7-2019

The Importance of Leadership Motivational Activities In Encouraging International Students To Return To Their Tier 1 Universities

Eric Hall

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Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Organizational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

International students are not returning to their undergraduate Tier 1 institutions during a period when quality student enrollment is essential, and there is scant research on academic advising strategies that can be used to combat international student attrition at these universities. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. An additional goal was to evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement to motivate more of these students to return to these institutions. Major findings were that personal communication with leader, cost, seminars on various topics, job opportunities, and social clubs and organizations motivated international students to return to their Tier 1 research universities. Results support that international students believe they will be able to pay for college and expect good work opportunities as a student, as well as better job opportunities once they graduated from their Tier 1 universities. Recommendations for future study include studying the perceptions of job performance by academic advisors, investigating the relationship between many international students majoring in the sciences and their expectation of acquiring advanced degrees and conducting future research in the United States, and exploring what motivates international students to attend a research university in a suburban or rural setting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has been with me and guided me through this entire, arduous, and adventurous journey. Because of Jesus, I am now victorious! I am so grateful that Jesus Christ has blessed me to write my dissertation and earn my doctorate degree.

My deepest gratitude and appreciation to my dissertation chairman, Dr. Pender B. Noriega, who was an oasis of encouragement, wisdom, and guidance. His steadfast support, invaluable mentorship, and accessibility shaped both my dissertation and my character.

My sincerest thanks to my dissertation committee member, Dr. Kathleen Cornett. You were so influential in my thinking about leadership.

Finally, thank you to all of the students who graciously provided their thoughts and insights during the one-on-one interviews.

Holy Bible Scriptures

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” – Proverbs 3: 5-6

“I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.” – Philippians 4:13

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beautiful and wonderful, wife, Eva A. Hall, for always believing in me and supporting me. You stood by me during our dating, engagement, and now our marriage. It is truly because of you that I now stand at the apex of this ultimate academic achievement. I love you more than the English lexicon can express!

To my 4-month-old son, Ethan Drew Hall, your preciousness and peace have given me the drive to finish strong. I pray that you grow up to be extremely successful, humble, and driven to do all things in excellency. I will be there every step of the way cheering you on.

To my mother, Yvette Norman Hall, you raised me to always do my best, especially when it came to schoolwork. With you being a teacher, I always knew that education was vitally important. Thank you for your guidance and support of me through the years, from the science fair projects in elementary school all the way to this present moment of my dissertation. I truly thank you for what you instilled in me. I love you Mama!

To my father, the late, great, Elliott Hall. Dad, you always supported me, whether it was at Honor Roll Day in elementary school, high school track meets, or when I went off to college. You, too, stayed up late with Mama and I working on school projects. You also taught me how to be presentable, whether it was turning in my homework on clean and crisp paper or teaching me how to tie a tie and iron so I could be as well-dressed as you. At the beginning of every school year, you reminded me that I only get one chance to make a good first impression. Well, Dad, this is my entrance into the doctoral world. I know that I made you proud!

Finally, to my brother, Evrick D. Hall, and my sister, Eryn D. Hall, thank you all for allowing me to be your big brother. I have treasured every sibling moment that we have had. I have strived to be the best big brother that I can be. I thank you for your encouragement of me during this process. It has meant much to me. I love you both.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As the U.S. economy begins to recover from the Great Recession of 2008, so too must colleges and universities (Dalton, 2009; Leonard, 2014; Zumeta & Kinne, 2010). Both smaller private institutions and larger public institutions have been forced to make financial cuts in terms of faculty positions, staff positions, and operational expenses in order to meet their budgetary requirements (Schumacher, 2015). In recent years, there has been a flurry of layoffs and cuts within higher educational institutions around the country. Schumacher (2015) noted examples include faculty and staff layoffs at Ashland University, a 4-year, private institution; Bowling Green State University (BGSU), a public research institution; and Terra Community College, a comprehensive community college (Schumacher, 2015). In 2013, all institutions in Ohio had been downsized in the last 2 years, a move that had been foreshadowed at institutions such as BGSU. Just 2 years before the Great Recession, in 2006, BGSU was part of an economic impact study. In this study, public higher education administrators sought solid economic justification for their budget requests from state legislators (Carroll & Smith, 2006). The summary of the study showed that for every $1 that BGSU received, it returned $8 to the state's economy, which was not on par with other institutions that were part of other economic impact studies. The low numbers were attributed to the conservative strategies used by the university. In contrast, the University of California returns $7 for every $1 that is spent specifically on research, which contributes $46.3 billion to California's economy (University of California, 2018). In another example, as recently as February of 2017, St. Joseph's University in Indiana closed its doors at the end of its semester as a result of being $100 million in debt and having deferred maintenance (Jaschik, 2017). The remaining 904 students received assistance and guidance from the university to place them at another institution where they would be able to matriculate and graduate. In La Jolla, California, Scripps Research Institute was having so many difficulties with budget cuts in 2013, that its president was negotiating merging with the much larger University of Southern California ("Struggle for Independence," 2014). Although Scripps received around $300 million in research funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), this was only 80% of its budget. The remaining 20% came from pharmaceutical companies ("Struggle for Independence," 2014). That money has waned in recent years. According to the literature, just 5 years earlier, Scripps dedicated a facility in Jupiter, Florida (Dalton, 2009). Since at least the late 1990s, alternative funding separate from federal agencies, there has been an increase in university research consortiums, centers, and collaboration (Jankowski, 1999). In light of these findings, there is a need for contemporary and innovative strategies to increase return.

California, the place of boom and bust, surf and sand, alternative lifestyles, and high-tech industries, is perhaps the one state that truly exemplifies the ideals of the American dream. Its network of public colleges and universities has been the envy of the world since 1920 (Douglass, 2012). Californians developed the country's first confluent mass higher education system. According to the literature, it is a tripartite (i.e., three-segment) system comprising the local community college sector, a regional set of campuses offering 4-year degrees (i.e., the California State University system), and a multi-campus University of California (UC) that provides the state's primary research institutions and advanced degrees (Douglas, 2011). Each segment plays a part in the larger system. The UC system is discussed in this study for context because it is one of the largest in the country and has many different research universities under its umbrella.

Other states have their own systems of public colleges and universities, but they have no formal method of coordination. Also, the colleges in other states compete for taxpayer dollars (Douglas, 2011). California is different in that its political and academic leaders created a network of geographically dispersed public colleges and universities linked by *matriculation agreements* (Douglas, 2011). This coherent approach, what Douglas (2011) called "the California Idea," enables a student to enroll at an affordable cost in a local community college to earn an associate of arts degree and then transfer seamlessly to a UC campus to earn a bachelor's degree. Fortunately, this system works. As early as the 1930s, almost half of all students at UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles (UCLA) were transfer students. During the next 30 years, no other state offered so many different paths toward a higher education degree (Douglas, 2011). This was a revolution in public education.

According to the UC's website, nonresident enrollment is down (University of California, 2018). Also, even though some students pay nonresident (in-state) tuition, there are other factors to explain why this has not significantly affected East Bay's budget. Some reasons are that some students have exemptions or are children of UC employees. These students do not pay nonresident, or higher, tuition (University of California, 2018). If there were more international students attending schools in the UC system and paying full tuition, this would help bring the budgets back to more favorable levels.

Problem Background

International students are not returning to their undergraduate Tier 1 institutions during a period when quality student enrollment is essential, and there is scant research on academic advising strategies that can be used to combat international student attrition at these universities (O'Keefe, 2013). A Tier 1 research university, also known as an R1, is a doctoral university that has very high research activity (Carnegie Classification System, 2018). In comparison, a Tier 2, or R2, research university only has high research activity. Peer-reviewed studies are remiss in addressing the reasons why international students return to a Tier 1 research university, specifically. Studies often lump all international students together and make efforts to attract more international students, but the reasons why international students are choosing research universities, and returning, are not being investigated in this manner (Hegarty, 2014). *Retention* is defined as the percentage of students who return the following fall among first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who enrolled at 4-year degree-granting institutions (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016b). Mooring (2016) emphasized the problem of lacking recruitment strategies to increase student retention. He suggested that changes in recruitment, the implementation of academic advising, and curriculum integration have the potential to help correct the problem. Little is known pertaining to what goes into the decision-making process of international students when choosing a research university. Student retention is a multifaceted issue. However, recruitment and retention are similar when it comes to students choosing and returning to a research university. Mooring, in part, suggested that poor retention begins with recruitment and continues throughout the curriculum.

O'Keefe (2013) cited the Department of Education Science and Training as stating that the attrition rate for domestic undergraduate Australian students was 21.2%, in contrast to the attrition rate for international students at 18.0%. For first year students in the United States, the American Institutes for Research (as cited in O'Keefe, 2013) stated the attrition rate was 30% in 2010. There was no attrition rate reported for international students at U.S. universities. University leaders should give authority to academic advisors to follow international students from the admission process throughout their matriculation.

Recently, there has been a decline in the number of international students enrolling in U.S. higher education, according to the Institute of International Education (as cited by Choudaha, 2014). This has led to a reduction in unrestricted revenue for universities, a lack of diversity, and diminished research innovation of U.S. universities by international students. There is a gap in the literature that does not address international students' enrollment as a significant contribution to a research university's ability to provide for all students using their tuition as unrestricted funds. At the same time, there have been drastic and continuous budget cuts by public research universities in recent years (Capaldi, 2011; Cuillier & Stoffle, 2011; de Waal & Kerklaan, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The bulk of revenue for a research university comes from research grants. However, research funding is earmarked for research, and universities are having major budget deficits (Pennsylvania State University Budget Office, 2016; Sorooshian & Yahaghi, 2017). Falling student enrollment is adding to these budget deficits (Douglass, 2015). The goal of this study was to determine what factors influence an international student to apply and return to a research university so the focus can be put on enrolling more international students to generate more unrestricted revenue for the research university to expand beyond the research realm. For example, the 2017-2018 tuition for in-state students at the University of Virginia was $16,146 and the out-of-state tuition was $46,975 (U.S. News & World Report, 2018). This is a difference of $30,829.

Research universities are typically non-profit (Carnegie Classification System, 2018; Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, n.d.; Georgia State University, 2017; Indiana University Bloomington, 2016; Nelson, 2016). Even though the bulk of their budgets come from research grants, this money can only be used for research. For example, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, received $628 million in total research funding awards and $353.7 million in federal research funding awards in 2017 (Emory University, 2018). Likewise, Florida State University's faculty brought in $190 million in contracts and grants in the 2015-2016 academic year (Florida State University, 2018). Florida State's website states that Florida State University is ranked among the Carnegie Commission classification: Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity (Florida State University, 2018). Yet, this money cannot be used for the general student population or student facilities. This leaves a research university at a deficit once student enrollment drops as a result of state budget cut allocations (Boylan & Ho, 2017). The literature also shows that for-profit universities are taking students away from non-profit universities (Douglass, 2012). When public higher education cannot keep pace with the growing public demand for access and programs, for-profits rush to fill that gap, becoming a much larger provider. This is the pattern in many developing economies (Douglass, 2012).

According to the literature, research universities get their income from two main sources: the federal government for research and tuition (Gilroy, 2008; Jankowski, 1999). Public institutions may get additional funds from the federal government and through private gifts; however, those funds are restricted to research purposes, and not student learning, such as professor salaries (Gilroy, 2008). These funds do not necessarily support the university's mission or espoused values (Gilroy, 2008; Kabanoff & Daly, 2002; Zerquera & Doran, 2017). As a result, a research university may not be able to retain its identity. It appears universities that began as research institutions may have had to modify their identities over the years to accommodate the growing restrictions and laws on research funding and innovation by the federal government and reduced student enrollment. International students can bolster the personality of that institution, and make a significant contribution to it financial well-being (Hegarty, 2014). In order for this significant contribution to take place, the reasons why international students choose a research university, in spite of their acculturative stress or culture adjustment stressors, must be addressed (Li, Wang, Liu, Xu, & Cui, 2018).

In 2009, the UC Board of Regents gave its president the power to enforce a furlough plan that would force staff to take unpaid leave (Bergman, 2009). The forced furlough was an alternative to massive layoffs (Bergman, 2009; Bradley, 2011). In 1993, two colleges in California, San Jose State University and California State University – Sacramento, reversed their policies on phasing out their Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs. Part of the reason was President Bill Clinton's acceptance of gay service members in the military. This was better known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. However, after the Department of Defense (DoD) said that universities would lose research funding, between $9 and $23 million, the colleges reversed their decisions to phase out their ROTC programs (Holden, 1997). The inability of the public system to keep up with enrollment demand has resulted in a phenomenon Douglass (2012) called the *Brazilian Effect*. In Brazil, more than 50% of student enrollment is at for-profit institutions; Korea and Poland also reflect this model (Douglass, 2012). For-profit higher education can be beneficial in expanding access and increasing graduation rates.

The problem with for-profit institutions taking over is that many of these educational providers offer low quality and productivity and little research is taking place at for-profit institutions. As their name suggests, these schools are expensive for students and for federal and state governments (Douglass, 2012). In 2008-2009, a Congressional report showed students at for-profit higher education institutions received 23% of all federal student aid even though they only accounted for 10% of all higher education students (Douglass, 2012). For-profit institutions have higher attrition rates and lower production of degrees than comparable public colleges, especially among the traditional college age population of 18- to 24-year-olds (Douglass, 2012). As stated, the literature is abundant in addressing state and federal contributions and tuition from students as a whole. However, the literature is deficient in addressing international students' role in this higher education problem. With a better understanding of the reasoning and decision-making of international students when they choose to attend a Tier 1 research university, universities will have more access to unrestricted funds that may be used for a variety of academic purposes that are not linked to budget cuts. The literature supports that changes to recruitment practices are necessary to draw students who are more likely to persist (Mooring, 2016). Aggressive advising creates a positive learning environment, thereby promoting retention by incorporating the students (Mooring, 2016). They are the target audience that will improve a university's retention rates. It behooves a university to be aggressive and innovative in its recruiting strategies. So far, researchers have not asked for feedback directly from international students, yet they have analyzed data about them (Mooring, 2016). By actually studying the feedback from international students, universities can provide support to current international students while fostering an environment that will encourage more international students to follow (Bista & Foster, 2011). In light of the scant research in the literature on international students' perspectives in overcoming student enrollment decline, this author chose to study this topic to fill the gap in the literature (Capaldi, 2011; Cuillier & Stoffle, 2011; de Waal & Kerklaan, 2015; Gilroy, 2008; Jankowski, 1999; Kabanoff & Daly, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schumacher, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. An additional goal was to evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement to motivate more of these students to return to these institutions. Hence, the theoretical framework for this exploratory qualitative case study was expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) as the underpinning goal was to gain an understanding of the motivational factors and decision-making processes used by international students when choosing to attend and return to a Tier 1 research university in the United States.

The population of international students who were asked to participate in this study was 18- to 24-year-olds who were in college for the first time at a 4-year, Tier 1 research university. The reason for the 6-year age range at a 4-year university is related to the definition of *graduation rate*, or the rate at which a first-time, full-time student enrolled at a 4-year institution graduates with a bachelor's degree within 6 years (NCES, 2016b). *Retention* is defined as the percentage of students who return the following fall among first-time, full-time degree-seeking students enrolled at a 4-year degree-granting institution (NCES, 2016b). *Attrition* is defined as a student who leaves an academic program before finishing (Higher Education Academy [HEA], n.d.). Using the qualitative data gained in this study, leaders and academic advisors might be able to revise their retention goals for international students.

Research Question

In consideration of the importance of motivating international students to return to their Tier 1 institutions, the overarching question for this study was: Why is there a vast number of international undergraduate individuals not returning to their same Tier 1 research institutions and what motivational activities might be implemented by leaders and advisors to entice them to return to these institutions?

By investigating the expected rewards and motivational activities of international students, academic advisors can better use certain models with international students. The open-ended interview questions were asked in such a way as to elicit emerging themes during analysis and understand the motivating factors for international students to return to a Tier 1 research university for a second and subsequent years (Yates & Leggett, 2016). This may increase the number of international students at Tier 1 research universities as well as other universities across the country. One can only imagine the influx of innovation in medicine and sciences with more diversity on the collegiate level. There are only 200 colleges and universities that enroll international students out of 4,500 colleges and universities in the United States (Choudaha, 2014). The data collected and analyzed in this study were intended to add to this number because of the ease of qualifying and understanding exactly what international students expect when they attend a Tier 1 research university.

Definition of Terms

The terms that are specific to this study are defined below.

- *Academic advisor* – a higher education leader who creates conditions for students to be successful and graduate (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013).
- *Attrition* – the number of individuals who leave a program of study before earning a degree (HEA, 2018).
- *Budget* – the process of allocating finite resources to the prioritized needs of an organization (NCES, 2016a).
- *Enrollment management* – an assertive practice of ensuring a consistent pool of qualified students required to sustain institutional vitality (Kemerer, Baldridge, & Green, 1982).
- *Graduation rate* – the rate at which a first-time, full-time student enrolled at a 4-year institution graduates with a bachelor’s degree within 6 years (NCES, 2016b).

- *Followers* – those under a leader's authority; also referred to as members, subordinates, team members, group members, or employees (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Silva, 2016).
- *For-profit institution* – a private institution in which the individuals or agency in control receive compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk (NCES, 2016a).
- *International student* – any student who is not a citizen of the United States. This may include any student who must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Testing Language System (IETLS), has a non-immigrant visa, or who may not have a Social Security number (University of California Riverside, 2017).
- *Intramural athletics* – a collegiate sport in which students compete, on campus, against each other in various leagues and tournaments (University of California Irvine, 2017).
- *Leadership* – the process of an individual influencing another individual or group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Northouse, 2007).
- *Liberal arts university* – a university where studies are more focused in language, philosophy, literature, or abstract science. A liberal arts university chiefly intends to provide general knowledge and to develop general intellectual capacities (e.g., reason and judgment) as opposed to professional or vocational skills ("Liberal arts," n.d.).

- *Non-profit institution* – an institution in which the individuals or agency in control receive no compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. Non-profit institutions may be either independent non-profit (i.e., having no religious affiliation) or religiously affiliated (NCES, 2016b).
- *Public university* – a school or institution that is controlled and operated by publicly elected or appointed officials and deriving its primary support from public funds (NCES, 2016b).
- *Recruitment* – the process of adding new individuals to a population or subpopulation of students (Braxton, 2014).
- *Research university* – a university in which faculty and graduate students are expected to spend a large portion of their time on research (Hyman & Jacobs, 2010; Lindsay, 2015).
- *Retention* – the percentage of students who return the following fall among first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who enrolled at 4-year degree-granting institutions (NCES, 2016b).
- *Tier 1 research university* – a university that is known for world-class research, academic excellence, an exceptional student body, and the highest levels of innovation, creativity, and scholarship (University of Houston, 2017).

