University of Wisconsin-System Academic Advisors'

Perceptions of Their Advising Interactions with Undeclared Transfer Students from the

Wisconsin Technical College System

By

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Abstract

Students transferring from the Wisconsin Technical College System into University of Wisconsin baccalaureate institutions consistently trail the general student population in first-year grade point average, second-year retention rate, and six-year graduation rate. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of professional academic advisors at University of Wisconsin baccalaureate institutions regarding their advising interactions with transfer students from the Wisconsin Technical College System. Due to the one-on-one nature of academic advising interactions, academic advisors' insight into the barriers Wisconsin Technical College System students encounter when transferring into University of Wisconsin baccalaureate institutions is valuable. This study also aimed to provide better understanding of professional academic advisors' approaches to foster Wisconsin Technical College System transfer students' academic success.

Nineteen professional academic advisors at four University of Wisconsin baccalaureate institutions were interviewed for this qualitative, inductive study. Study participants were asked to share their perceptions of their position's role, practice, and impact on student outcomes before reflecting upon their advising interactions with Wisconsin Technical College System transfer students. Research techniques commonly associated with phenomenological and grounded theory studies were used to analyze participants' responses.

Though a common approach to advising practice failed to materialize, this study found that participants' perception of their position's roles and objectives largely adhere to the Centralized Standards for Academic Advising (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). In addition to fulfilling these Standards, relationship-building emerged as an important component to the student-academic advisor interaction. Participants viewed academic advising as a process that

prepared students to become competent and confident decision-makers regarding their academic career. Student persistence represented an outcome participants believed they can impact as an academic advisor, but not an outcome that measures advising effectiveness.

In focusing on their advising interactions with Wisconsin Technical College System transfer students, participants expressed that these students often exhibit more circumstances to consider when academic-planning. However, academic advisors did not alter their facilitation of the advising process when working with Wisconsin Technical College System transfer students. Implications and recommendations in response to these findings are also discussed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2009, ACT reported that the national five-year graduation rate for students pursuing a baccalaureate degree was 52.7 percent (ACT, 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that in public institutions, which enroll nearly three-quarters of the more than eighteen million bachelor degree-seeking undergraduate students, only 44 percent of students graduate within five years (NCES, 2009). Private institutions fare better with respect to this outcome, graduating 57.6 percent (2009). Though it is necessary to recognize that many schools graduate their students more successfully than the national average, the fact that even the more oft-measured six-year national graduation rate has lingered just above 50 percent for well over a decade underscores both the challenge a large number of institutions face retaining their students to graduation and the difficulty students experience in persisting toward a bachelor's degree (Reason, 2009; Tinto, 2002, 2006; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). A universally-shared goal to improve graduation rates within political, educational, and societal sectors has resulted in student departure representing one of the most studied phenomena in higher education (Tinto, 2006a; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

While it is easy to surmise the reasons retaining students from one year to the next is essential from an institutional point of view, more meaningful outcomes are realized by a much larger body of stakeholders only when students persist to graduation (Adelman, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Retaining students is considerably less costly than recruiting new ones (Cuseo, 2004). In addition to the purely financial ramifications felt at the institutional level, post-secondary administrators view a high graduation rate as an indicator of student satisfaction, faculty's ability to fulfill the teaching-learning mission, and academic support system effectiveness (Adelman, 1999; American Council on Education [ACE], 2003;

Braxton, 2000; McGillin, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 2006, 2006a). Individuals benefit from earning their bachelor's degrees in many ways. For instance, college graduates collectively experience better health, heightened career opportunities, and lower unemployment rates than those without bachelor's degrees (Boswell, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Wang, 2009). Degree attainment also positively impacts society: higher incomes earned by college graduates translate to increased tax revenues which minimize the demand on public resources, are linked to lower crime rates, and can help to lessen social inequalities (Boswell, 2004; DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 2002; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Ishitani, 2006; Lee, 2001). For these and countless other reasons, Adelman (1999) contends that "degree completion is the true bottom line for college administrators, state legislators, parents, and most importantly, students—not retention to the second year, not persistence without a degree, but completion" (pg. 1).

