of involvement in the ministry and their
academic success and subsequent college completion or departure. Follow-up interviews
were conducted with select students to gain further insight into student perceptions.

KEYWORDS: Academic success, Alexander Astin, Baptist Collegiate Ministry, campus

ministry, community-college, completion, first-time, full-time freshman, graduation, higher education, integration, marginality, persistence, student retention, student involvement, two-year college, Vincent Tinto.

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