Significance of the Study

The results of this study provide a wealth of information for educational leaders to assist in motivating international students to return to their Tier 1 institutions in order to further their education. International students are significant to research universities as well as to the U.S. economy, as they contribute $22 billion to the U.S. economy per year (Hegarty, 2014). In contrast, the gaming industry contributes $18 billion, the weight loss industry brings in $20 billion, and the domestic music and movie industries combined bring in $20 billion (Hegarty, 2014).

Student attrition has become a serious problem for higher education institutions across the world. In the United States, universities lose revenue as a result of students exiting a program early. According to O'Keefe (2013), universities received $6.18 billion in subsidies between the years of 2003 and 2008 to fund the education of students who exited tertiary education after 1 year. A total of $2.9 billion was paid to students in the form of state and federal grants who did not pursue a college education past their first year. The data received from the international student feedback in this study were intended to give insight to academic advisors and other university leaders on why international students decided to attend a research university. By analyzing the data from this study, leaders of other universities can lower their student attrition rate, save money, and bring in more money from international students paying full tuition, and paying it for at least 4 years. Ethnic minorities are at risk for contributing to higher attrition rates as a result of non-completion of an academic program (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, p. 2, as cited by O'Keefe, 2013). Furthermore, first generation college students are considered to be at a higher risk for non-completion (Collier & Morgan, 2008, p. 426). Many international students may represent two categories: ethnic minority and first generation college student.

Many studies previously conducted in the realm of what attracts international students to a college or university have been qualitative studies conducted at liberal arts colleges or universities (Callahan, 2014; Frølich & Stensaker, 2010; Gallo, 2014; Julien-Molineaux, 2015; Schumacher, 2015). One study addressed the importance of international students, but did not go into why they choose research universities (Hegarty, 2014). By using the results of this qualitative study focusing on why international students choose to continue their education at a Tier 1 research university, academic advisors can modify their strategic plans to reflect the inclinations of applying and returning international students. This, in turn, may increase student enrollment, increase revenue, and reduce the budget cuts that have become commonplace (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2015). Leaders of university systems around the country can use the results of this study to identify the specific reasons international students select or reject their institutions. Another reason the researcher chose research universities for this study was because of the abundance of Tier 1 research universities in close proximity of the researcher. Furthermore, if leaders of research universities can adopt a better system, it should be easier for non-research universities to incorporate the findings from this study.

Research institutions were the focus of this study because they have large budgets, but are limited in how they can use those funds. If they are able to restructure the use of unrestricted funds and government funds, then non-research institutions should be able to make the adjustment even more easily. The results of this study can be used to make top research universities more efficient and effective. The researcher believed that corporate donors, philanthropists, and research firms could also benefit from this streamlined and directed approach with students. Donors will feel more assured that their money is being directed appropriately.

International students bring a different perspective than domestic students on why they choose a university (Sigillo, 2013; Slater, 2016). One difference is that international students place more emphasis when choosing a university on the career opportunities it can provide (Choudaha, 2014; Sigillo, 2013). Because international students are not eligible for reduced in-state tuition, nor some domestic scholarships, grants, and financial aid, it is in the best interest of enrollment managers to hone in on what international students look for at a public research university. This will contribute to higher tuition revenue for the overall higher education research organization. Hegarty (2014) suggested the vast majority of international students pay full tuition. He continued by stating that international students will not gain entry into the country without proof of financial support for the duration of their studies. Once a student is admitted, this is a guaranteed revenue stream for a university for at least 2 years, or 4 years in the case of an undergraduate student (Hegarty, 2014).

The researcher is aware that public research universities are restricted in how they can spend research dollars (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2015; Pennsylvania State University Budget Office, 2016). Research dollars are rarely approved to be spent on students or on the faculty instructing students. However, the researcher is also aware of the social contract that is currently in place among taxpayers, parents, and students (Demeritt, 2000; Douglass, 2015). In essence, parents and students choose public research universities for their quality education and successful career implications. In tandem, taxpayers agree to support public research universities for their groundbreaking innovations in many fields, especially medical research.

As for international students, this study is significant in exploring more of the complexity and range that international students have in applying, matriculating, and graduating from a public research university. Also, academic advisors will be able to empirically see international students' responses and plan accordingly. The focus in this study was on aspects of student life, which can encompass student supports. The literature reflects that oftentimes, all international students are grouped into one category of international student, though there are other dimensions to an international student than just nation of origin or nationality (Gargano, 2012).

In Gargano's (2012) qualitative study entitled, "Grounded Identities, Transient Lives: The Emergence of International Student Voices in an Era of Cosmopolitan Learning," the author strongly implied that universities have neglected to explore the journeys of international students and should challenge the way they have traditionally understood international students. The current study gives credence and insight to why international students choose a Tier 1 research university in the United States, as opposed to choosing a research university in another country. Results from this study may become a strategic planning blueprint for the 200 U.S. universities that enroll international students. They may also be a template for the remaining 4,300 universities that do not currently enroll international students.

To drive home the importance and impact international students can bring, the researcher gathered data on the current international student populations of some Tier 1 research universities. These universities have a big economic and academic impact on their city or state. If more international students are recruited and retained, there can be an even greater impact that will seem to overcome any budget cut or reduced funding. As of Fall 2016, the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) stated 18% of its admitted freshmen were international students (University of California Los Angeles, 2015). The University of California Berkeley admitted 8.8% of international students for Fall 2017 (University of California Berkeley, 2017). Georgia State University, a Tier 1 research university, has an economic impact to its surrounding city of Atlanta of $2.5 billion alone. Georgia State has 3,000 international students out of its 51,000 total student population, or about 5%. These 3,000 international students come from 170 countries (Georgia State University, 2017). Harvard University has a 12.4% international student population (Harvard University, 2017). The retention rates for these universities have not been included because that information was not provided. This adds to the significance of this study. The researcher intended to begin an academic discussion on the decision-making processes international students use when applying and returning the next year to a Tier 1 research university.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The focus in this study was on the factors that influence international students to apply and return to a Tier 1 research university in the United States. Other researchers have studied student influences at liberal arts colleges and in other geographical areas of the United States (Gallo, 2014; Schumacher, 2015). The literature attributes some retention difficulties to the current recruitment and admissions approach (Mooring, 2016). The researcher in this study focused on the decision-making process by which international students choose a research university in the United States, as opposed to another country. The researcher also examined the leadership behaviors of academic advisors in following international students through graduation. The focus in this review of the literature is on the various factors involved in recruiting and retaining students at higher education institutions, including leadership, satisfaction, enrollment management, academic advisors, theoretical framework, international students, tuition, and strategic planning.

According to the literature, only 53% of college freshmen earn a bachelor's degree within 6 years (Stern, 2016). The chances of graduating decrease the longer a student lingers in college. To increase its graduation rate, Georgia State University (GSU), a state college in Atlanta, Georgia, with a 63% minority population, introduced a strategic program in 2015. GSU's approach relies on one-on-one advising and analytical data to direct students in the right direction and curtail dropping out (Stern, 2016). This personalized approach increased graduation rates by 22 percentage points, making the rate among the highest in the nation (Stern, 2016). In addition, the graduation rate for Latino students rose from 32% to 54% within 6 years and the rate for African American students spiked from 28% to 57% (Stern, 2016). In Stern's (2016) study, the vice-provost and vice-president for enrollment management and student success described their approach as high tech and high touch. More will be discussed on the role and responsibilities of enrollment managers and academic advisors in later sections.

Leadership

According to the literature, leadership is important in most all areas of work and social life (Bass, Bass, & Bass, 2008). What is not clearly delineated is what constitutes a leader. The modern concept of leadership addresses the leader, the followers, and the context of the leadership process (Silva, 2016). Before there was an emphasis placed on teams and employees working together on projects in the workplace, leadership involved a top-down approach. In this present affluent society, leadership appears to be different from this approach (Kotter, 1988). For example, leaders, referred to as field instructors in the social work field, play a significant role in helping students build competencies (Tennille, Solomon, Bourjolly, & Doyle, 2014). In other words, a leader may have to lead by working beside followers in order to motivate them to reach a shared goal.

Defining a leader as simply a person who has followers does not imply nor denote the effectiveness of that leader in today's data, results, and team oriented society. Throughout the literature, leadership is described as being more than just a person who gives orders without getting any feedback from the subordinates who are carrying out the process. Leaders who are considerate to their subordinates are more effective (House, 1971), partially because the subordinates are motivated to work because they have a close relationship with their leader. Recent job descriptions have depicted the need for leaders who can "roll up their sleeves" from time to time and work side by side with followers

(Indeed.com, 2017). The literature supports this real-world practice of leadership through the suggestion that interpersonal influence is a critical managerial leadership competency (Kerns & Ko, 2014).

Historical Definitions of Leadership

Stogdill (1950) stated there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept (p. 7). Bennis estimated that near the end of the 20th century, there were at least 650 definitions of leadership in the literature (Bennis & Townsend, 1995). This number seems to have been increasing, and Kellerman, who, in an interview with Volckmann (2012), commented that there are approximately 1,400 different definitions of the words leader or leadership. These numbers, either real or exaggerated, simply mean there is not a consensus about what leadership is and therefore the search for a better definition goes on. In contrast, McCleskey (2014), citing Bass et al. (2008) and other authors, argued that the search for a single definition of leadership may be in vain as the appropriate definition of leadership depends on the interest of the researcher and the type of problem or situation being studied.

In order to create a working definition of leadership, one must amalgamate the chronicled definitions over the history of the world. However, what constitutes an effective leader and the status of leaderships remain subjects of study (Shrestha, 2015). For many centuries, leadership was seen as a personal quality. Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher who lived about 2,500 years ago, did not offer any definition of leadership but insisted on the need for leaders to be virtuous and look after the people around them. For Confucius, a leader’s primary purpose was to serve the people

(Confucius, circa 475 BC/1998). Plato, recognized by many as the founding father of philosophy, suggested a leader should be wise (Takala, 1998). Machiavelli stated the leader should have good virtues and should be intelligent to have the support of the people (Machiavelli, 2005). This brings Salovey and Mayer's (1990) emotional intelligence theory to mind. They suggested the ability to identify, assess, and control one's own emotions, as well as those of others, is emotional intelligence.

In the 19th century, Carlyle condensed the recurring ideas about leadership in his theory of the "great man" (Sorensen, Kinser, & Carlyle, 2013). To Carlyle, leaders were exceptional persons or heroes who were able to use their charisma, intelligence, wisdom, and political skill to exert power and influence over other people. Although Carlyle's ideas remained predominant, Spencer (1961) pointed out that such great men were ousted from their societies or the context. Despite the fact that leadership continued to be defined as a personal quality, a new trend started after World War II. Stogdill (1950) defined leadership as "the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement" (p. 3). This was perhaps the first effort to point out that leadership was not a mere individual trait but a process of influence upon others. Stogdill continued by stating that the purpose of the process was to set a goal and achieve that goal. Tannenbaum, Weschler, and Massarik (1961) continued in the same line as Stogdill and defined leadership as the interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed through the communication process toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals. Zaleznik (1977) also emphasized the aspect of influence in leadership by suggesting leadership requires using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people.

In the late 1980s, Kotter (1988) added a new viewpoint when he defined leadership as “the process of moving a group (or groups) in some direction through mostly non-coercive means” (p. 16). The inclusion of the term non-coercive implies that the use of coercive means is not akin to leadership, nor effective leadership, as there should be a voluntary followership. Not all scholars agree with this distinction; for example, Kellerman insisted that the use of force is also leadership (Volckmann, 2012).

According to the literature, leadership scholars started to give importance to followers in the leadership process during the 1990s. Bass (1990) established a breakthrough in the field by noting that leadership was not only a process of the influence of the leader upon others, but an interaction process that could be influenced by anyone involved. Bass viewed leadership as an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members. Bass continued to suggest that leadership occurs when one group member transforms the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership.

More recently, Owusu-Bempah (2014) mentioned several other authors who between 1992 and 2001 argued in favor of a “follower-centric” approach, emphasizing followers’ contributions and roles in the leadership process. Handy (1992) argued for the importance of the leader setting a vision and sharing this vision with others. Handy believed a leader shapes and shares a vision, which gives a point to the work of others. A vision gives followers a goal to meet and a purpose for their process at work. Rost (1993) also emphasized that leadership is a relationship process oriented to achieve some common goals. Rost suggested leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. The mutual purpose for leaders and followers is to achieve a set goal or goals through the positive influence of the leader and motivation by the followers. Bennis and Townsend (1995) stated that leadership is the capacity to create a compelling vision and to translate that vision into organizational realities, or goals. In short, Bennis's idea of leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. Drucker (1996) summarized the ideas at the conclusion of the 20th century when he asserted that the only definition of a leader is someone who has followers.

Although most contemporary thinkers have avoided giving a definition of leadership, Kellerman expressed that she visualized leadership as an equilateral triangle in which the three sides are the leader, the followers, and the context (Volckmann, 2012). That is, she recognized the importance of the leader, as has been done for centuries, but stated that followers are as important as the leader, as was suggested by Bass (1990). Most interestingly, she added the context as an equally important component of the leadership process. For Kellerman, leadership is not the same now as it was 5 or 10 or 20 years ago, and it is not the same in China, the United States, Brazil, or England (Silva, 2016).

According to the literature, there are three skills of influence for an effective leader to use: (a) help set a clear and motivating direction; (b) focus followers on the actionable and important areas of impact; and (c) coordinate and make organizational resources accessible, especially people (Flauto, 1999; Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2003). Communication is a fundamental area of practice within the interpersonal influence/people skill domain that can contribute to leadership effectiveness and business outcomes (Flauto, 1999; Riggio et al., 2003).

Leadership and Satisfaction

Leadership is defined as the process of an individual influencing another individual or group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Northouse, 2007). As it relates to the current study, if academic advisors, as leaders, can influence international students to continue at a research university, then the attrition rate will decrease. The literature has revealed the common theme of relationship building and motivation as key factors to perceived satisfaction.

Yadav, Agrawa, Khandelwal, and Tripathi (2018) studied the role of trust in customer satisfaction and the nexus to loyalty in the Indian banking system. According to Yadav et al., trust plays a vital role in developing and maintaining a good relationship between the customer and the service provider. Financial transactions are inherently of a risky nature, so it is important to build a relationship with the customer that is based on trust. Though many researchers have argued in support of the mediating role of trust in the satisfaction–loyalty link, Yadav et al. were not able to find such a relationship in the context concerned. Although customer satisfaction was found to be positively related to benevolence and credibility—the two trust dimensions—as far as their mediation effect was concerned, it was found absent. Furthermore, it was previously argued that education level affects customers' trust, but in the Indian context, there was no such relationship to be found. In the light of the given outcomes, appropriate strategies concerning decision-making in business were suggested. Yadav et al. asserted that, by virtue, there are involved risks and intangibility characteristics required to have a feeling of trust between the bank and its customer (Bhowmik & Saha, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). A basic level of employee–customer interaction is important in order to develop and maintain a feeling of trust, especially in financial service transactions because it reduces the perceived risk (Kesharwani & Bisht, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018) and provides stability to the banking industry (Dia, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). In the context of academic advisors and international students, the concept of trust, presumably, is similar in that if international students feel they can trust their academic advisors to guide them toward graduation, it would seem plausible that the attrition rate of international students would also decrease. With the advent of technology and online business chats, international students still would need the one-on-one interaction with their academic advisors to decrease their attrition rate. Furthermore, any language or cultural barriers can be dispelled by the academic advisor in real time. The academic advisor can adjust his or her responses so international students can understand their matriculation path.

Yadav et al. (2018) supported the idea of in-person relationship building by suggesting one-on-one interactions are now becoming obsolete ss a result of increasing self-service technology (SST) platforms and high employee attrition. It is becoming more and more difficult for customers to build and maintain a personal relationship with service employees (Yadav et al., 2018). Relationship marketing is juxtaposed to the classical transaction-based marketing, where relationship marketing conceptualizes trust as a significant factor to develop and sustain a profitable relationship between the parties involved (Yadav et al., 2018). If banks are not able to build and maintain a feeling of trust with their customers, it will not be possible to maintain healthy relationships with customers. Likewise, if university academic advisors are not able to build and maintain a sense of trust with their international students, then international students may drop out of their programs as a result of a lack of trust and guidance. Business profitability will also be reduced. Therefore, it is becoming more important to cater to the issue of trust in relational exchange because trust brings satisfaction, reduces the transaction cost incurred in information searching (Williamson, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018), and ultimately establishes a healthy relationship between the service provider and the customer.

Relationship marketing predominantly is concerned with retention strategies because it provides benefits to the firms in terms of retaining old customers as against recruiting new ones, and higher profit as a result of securing customer loyalty over a long time period (Buttle, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). Retaining students year after year as they matriculate through their college studies is called retention. If international students complete their program, then they add to the retention rate and graduation rate. However, if they begin their program but stop before they graduate, this is called attrition. As far as bank profit as a result of customer loyalty is concerned, a loyal customer maintains and even increases repeat dealings with the existing banks over a long period of time, which ultimately generates more sales and profits for the bank. As for international students, they usually pay full tuition at a state university. This means that if the attrition rate is reduced, international students are continuing their programs and paying their tuition. This helps generate more unrestricted funding for the research university to use on non-research initiatives. This may include hiring more professors, student amenities, housing, and improvements to physical buildings. According to James's (2015) "Survey of Best Practices in Academic Advising" study, there was a 45% reduction in attrition rates when advisors built a strong relationship with each student. It may be possible to understand what type of relationship an academic advisor should form based on the decision-making process and expectations of international students. Three of James's best practices for academic advisors are to build strong working relationships, be consistent and accurate with information, and have one-on-one contact with students. Yadav et al. (2018) provided five definitions that can be associated with relationship building between academic advisors and international students at a research university: (a) cognitive belief, (b) behavioral intention, (c) belief and behavior, (d) perceived trustworthiness/trusting behavior, and (e) sociological. Cognitive belief is defined as a cognitive/affective belief of one party about a partner's perceived trustworthiness (Anderson & Weitz, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). Behavioral intention is the likelihood of a party to act in such as way so as to avoid risk, uncertainty, or increase its liability to another party (Zand, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). International students act in a certain way to avoid dropping out of their program. Likewise, academic advisors are inclined to build a strong relationship founded on trust as to avoid having students drop out from their programs. International students put their trust in their academic advisors, which is a liability for them, but they trust that they will be guided correctly toward graduation. The higher the trust level and the stronger the relationship built by academic advisors, the lower the attrition rate.