Because desirable results for a wider range of stakeholders are realized only through degree attainment, the terms *retention* and *persistence* should not be misconstrued as interchangeable concepts (Reason, 2009). Retention is most commonly expressed as a percentage of students who enrolled at an institution until graduation, whereas persistence refers to students continuing their education until earning a degree (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Reason, 2009). In studying student departure, Reason (2009) distinguished persistence from retention as a student-centered return, upholding that persisting to a degree is a positive student outcome for many stakeholders whereas retention rates more often reflect an institutional goal of maintaining enrollment numbers. Certainly, retention may ultimately lead to graduation, but it is not by itself a positive student outcome (Education Writers Association, n.d.). Put another way,

persistence closely correlates to degree attainment, whereas retention does not necessarily entail graduation (Wang, 2009).

The inability of one institution to retain a given student does not denote that he or she failed to persist to graduation; through institutional transfer, the student could achieve an equally desirable outcome as earning a degree from the school of initial enrollment (Choy, 2002). In point of fact, transfer students comprised nearly half of all students earning a bachelor's degree during the 1999-2000 academic year (Li, 2010). Thus, while a student transferring out of an institution negatively impacts that school's retention rate, this same student would positively impact the national persistence rate if he or she graduates from another institution and is accurately tracked. Different perspectives of the criteria used to define both successful institutional retention and overall student persistence, however, create disagreements in statistical reporting across studies and confuse our understanding of student outcomes in these areas.

The importance of tracking students through transfer is further supported by data from an ACE (2003) study which found that less than half of all students graduated with a bachelor's degree from their first institution within six years, but the rate jumped to 54 percent when multi-institutional attendance was taken into account. This study also found that nearly 15 percent of students who had not yet obtained degrees were still enrolled in a post-secondary institution, resulting in an overall six-year persistence plus graduation rate of 69 percent for all undergraduates (ACE, 2003). In another study for the ACE, Choy (2002) observed the total post-secondary persistence rate to be considerably higher than the national institutional retention rate. Her study measured the five-year institutional retention rate at 56 percent, but the national persistence rate climbed to 76 percent when transfer students were considered (Choy, 2002). Hess, Schneider, Cary, and Kelly (2009) more cautiously estimated the individual graduation

rate to be about 8 percent higher than the institutional graduation rate when omitting the six-year timeframe criterion. These studies demonstrate that simply combining all of the graduation rates at single institutions does not culminate in an accurate national graduation rate and they further illustrate that analyzing persistence conditions requires careful consideration of the parameters researchers used in categorizing the data.

Clearly, the timeframe and enrollment pattern standards constituting successful student persistence to graduation have been interpreted in many different ways in relation to the criteria used. Therefore, while this paper supports Reason's (2009) premise that persistence to degree is a positive outcome for the individual, institution, and society, while retention is primarily important only to the university, it also recognizes that contradictory findings are prevalent within persistence research. The non-uniform methods for measuring persistence, coupled with the inherent difficulty of accurately tracking students' complete educational paths as they increasingly attend multiple institutions over many years before ultimately earning their degrees, are a significant limitation of previous studies, and they continue to prevent research from fully encapsulating the reality of student persistence (ACE, 2003; Boswell, 2004; Hess, et al., 2009; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). While acknowledging these limitations, however, the inaccuracies and substantial variability regarding degree attainment present in student persistence research does not diminish the fact that even favorable estimations find less than six out of ten bachelor degree-seeking students graduate within six years from initial enrollment. As poor graduation rates are perceived by and large as an enormous waste of human capital and financial resources for individuals and institutions alike, student persistence is an outcome a large number of institutions, and even statewide post-secondary systems, strive to improve (Cuseo, 2004; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The thirteen public baccalaureate-granting institutions comprising the University of Wisconsin System (UWS) have experienced a steady increase in the number of students transferring to them from the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) (UWS, Office of Policy Analysis and Research [OPAR], 2010). Unfortunately, students transferring from the WTCS to UWS four-year schools lag behind other student subpopulations in persistence toward graduation (2010). As the number of WTCS transfer students enrolling at UWS campuses continues to grow, UWS institutions must find methods to identify and address factors within their control that contribute to the inordinately high rate of attrition among these students.

Academic advising is a process in which students receive assistance in clarifying goals and in developing educational plans to reach those goals (Crockett, 1987; Winston, Jr., Enders, & Miller, 1982). Students most commonly receive formal academic advising either from faculty advisors, who count student advising as just one of their many commitments, or from professional academic advisors whose main responsibility is to promote total student development through mentoring and counseling (Roberts & Styron, 2010; Tuttle, 2000). The presence of professional academic advisors on college campuses has increased over the past 30 years as a response to higher attrition rates, students' demands for improved advising, and lack of faculty interest toward advising (Frost, 2000; Tuttle, 2000). Professional academic advisors are believed to be in a better position than faculty advisors to meet students' needs because they are more accessible, link students to other campus services, and are committed to student retention and persistence (Migden, 1989; Tuttle, 2000). UWS four-year institutions are no exception: they employ professional academic advisors to ensure that students have a resource to assist them in navigating their academic paths toward graduation.

The seminal research shaping many of the current measures used for countering attrition identifies student engagement as a key factor in improving student persistence (Astin, 1984, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Effective academic advising is a student-centered experience that actively engages students in academic and social integration, which are linked to student persistence (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Habley (1994) contended that academic advisors are uniquely situated to bring about student engagement because they often conduct the "only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution" (p. 10). Tinto (1993) underscored the significant effect student-advisor interaction has on persistence, positing that academic advising should serve as the focal point of institutional efforts to retain students. Research emphasizing the important role quality academic advising plays in fostering student success would suggest that advisors are key agents in helping students overcome the challenge of persisting to graduation.

It is important to note, however, that shifting enrollment trends in higher education have implications for research seeking to explore the connection between academic advising and student persistence. An increasing number of college students receiving academic advising no longer match the traditional profile of college-enrolled students. Choy (2002) described traditional four-year college students as those that enroll full-time immediately after high school graduation, rely on parents to pay for college and expenses, and work part-time or less. For a vast majority of higher education research's history, these students served as the sample population for educational outcomes studies (Walpole, 2003). Academic advising initiatives predominantly concentrate on retaining traditional freshmen to their sophomore year because extensive research

has shown that the freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate is crucial for increasing graduation percentages, since attrition rates decline dramatically each year thereafter (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987; Tinto, 1993). Given that upperclassmen populations exhibit lower attrition rates, the logic behind institutions' decisions to center retention efforts on incoming freshmen is understandable. But, the traditional view of college students being 18-22 years old, white, and enrolled full-time that has long-informed persistence knowledge, clouds the reality of today's diverse student population (Reason, 2003; Walpole, 2003). Only slightly more than 40 percent of the entire post-secondary population now fits the pre-enrollment profile that would categorize them as traditional students, while the rest possess at least one nontraditional student characteristic (Choy, 2002). Therefore, chiefly using research focusing on freshmen retention to inform persistence interventions is no longer sufficient, as fewer students are enrolling at a four-year college immediately after high school, attending that same college each fall and spring semester, and receiving their diploma after four years of continuous schooling.

Many UWS four-year schools require students who are new to campus, including transfer students, to meet with an academic advisor prior to registering for their classes and then again before each registration period. This arrangement ideally positions advisors to ease transfer students' adjustment from one school to another. But, there is a gap in the research available to inform advisors' approaches to helping students through such a transition. For those advisors working with transfer students, their interactions certainly must lead them to make assumptions regarding the differing threats to persistence students within specific transfer populations commonly encounter, and, in turn, the advisors most likely attempt to address those perceived needs. Given the lack of research documenting advising practices, advisors' perceptions about student needs and their subsequent response to those needs through advising can be of value in

generating much-needed theory on how differentiating advising approaches for transfer student populations can impact student persistence. But, the extent to which advisors currently individualize their advising approaches or attempt to improve persistence is unknown. Therefore, before a theory for effectively advising the at-risk WTCS transfer population can take shape, a question must guide the research:

> How do academic advisors at UWS four-year schools interact with WTCS transfer students?

In order to situate the dynamic of student-advisor interaction between WTCS transfers and UWS academic advisors, this larger inquiry must be built upon a series of smaller questions. Specifically, these guiding questions will examine UWS academic advisors' perceptions of: 1) their roles as academic advisors and their general approaches to providing academic advising; 2) the student outcomes academic advising should seek to enhance; 3) their responsibility and influence toward student persistence; 4) UWS adjustment and persistence experienced by the WTCS population; 5) their advising practices when working with WTCS transfer students; and 6) the ways they attempt to ease adjustment and improve persistence within the WTCS transfer population.