Yadav et al.'s (2018) findings resulted in the conclusion that satisfaction is preceded by trust. They stated trust can be conceptualized as an antecedent of satisfaction (Yadav et al., 2018). They observed that customer satisfaction was positively related to benevolence and credibility—the two trust dimensions. However, as far as trust having a mediation effect, it was found absent (Yadav et al., 2018). The same is the case with the education level that earlier researchers argued affects customers' trust. Yadav et al. found that there are levels of satisfaction in the Indian banking sector. As trust increases in what a bank can offer, the level of perceived risk is reduced. In parallel, as trust in the academic advisor increases, the level of perceived risk, and ultimately attrition, is reduced. Tier 1 research universities typically have more to offer students, such as a plethora of academic majors, multiple eating locations, free tutoring for students, multiple libraries, computers and Internet access, and up-to-date housing. International students' satisfaction with their academic advisors affects their attrition and reduces their perceived risk.

Thongpapanl, Ashraf, Lapa, and Venkatesh (2018) conducted a quantitative study of the effects of motivations on trust and perceived value as it relates to customers and mobile commerce (m-commerce). The methodology of this study involved two stages of interviews. The authors collected data using a professional, online consumer panel provider. They obtained responses from 1,431 mobile telecommunications customers using smartphones in six countries: Australia (*n* = 271), Bangladesh (*n* = 161), India (*n* = 216), Pakistan (*n* = 272), the United States (*n* = 254), and Vietnam (*n* = 257; Thongpapanl et al., 2018). The authors collected data in two stages. In stage one, they administered an interview that included all variables except m-commerce use. In stage two, 1 month later, they administered a second interview using the same consumer panel provider for the same participants across six countries and received 1,183 responses: Australia (*n* = 204), Bangladesh (*n* = 147), India (*n* = 186), Pakistan (*n* = 212), the United States (*n* = 210), and Vietnam (*n* = 224; Thongpapanl et al., 2018). In the second interview, in addition to measuring use, Thongpapanl et al. used a shortened format of the original interview to assess common method bias. For each construct, they chose one proxy item that they believed best represented the original overall construct (Thongpapanl et al., 2018).

In their study, Thongpapanl et al. (2018) discussed the different types of motivations of m-commerce customers. In essence, the two types of customers had different perceptions of trust regarding shopping online, utilitarian and hedonic. Utilitarian motivation is where online customers are utility-motivated when shopping online. Utilitarian customers are motivated to shop online because they find value in instrumental, practical, and functional convenience with website attributes (Thongpapanl et al., 2018). On the other hand, hedonic customers get enjoyment from the visual appeal of websites. Hedonism-motivated customers seek aesthetically appealing, experimental, and enjoyment-related website attributes (Thongpapanl et al., 2018). Thongpapanl et al. described utility-motivated customers as more task oriented, tending to focus more on relevant product attributes, information collection, and finishing the shopping task in a timely and efficient manner.

Hedonism-motivated customers are more concerned with the online experience and engage in shopping activities for adventure, entertainment, and sensory simulation. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018) classified hedonism-motivated customers as “enjoyment seekers.” Hedonic individuals enjoy fantasy, arousal, and adventure. On the contrary, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, as cited in Thongpapanl et al., 2018) categorized utility-motivated customers as “problem solvers.” Utilitarian customers are involved in goal-oriented activities, such as weighing evidence, searching for information, and making judicious evaluations. Hedonic and utilitarian constructs can be applied to domestic students (hedonic) and international students (utilitarian), though within each group are those who deflect from the standard deviation of this analogy. However, the literature supports that domestic students are more interested in a university for reasons such as athletic teams, up-to-date housing, notoriety of the university, and fraternal and sororal organizations (Sigillo, 2013; Slater, 2016). On the other hand, international students are more focused on academic majors, such as the sciences and engineering, career opportunities, and research (Choudaha, 2014; Sigillo, 2013). In other words, international students are more concerned with what a research university can offer them in a practical sense. These offerings relate back to the aforementioned article that showed Indian banking customers had more trust in their bank when the bank had more offerings (Yadav et al., 2018).

In their empirical, quantitative study, Thongpapanl et al. (2018) used two theories as part of their theoretical framework. The first theory was the regulatory focus theory, developed by Columbia University psychology professor E. Tory Higgins (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). The regulatory focus theory is used to describe people's perceptions in the decision-making process by examining the relationship between the motivation of a person and the way in which he or she goes about achieving a goal. The regulatory focus theory delineates between two types of approach–avoidance goals: promotion-oriented goals and prevention-oriented goals (Higgins, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018). According to the literature, a promotion focus consists of growth, accomplishment, and advancement. A prevention focus includes security, responsibility, and protection (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018). Promotion-oriented individuals strive to achieve their hopes and aspirations, whereas prevention-oriented individuals aim to fulfill their duties and obligations (Higgins, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018). Again, domestic students are typically reared with the belief that they can accomplish and be anything they want to be. By the time they get to college, this has been engrained in them. As a result, domestic students attend college to fulfil their dreams and aspirations. On the other hand, international students may not have been reared in the same fashion. They seek the security of a career. They may also have a duty and obligation to their family in representing them or helping them with resources acquired from entering a research university in the United States and later obtaining a secure career.

The second theory used in the Thongpapanl et al. (2018) study was the regulatory fit theory. According to the literature, the regulatory fit theory is a goal-pursuit theory that places special emphasis on the relation between the motivational orientation of the actor and the manner in which that actor pursues a goal (e.g., the strategic means used by that actor; Higgins, as cited by Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2007). Regulatory fit theory is described as customers using strategies that fit their regulatory orientation. They feel right, engaged, and motivated (Aaker & Lee, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018).

Recent consumer behavior research showed customers derive value not only from the outcome of their decisions, but also from pursuing goals in a way that fits their regulatory orientation (Aaker & Lee, 2006; Avnet & Higgins, 2006). When customers use strategies that fit their regulatory orientation, they feel right, motivated, and engaged (Aaker & Lee, 2006). Regulatory fit theory suggests that people experience fit when they process information or make trade-off decisions that are consistent with their regulatory orientation (Aaker & Lee, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018). Prevention-oriented individuals are more likely to experience fit when they seek to fulfill goals by adopting vigilant strategies that focus on being careful, whereas promotion-oriented individuals are more likely to experience fit when they pursue goals by implementing eagerness strategies that focus on advancement (Avnet & Higgins, as cited by Thongpapanl et al., 2018). The example given by Thongpapanl et al. (2018) was from Aaker and Lee (2001). Their analysis of different advertisements for Welch's grape juice showed that prevention-oriented customers favored risk-avoidance attributes, such as antioxidants and cardiovascular disease prevention, whereas promotion-oriented customers responded more favorably to pleasure and enjoyment attributes, such as energy and taste (Thongpapanl et al., 2018).

Both theories emphasize decision-making, motivation, and goals. The focus in the current study was on the decision-making process of international students to continue their academic program at a Tier 1 research university. This researcher analyzed their goals and expectations, as well as their motivations. In particular, the focus was on the motivation international students have based on their relationship with their academic advisor. Thongpapanl et al. (2018) suggested customers from developing countries, such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, have different regulatory orientations and motivations to use m-commerce than customers in developed countries, such as the United States and Australia. The researcher in the current study transferred these orientations to international students having different motivations and fit for continuing their academic program at a research university. Academic advisors are influential in keeping international students from dropping out.

Han, Kim, Lee, and Kim (2018) explored how visibility leads to customer satisfaction and the impact of customers' image congruity and satisfaction on customer retention at luxury restaurants. Han et al. examined the conspicuousness of product consumption as the moderator in the relationship of image congruity and customer satisfaction. Conspicuousness is essentially making an object clearly visible, or leaving it out in the open. The distinction of a luxury restaurant is the fact that a restaurant operates by having managers and employees who are eager to provide impeccable service standards (Han et al., 2018). The results of this study uncovered factors that lead to customer retention and clearly identified the role of such factors that are of keen importance to the proprietor, or the leader, regarding what leads to customer retention. Uncovering factors that lead to customer retention and identifying the role of such factors is of utmost importance for the proprietor/operator in that these factors can be directly related to the survival and success of a luxury restaurant. Han et al. concluded by suggesting that customers' image congruity was an initial antecedent to customer satisfaction and customer retention (Han et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction has a mediating role, and the conspicuousness of product consumption affects the association between image congruity and customer satisfaction (Han et al., 2018). In context, if international students are able to see their academic advisor, this may lead to a reduced attrition rate. It is implied that if a student sees his or her academic advisor, then the academic advisor is building a strong relationship with that student. The advisors are not inconspicuous, but conspicuous for the international students to communicate.

Though Han et al. (2018) discussed conspicuousness and customer satisfaction, being visible to someone is a very good way to build trust. One can see body language, hear verbal inflections, and get immediate feedback. These characteristics imply a strong relationship of trust. Thus, the leader is influencing the follower to continue to return to his or her restaurant, or in the case of the current study, the Tier 1 research university. With trust, it is implied that there is a certain level of expectancy from the customer, or student. This researcher believes there are parallels in that the higher the trust level, the higher the expectation, and the higher the level of satisfaction.

Enrollment Management

It has been suggested that poor retention begins with recruitment and continues throughout the curriculum (Mooring, 2016). Poor attrition rates, where students do not return after the first year, may also be inferred with this assertion. Before academic advisors receive students, enrollment managers develop a recruitment plan and then accept students. They, too, are leaders whose communication and attentiveness throughout the initial process affect international students' decision-making process as to whether they will continue as a student. According to Kurtz and Scannel (2006), the term *enrollment management* was coined during the early 1970s to refer to the process implemented by college and university presidents to monitor how revenues were being used. Since then, other terms, such as "gatekeepers," have been suggested. Gatekeepers are enrollment managers whose job is to ensure only "qualified" students are admitted (Astin, 1975).

Schee (2009) compiled a universal definition for enrollment managers. Enrollment managers are responsible for five components in enrollment management: (a) institutional marketing, (b) admissions/recruitment, (c) retention programs, (d) planning, and (e) model of coordination (Schee, 2009). Since his 2009 article, other authors have written articles and conducted studies on using alumni or current students to contact perspective students as a newer recruiting strategy (Choudaha, 2014; Slater, 2016).

Overall, enrollment managers have a uniquely important role in acquiring and maintaining students. Their office deals with housing, financial aid, dining, and academics. An enrollment manager is truly a leader who wears many hats. An enrollment manager must share the same innovative strategies as the university president in order to be successful. Neumann and Finaly-Neumann (1994) conducted a study entitled, "Management Strategy, the CEO's Cognitive Style and Organizational Growth/Decline: A Framework for Understanding Enrolment Change in Private Colleges," and reported two major findings. Neumann and Finaly-Neumann's first finding was that growth in enrollment was associated with a focused strategy, the CEO's innovation style, differentiation, and an assertive strategy-making process. The second major finding was that the major discriminating factors between institutions experiencing enrollment growth and those experiencing enrollment decline were a focused strategy and the CEO's innovator cognitive style (Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1994). The theoretical framework for this study, the CEO's cognitive style, and strategy-making process are discussed later in this chapter.

Around the world, enrollment managers and university leaders have been grappling with the right way to retain students. These are not international students, but students who attend universities internationally. Aljohani (2016) stated that in the Australian higher education context, institutions focus on quality and the first year experience as an indicator of whether students will return the next year. In British higher education, Aljohani discussed the reasons for reduced retention. Academic abilities, academic goals, and preparation and readiness are factors in student retention difficulties.

In the United States, which is the home of early works and research on student retention (Aljohani, 2016), traditional students have been the focus within the research. However, Aljohani (2016) cited that recent research has shifted, not to international students, but to community college students. He continued by stating that diversity issues as well as the experiences, attrition factors, and minority students played a role in retention. Even as nontraditional students are researched for retention strategies, international students are not included in these nontraditional student groups.

Olbrecht, Romano, and Teigen (2016) cited Tinto (1994) as stating that in order for colleges to improve their statistics, they must create “high impact practices.” The unmet needs of financial aid may actually aid in retaining students. The idea is that when financial aid does not pay all of a student’s fees, the student will be more likely to return to that college the next year because he or she is financially invested in gaining an education. International students may not be eligible for any type of financial aid, loans, or government grants because they are not U.S. citizens. This infers that international students will be financially invested in their education from the beginning.

Academic Advisors

If enrollment managers are considered gatekeepers, then academic advisors can be considered tour guides, hall monitors, or coaches. They monitor students’ success and progress during their matriculation in college. Academic advisors also guide students toward graduation through advising students on which academic major to choose, which classes to take and the best time to take them, and even what other services are available to them, such as counseling services, tutoring services, and scheduling courses. An academic advisor has a huge responsibility in getting students to be successful and graduate. The literature supports that academic advisors create the conditions necessary for students to achieve success (Drake et al., 2013). Academic advisor is a relatively new profession that has evolved over the years in higher education. Academic advisors were not prominent until the late 1970s in the form of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA; Beatty, as cited by Drake et al., 2013). First, advisement came directly from college faculty members, then from student affairs personnel, and finally from professional advisors (Beatty, as cited by Drake et al., 2013).

Drake et al. (2013) wrote a book entitled, *Academic Advising Approaches: Strategies That Teach Students to Make the Most of College*. Making the most of college is more like a process or a journey for a student. College offers new ideologies, new friendships, new challenges, and new surroundings. Drake et al. interpreted these new comings by suggesting students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a domestic society and a global community. It seems that to be successful in college today, a student must be a holistic, well-rounded student. An advising strategy is a purposeful attempt to facilitate student learning and the development of a holistic and appropriate educational plan (Drake et al., 2013).

Drake et al. (2013) asserted the importance of academic advisors who focus on the development of the whole person. When a student takes on the mindset to overcome these new challenges, he or she will become successful inside and outside the classroom. Throughout this process of overcoming challenges, students will need guidance from a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). The literature gives the example of Alice in Wonderland. Students cannot merely be told they are going somewhere or that they will be successful. Students cannot be sent on the path alone. This would be like them falling down the rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland. Drake et al. (2013) continued by stating that advisors must be prepared to offer direction and assistance while enduring the journey along with students. In other words, advisors must be intentional in order to achieve the important goals set for their practice and students.

Academic advising is an interdisciplinary field as it draws from many different disciplines as academicians attempt to understand the experiential nature of student learning and development (Drake et al., 2013). With a surplus of knowledge, the challenge for academic advisors is how to disseminate this wealth of knowledge to students, each of whom learn differently. As leaders, academic advisors must be able to connect with students. Drake et al. (2013) suggested academic advisors have their own personal beliefs as well as the diversity of ways students learn, grow, and develop. Drake et al. began their book by addressing academic advising as an intentional process shaped by several different ways of thinking about students. Academic advisors must have an open mind about students. They should converge all of their personal experiences and education and tailor their advising to each and every student. The literature indicates that through academic advising, experiences are translated and the consequences of action, anticipated or actual, are examined, embraced, or discarded in relationship to the individual's current beliefs and future dreams (Drake et al., 2013). It seems an academic advisor would not be able to use the same process used with domestic students with international students.

Academic advisors can use their vast knowledge and experiences and blend this information with international students' beliefs and future dreams. For example, an academic advisor may push an international student to do a domestic exchange program. Many domestic students favor the idea because they get to travel and see new places around the country. However, an international student my not be interested in traveling once again to a new place. He or she may be more interested in conducting research for the summer or being an intern at a company the student might want to work for in the future. This is where academic advisors must connect with and understand their students. Drake et al. (2013) stated academic advising is a relationship-based enterprise that is not dominated by a single truth or reality, but that accepts multiple realities coexist.

Another study supported Drake et al.'s (2013) claim that academic advisors must know their students. James (2015) presented data from 45 colleges and universities about their academic advising efforts in his study entitled, "Survey of Best Practices in Academic Advising." Some of the institutions in the study included Agnes Scott College, Dominican University, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Holy Apostles College and Seminary, Indiana University South Bend, ITT Technical Institute, Lewis-Clark State College, Pasadena City College, Rutgers University, Sam Houston State University, St. Joseph's College New York, and Texas A&M University-Central Texas (James, 2015). The questions related to whether the college was public or private, annual tuition at the college prior to any deductions or financial aid, the full-time equivalent enrollment of the college, Carnegie class or type of college, and scope of the academic advising program. Under the category of whether the college was public or private, there were 25 public colleges and 18 private colleges for a total of 45 colleges. For the category of annual tuition, 11 paid less than $5,000; 10 paid between $5,000 and $8,000; 10 participants paid between $8,000 and $25,000; and 12 paid more than $25,000. In the Carnegie classification, 12 respondents were community colleges, 19 were 4-year colleges, three were MA/PhD granting colleges, and nine were research universities.

Drake et al. (2013) and James (2015) would agree that advisors must know their students. James (2015) stated, in his key practices section for 4-year colleges, in all capital letters that advisors are also learning specialists so they must know their students very well. For a research university, James continued by suggesting academic advisors need to apply a holistic advising model in which each advisor develops a relationship with the advisee in addition to providing academic, financial, career/major, and personal/social advising (James, 2015). James also made a leadership connection for academic advisors by suggesting a university should empower advisors with the necessary responsibilities and decision-making power (e.g., course approvals, supervising peers, etc.). Both of these studies support the importance of advisors developing a relationship with their students. They also emphasized the impact academic advisors have on a student’s development academically, socially, and personally. As stated earlier, an academic advisor tailors a specific plan for international students. James made the suggestion, in the same research university section, that advisors create individualized academic plans for each student. Another best practice was college specific advisors, as this led to an increase in science retention (James, 2015). The final best practice for academic advisors was to a strong relationship with each student, as this led to a 45% reduction in attrition rates.

Another study published in the *National Academic Advisors Association Journal* echoed Drake et al. (2013) by stating that academic advising was traditionally a decentralized activity conducted by faculty members, who also comprised the first formal systems of advising (Kuhtmann, 2004). Kuhtmann (2004) chose to study institutional culture and the different models of advising and addressed five models: split model, supplementary advising model, total intake model, satellite model, and faculty only model.

The split model is a model where the advising responsibility is shared between faculty and advising office staff. The responsibilities are divided according to student declared or undeclared status. The need for specialized advising services may also determine how responsibilities are acquired. Of pertinent note, specialized advising services are provided to student athletes, underprepared students, and nontraditional students (Kuhtmann, 2004). The split model may be able to include international students. However, more examination is needed. With that, the next organizational model is the supplementary advising model. At its core, supplementary advising is advising where faculty members serve as advisors of all students in a given institution. However, there are services offered to students that support the faculty’s work through an advising office. This office also provides training and support resources to faculty advisors (Kuhtmann, 2004). The third model of advising is the total intake model. This means all students are advised by staff in an advising office for a set amount of time or until certain actions occur. This may include a student declaring a major. Kuhtmann continued by stating that there can be some modifications to this model depending on whether the office staff is also responsible for the development of curriculum and the administration of instruction, as well as the development and enforcement of academic policies. As seen throughout the literature, academic advisors are leaders with varying degrees of responsibility and oversight. Academic advisors are very important to student success and the reduction of student attrition rates, no matter their purview (Drake et al., 2013; James, 2015; Kuhtmann, 2004).