Answering the research question is crucial. Bachelor's degree attainment among transfer students is an important but under-researched area of study (Li, 2010). National research focusing on transfer students tends to view the entire transfer population as a single entity, inadequately addressing the great variance in college preparedness and college success that exists between sub-groups within the transfer population (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Li, 2010).

In Wisconsin, transfer student degree attainment is fast becoming a pressing economic and societal issue. According to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau data, only 27.9% of Wisconsin adults aged 25-64 hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc., 2010). An analysis conducted by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, however, forecasts that 61 percent of Wisconsin jobs will require post-secondary credentials by 2018 (2010). Qualifications for many of these positions will likely require an earned four-year degree, as the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Office of Economic Advisors projects an 18.7 percent growth in jobs requiring a bachelor's degree by 2014 (University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, 2011). The low-cost, open-enrollment nature of WTCS institutions offers nearly every Wisconsin resident access to beginning their pursuit of a bachelor's degree. This realization is demonstrated by the significant annual increase in the number of WTCS students transferring to a UWS institution (OPAR, 2010). Therefore, raising the graduation rate of WTCS transfers enrolling at UWS institutions is integral to closing the gap of bachelor's degree-holding adults needed to fill the workforce.

Literature identifies high-quality advising as paramount to student persistence. Research on the advising interactions between UWS four-year school academic advisors and WTCS transfer students may well uncover new variables leading to the immoderate barriers to persistence these students collectively experience. It might also shape the role academic advisors play in easing the traditionally difficult transition process for WTCS students coming to UWS four-year schools in the future. Most importantly, it may inform and promote future studies that will lead to best-practice methodologies in advising unique transfer populations.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Academic advising can play a key role in student persistence, especially for those populations most susceptible to obstacles that lead to departure (Crockett 1978; Habley, 1994; Nutt, 2003). When working with transfer students, the ability to assimilate persistence-related theory into differentiated advising approaches may improve resilience towards these barriers. In transfer subpopulations that experience inordinately high rates of attrition, such as WTCS transfer students, addressing issues commonly linked to students' matriculation status could have even more potential to positively affect persistence.

In their extensive review of the literature, Terenzini and Reason (2005) asserted that the factors impacting a wide scope of student outcomes can be organized under four broad constructs. Those constructs are student precollege characteristics and experiences, organizational context, student peer environment, and the individual student experience (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). This conceptual framework, though general to all student populations, efficiently identifies and categorizes the variables that most often affect an array of student outcomes, including persistence (Reason, 2009). Understanding that students' decisions to persist are impacted by countless factors that fall within the confines of these four categories, these domains serve as reference points for all faculty and staff to consider in their interactions with students. Thus, Terenzini and Reason's (2005) framework has provided a wide context to guide an exploration of UWS advisors' considerations of the factors influencing WTCS transfer student outcomes.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

To better understand the difficulty many WTCS students experience in their attempt to attain a baccalaureate degree after transferring to UWS four-year institutions, this chapter begins by reviewing literature that has identified and analyzed factors believed to impact students' degree attainment, followed by summarizing the influence research has had on institutions' persistence efforts. The chapter then shifts its focus to a review of studies that have described the challenges different transfer student subpopulations encounter when making the transition to a new campus and how those barriers appear to affect student departure. With national data and the extant literature that address student departure serving as the foundation for inferences as to why persistence issues might vary among different student subpopulations, baccalaureate degree attainment among WTCS students transferring to UWS four-year schools is explored. The chapter concludes with considerations of the research that addresses the role academic advisors can play in enhancing student persistence and how that literature might apply to advisors working with WTCS transfer students.

Retention Research and Persistence Interventions

Low graduation rates are not owed to a shortage of literature examining the factors that cause students to persist or depart from college (Davidson, Beck, & Milligan, 2009; Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Oseguera & Rhee, 2009; Reason, 2009; Stage & Rushin, 1993; Tinto, 1993, 2006a; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Collectively, the existing research base identifies, describes, and addresses an exhaustive set of individual, institutional, and societal triggers shown to lead to attrition. Racial and ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Rendon, Romero, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Reason, 2009; Tinto 1993), socioeconomic status (e.g., Astin,

1993; Berger, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993, 2006; Tinto & Pusser, 2006), K-12 educational preparedness (e.g., Adelman, 1999, 2006; Tinto, 1993), parental education level (e.g., Choy, 2002; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009), institutional type and selectivity (e.g., Adelman, 2006; Titus, 2004), classroom and campus climate (e.g., Tinto, 1993, 1997), and financial aid and tuition costs (e.g., Cabrera, Nora, & Castañeda, 1992; Gross, Hossler, & Ziskin, 2007; St. John, Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000) highlight just a few of the innumerable variables researchers have found to impact students' persistence decisions.[1] Even with the abundance of available research illuminating the obstacles to student success, uncovering the answers to improving persistence rates remains elusive for colleges and institutions (Bray, Braxton, & Sullivan, 1999; Davidson, et al., 2009; Reason, 2009; Tinto, 1993).

Focused research clarifying the role a given factor or subset of factors play in student persistence is necessary to enrich our understanding of what exactly influences students' departure decisions. Yet, even highly-esteemed inquiries into aspects of student attrition have garnered criticism for being too narrow in scope, consequently failing to fully explain how these triggers are affected by incessant interaction with one another (Braxton, 2000; Reason, 2009). Meta-analyses counter the shortcomings of targeted studies by advocating that no one student, institutional, or societal factor initiates attrition. Rather, these meta-analyses suggest that multiple variables either contribute to or protect against student departure. In one of the most widely-read works addressing student attrition, Tinto (1993) conjectured that student departure holds no pattern among student groups or types of institutions because it is situational in nature;

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[1] See Ishler & Upcraft, 2005 or Reason, 2003 for a more complete list of departure triggers containing brief summaries of how each variable has been shown to impact persistence.

that the internal and external factors each individual faces interact with the distinctive academic and social communities of the institution to influence a student's intentions and commitment to earning a degree from that institution. In what many consider to be the most complete review of research on college student outcomes to date, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also posited that student persistence decisions are determined by the interplay of an infinite amount of interconnected factors exclusive to each individual student. Researchers continue to disagree over the relative importance of each mechanism to student departure, but there is general consensus within the literature base that a vast set of uniquely-intertwined personal, academic, institutional, and societal variables influence each individual's persistence decisions (Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Martinez, et al., 2009; Reason, 2009). Still, as Tinto and Pusser (2006) point out, the voluminous research that has brought us a deep understanding of why students leave does not automatically translate into knowing how to help students persist to graduation.

Precollege Academic Performance Used as the Foundation for Freshmen Retention Interventions

Although studies have yet to uncover a common formula that accurately predicts whether a student will graduate, research into certain variables' relationship to degree completion has been advanced further than others. For example, high school preparedness, or precollege academic performance, has shown to be a strong indicator of college degree attainment (Reason, 2003). Extensive research by the U.S. Department of Education and ACT found significant correlations between students' college academic success and their high school GPA, standardized test scores, and rigor of high school curriculum (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Habley, Valiga, McClanahan, & Burkum, 2009). Ishitani (2003) learned in his study of 2,752 college students matriculating as freshmen at a Midwestern four-year comprehensive public university

that high school GPA yielded the largest effect on six-year graduation rates. Although it must be recognized that an entirely different but equally vast body of literature studies the factors influencing K-12 academic preparedness itself, research specific to college student persistence finds that precollege academic performance appears to be more strongly associated with degree attainment for incoming freshmen than any other single variable (ACT, 2007; Davidson, et al., 2009; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Ishitani, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smitri, Schmitt, Oswald, & Kim, 2006; Tinto, 1993). This strong linkage results in precollege academic variables such as high school and standardized test achievement level regularly serving as the impetus for institutional interventions and policy constructed to support students (Davidson, et al., 2009).