The fourth organizational model is the satellite model. According to Kuhtmann (2004), the satellite model is one of two models under the larger umbrella of decentralized models. The other model is the faculty only model. The previous three models are referred to as shared models. In the satellite model, advising offices are held within academic subunits of an institution. Sometimes these offices serve the advising needs of students from the time of their matriculation to the time of their departure from the institution (Kuhtmann, 2004; Mooring, 2016; O'Keefe, 2013). The final organizational model addressed in Kuhtmann's article is faculty only model (Kuhtmann, 2004). In this model, entering students are assigned a specific faculty advisor, usually according to their major. If a student is undecided, he or she will be advised by a faculty member in the liberal arts, volunteer advisors, or by faculty members with a small case load of students (Kuhtmann, 2004).

Of particular interest as it relates to the current study is the section titled "Advising and the Culture of Research Universities." In this section, Kuhtmann (2004) cited Reinarz (2000, p. 218) who, in essence, stated that many research universities have large undergraduate populations. As a result, it is beneficial for them to have a variety of advisor types. Even so, the faculty only model was not encouraged. The faculty only model is more widely used at small institutions. Habley (1997, p. 40 as cited by

Kuhtmann, 2004) pointed to an inverted relationship between the use of faculty-delivered models of advising and institutional size—faculty-delivered models of advising account for 75% of the models at campuses with less than 1,000 students, and account for only 9% of the models at campuses with enrollments larger than 20,000 students. Academic advisors are of paramount importance, as they are the link between helping both students and the institution achieve their goals (King, as cited by Kuhtmann, 2004). Kuhtmann made the point that because institutional environments are more and more complex, faculty should not be solely responsible for handling the advising responsibility. With research universities having such a large student enrollment, it would seem they should abandon the faculty only approach. At research universities, research and publication weigh heavily on faculty promotion and tenure decisions. With this knowledge, a shared or centralized model of academic advising would be more beneficial (Kuhtmann, 2004). Kuhtmann also made an interesting assertion by suggesting an academic advising model for a research university depends on that university's mission statement, research, teaching, and service.

These three studies all support the need to establish a strong relationship with students when they first enter a university. Also, it is repeated throughout the literature that academic advisors are leaders with authority (Drake et al., 2013; James, 2015; Kuhtmann, 2004). It has also been stressed that academic advisors tailor their strategies to each individual student, as no two students are the same. Culture has also been emphasized. That is of particular importance to the current study, which took into account the cultural perspective of the decision-making process of international students.

International Students

The Institute of International Education (as cited by Choudaha, 2014) stated there were 886,052 international students enrolled in U.S. higher education for the 2013-2014 academic year, a 55% increase from the 2003-2004 academic school year. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed $30.5 billion to the U.S. economy in 2015 (Slater, 2016). Seventy-two percent of international students' funding comes from outside sources other than the United States (Slater, 2016). Even with these impressive numbers, Choudaha (2014) still warned that there are challenges that can threaten leadership in attracting and retaining international students.

According to Choudaha (2014), there are five important facts to consider about international students enrolling in U.S. higher education. The first is that international student enrollment has decreased. Although Choudaha stated there are nearly 890,000 international students studying in the United States, the United States has lost some students to Great Britain and Australia since the September 11th attack. There was around a 7% decline in market share from 2000 to 2012. The second is that new destinations are continuing to drive the competition. There are new destinations for international students to study on a collegiate level, such as Korean students going to China for a lower cost. The third is that U.S. institutions have the ability to enroll more international students. Choudaha explained that international students only account for 4% of the total enrollment, as compared to Great Britain and Australia with 18% and 19%, respectively. Fourth, many institutions are struggling to attract international students. There are 4,500 postsecondary degree-granting institutions, yet only 200 universities enroll international students. Ill-adeptness in recruiting and retaining international students and college location are two factors for this struggle. Finally, others are struggling to diversify international student source countries (Choudaha, 2014). Although the overall number of international students has increased, 33% are from one country, China. They contributed close to 60% of the total growth in enrollment in 2013-2014.

According to a *U.S. News and World Report* article (Powell, 2016), there were 974,926 international students enrolled in higher education in the United States in 2014-2015. Powell (2016) suggested Latin America and the Caribbean represent the fastest-growing regions of origin for international students in the United States with a 19% increase. The article illustrated the top 10 universities where international students make up the largest percentage of the degree-seeking undergraduate student body. With 32.9%, Florida Institute of Technology takes the number one position, followed by New School in New York State with 31.7%. In third place is Illinois Institute of Technology with 29.8%. Rounding out the bottom of the top 10 universities with a large percent of international students is University of San Francisco with 19.0% (Powell, 2016). The complete list is as follows:

- Florida Institute of Technology: 32.9%
- New School (NY): 31.7%
- Illinois Institute of Technology: 29.8%
- University of Tulsa (OK): 26.7%
- Lynn University (FL): 23%
- Carnegie Mellon University (PA): 20.9%
- University of California - San Diego: 19.9%

- Andrews University (MI): 19.6%
- Northeastern University (MA): 19.1%
- University of San Francisco (CA): 19.0%

Two of the top three positions are held by technology schools and the list has a heavy concentration of science classes. Research will most likely be science or engineering related, such as biomedical engineering. In the next section of this literature review, articles are discussed that relate to tuition.

Tuition

Unrestricted endowment spending and annual giving from private sources that can be used for current operating expenses or for capital purchases provide dollars spent on research that is not federally or state funded. Ehrenberg (2013) suggested these dollars, in part, may come from revenue streams the university has developed from the commercialization of its faculty members' research findings (e.g., licensing revenue from patents and startup-company investments). Another part of a private research university's budget is financial aid. The reason private research universities are doing better than public research universities is that they have higher tuition (Marcus, 2017). Since then, the financial aid demands of students have increased, yet real income growth has stagnated, according to Ehrenberg. He continued by describing a simpler, more compassionate time where universities linked tuition increases to changes in median family income, prior to 1980. Ehrenberg gave the example of how Cornell University's tuition rose roughly 28% between 1965 and 1980. However, by the 2010-2011 school year, it had risen to 65%. As the financial needs of these universities' students increased over time, the tuition discount rate (i.e., the share of each tuition dollar given back in the form of financial aid) grew. The typical private research university now gives back over 40 cents of each dollar of its undergraduate tuition in the form of financial aid (Ehrenberg, 2013).

Raising tuition by such historically large rates is increasingly becoming politically unpopular and economically unfeasible. This is also the case as far as endowments. Private research universities were spending between 4% and 5% of their weighted average endowment, usually over 3 years (Ehrenberg, 2013). Ehrenberg (2013) reported that with prolonged endowment growth, the percentage being spent relative to the current value of the endowment often turned out to be substantially less than 4% to 5%. Ehrenberg noted that with this momentum, the wealthiest institutions (i.e., Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford) began to increase the generosity of their financial aid policies, and the rest of the private research universities followed suit to the best of their abilities. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (2018) reported that by Fall 2008, the average tuition discount rate at private 4-year institutions had risen to 42% nationwide, up from 26.7% in Fall 1990. Inasmuch as most of the private research universities fund the majority of their students' grant aid out of current revenues (e.g., Cornell, with an endowment in the $5 billion range, funds over 80% of its institutional grant aid this way), their financial aid budgets have consumed an increasing share of the increase in tuition revenue they generate each year (Ehrenberg, 2013).

This opulence in financial aid continued until 2008, when the federal government, namely, the Senate Finance Committee, began to investigate the endowment spending policies of the institutions with the largest endowments. This slowed the lavish endowment spending because private research universities did not want Congress to begin investigating their endowment spending practices and then put regulations on how they spent their endowment. A sincere concern was that universities were enrolling relatively few Pell Grant recipients. This caused the richest institutions to eliminate all loans from their financial aid policies and increase the generosity of their grant-aid programs even more. Universities that did not have the same level of endowments as the aforementioned universities reacted as best they could.

Tuition is a big part of college. The current study was designed to determine why international students choose a Tier 1 research university. Other researchers have collected data on freshmen students. One study, in particular, collected comprehensive data to see how well public and private universities were preparing students for the workforce. They also asked students whether the cost of college and return on investment were aligned. Kelly and Walters (2016) collected data on the 2014 and 2015 freshman classes that were part of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). This survey was not the first of its kind. The authors mentioned that the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has been collecting the expectations of entering first year students for 50 years (Kelly & Walters, 2016). Data from this study showed that being able to get a better job has become increasingly important over the years. In 1971, 70% of first year students went to college to get a better job. In a stark increase, 85.2% of first year students said they were going to college to be able to get a better job in 2015. The high was 87.9% in 2012. Graduate school interest has also risen over the decades. This was the first determinant for college students. In other words, students choose a university based on whether they think the tuition they pay will equal the job opportunities upon graduation.

The results for the Class of 2014 were positive and were only slightly different from the NACE benchmarks—53.1% versus 55.4% (Kelly & Walters, 2016). The results for the Class of 2015 were extremely positive. The authors suggested this increase was due to the learned experiences from the 2014 NACE timeline, as well as creating a plan with the new Director of Career Services. Data rose more than 8 percentage points, from 61.7% to 70.1%. This also led to more comprehensive data of "still seeking," "employed part-time," or "employed full-time" (Kelly & Walters, 2016). The data collected from students were comprehensive and qualitative. However, the students who were surveyed were not mentioned to be international students.

Broader research was conducted on 473 baccalaureate-granting institutions by Jaquette and Curs (2015) to investigate whether public, or state, universities increase their nonresident freshman enrollment when state appropriations decline. During the 2000s, public universities were compelled to become more dependent on net tuition revenue because state higher education appropriations declined across the country (Jaquette & Curs, 2015). For example, total state appropriations across all public baccalaureate granting institutions dropped from $54.5 billion in 2001-2002 to $45 billion by 2011-2012. This $9.5 billion decline gave public universities the incentive to expand their nonresident, or out-of-state, enrollment to grow tuition revenue. This study was conducted in an attempt to find a solution to combat reduced budgets. However, international students were not targeted, as the focus was on out-of-state students in general. Jaquette and Curs did mention that the decline in state appropriations was most dramatic during the 2007-2008 academic year. The dependent variable of this study was nonresident freshman enrollment and the independent variable was revenue from state appropriations (Jaquette & Curs, 2015). Results for Hypothesis 1 showed a 1% decline in state appropriations (lagged 1 year) resulted in a 0.27% increase in nonresident freshman enrollment for the sample of all public baccalaureate-granting institutions. Results for Hypothesis 2 showed this relationship was even stronger for research universities. At (extensive and intensive) research universities, when there was a 1% decline in state funding, there was a 0.46% increase in nonresident freshman enrollment. There was a 0.50% increase in nonresident freshman enrollment at research-extensive universities (Jaquette & Curs, 2015). This supports that research universities need more out-of-state students than non-research universities. International students can add to this 0.50% increase if they are asked, by university leaders, why they chose their university and why they chose to return after their first year. For clarification, research-extensive means there is research conducted in a variety of fields at a high level. Intensive research means there is a narrow focus of research in certain areas. Extensive research has the connotation of being better than intensive research (Stack Exchange, 2012).

Other research expanded from the nonresident model. Some universities are moving toward a “progressive tuition model” in which they attempt to invest approximately one-third of tuition income into institutional financial aid for lower-income and middle-class students (Lapid & Douglass, 2016). Lapid and Douglass (2016) used the one-third proportion that Ehrenberg (2013) discussed in his study. Their study was designed to determine whether the model was working or if students were changing their behavior. Lapid and Douglass used data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey of undergraduates and other data sources. They explored students’ issues by focusing on students at the University of California and 10

AAU institutions. To date, increased tuition, housing, and other living expenses did not have a negative impact on lower-income students attending the UC. Contrary to popular belief, higher tuition is not a deterrent for low-income students. However, it may be a deterrent for middle-class students who are concerned about mounting student loan debt. Lapid and Douglass referred to this as the "middle class" squeeze. The researchers concluded that the "progressive tuition model" was working in terms of affordability and with a moderate increase in financial stress. Tuition freezing was not seen as a clear correlation of tuition and affordability, as suggested by California state lawmakers. Lapid and Douglass concluded that the best way for public universities to generate income was by federal, state, and institutional financial aid, as well as higher tuition. This would continue to make college at selective public universities accessible for lower-income students.

Consumer choice is an important factor in international students choosing a Tier 1 research university. McPherson and Shulenburger (2008) addressed the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). For one, they suggested students receiving Pell Grants would be able to better afford college. The authors discussed that the bill's initial purpose was to shame colleges and universities with the highest tuition hikes. However, the HEA created significant additional costs for colleges and universities. One way the HEA reduced pressure on tuition increases without causing long-term distortions was by eliminating a number of regulations and reporting requirements. McPherson and Shulenburger stated that public research universities in this country have begun a serious dialogue about keeping public higher education affordable. The authors reported that from 1996 to 2006, the cost per student remained relatively the same, even though tuition has increased several times over during the same time period at both public and private research universities. According to the literature, public research university tuition has increased 2.7 times faster than consumer prices (McPherson & Shulenburger, 2008). In 1996, the cost per student was $10,091; in 2006, it had only risen slightly to $10,294. McPherson and Shulenburger suggested public university managers have done very well by keeping this number down. They also suggested these leaders had to keep costs down with the resources available to them. On the other hand, private universities have real budgets per student because they do not get state appropriations plus tuition like public universities. Private universities have had real cost-per-student increases over the last decade. McPherson and Shulenburger concluded with the recommendation that public universities begin a serious dialogue within and among universities about tuition levels and alternative ways of restraining them in the future. Another suggestion was the use of scholarly research to quantify the benefits of higher expenditures for students.

The literature addresses tuition and cost, and how university leaders are structuring their finances. Phillips and Olson (2015) collaborated on an exploratory research study to help university leaders understand where the money was coming from and where it was going. This way they can effectively manage costs by gaining insight into the cost structures of private research universities (Phillips & Olson, 2015). The authors concluded by suggesting it is critical to develop innovative solutions for reducing expenses and generating subsidy revenue. In order for colleges and universities to contain cost increases, they need to think beyond the traditional control method of monitoring spending relative to static budgets, and to include continuous monitoring. They also recommended using full-costing models because they provide decision-makers with a richer perspective of the true cost of delivering services than would be obtained by analyzing direct costs alone (Phillips & Olson, 2015).

Public tuition is rising faster than private tuition in terms of percentage (Bienen, 2012). Tuition overall has increased 12 percentage points over a 27-year period. Bradley (2011) referenced a report by the National Conference of State Legislators that showed tuition in 2011 was 37% of higher education's revenue, as opposed to 25% in 1984. California's 58% inflation-adjusted increase in average published tuition and fees for full-time students at public 2-year colleges between 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 was second only to Louisiana's 62%. On the other hand, California's price remains the lowest in the country (Cooper, 2011). As a public university, increasing tuition to raise revenue may cause political backlash (Bienen, 2012).

Strategic Planning

Only after the financial meltdown did the leaders of many institutions realize they had to look at administrative costs more systematically across the whole institution. Many public and private institutions hired management consulting companies to provide advice (Ehrenberg, 2013). Other universities accomplished savings by reducing the layers of administration and increasing the number of direct reports each administrator supervised, or by centralizing procurement and limiting purchasing to "preferred vendors" to achieve price concessions from suppliers as a result of large-scale purchasing. This continued by moving more fully to electronic purchasing to reduce the paperwork involved (Ehrenberg, 2013). This also reduced employment. Universities were able to achieve efficiencies in how information technology is delivered and organized across campus, and reorganize the delivery of support services such as finance, communication, and human resources. Ehrenberg (2013) gave the example of how Cornell was poised to save between $75 and $85 million a year by the end of FY2015 by using Bain's Consulting Company's suggestions.

As the previous section showed, there needs to be a way for university leaders to move forward with implementing feasible plans that do not put tuition out of reach for students, yet allows them to choose a university based on other characteristics. Zerquera and Doran (2017) conducted a study on how universities can navigate around obstacles and stay true to their mission. An *urban-serving research university* (USRU) is a unique institution as it provides access to higher education for residents of its surrounding region (Zerquera & Doran, 2017). In short, USRUs uphold the American dream by providing educational opportunity. The authors discussed that the birth of USRUs came about during the mid-20th century in response to urbanization, mass migration to urban areas, and the increased demand for higher education in the post-World War II era (Zerquera & Doran, 2017). One suggestion that Zerquera and Doran proposed was to change the name from urban serving to metropolitan. This may make it hard for an urban university to stand firm on its mission when the public has a different view of its existence in the first place.

The literature shows that USRU leaders develop ways to adapt and move forward as decreased funding is unlikely to improve (Zerquera & Doran, 2017). According to the authors, USRUs should consider consortiums with other campuses. At the same time, USRUs should focus more on their workforce preparation and training (Kelly & Walters, 2016; Zerquera & Doran, 2017). This recommendation is one of the reasons students gave for going to a research university in the article by Kelly and Walters (2016).

Perhaps another way for metropolitan serving universities to increase their budgets is to understand what international students expect, and market to this population. This will enable the university to expand the American dream and opportunity.

Research and mission have continued to be researched. Metropolitan Universities also published a study called, "Measuring Community-University Partnerships Across a Complex Research University: Lessons and Findings From a Pilot Enterprise Data Collection Mechanism" (Holton, Jettner, & Shaw, 2015). The authors discussed institutionalizing the public mission of universities while seeking strategies and opportunities to more heavily involve external stakeholders in all aspects of their work, including teaching, research, and service (Holton et al., 2015). The authors continued to encourage this partnership because their efforts produce new knowledge, improve the well-being of communities, and educate the citizenry (Holton et al., 2015).

Institutionalizing the mission of a university may become more difficult when university leaders rarely use the word research when speaking to non-university persons (Lemann, 2014). One strategic planning approach is for research universities to connect more with their communities and the surrounding region. This will inform and connect the people who benefit from research universities, but are unaware (Lemann, 2014). This may, in turn, cause more students to enroll. As a result, the budget woes of research universities will be diminished.

Organizational growth and decline are vital components of an organization's effectiveness. The literature fundamentally defines *organizational effectiveness* as the degree to which an organization realizes it goals (Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1994).

Organizational survival, resource acquisition, and financial viability are generally acceptable criteria of an organization's success and failure.

The literature defines *organizational decline* as a lack of awareness of environmental threats and internal weaknesses, or a lack of corrective action (Levy, 1986). Also, there is visible diminishing of size through workforce, market share, assets, or profits. In Levy's (1986) study, workforce, student enrollment, tuition, research grants, and physical campus buildings will be implicated to determine a university's growth or decline. Likewise, organizational growth is defined as an increase in any of these facets.