High school academic preparedness is a variable that institutions use to shape both pre- and post-enrollment measures for enhancing degree attainment. Since numerous studies have shown individuals' high school curricula, high school GPAs, and standardized test scores to be highly predictive of first-year grades and persistence in college, freshmen admission requirements are established in an effort to align the precollege academic skills needed to cope with the rigor of the respective post-secondary institution (Kuh, 2009). Although many unforeseen barriers affecting a student's chance of earning a degree may arise after matriculation, these recurring findings also support many campus administrators' belief that first-year programming can be effective at helping their freshmen persist to sophomore year if interventions are properly aligned with students' precollege academic characteristics. Dependent upon the institution, targeted population, and the nature of the intervention, an expansive set of first-year programs and policies such as learning communities, academic skills training, freshmen advising, peer advising, early warning, and shared curriculum have shown promise in

improving the retention rates of traditional college freshmen to their sophomore year (Gardner, 1986; Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Lotowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1999; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

The attention given to the predictive nature of precollege academic preparedness within this review is not meant to champion the variable as the dominant trigger to student persistence. Instead, high school academic preparedness is referenced solely to exemplify how colleges can, and often do, utilize a single variable within a student population to focus their retention efforts. More importantly for the purposes of this study, it also illustrates that many colleges and universities target their freshmen populations for retention interventions because precollege academic criteria provide relatively uniform measurements that allow for easy and early identification of students that have traditionally been at risk for departure at that particular institution. And, as freshmen are nearly always the largest incoming student population, their persistence to sophomore year is instrumental in cultivating the overall graduation rate within a majority of institutions.

Persistence rates can vary sharply in relation to the selectivity of the college, but the national freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate at four-year institutions is about 73 percent (ACT, 2009; Education Writers Association, n.d.; Reason, 2003). On average, the typical four-year institution will see 25 percent of its students depart between their freshmen and sophomore years, compared to just 12 percent between sophomore and junior years and eight percent from junior to senior year (Reason, et al., 2006). Studies also estimate that more than half of all college dropouts leave before the start of their sophomore year (Cuseo, 2004; Reason, 2003). Thus, improving freshmen retention rates will bring the greatest benefit to most institutions' overall graduation rates even when subsequent departure trends at each class level from

sophomore to senior year remain unchanged. For this reason, studies aiming to increase

persistence currently focus on first-year students (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Reason, 2003;

Tinto, 2006; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). As a consequence, however, there remains a gap in the

research base addressing persistence issues present among the growing number of transfer

students comprising the post-secondary population.

Barriers Negatively Impacting Transfer Student Persistence

When first enrolling at a new institution, transfer students face many of the same

challenges freshmen encounter in their efforts to earn a degree. Like freshmen, transfer students

must familiarize themselves with classroom and administrative office locations, institutional

policies, and academic expectations of their instructors in addition to coping with all of the

nuances entailed in adjusting to a new social climate (Tinto, 1993). Campus administrators and

faculty may assume transfers are more equipped to handle these adjustment issues because they

bring with them post-secondary experience, but many of these students require as much guidance

in navigating an unfamiliar campus as freshmen (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore,

subject to individual circumstances, transfer students could face additional obstacles to

graduation, not encountered by incoming freshmen, that may be difficult to address through

campus policies or programs implemented to lessen attrition.

Though the lack of equal support systems for all students is certainly not justifiable, the

same level of institutional commitment to easing the barriers freshmen face in their transition to

a new campus is rarely made available to transfer students (Duggan & Pickering, 2008).

Designing successful campus-wide programming for transfer students on par with that of

freshmen is easier said than done: the transfer population tends to be much more heterogeneous

than that of an incoming freshmen class, which complicates the identification of a uniform set of departure indicators to use as reference points in the design of effective persistence-enhancing measures (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Wang, 2009).

Transfer Student Heterogeneity

Research continues to find that both academic skills and demographic backgrounds such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and parental educational level interact with the institutional climate to affect all post-secondary students' potential for degree attainment (Adelman, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini; 2005; Tinto, 1993; Wang, 2009). In most cases, however, a transfer cohort enrolling at a new campus displays a higher degree of in-group variability with respect to these traits than do freshmen cohorts (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). Transfer students new to four-year campuses are likely to vary more in terms of age and post-secondary experience, whereas the new freshmen body has typically been the same age, enrolled immediately after graduating high school, and presumably accumulated little to no college credit (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Long & Kurlaender, 2008). In contrast to studies supporting the use of precollege academic indicators to enhance freshmen retention, these same factors' predictive properties have also been shown to decrease significantly as students move further away from their high school graduation date (Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Accordingly, using precollege academic traits to address persistence concerns, as is common with freshmen interventions, is much less effective with transfer populations (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Wang, 2009).