On the other hand, as a college or university president, the literature debates the issue that organizational growth and decline do not occur in isolation. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is linked to organizational growth and decline based on personal characteristics, strategy-making process, and competitive strategy (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989).

According to a study conducted to find strategies to increase the representation of minority individuals and women in sports management and physical education teacher preparation programs, the common themes were mentoring, advising, and networking (Tremble, O'Bryant, & Hums, 1996). This study also revealed some of the least effective ways to increase retention, one of which was mail-outs. Mail-outs, or even networking, do not seem to be effective for international students as they would not receive the mail nor have any points of reference or contacts for networking. This further highlights the omission of international students from the minds of university leaders. However, as

Tremble et al. (1996) suggested, advising is a common theme to increase underrepresented populations in a university setting.

Strategy

Porter (1980) approached the issue of tuition by creating three competitive strategies: (a) differentiation, (b) cost leadership, and (c) focus. *Differentiation* attempts to distinguish an institution from others by having unique competence offering products. These products are perceived to be unique by students because of their innovativeness, style, or quality (Porter, 1980). Any university that implements the results from this study would definitely be unique in its approach to accommodating international students and increasing its budget. The second competitive strategy is *cost leadership*. This is when an organization orders products at a lower price than the competition. The first two ideas that come to mind are tuition and variety of academic majors. Oftentimes, it seems smaller specialized universities do not offer majors outside of their specialty. This may be a reason why their size stays small. Another idea relates to student athletics and student housing. A student may want to attend a college for its successful athletic teams or higher quality dormitories. By using the Porter principle of competitive cost, it seems a university that offers low tuition, winning teams, and high-quality housing should see tremendous organizational growth. However, there is more to organizational growth than these two factors. The third strategy is *focus*. Even with lower tuition than other universities and winning teams, Porter understood that a university must garner attention from a specific type of student by using cost leadership, differentiation, and even tapered geographic markets. The focus strategy is intended to play a significant role in an organization's growth or decline. Current strategies encourage innovation or inventiveness in order to achieve growth and not merely sustainability (Dartey-Baah, 2015; Productivity, n.d.). For growth to occur, there must be more than one novel idea. By knowing what international students are expecting when they apply to a research university, academic advisors will be able to anticipate the needs of current and future customers.

For the current study, customers were international students. Employees and stakeholders must collaborate strategically and systematically. A current consulting and training firm suggested the most important parts of an innovation system are leadership behavior, infrastructure, and processes to execute on key insights effectively (Productivity, n.d.). Building on the current value while also building new value propositions may generate growth under the incumbent business models. Implementing industry-changing ideas requires new business models.

Strategy Making Process

Strategy making has become a criterion for the success of organizations. Having a strategy is a method to keep an organization focused on its goals. It is also a tool that can be used to be proactive in governance and growth. Neumann and Finaly-Neumann (1994) suggested the most important element of strategy making is assertiveness. In their study, they essentially argued for being proactive as opposed to being reactive in a competitive environment. By being reactive, leaders of an institution can become complacent or even begin to decline when they are halted in their thinking. As referenced by Neumann and Finaly-Neumann (1994), Miller and Toulouse (1986) debated that being overly cautious and traditional can hurt organizations, as stagnation and decline usually follow. Reactiveness is extremely harmful to organizational survival where long-tenured executives fail to acknowledge the need for strategic renewal because they are committed to old ways and business as usual. By using feedback from the current study and the theoretical framework of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), academic advisors will be using proactive measures.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used to guide this study was Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, which was first presented in a study entitled, "Work and Motivation." Vroom discussed that an individual will act in a certain manner because he or she is motivated to choose a certain behavior over another behavior based on the expected result of the chosen behavior. In other words, the motivation behind the behavior is based on how desirable the outcome. In his study, Vroom defined *motivation* as the process governing choices among alternative forms of voluntary activities. This process is governed by the individual. However, expectancy theory is not solely based on just an outcome. The mental processes an individual undergoes when making choices are also a part of expectancy theory. Vroom's study is relevant to leadership, as it was developed while Vroom was a professor at the Yale School of Management. Parijat and Bagga (2014) evaluated Vroom's study in their own study published in the *International Research Journal of Business and Management*. Their synopsis of expectancy theory is that it is a more complex theory of motivation. They suggested it is based on common sense psychology of employees who will be motivated to act when there is an expectation that their behavior will result in the achievement of desired outcomes (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). These authors gave the example that an employee will not work extra hours unless he or she is motivated by the need for career advancement, to maintain superior inter-personal relations, to project a more ethical image, or other things (Parijat & Bagga, 2014).

Vroom (1964) also connected leaders to their workers. He suggested managers should use systems that link rewards very closely to performance. Managers should also make certain the rewards offered are actually what the recipients desire. As it relates to the current study, it would not be helpful for a university to offer rewards to international students that they do not feel are worth their effort in leaving their home country. Academic advisors can benefit greatly from the results of this study. They will be in contact with international students throughout their matriculation. Knowing what international students desire as a reward and the thought process they use in reaching their decision is key for both academic advisors and international students so they both are appropriately rewarded and attain the university's goal of reducing its budget.

The three main variables in Vroom's (1964) theory are (a) expectancy, (b) instrumentality, and (c) valence. The first variable is expectancy. *Expectancy* is the belief that one's effort (E) will result in achieving the desired performance (P) goal. Expectancy is usually based on past experiences, perceived difficulty of the performance goal, and self-efficacy (self-confidence). In essence, *self-efficacy* is the belief an individual has in his or her own abilities and skills. Vroom suggested individuals must believe they have some degree of control over the expected outcome. If an individual believes the outcome is beyond what he or she can do him or herself, then he or she will have low expectations and low motivation to complete the goal. Similarly, when goals are set too high and expectations are too challenging, an individual will, more than likely, have low expectations. Finally, for the expectancy variable, there is self-efficacy. This is the personal belief in one's self to perform a particular behavior successfully. With it being a personal belief, one may think that everyone has the same goal in mind. However, Parijat and Bagga (2014) suggested expectancy theory is based on the contingency model in that every employee is not motivated by the same things in the same way. With that, it is important for academic advisors to customize their advisement to each student. O'Keefe (2013) confirmed this assertion in stating a student feeling cared for is critical with the tertiary education environment, both in ensuring students perform to the best of their abilities and in preventing student attrition (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Pearson, 2012, p. 188). Pearson's (2012) study was entitled "Building Bridges: Higher Degree Student Retention and Counseling Support." Heisserer and Parette's (2002) study was entitled "Advising At-Risk Students in College and University Settings." The researcher took these titles into consideration when developing the current study. Many universities offer things to international students, but few ask the international students themselves what they are expecting by applying to a particular university. Also, academic advisors influence the retention and attrition rates of a university by the way they counsel students.

The second variable is instrumentality. Vroom (1964) described *instrumentality* as the belief that a person will receive a reward if the performance (P) expectation or outcome (O) is met. For example, the reward may be a pay increase, promotion, recognition, or sense of accomplishment. Instrumentality is low when the reward is the same for all performances (Vroom, 1964). Another example of how instrumentality works is through a person making commission sales. The idea is that if performance is high and many sales are made, the person will make more money. Trust, control, and policies are instrumentality outcome factors. Trust comes into play with the people who will decide who gets what outcome based on performance. When it comes to international students trusting academic advisors, the students will perform well in class when they trust the academic advisor to guide them to take the correct classes. The international students' goals may be to graduate or to get a good job in their field of interest. Control is thought to be how the decision is made.

The third variable in Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory is *valence*, described as the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome. This is based on an individual's needs, values, goals, and sources of motivation. Parijat and Bagga (2014) suggested valence measures the attractiveness, preference, value, or the liking of the rewards or work outcomes for the employee. An outcome may not be attractive. Parijat and Bagga gave the example that work outcomes can be stress or fatigue. On the other hand, they can also be a pay raise or promotion. The goal is for the measures to be positive and not negative.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory is about how much work effort a person puts in and determining how that person perceives the outcome. It may be desirable or unwanted. Its constructs form a basis for leaders to get high performance from their employees. However, authority alone will not get the leader to high performance. The leader must provide a variety of rewards so each employee can choose which reward is right for him or her. As previously stated, one employee may want a pay raise, whereas another employee may want a promotion and yet another employee may just want to be recognized. Vroom's expectancy theory provides a foundation for this research of academic advisors and international students. The outcomes for the international students vary. Some may want to graduate and others may want to get a job. Yet others may want to graduate after 4 years and continue at that university to pursue a higher degree and research.

For leaders in the position of academic advisors, their goal is to graduate students. When they do this, the byproducts are increased budgets, more unrestricted revenue that can be spent on students and faculty, and lower attrition rates. Keeping these goals in mind, academic advisors must be mindful that they must show care and concern for international students. They must also remember that each student has a different goal in mind.

In the current study, the researcher attempted to determine the cognitive processes an international student undergoes when making a decision to choose a research university. Vroom (1964) suggested that intensity of work effort depends on the perception that an individual's effort will result in a desired outcome. Through interviews, the researcher gained a better understanding of international students' decision-making process. This information can be used by academic advisors to better serve international students through their matriculation. By international students continuing their education at a research university, the university can receive full tuition from these students, reduce budget deficits, and provide services to all students with the use of unrestricted revenue. Academic advisors are crucial in this scenario because their care and understanding of international students may determine whether international students will leave their program before they graduate. This will, unfortunately, increase the attrition rate.

Summary

After reviewing the literature, satisfaction and the leadership of academic advisors stood out. Motivation and satisfaction were examined in this study, making Vroom's (1964), expectancy theory, from his book, *Work and Motivation*, an appropriate theoretical framework. Gathering international students' lived experiences at a Tier 1 research university and how they interact with their academic advisors required answering open-ended questions. This way, international students were able to express themselves at liberty. The appropriate methodology for this type of questioning was qualitative methods, which are discussed further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. An additional goal was to evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement to motivate more of these students to return to these institutions.

Leaders of institutions are tasking enrollment managers and academic advisors with acquiring and retaining new students. The literature supports that higher education can be considered a service industry (Cheng & Tam, as cited in Elliott, 2003). By finding common themes of what international students prefer during their decision-making process at a research university, academic advisors can better serve international students by providing what they expect to receive from their university. Perhaps, by qualifying the interview responses of international students, more international students will begin to apply as a result of academic advisors adopting a culturally aware and customized way of advising. This, in turn, will decrease the attrition rate at research universities. As stated in Chapter 2, expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) is used to maintain the effective use of the knowledge available at the time of decision-making (Bloodgood & Chilton, 2012).

Research Design

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to understand and describe a trend among international students (Creswell, 2014). The researcher’s intent was to explore the process international students use in deciding whether to return to a Tier 1 research university and their motivating factors (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative method was used as the literature supports that qualitative research focuses more on the individual, or in this case, a specific group of students' experiences (Nicholls, 2009). Other researchers supported this claim by stating qualitative researchers investigate an understanding of a situation holistically, rather than through numbers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2005). According to Creswell (2014), case studies are a design of inquiry in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, including a process, or one or more individuals. Hence, a case study was not used because the investigation was designed to explore individuals from different institutions. The researcher used known data from the literature as well as developed new themes and reasons to address the gaps in the literature. Gaining an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students used in choosing to apply and return to their Tier 1 research universities may also enable Tier 2 and Tier 3 research universities around the country to increase international student enrollment and retention and reduce student attrition. This may also enable more than just the 200 universities to enroll international students.

Yin (2011) purported that nearly every real-world situation can become the focus of a qualitative study. In other words, qualitative research is used to understand why and how a group made certain decisions that are reflected in the quantitative results. The data for this study were collected at one point in time. In-person interviews were conducted with students who identified as being international students.

A qualitative phenomenological method was used to study the phenomenon of the increase in the attrition of international students from Tier 1 universities. The qualitative method was used to ensure the individuals themselves were providing the necessary information to gain an in-depth representation of their lived experiences.

Research Question

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to investigate the overarching research question of: Why is there a vast number of international undergraduate individuals not returning to their same Tier 1 research institutions and what motivational activities might be implemented by leaders and advisors to entice them to return to these institutions?

Participants

The sample size was 12 individuals who fit the criteria of being international students who were completing their final year of an undergraduate degree or international students who completed their degree within the last 3 years. These 12 individuals were interviewed one-on-one and four individuals were asked to participate in a focus group. A purposive sampling method was used to select the participants from the researcher's personal network of professionals using personal contact information. In order to achieve the anticipated sample size, the snowball effect was used where participants were asked to make referrals of others from their own personal professional networks who met the selection criteria. No participants were contacted through their places of employment. Data collected pertained to the participants' individual lived experiences and perceptions of their experiences, not the perceptions of others. The researcher maintained a journal throughout the interview process to record and collect any additional information offered. The one-on-one interviews along with the focus group and the maintenance of a journal provided for triangulation, which added validity to the study.

Instrument

The open-ended questions used for the one-on-one interviews and for the focus group were as follows:

1. What have you found to be one of the most effective motivational incentives that might encourage international students to want to return to their Tier 1 institutions, and please explain?
2. From your experience attending a Tier 1 educational institution, what activities can a leader implement that might have the most influence on student satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
3. During your affiliation with your Tier 1 institution, what were some of the basic practices that were enforced or provided by leadership that might have had the greatest impact on your successful tenure that might motivate you to recommend the institution to others?
4. What activities would you say contributed the most to your selection of your Tier 1 institution and what events aided you the most in being able to be successful?
5. What resources or facilities did the leader provide that you found to be the most attractive in selecting the Tier 1 institution and why are they no longer a motivator for you to want to return next year as a current student?
6. What were some of some of the services, events, or activities that you felt were a positive influence in your tenure at the university and might motivate you to return?

7. What activities or obstacles that leaders control might have the largest impact on international students not returning to a Tier 1 institution and what suggestions might you recommend for removing these obstacles?
8. Is there any additional information you would like to add pertaining to the reason for the attrition of international students at Tier 1 institutions?

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations are parameters that cannot be controlled by the researcher. Limitations can include limited funding, statistical model restraints, or other factors (Simon & Goes, 2012). The literature supports that limitations can be virtually most things in life (Simon & Goes, 2012). In this study, time was a limitation as there was not enough time to survey and analyze 10%, 5%, or even 1% of the 50,000 students within the time constraints. One of the Tier 1 research universities in proximity to the researcher had close to 50,000 students, according to its website. This was used as an example of the researcher's limits. Fowler (2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014) described limitations in a study as having five parts: (a) risk of bias common to many or all studies, such as lack of blinding for subjective outcomes or unavailability of data; (b) inconsistency of effect or association, as demonstrated by high heterogeneity; (c) imprecision as a result of few events or a small sample size; (d) indirectness of the evidence, such as the use of an intermediate or short-term outcome; and (e) the likelihood of publication bias (Yavchitz, Ravaud, Hopewell, Baron, & Boutron, 2014).

This study involved the use of convenience sampling, which Creswell (2014) described as the least desirable of sampling methods. Two other types of random sampling that the researcher could have chosen are probabilistic and systematic sampling. According to Creswell, probabilistic sampling is a representative sampling from a population. The purpose of using probabilistic sampling is to stratify, or separate, to be able to generalize to a population from the representative individuals. Creswell warned that if the list of individuals is too long, then drawing a random sample will be difficult. This study involved a large sample size of over 50,000 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24. Fowler (2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014) stated that systematic sampling can have precision equal to that of random sampling. In this approach, the researcher chooses a random place to start on a list and chooses every X number of people on the list (Fowler, as cited in Creswell, 2014). For example, the researcher can go through the list and choose every 50th person or every 80th person. This would still not have been feasible for the current study. Randomly gaining access to 50,000 students to get a snapshot of 3,000 of these students was limiting in itself.

The researcher began contacting participants for initial/pre-Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval during the summer semester, which decreased the chance of getting more international students to participate in the questionnaire. The researcher corresponded with international student organizations. Some agreed to paper questionnaires whereas others preferred e-mail, and one organization declined because its summer institute was ending. With this knowledge, the researcher still believed there could be a certain level of variety in academic majors. Also, the researcher wanted honest feedback and believed students would be more apt to take a survey at their convenience, in a general body meeting, rather than a scheduled or forced study appointment.

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study make the researcher's goals attainable. Delimitations allow the researcher, or writer, of a study to set boundaries (PhD Student.com, 2017). Research questions and populations, for example, have been chosen to fit within reasonable time constraints of attainment. The researcher of this study chose the particular interview questions in order to drive the research and support the overarching theoretical framework of Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964).

Kwan and Wolf (2002) described the delimitations of a study as things that are known early in the study that narrow its scope. The researcher chose to address what international students are looking for or expecting when they apply to a research university, as well as what makes them return to a Tier 1 research university. By knowing what international students expect from their university, university leaders can strategically provide those resources, which will enroll more students. More students, assumingly, means revenue will increase and budget deficits will decrease. This may contribute to a university's survival and organizational success (Levy, 1986).

Tier 1 public research universities were chosen for this study because of the geographic proximity to the researcher. There was a better likelihood that the researcher would obtain the desired number of participants with multiple universities and personal contacts. Also, the literature indicates public tuition is rising faster than private tuition in terms of percentage terms (Bienen, 2012). The total student population is a little more than 50,000 students. This may seem like a large sample size, though Lowry (2004) suggested that public universities with few competitors and universities that rely profoundly on government subsidies comparative to tuition tend to have larger undergraduate enrollments, fewer small classes, lower graduation rates, and are more likely to engage in separately budgeted research than universities with the opposite characteristics.

Only a fraction of these students responded to participate in this study. Also, at some point, repetition of results occurred. Gay (1996, p. 125) suggested that for any population over 5,000, a sample size of 400 is appropriate. The researcher originally believed that close to 400 students would respond. However, with IRB policies and informed consent protection among universities, fewer than 20 volunteered to respond. Even if 10 students completed the questionnaire, this would add to the scant data on international student retention. Ten students, for a qualitative study, is enough for the researcher to synthesize the recurring themes from their responses. Students live busy lives. Some students chose not to complete the questionnaire. Fowler (as cited by Creswell, 2014) referred to this as a response bias, and considered those who decide not to respond to be non-respondents. This would give the researcher a 5% sampling error. This means the researcher can be confident in having 95% correct statistics (Suskie, 1996).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected for this study were provided as a result of open-ended interview questions. A recording device was used with the approval of the applicant being interviewed. If students needed clarification about the interview, the researcher provided on the spot clarification. If the international student organization preferred to have the informed consent e-mailed to them, clarification would be given through e-mail. The population was international students at Tier 1 research universities in the Atlanta, Georgia area. The sample population was students who were part of the researcher's personal contacts. Because the researcher acquired students during the summer semester, it was projected that only 12 to 15 students would respond to the interviews and three to four would also be asked to participate in a focus group. The researcher used the snowball effect to generate applicants for this study. According to the literature, snowball sampling, also known as chain referral sampling, is a type of purposive sampling that is used, through social networks, to refer the researcher to other people who would otherwise be considered a "hidden population" (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Narney, 2008). The interview was a qualitative method to find trends in the decision-making of international students, their relationships with their academic advisors, and why they decided to return after their first year of college to a research university.

Data were analyzed using qualitative observation and through collecting open-ended responses (Creswell, 2014). Open-ended questions were chosen because the researcher was collecting data from the participants' perspectives. Open-ended questions enabled the international students to give their perspectives and expectations, instead of a yes or no response that was shaped from the researcher's mind. With the convenience and randomizing of participants, the researcher recorded the data in a semi-structured way (Creswell, 2014). The convenience sampling allowed subjects to freely provide their views. The researcher believed that more semi-structured collected data would reflect the overall sample responses because questionable data are discarded. NVivo software was also used to assist the researcher in analyzing the interview data.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity in this study, the researcher used the strategy suggested by Creswell (2014) of using rich, thick description to convey the findings. The setting of administering the interviews in the privacy of the participants' chosen location provided a richer description of the results during the interview process. In other words, the researcher added to the validity of this study by making the subjects feel more comfortable in their own environment. The researcher also clarified the international students' bias (Creswell, 2014). The researcher read the responses to find patterns and themes in the different responses. If most of the international students had a similar response, that would mean a theme developed from that particular question. This would make the responses valid because they are all similar.

Words used to describe reliability are repeatability, stability, and consistency (Lakshmi & Mohideen, 2013). An error free measure that yields consistent results is a signal of a reliable study. Lakshmi and Mohideen (2013) gave the example of reproducing relatively the same test scores of individuals across testing situations on the same, or parallel, testing instruments. In this study, reliability referred to whether the researcher's approach was consistent with other researchers and different projects (Gibbs, as cited by Creswell, 2014). A reliability procedure implemented in this study was that the researcher checked the interviews to make sure they did not contain obvious mistakes made while the international students responded (Creswell, 2014). Once the international students completed the one-on-one interviews, the researcher reviewed them, on the spot, to clarify any questions for the researcher or international students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. All data were analyzed from an interview format. The population of international students who participated in this study included freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and alumni between the ages of 18 and 26 who were in college for the first time at a 4-year university. If a student was over the age of 26, his or her responses were included if there was an overall low response and if the student was still in the classification of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or alumni. The age range was extended, as some international students do not start college at the traditional age. Using the qualitative results, academic advisors will be better able to understand how they can help their international students experience success.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. An additional goal was to evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement to motivate more of these students to return to these institutions. Hence, the theoretical framework for this exploratory qualitative case study was expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), as the underpinning goal was to gain an understanding of the motivational factors and decision-making processes used by international students when choosing to attend and return to a Tier 1 research university in the United States. The following research question guided this study: Why is there a vast number of international undergraduate individuals not returning to their same Tier 1 research institutions and what motivational activities might be implemented by leaders and advisors to entice them to return to these institutions?

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to investigate the overarching research question. According to Creswell (2007, p. 11), there are five main approaches that qualitative researchers can take: (a) narrative research, (b) phenomenology, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, and (e) case study. Creswell (2007) cited Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1994) as suggesting that phenomenological studies present a range of methods and current issues. Also, phenomenological studies, through interviews, provide a systematic interpretation of interview transcripts that is helpful in extracting themes that are common across interviews or unique to an interview and then creating a conceptual link (Creswell, 2007). Willis (1996, p. 216) recounted that phenomenology rose out of a reaction to positivism through which the discourses of the physical sciences were applied to all forms of human enquiry. In essence, there was a push to counter the standing notion that quantitative research was the end all, be all. Phenomenology emerged to counter mentalist views, which were of the mindset that the world is purely a construction of the mind. It did not acknowledge that humans are actually connected to the world in which they exist (Willis, 1996).

Through interviews, a focus group, and journal notes, the researcher studied the motivations of international students as well as the decision-making process, or thought process, they used to make their Tier 1 university decisions. This method was in line with the recommendations made by Willis (1996), who stated that the more one reflects upon one’s thinking, the more one is confronted with a proactive and a contemplative modality. The proactive way is imagined as a series of processes variously interpreted, in which a thinker moves from taking in and naming experiences in some fashion, to ordering them and locating them into the more generalized categories of one’s language and ways of seeing the world (Willis, 1996, p. 217). The intuitive/contemplative way refers to more receptive and aesthetic forms of thinking and focusing attention. The thinking human positions him or herself vis-à-vis an object with a receptive stance and holds back discriminatory analytic thinking in favor of a more contemplative process (Willis, 1996, p. 218).

Summary of the Methods

For this study, the researcher employed the use of the qualitative phenomenological method in order to understand and describe a trend among international students (Creswell, 2014). The intent was to explore the process international students use in deciding whether to return to a Tier 1 research university and their motivating factors (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 international students enrolled at a Tier 1 research university in the Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area. A focus group of four students, all from India, was also conducted. These individuals were chosen because of the even distribution of two females and two males. Participants 1, 3, 5, and 10 made up the focus group. Last, the researcher kept a journal. These three strategies were employed to triangulate common themes and add validity to this study. After transcribing all of the interviews, the researcher analyzed the data to see what themes emerged. The researcher then used the computer software, NVivo 12, to aid in coding the transcribed interviews and to add to the reliability and validity of this study. The seven coding nodes used were referral, personal communication with leader, paperwork, cost, leader motivation, self-motivation, and finding a better school. NVivo 12 was also able to provide graphics to visually organize the data.

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to be able to explain the questions for more clarity and not stick solely to the printed questions. This was important as there were some language barriers with some international students and there was a need for clarification when some questions were asked. The researcher analyzed the interview data using qualitative observation and through collecting open-ended responses (Creswell, 2014). Open-ended questions were chosen because the researcher collected data from the participants' perspectives. Open-ended questions enabled the international students to give their perspectives and expectations, instead of a yes or no response that was shaped from the researcher’s mind. With the convenience and randomizing of participants, the researcher recorded the data in a semi-structured way (Creswell, 2014). The convenience sampling allowed subjects to freely provide their views.

The open-ended questions used for the one-on-one interviews and the focus group were as follows:

1. What have you found to be one of the most effective motivational incentives that might encourage international students to want to return to their Tier 1 institutions, and please explain?
2. From your experience attending a Tier 1 educational institution, what activities can a leader implement that might have the most influence on student satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
3. During your affiliation with your Tier 1 institution, what were some of the basic practices that were enforced or provided by leadership that might have had the greatest impact on your successful tenure that might motivate you to recommend the institution to others?
4. What activities would you say contributed the most to your selection of your Tier 1 institution and what events aided you the most in being able to be successful?
5. What resources or facilities did the leader provide that you found to be the most attractive in selecting the Tier 1 institution and why are they no longer a motivator for you to want to return next year as a current student?

6. What were some of some of the services, events, or activities that you felt were a positive influence in your tenure at the university and might motivate you to return?
7. What activities or obstacles that leaders control might have the largest impact on international students not returning to a Tier 1 institution and what suggestions might you recommend for removing these obstacles?
8. Is there any additional information you would like to add pertaining to the reason for the attrition of international students at Tier 1 institutions?

Demographics

In this study, there were 12 international student participants, seven female participants (58%) and five male participants (42%). The female responses accounted for 58% of the responses. Out of the 12 participants, there were eight countries represented. Table 1 shows the country, gender, and number of participants in the order they were interviewed.

Table 1
Country, Number of Participants, and Gender

Country	Number of Participants	Gender
India	4	2 female, 2 male
Pakistan	1	Male
Nigeria	1	Female
China	3	3 female
Tanzania	1	Female
Vietnam	1	Female
Bahamas	1	Male
South Korea	1	Male

Table 1 shows that 33% of the participants were from India, 8% were from Pakistan, 8% were from Nigeria, 25% were from China, 8% were from Tanzania, 8% were from Vietnam, 8% were from the Bahamas, and 8% were from South Korea. These percentages equal to 106% because there were 12 participants, and not 10. However, one divided by 12 is 0.0833. This was rounded down to 8%. Figure 1 gives a visual graphic picture of the participants' country of origin percentages.

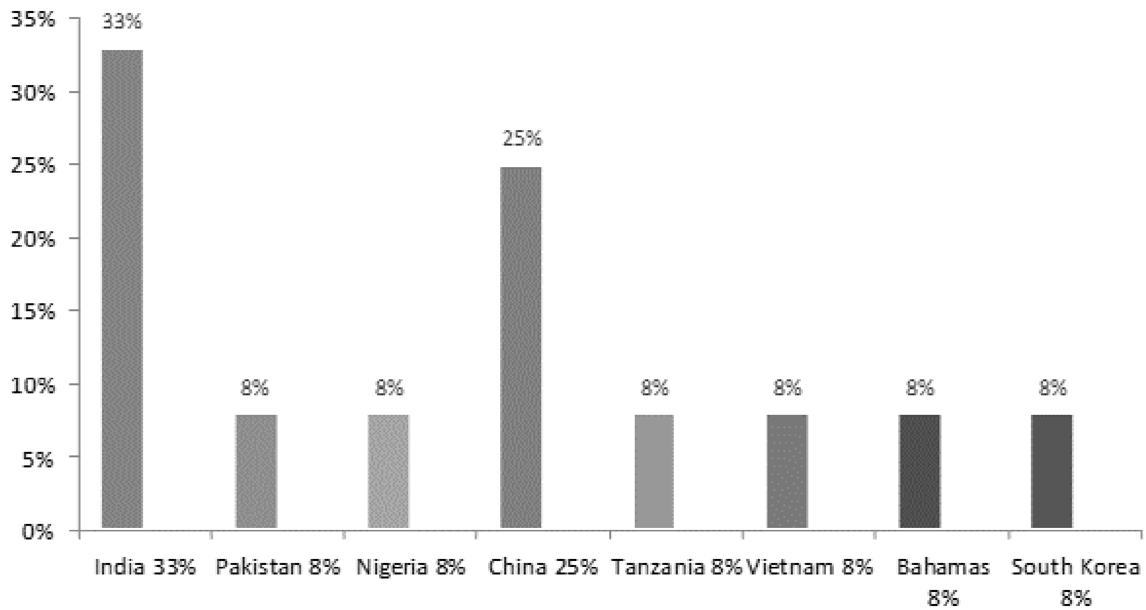

Figure 1. Participants' countries of origin.

The grade classifications of participants were as follows: 0% freshmen, 25% sophomores (*n* = 3), 33% juniors (*n* = 4), 33% seniors (*n* = 4), and 8% graduate students (*n* = 1). The majors of the participants were of interest to the researcher (see Figure 2). Their majors aligned with their decision-making in returning to a Tier 1 university, as most were science majors. Of the 12 participants, 33% were science majors (*n* = 4 participants; nursing and biology), 17% were business majors (*n* = 2 participants; finance and economics), 8% were social science majors (*n* = 1 participant; public policy), 25% were technology majors (*n* = 3; computer science or computer information systems majors), and 8% were mathematics major s(n = 1; mathematics). One participant (8%) in the computer science category was a dual major and was majoring in computer information systems and managerial sciences.

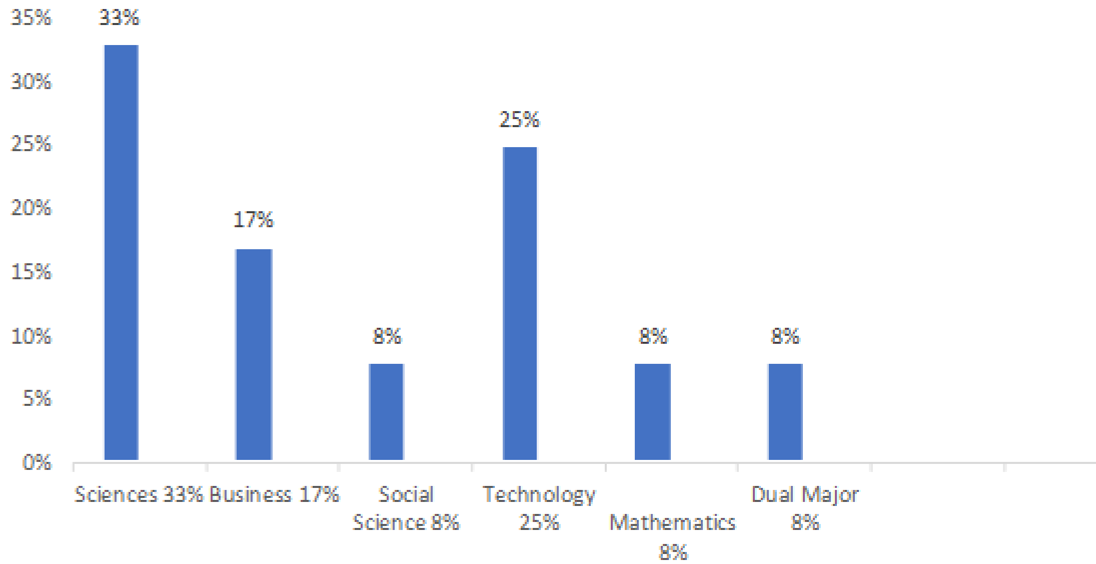

Figure 2. Participants' majors.

Participant Profiles

Participant 1 was an Indian male who was 19 years old. His major was finance. He was very cordial during the interview and was part of the focus group. He seemed like a self-starter and was enjoying being a part of a social outlet in his fraternity. He gave honest and personal responses.

Participant 2 was a Pakistani male who was 19 years old. His major was biology. He was quiet and smiled during the interview. He answered the questions, but did not do much talking outside of the interview questions. This was perhaps part of the cultural differences.

Participant 3 was a 21 year old junior from India. His major was economics. He spoke in a businesslike tone of voice. He also agreed to be a part of the focus group.

Participant 4 was the first female to be interviewed in this study. She was a 25 year old junior from Nigeria. She was a biology major. She was very well-spoken, confident, and thorough with her responses. She was also very aware that she was an international student and she took her status at this university very seriously. Her body language indicated she really wanted to make a difference through this interview and have her opinions heard by leadership. She was very proud to be a student at her Tier 1 research university. She knew that the name of her university added prestige to her resume and transcripts. She mentioned this in her response to Question 1.

Participant 5 was 23 year old female from India. She was a graduate student. Her major was public policy. She was willing to do the interview. She started out reserved, but opened up near Question 4 where she spoke about knowing someone who already attended this university. Participant 5 also agreed to be a part of the focus group.

Participant 6 was a 21 year old female from China. She was a senior and a biology major. She gave good responses, particularly about leadership through her professor and how they took a personal interest in guiding her to this Tier 1 research university.

Participant 7 was a 22 year old, senior female from Tanzania. She was a computer science major. Participant 7 planned to do IT development after she graduated. She planned on getting her master’s degree, but wanted to get a job first. She was engaging and seemed happy to give her responses. She wanted leadership to see things from her perspective and hear her opinions.

Participant 8 was a 19 year old, junior biology major from Vietnam. She was well-spoken, focused, and aware of what she needed to do to become successful at a U.S. university. Participant 8 was also very humorous and engaging.

Participant 9 was a 20 year old senior from the Bahamas. His major was computer science. Participant 9 was very well-spoken, focused, confident, and very thorough in his responses. Participant 9 had a plan for his life and academic career at this university. Participant 9 understood the position his country was in and how it was easier for him to assimilate. He discussed this in his response to Question 1. Participant 9 was a computer science major, but wanted to get into financial technology after graduation. He even said that he may pick up some classes and audit them so he could get the financial knowledge he needed. Participant 9 also said he may get his Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) certificate. Participant 9 was a sharp-minded young man.

Participant 10 was a 20 year old female, double major, senior. Her major was computer information systems and managerial sciences. Participant 10 was cordial and wanted to use her managerial sciences degree to get into consulting and data analytics, and IT. Her home country was India. Participant 10 was also part of the focus group.

Participant 11 was a 26 year-old male. He was a junior, nursing major from South Korea. Participant 11 was part of the focus group as well. However, it was noted in the researcher's notes that Participants 11 and 12 had a language barrier but gave the best responses they could.

Participant 12 was a 21 year old female from China. She was a sophomore and also had a language barrier. Her responses were shorter than those given by the other participants because of the language barrier. However, Participant 12 was cordial and willing to be interviewed.

Participant Responses

Participants' responses were transcribed as they were spoken. Also, journal notes taken by the researcher are markedly interwoven in this section. The journal was one third of the triangulation for this study. Some of the responses were shorter than others because of language barriers and cultural differences.

Question 1

What have you found to be one of the most effective motivational incentives that might encourage international students to want to return to their Tier 1 institutions and please explain?

> I'm a finance major and this university is surrounded by Fortune 500 companies. It would be ideal in getting internships which lead to future jobs. (Participant 1)

> International students have to pay a lot. But, at this university they have a lot of fees. Out state fees and in-state fees. (Participant 2)

> Really diverse. It's right by my parents' house, so really convenient. (Participant 3)

> Just the opportunities, the fact that I came to this country. A lot of people look at where you got your degree from, U.S., Europe and Western degrees are look on better. (Participant 4)

> This is the first college in the U.S. I came to. I went to a college in India. I came here because one of my professors in India got his master's degree and PhD degree at this university. (Participant 5)

> My biology program. It's a program connection between my Chinese college and this university. So, I will get two degrees. (Participant 6)

> They had like programs. Like international student clubs, and international student Thanksgiving and lunches. Those were fun. (Participant 7)

> Compared to my country, this university has good facilities and the staff is very helpful. Also, the culture is very diverse. If I'm in my country, right away I

> would not get access to diverse culture and technology. The infrastructure is like no other country. Atlanta is a really good place. The professors are really professional. This school is one of the top in Georgia. (Participant 8)
>
> Links back at home. That come from #1 family. But you can't do things for family but yourself. [In other words, Participant 9 was saying he was self-motivated to come to this university. He was saying that students have to have a personal drive, and not just have family wanting them to be successful, but students have to want to be successful for themselves]. But the Bahamas is different than other countries. Since I live so close to America, I have better opportunities, and understandings of how things work than people from other countries. I want to be able to give back to my country. I go home often, and I see people. It is the perfect motivator. (Participant 9)
>
> They give two reasons: One was financial. I was given a waiver to pay in-state [tuition]. That opportunity is not present in a lot of other universities. My second reason is everyone was so welcoming. I felt I had at least one group to fit in. (Participant 10)
>
> Because of my future job. Because I want to be a global nurse. (Participant 11)
>
> I think maybe the style communicate with me directly. How to say that? Makes you believe them. (Participant 12)

Question 2

From your experience attending a Tier 1 educational institution, what activities can a leader implement that might have the most influence on student satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

> If you're falling behind in classes, the academic advisors come up with a step-by-step plan so you can reach your ideal GPA standard. No dissatisfaction. They just tell me to come on in and they give you a step-by-step plan and study hours for each class. (Participant 1)
>
> They should ask students what problems students are facing. They should meet with me once a month to ask my opinion. Awareness or something like that. (Participant 2)
>
> Cover the points. They guide you right. They reply to your email fast. (Participant 3)
>
> If they have an apathetic view. Some professors want to make sure I understand. The reason I like microbiology is because my professor cared that I understand. He didn't just regurgitate information to me. He took time to explain concepts to me. He wanted you to grasp what he was teaching. (Participant 4)

> Feedback on my assignments. I saw someone for basic information. When I asked them questions through email, they replied to me. (Participant 5)

> The thing, well it's the professor that offers a lot of fellowship and opportunities to intern. (Participant 6)

> Resources I'd say. Because it's hard to find scholarships for international students. So, if they had resources for international student scholarships, that would be amazing. (Participant 7)

> I'm in the LEAD cohort and to get into that, I have to go through the process. The staff is really helpful. I have a lot of benefits being in the leadership. I took classes to train me on leadership and how to take class. The professors are professional and inspiring. (Participant 8)

> One of the bigger impediments of success is opportunities. That comes from advisors and professors. Professors should reach out, and give transparency. I had an interview and got to the end and found out they don't hire international students. You don't need a sponsorship while in school here, I am in the CPT [Curriculum Practical Training], and the OPT [Occupational Practical Training] programs. The CPT is while I am a student, and the OPT prepares me for a job when I graduate. (Participant 9)

> Just being recognized plays a big role. Having an academic advisor remember my name, or a dean remember my name. Having a professor remember me a semester later. (Participant 10)

> Actually, my buddy, she helped me a lot in this place because I'm the only one Korean peoples. In Korea, my professor advised me [to come to this university] because she studied in Atlanta. She tried to match both universities. (Participant 11)

> Style of class-it's more alternate and yeah. A different type of class. Just face-to-face. I don't have online classes. (Participant 12)

Question 3

During your affiliation with your Tier 1 institution, what were some of the basic practices that were enforced or provided by leadership that might have had the greatest impact on your successful tenure that might motivate you to recommend the institution to others?

> Motivation is all on you. Each student brings their own self-motivation. You should come motivated, because you are paying for your education. (Participant 1)

The only thing they've done is help me with my major. It wasn't so helpful. DSU 1010 referred me to advising center, but not helpful. (Participant 2)

Since I was born, I always had trouble speaking in front of class. They helped me cause people have different accents and have different backgrounds. (Participant 3)

I finally decided that I didn't want to go to medical school. I wanted to do MPH/PhD dual program, and my professor at down with me to cross-list the subjects with the MPH field. My professor took time with me to make sure I knew which classes transferred, and which classes I would need in the future. (Participant 4)

Quite frankly, it would be in academics. Quality of the academics and professors. Quality of academics is the main thing. (Participant 5)

If I recommend this school to my friends, it's a better undergraduate school than other schools. (Participant 6)

Make their tuition fees more affordable. Or in some way a merit-based. They have a presidential waiver for the main university, but not the 2-year college. So, they can waive out of state cost. It is insanely high. They are more than 50% amount of tuition. Like next semester it's like $13,000, but without it [out of state fees] it was $5,000. That's insane. (Participant 7)

I would recommend this university because of what I mentioned above. The opportunities, Honors College, Leadership. Also, diverse culture makes you stand out because everyone values your opinion. This university is all about culture. (Participant 8)

I think where the school is, and liberal nature of Atlanta is receptive to international students. The city and school embraces international students. You can be a RA [Resident Assistant in the university dormitories] and work on campus. Significant money put into programs to give us money to do what we want to do. Also, the Caribbean Student Association and the Singapore Student Association. I think this university is open to non-local cultures. They don't tolerate against attacks. They are inclusive. The leadership has made a concerted effort for inclusion and opportunity. It's still up to you if you leverage their connections. Connections like the Southeastern Hedgefund Competition, the Hackathon, The business school has industry practitioners come and talk to us. They say that half of the work is showing up. So you can go sit in on the seminars if you want it bad enough. (Participant 9)

As a junior, I realized specifically in the RCB Honors, Business Just Honors College, and LEAD with Honors, it gave me a way to learn about leadership or just make friends when I didn't have anyone around me. It also showed me how different people still work together. Career counselors review your resume. I made friends through those programs. (Participant 10)

> For just global experience. Also, we can learn about our major. I'm nursing, so learn about nursing. (Participant 11)
>
> More close to you. Talk about their families and daily lives. More casual, not just a teacher. (Participant 12)

Question 4

What activities would you say contributed the most to your selection of your Tier 1 institution and what events aided you the most in being able to be successful?

> Nothing that they did. I was motivated by the future job opportunities. (Participant 1)
>
> Diversity. People come from all over the world. I like meeting new people. (Participant 2)
>
> To be honest, this was the only school I applied to. If I didn't get in here . . . When I do things by myself, I learn more. (Participant 3)
>
> It's closer to home and more affordable. My other college was in Macon, [Georgia] and it was more expensive, smaller, and had racial issues. One situation was with the Financial Aid office. Financial aid was given to those of another hue. They found financial aid for them, but not us. That's why I like it here at this university. My experience has been better here. (Participant 4)
>
> So quite frankly, I knew someone else from this university that was successful. It motivated me to want to come to this university, so I could be successful, too. (Participant 5)
>
> My program and low tuition fee and somebody's suggestion. My professor in China and here. You must know what to do and what you want to do in the future, not just your major. (Participant 6)
>
> I didn't really choose this university. My cousin went here before, so my aunt just sort of registered me. (Participant 7)
>
> I'm a biology major, so taking upper division classes, dating is important (lol). Hanging out with friends that are into diverse cultures. Seminars and attending seminars. Oh, I'm really athletic, so bon fire in the Rec Center. (Participant 8)
>
> Mine is a bit different. For me, I was going to college with the perception of going and finishing as soon as possible. I was going to go to a school in Canada, but my dad made the executive decision to come to Atlanta, a major city. I'm paying more, but the location of this university sold me. (Participant 9)

> What activities? The Economic Advantage Waiver. It converted me from an international student to an in-state student. They gave me that privilege. That definitely helped. Basically, that's the only reason I chose this university. Being successful, it's the community. This university has given me confidence to talk to a stranger. RCB Honors Program, I've learned a lot. I did a lot. It helped my career. (Participant 10)

> A lot of programs we did. We watched fireworks and go to the house who is program director, and have some dinner. With my buddy, I watch a movie. (Participant 11)

> It is just because my university, they have some opportunity between my university in China and this university. (Participant 12)

Question 5

What resources or facilities did the leader provide that you found to be the most attractive in selecting the Tier 1 institution and why are they no longer a motivator for you to want to return next year as a current student?

> I'm in a fraternity. So, joining [the fraternity] opened up the whole campus to me. Before, I was sectioned off to just going to my classes. Now, I know the whole campus. (Participant 1)

> Counseling. Every office covers most of the parts I need for my college degree. (Participant 2)

> My academic advisor was kind and polite and did what they needed to do for me. (Participant 3)

> He (my professor) sat down and gave me a plan to do besides just classes. He gave me options like joining organizations, e-boards, and internships to make my application more well-rounded. (Participant 4)

> This is my first year. (Participant 5)

> Waiving fees. I have out of state fee, so I pay in-state tuition fee. It's cheap [in-state tuition]. A lot of my friends coming here too, so I chose here. I only pay for in-state fees. (Participant 6)

> I didn't really choose it. I got here for orientation and was like OK. (Participant 7)

> The lifestyle in America is better than in my country. This university has awesome opportunities for students. In account to professional staff. [Participant

8 was referring to the fact that there were many opportunities at this university, and that the staff added to her experience by being professional.] (Participant 8)

Honestly, to be truthful, the school doesn't necessarily make you want to com back. It's the students you've met. For instance, the University Rec Center, second semester of my first year. My friend was always on the move. Once we met, became a leader through the organizations and people that he already knew. I got involved with the Atlanta Student Investors Club. He helped me find my first internship. He turned me away from my original thinking that college was about partying, but instead about getting the most you can out of college. This is a quote I like. It says that if you hang around with clowns, you'll join the circus. Ownership and confidence. I always think how can I give before I leave. My friend changed my orthodox look on what college is. It did not come from a leader though, but another student. (Participant 9)

It kind of goes back to my Economic Advantage Waiver. Also, I had a good advisor. I'm a first generation college student. I don't know how college works. I just go off of what my advisor tells me to do. In the past 3 years, I've had 20 advisors. Here, they change a lot. I got lucky by getting the advisor I had first. (Participant 10)

Nothing. (Participant 11)

Because I have two classes. I have class 2 days. I don't get many materials. But teachers really give us lots of materials. My Global Economy teacher, he teach us, encourage us to think. I think that is great. (Participant 12)

Question 6

What were some of some of the services, events, or activities that you felt were a positive influence in your tenure at the university and might motivate you to return?

We do a lot of fundraising [the fraternity], leadership, raising money for kids. It's more my fraternity bringing me back. My academic advisors just meet with me twice a year. If I need to schedule classes. (Participant 1)

DSU 1010; Program about alcohol abuse and sexual abuse. They care about us, giving us this information. (Participant 2)

I became more confident. (Participant 3)

I like the SI [Supplemental Instruction] and tutoring in the biology and chemistry building. (Participant 4)

I guess going to guest lectures. That was the most significant part for me. (Participant 5)

> Doing ISSS [International Student & Scholar Services], they offer a lot of orientations, and it helped me get familiar with this totally strange campus. Totally strange class. Everything is strange for me. (Participant 6)
>
> International student Thanksgiving Lunch. It was good to get the culture we are trying to assimilate to. We would also experience other people's culture and Thanksgiving here. (Participant 7)
>
> I've been to a retreat with my cohort and I learned a lot of leadership skills that I can apply in my daily life. This university provides practical skills for me. I am also returning because I have a boyfriend here [smile]. (Participant 8)
>
> From day 1, it was the Resident Assistant. They were inviting and positive. Also, the international student office was not friendly, but positive. They weren't over bearing. They just did the bare minimum to advise me. Going to the international student office is like going to the U.S. embassy when you travel to France. You expect to be treated very well. I'm in Honors College, and that opened up a few opportunities for me. Also, the Civic Engagement office is big on community service. (Participant 9)
>
> There were so many, I can't pinpoint just one event or activity. I guess Coffee Talk every Tuesday. It's where we [international students] sit around and talked about current events. We had experts come and talk to us about the current events. That was pretty cool. They came and talked about their work. Like during the immigrant crisis week, someone from the IRC came and told us how they helped the refugees settle in. Other activities and events are the LEAD with Honors just in general, RCB Honors, Women Lead, which is a class dedicated to know that women can lead to. It was a class to fix the gender wage gap. (Participant 10)
>
> Matching with my buddy. I think it's a good experience. I want to know their lifestyle-American. (Participant 11)
>
> More of lifestyle and class that professor teach us. Also, my major can get more benefits in the future. (Participant 12)

Question 7

What activities or obstacles that leaders control might have the largest impact on international students not returning to a Tier 1 institution and what suggestions might you recommend for removing these obstacles?

> Being an international student, there are so many documents and requirements. It's a lot of verifications you have to get before you can even enroll in classes. (Participant 1)

They were pretty clear telling me the office or go to this website. (Participant 2)

In classes when they have online stuff to do, it makes it easier for me. (When professors talk as if everyone understands what they are saying, as far as language, and class vocabulary. When it is online, I can take my time and read the instructions over and over. (Participant 3)

Sometimes, like my paperwork was a little bit in between. They would take my paperwork and not process it, or they would lose it. It's a back and forth that takes time, and is frustrating. (Participant 4)

But like for me, is restricting on my Visa. I can't work outside of college. If I leave, I have to come back. The requirements are too much. They are stringent. (Participant 5)

You ask someone it's very, very no. I can't do that. You need to ask another one. [Participant 6 was frustrated with asking an advisor for help, and she was sent from one office to another, or one person to another.] (Participant 6)

I'd say some [leaders] keep changing the requirements for graduating. So, like when I was trying to transfer here, I thought I had everything, but they said I need to take a science class. Then, a semester ago, they said that the 1,000 level class I took did not count. I had to take a 3,000 level class. I wish they were more direct so I would not have to take it twice. (Participant 7)

International students pay more than Georgians. I don't know, I don't have trouble with language. Some students do, but I don't. Because, I have a good science back ground from my country. [Participant 8 travelled extensively with their parents as a child to the United States. This contributed to her ease with language and assimilation. She lived by herself. She said that along with traveling as a child, she learned English in third grade. She said that most Vietnamese's English is broken, but not hers.] (Participant 8)

As someone who works in university housing, and international admissions, it's probably their experience. It's the adjustment between home and this country. Classes are great, but outside of classes, it's whoever runs the clubs. It's not the leaders, but the students. (Participant 9)

This one goes to the international advisors. There's an office, but each one says a different thing. Each advisor gives a different answer, and it is frustrating. On may something, and then another will say something else. Like when I asked about getting work authorization, each one said something different. (Participant 10)

Nothing. I'm fine. (Participant 11)

Not sure, because, just as I said before, I have 2 days of class. I might find some obstacles in the future. It is because my English limitations make me confused.

> Also, culture – I never heard what they said and makes me confused [colloquialisms, idioms, and slang speech]. (Participant 12)

Question 8

Is there any additional information you would like to add pertaining to the reason for the attrition of international students at Tier 1 institutions?

> They get into a better school. They just come here to build their GPA in America, and then transfer to a better school in the U.S. or another country. (Participant 1)
>
> I don't know any, but I'm coming back. (Participant 2)
>
> I really don't know a lot of kids here. I met him last year. He was just talking. (Participant 3)
>
> I know people have Visa issues. That's about it. (Participant 4)
>
> So, I feel like a lot of people would want to be in big cities. When you're on a Visa, you have only a few years. My friends think about the city a lot before they choose their institution. New York, Washington, DC are big cities. (Participant 5)
>
> They have better choice, and maybe their heal problems [parents are worried that their children will get sick, and they will be too far away to take care of them]. And their parents don't want them to come to another country to school because they can't take care of them. And money. It's still expensive here. (Participant 6)
>
> I know one, he came back . He had to stop. I think because of the cost, and also for he had to drop a semester, but they did not withdraw him, so he got a "F" for the classes. It lowered his GPA. (Participant 7)
>
> If they don't have a scholarship, they don't return. If they don't find a job, because of their language barrier, then they don't return. (Participant 8)
>
> Living 90 miles from Florida made assimilating easy for me. But other international students need help to assimilate. The cost is also a big factor. A lot of U.S. students rack up loans and stay to push through later. It's not what they [international students] expected living in a new country, especially if we pay two to three times more than U.S. students. But, that's kind of how the ball falls, you know? (Participant 9)
>
> I almost didn't come here, but I'm glad I stayed. But, my friend , she did not come here because there is a stigma about going to this university because it is not an Ivy League university. People think it's a stupid college, or not a good college.

> She transferred to another university. I don't know why it has that stigma. The only thing I can think of is that it is easy to get into. (Participant 10)

> I know one because I'm Korean, so we have a lot of ready to go Visa and have a lot of money to pay. So, it was difficult for me to come here. (Participant 11)

> There are a lot of reasons. Maybe they found a better school. Students pay attention to top schools. Professor in China recommend another university. Students may consider that. Some of the students like me may not consider the future here, or U.S. have feelings of different things. They have some trouble. Their goals are different. But also, if something really surprise them, they might consider this school in the future. It will happen. A lot of things can not control. (Participant 12)

Common Themes

Among the seven codes, each was mentioned by at least two participants. The seven codes were (a) referral, (b) personal communication with leader, (c) paperwork, (d) cost, (e) leader motivation, (f) self-motivation, and (g) a better school. A better school had the fewest mentions by participants. Personal communication with leader and cost were the top two most referred to by participants in the interviews. Some of the participants mentioned that they would have liked their academic advisors to learn their names or give them the same straight answer, no matter which advisor they consulted. As for cost, it was repeated many times in the interview responses that international student pay more for college than U.S. students because of in-state and out-of-state fees. The data reflect that international students who were in the Honors College got scholarships and other breaks that other international students did not receive.

A referral from a friend, family member, or professor, along with leader motivation and self-motivation, were seen as the mean, or average number of participants, or most participants mentioned one of these codes in their interview responses. Results of the data analysis indicated that motivation was somewhat important, but personal communication with the leader, or by the leader, and personal referrals were more important for international students to return to their university.

Emergent Themes

Four themes emerged from the analysis of data that were not in the original seven codes: (a) job opportunities, (b) seminars on various topics, (c) Honors College, and (d) social clubs and organizations. Social clubs and organizations included being in a sorority or fraternity, international student associations, academic major affinity groups, and events (e.g., Coffee Talk, Southeastern Hedgefund Competition, and Thanksgiving) with other international students. For cost, the international student participants in this study favored international student scholarships, Economic Advantage Waiver, and Visas and work authorization access.

Summary

After analyzing the data, the responses revealed themes that aligned with the theoretical framework proposed by Vroom (1964). In addition, the researcher found new themes that resonated passionately among the international students who participated in this study. The responses given were rich, personal, and reflected the participants' decision-making process. Also, the participants represented eight countries. This added value and richness to the data of this study by getting a wide scope of perspectives from different cultures and geographies. The researcher can now draw conclusions and recommendations for future research based on this newfound knowledge that can add to the dearth of research on international students and their decision-making process in returning to a Tier 1 research university, helping to close this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The researcher in this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 international students who were enrolled at one of several Tier 1 research universities in the Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area, as well as a focus group of four students. The population of international students who participated in this study included freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and alumni or graduate students between the ages of 18 and 26 who were in college for the first time at a 4-year university. The age range was extended, as some international students do not start college at the traditional age. Last, a journal was kept by the researcher. These three strategies were employed to triangulate common themes and add validity to this study. Once all of the interviews were transcribed, the researcher analyzed the data to see what themes emerged. The following research question guided this study: Why is there a vast number of international undergraduate individuals not returning to their same Tier 1 research institutions and what motivational activities might be implemented by leaders and advisors to entice them to return to these institutions?

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explain the questions for more clarity and not stick solely to the printed questions. This was important as there were some language barriers with some international students and a need for clarification when some questions were asked.

The researcher also used the computer software, NVivo 12, to aid in coding the transcribed interviews and to add to the reliability and validity of this study. The seven coding nodes were referral, personal communication with leader, paperwork, cost, leader motivation, self-motivation, and finding a better school. NVivo 12 was also able to provide graphics to visually organize the data.

Summary of Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the decision-making and reasoning processes international students use in choosing to return to a Tier 1 research university. An additional goal was to evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement to motivate more of these students to return to these institutions. Hence, the theoretical framework for this exploratory qualitative case study was expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), as the underpinning goal was to gain an understanding of the motivational factors and decision-making processes used by international students when choosing to attend and return to a Tier 1 research university in the United States.

Discussion of Results

In addition to the seven coding nodes that were originally examined, four more themes emerged: (a) job opportunities, (b) seminars on various topics, (c) Honors College, and (d) social clubs and organizations. Social clubs and organizations included being in a sorority or fraternity, international student associations, academic major affinity groups, and events (e.g., Coffee Talk, Southeastern Hedgefund Competition, and Thanksgiving) with other international students. in the area of cost, the international student participants in this study favored international student scholarships, Economic Advantage Waiver, and Visas and work authorization access. The researcher believes that if academic advisors and university leaders take heed of these new, emergent themes, they will reduce their attrition rate significantly because international students will not only be motivated to return, they will feel listened to and comfortable.

Prior to gathering these data, universities were doing what they thought international students expected. However, this study shows that international students go through a different decision-making process than U.S. students. It is clear from the responses that international students come to a Tier 1 research university because of a personal contact referral, such as through a professor in their home country, a family member, or a friend. O'Keefe (2013) confirmed this assertion in stating a student feeling cared for is critical within the tertiary education environment, both in ensuring students perform to the best of their abilities and in preventing student attrition (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Pearson, 2012, p. 188). Yadav et al. (2018) suggested that international students have a different set of cognitive beliefs and perceived trustworthiness.

Once international students come to the United States at a Tier 1 research university they stay not necessarily because they are motivated by their leader, such as an academic advisor or professor, but because of the job opportunities they look forward to having once they complete their program and graduate. International students also are motivated through the personal attention or communication they receive from their leader. James (2015) suggested that in order to build a strong, working relationship, one must be consistent and accurate with information. Some of the participants expressed that they became frustrated when their academic advisors gave them different answers to their questions or made them take classes twice instead of guiding them to the correct class the first time.

Major Findings and Discussion of Conclusions Drawn

The coded themes of referral, personal communication with leader, paperwork, cost, leader motivation, self-motivation, and a better school aligned with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as it pertains to motivation and leadership. Personal communication and cost were the two themes to which the participants referred the most in their interviews. For the referral code, Participants 4, 5, 6, and 7 mentioned that a friend, family member, or professor referred them to their Tier 1 research university. This represented 33% of participants. Personal communication with leader was a commonality among Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, or 75% of the participants. Personal communication with leader was one of the top codes and supports Yadav et al.'s (2018) statement regarding the importance of one-to-one interactions with customers in the Indian banking system. This is also another reason that one-on-one interviews were conducted in this study instead of an online or purely survey format. The paperwork code was mentioned by Participants 1, 4, 5, 7, and 11, which represents approximately 42% of the participants. Paperwork included Visas for work authorization and even enrolling as an international student. The cost node was referred to by Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 75% of the participants.

The leader motivation node was mentioned in the interviews with Participants 4, 6, 8, and 9, or 33% of the participants. Coincidentally, the self-motivation code was also referred to by 33% of the participants (i.e., Participants 1, 3, 8, and 9). The two motivational codes had the same response percentages. Rounding out the lower tier of coded themes was international students who left to go to what they considered a better school. This was mentioned in the interviews or focus group by only two out of the 12 participants (17%). The participants who mentioned knowing someone else who left their particular research university for what they called a better one were Participants 1 and 6. The other participants did not mention that they knew anyone else who left to go to a better school. Figure 3 illustrates the coded themes that were initially used during the data collection process.

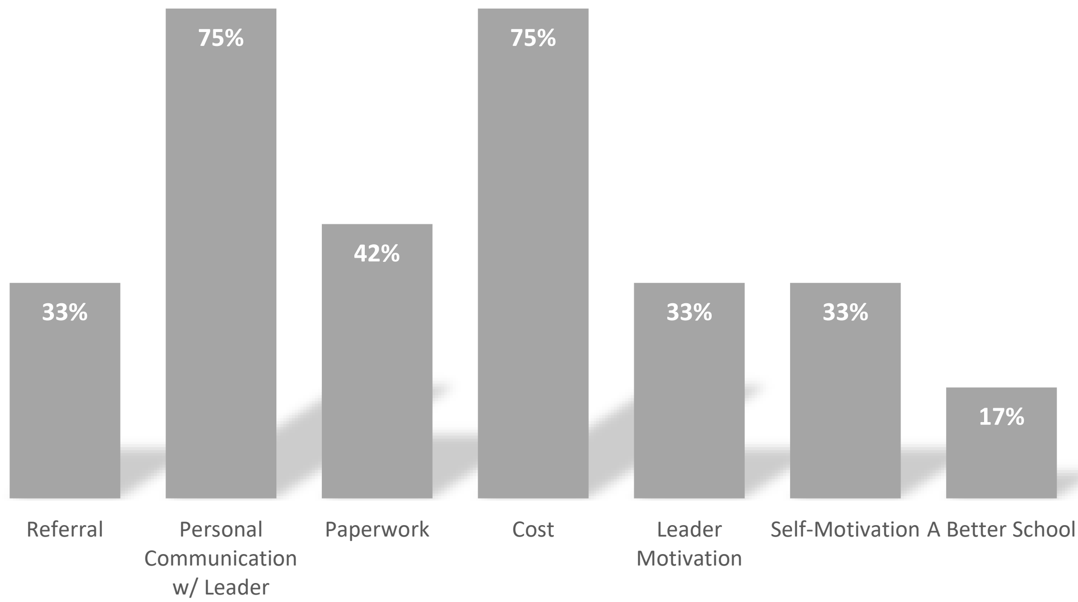

Figure 3. Coded themes.

The emergent themes, or new themes that developed during the data collection process, of job opportunities, seminars on various topics, Honors College, and social clubs and organizations presented insightful results. For this study, counseling, tutoring, and supplemental instruction fell under seminars on various topics. Also, guest lectures fell under the emergent theme of seminars on various topics. For the emergent theme of job opportunities, Participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 mentioned they expected better job opportunities while they were a student and once they graduated, representing 67% of the participants. For the emergent theme code of seminars on various topics, 92% of the participants spoke about the importance, enjoyment, social networking, cultural inclusiveness or assimilation, confidence building, and leadership development this opportunity played in their motivation and decision-making to return to their Tier 1 research university. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 mentioned the importance of the Thanksgiving Lunch, the Coffee Talk, or the Hedgefund Competition in their motivation. The Honors College had the lowest percentage, at 25%. However, it is worth noting that the researcher observed the confidence, language fluency, and overall satisfaction with their university among those participants who were a part of the Honors College. The Honors College also provided leadership development, public speaking, meeting new people, and giving insights the students would not have otherwise obtained as a regular international student. Participants 8, 9, and 10 brought out the Honors College theme. Tied for second place, percentage-wise, was the emergent theme of social clubs and organizations at 67%. These included international student associations, sororities and fraternities, and other social gatherings, such as Thanksgiving Lunch with other international students. Internships not obtained from an academic advisor or other leader but through a friend fell under these auspices. Participants 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 all mentioned social clubs and organizations in their interview or focus group. Figure 4 illustrates the emergent themes.

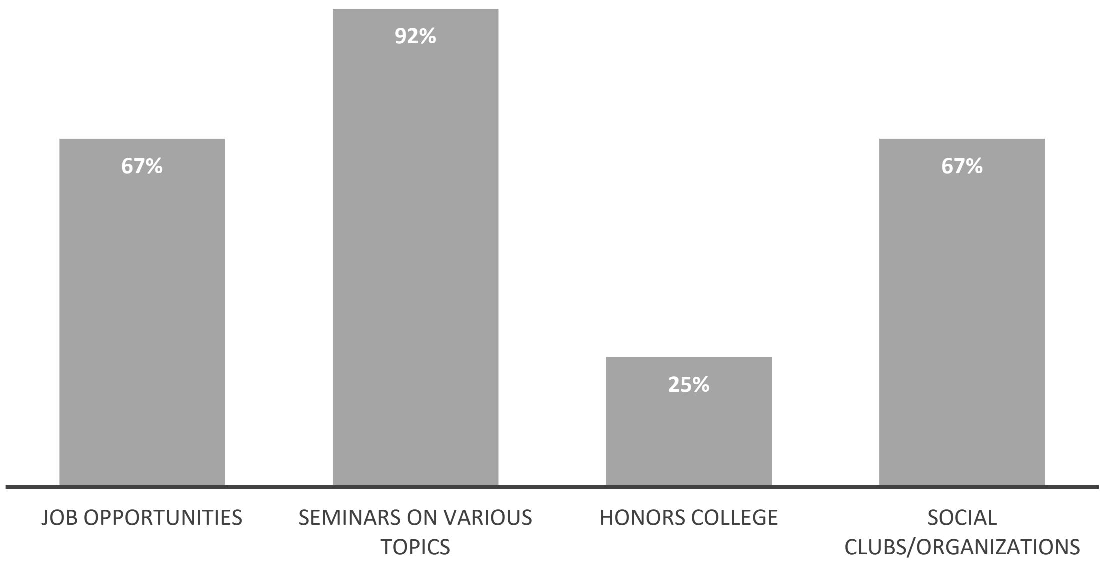

Figure 4. Emergent themes.

Most of the participants expected that they would be able to pay for college and expected good work opportunities as a student, as well as better job opportunities once they graduated from their Tier 1 university. What they did not expect were Visa work authorization issues, referred to as perceived trustworthiness (Anderson & Weitz, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). Also, they did not expect that they would be allowed to take the wrong classes and then be told they had to retake the correct classes, or to be told different things from different academic advisors. As Yadav et al. (2018) suggested, this was a trustworthiness factor. Also, Vygotsky (1978) discussed the more knowledgeable other in the role of academic advisor. International students expect to he guided down the correct path the first time. When they are not, time and money are wasted, leading to international students' dissatisfaction and loss of motivation, a detraction from Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory.

The literature showed that a basic level of employee–customer interaction is important in order to develop and maintain a feeling of trust, especially in financial service transactions because it reduces the perceived risk (Kesharwani & Bisht, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018) and provides stability to the banking industry (Dia, as cited by Yadav et al., 2018). International students expect that the classes they are told to take will be the correct classes. Also, they expect to get the same answer from any academic advisor when it comes to taking classes, choosing a major, or even transferring into their university. The reason is because in Vroom's (1964) study entitled "Work and Motivation," the IBM workers were motivated by their leader when the leader offered a reward that was pleasing to the workers. This study included work Visa authorization, consistency among academic advisors, reasonable tuition cost, and the streamlining of the Visa authorization paperwork.

At the end of this expectancy continuum, for this study, were graduation and job opportunities based on the students' expected success from their chose of academic major. In this study, the top two categories were science and business majors. What stood out to the researcher was that the one international student who chose a social science major instead of a science major majored in public policy. The researcher came to the conclusion that the decision-making process of Participant 5 was that she expected to make policy changes in higher education or at the federal level perhaps to better the lives of international students who come to the United States.

Implication of Study Findings

The researcher recommends that leaders of Tier 1 research universities employ the emergent and common themes brought forth from this study. In doing so, the researcher is confident that these universities will see a significant reduction in their attrition rates. From the researcher's journal, participants' body language and tone both signaled that the international students believed what they said and really. The researcher could tell that each participant wanted their responses to be taken into consideration. Cost and Visa paperwork must come down and be streamlined, respectively. By adhering to the results of this study, Tier 1 research universities will see significant gains in their graduation rates and international student enrollment. By virtue that many of the participants in this study came to their university from a personal referral, one can only imagine the increase in international student enrollment. Ironically, as international students responded that they were trying to assimilate to U.S. culture, when their numbers increase, they will have more influence and leverage about their campus culture.

Recommendations for Future Study

Further investigation is needed on the job performance of academic advisors. They may believe they are taking all factors into account when it comes to international students. They also may use the same strategies they use with U.S. students with international students. As one of the participants of this study indicated having had a plethora of academic advisors, perhaps there is a systemic glitch that university leaders need to examine.

The second recommendation for future study is to investigate the relationship between many international students majoring in the sciences and their expectation of acquiring advanced degrees and conducting future research in the United States.

The last recommendation for future study is to explore what motivates international students to attend a research university in a suburban or rural setting. Some of the participants of this study stated they came to Atlanta because it is a big city. What remains unknown is the reasons international students attend rural research universities.

Cross-referencing these students' decision-making process and motivation would be good to compare. This will add validity to the research done on international students in larger cities.

Generalizability and Limitations

Limitations are parameters that cannot be controlled by the researcher. Limitations can include limited funding, statistical model restraints, or other factors (Simon & Goes, 2012). The literature supports that limitations can be virtually most things in life (Simon & Goes, 2012). In this study, time was a limitation as there would not have been enough time to survey and analyze 10%, 5%, or even 1% of the 50,000 students within the time constraints. One of the Tier 1 research universities in proximity to the researcher has close to 50,000 students, according to its website. This was used as an example of the researcher's limits. Fowler (2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014) described limitations in a study as having five parts: (a) risk of bias common to many or all studies, such as lack of blinding for subjective outcomes or unavailability of data; (b) inconsistency of effect or association, as demonstrated by high heterogeneity; (c) imprecision as a result of few events or a small sample size; (d) indirectness of the evidence, such as the use of an intermediate or short-term outcome; and (e) the likelihood of publication bias (Yavchitz et al., 2014).

This study involved the use of convenience sampling, which Creswell (2014) described as the least desirable of sampling methods. Two other types of random sampling the researcher could have chosen are probabilistic and systematic sampling. According to Creswell, probabilistic sampling is a representative sampling from a population. The purpose of using probabilistic sampling is to stratify, or separate, to be able to generalize to a population from the representative individuals. Creswell warned that if the list of individuals is too long, then drawing a random sample will be difficult.

Study limitations were primarily related to the problems inherent in studying motivational activities. These limitations included:

- Limited generalizability of the study exists because the findings were limited to international students at a few large Tier 1 research universities in Atlanta, Georgia in the summer of 2019, and results are not necessarily generalizable to other institutions or groups.
- The results were limited by the validity and reliability of the survey instrument and the timeframe in which the data were collected (Kelso, 2008).
- The data for this study were collected using an in-person, one-to-one interview and focus group based on the participants' lived experiences.
- Participants had the option to choose to participate or not participate in the interview.

Final Summary and Conclusion

Based on the data collection and analysis, the researcher concludes that there are seven motivational activities that lead to international students deciding to return to their Tier 1 research university: (a) personal communication with leader, (b) cost (reducing high tuition, especially when some students pay in-state fees and others pay out-of-state fees), (c) paperwork (a more streamlined process is needed to reduce misconceptions and reduce frustration among students, either during the application and enrollment process, or as a student who needs to work a job during his or her studies), (d) seminars on various topics, (e) job opportunities, (f) social clubs and organizations, and (g) Honors College (if students meet their university's requirements).

With accreditation regulations being increasingly violated and with continuous state budget cuts, it would behoove universities to find ways to reduce attrition and budget cuts. International students have much to offer a university and its surrounding community. It all begins with enrollment managers and academic advisors. Academic advisors are the long term constant leaders with whom international students communicate during their matriculation. Academic advisors' roles and authority have not been updated since the 1970s (Beatty, as cited by Drake et al., 2013). Before the 1970s, the term academic advisor did not exist. Faculty members played that role. It is clearly time, as higher education is changing rapidly in an attempt to keep up with the changing society and laws, for academic advisors to have their leadership authority increased and their role re-defined. This is the only way academic advisors will be the most effective with international students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

My name is **Eric Hall**, and I am a **doctoral student** at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, **"The Importance of Leadership Motivational Activities in Encouraging International Students to Return to their Tier 1 Universities",** occurring from **06-2019 to 09-2019**. The purpose of this study is to try and evaluate why there is a vast amount of attrition among international students in not returning to their Tier 1 institutions and what activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement in order to motivate more of these individuals to return to these institutions. This study will help to provide additional information for educational leaders to assist them in motivating international students to return to their Tier 1 institutions further and complete their education. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by **Eric Hall,** doctoral student, at National Louis University.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to explore/understand the activities leaders and advisors might be able to implement in order to motivate more international students to return to their institutions. Participation in this study will include:

- 1 individual interview scheduled at your convenience in the summer of the 2018-2019 academic year.
    - Interviews will last up to 45 min. and include approximately 8 questions to examine/understand what motivates international students to return to their Tier 1 university after their first year.
    - Interviews will be audio recorded and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts.
- 1 thirty-minute focus group to gain contextual understanding and perspective.
    - Eric Hall will take journal notes during the focus group to capture nuances and additional information given by participants.
    - Participants may view journal notes and have final approval on the content of journal notes.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, and employed to **inform university leaders and academic advisors**, but participants' identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality the researcher will secure recordings, interviews, and journal notes in a locked cabinet in his home office. Only **Eric Hall** will have access to data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to **the Tier 1 research universities** and other schools looking to **reduce attrition of international students**.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, **Eric Hall** at ehall11@my.nl.edu to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, **Eric Hall**, at ehall11@my.nl.edu, (404) 593-6084.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my dissertation chair, **Dr. Pender Noriega** at pnoriega@nl.edu; the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu; phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Carol Burg; email: CBurg@nl.edu; phone: (813) 397-2109. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study "**The Importance of Leadership Motivational Activities in Encouraging International Students to Return to their Tier 1 Universities".** My participation will consist of the activities below during *a time of my convenience to be scheduled with the researcher*:

- 1 Interview lasting approximately 45 minutes each
- 1 thirty-minute focus group

__________________________ __________________________
Participant's Signature Date

__________________________ __________________________
Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The following questions will be used to guide both the individual interviews and to lead the focus group discussion.

1. What have you found to be one of the most effective motivational incentives that might encourage international students to want to return to their Tier 1 institution, and please explain?

2. From your experience of attending a Tier 1 educational institution what activities can a leader implement that might have the most influence on student satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

3. During your affiliation with your Tier 1 institution what were some of the basic practices that were enforced or provided by leadership that might have had the greatest impact on your successful tenure that might motivate you to recommend the institution to others?

4. What activities would you say contributed the most to your selection of your Tier 1 institution and what events aided you the most in being able to be successful?

5. What resources or facilities did the leader provide that you found to be the most attractive in selecting the Tier 1 institution and why are they no longer a motivator for you to want to return?

6. What were some of some of the services, events, or activities that you felt were a positive influence in your tenure at the university and might motivate you to return?

7. What activity or obstacles, that leaders control, might have the largest impact on international students not returning to a Tier 1 institution and what suggestions might you recommend for removing these obstacles?

8. Is there any additional information you would like to add pertaining to the reason for attrition of international students from Tier 1 institution?