Early college academic achievement has been shown to be the strongest predictor of degree attainment within continuing college student populations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005;

Wang, 2009). Still, campus administrators must be wary of placing too much confidence in these academic factors. Academic rigor and credit load carried at the previous institution attended, enrollment patterns, or changes in life situations since attending their previous institution represent just a few elements of students' post-secondary backgrounds that seem to trump early college achievement when assessing the likelihood of graduation (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). In fact, research has proposed that non-scholastic factors have the potential to be even more indicative of students' ability to persist towards a degree than academic background (Braxton, 2000; Laanan, 2004). For example, students transferring to four-year schools are substantially more likely than those matriculating as freshmen to attend school only part-time, interrupt their enrollment, maintain at least part-time employment when enrolled, commute to campus, and have children (Li, 2010; Tinto, 1993). These responsibilities limit their ability to fully engage with the academic and social culture of the campus, a key to educational satisfaction, persistence, and educational achievement (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2009; Li, 2010; Milem & Berger, 1997; Stage & Rushin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Class level of entrance, major course of study, age, gender, and other demographic factors have also proven to significantly influence college GPA and departure within the transfer population (Rhine, Milligan, & Nelson, 2000; Thurmond, 2007).

Broad generalizations concerning transfer students are severely inadequate in explaining persistence patterns; however, discrepancies in the frequency of some characteristics do exist between transfer sub-groups and appear to affect rates of departure (Adelman, 1999). Certain transfer subgroups project little need for concern regarding student departure, while other subgroups' low graduation rates would suggest they could benefit from persistence-enhancing interventions. For example, Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer (2009) recognized distinguishing characteristics between transfer populations that influence students' educational expectations,

motivations, and preparation. Students transferring directly from one four-year school to another, known as lateral transfers, were found to be a relatively elite group whose motivations for transferring were tied to college preference or desire for a more prestigious school rather than owed to poor high school preparedness or college performance (2009). Furthermore, there was no discernible difference in the rates of degree completion between students persisting to graduation at their initial four-year college of enrollment and of lateral transfers between four-year colleges, rendering the issue of lateral transfer inconsequential for institutions and policymakers, as these students are not at a disadvantage to succeed (2009). Contrarily, students transferring from two-year schools appear to be disadvantaged in their pursuit of a four-year degree (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Laanan, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Wang, 2009).

The Presence of Transfer Shock and Its Impact on Persistence among Transfer Students from Two-Year Schools

Transfer students belonging to any matriculation status category are vulnerable to experiencing a difficult transition when beginning at a new campus. Hills (1965) discovered that transfer students commonly experience as much as a .50 GPA decrease during their first and second semesters at a new institution. This drop in GPA was attributed to students experiencing a phenomenon called "transfer shock" (Hills, 1965). Studies from the 1970s and 1980s supported the presence of transfer shock, observing that students by and large saw a .20 to .30 decline in GPA in their first semester after transfer (Thurmond, 2007). In reviewing over forty years of literature regarding transfer student academic outcomes, Ishitani (2008) put forward that transfer students still remain highly susceptible to transfer shock. Transfer students, during their first two semesters at a new school, continue to exhibit lower GPAs than their "native student" counterparts at every class level (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Ishitani, 2008). And, although a recovery in GPA after the first semester of attendance is typical among transfers, the initial GPA

decline may contribute to departure, as early college GPA performance appears to have a strong effect on departure decisions (Ishitani, 2008; Reason, 2009; Thurmond, 2007). In a three-year longitudinal study of over 7,600 transfer students, early GPA performance had a dramatic effect on persistence: students who earned a GPA of 3.0 were 85 percent less likely to depart than those with a 2.0 GPA (Ishitani, 2008).

Transfers from two-year institutions prove to have a difficult time making the academic adjustment to a new four-year campus (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Laanan, 2004, 2007; Rhine et al., 2000). Research suggests that the combination of academic and social backgrounds these students bring with them to new institutions often negatively affects both short- and long-term academic outcomes (Flaga, 2006; Rhine, et al., 2000). Transfer students of all types were found to be 1 to 10 percent less likely to graduate from their institutions of transfer compared to freshmen at those institutions (Ishitani, 2008). Students transferring from two-year colleges to four-year colleges for the purpose of earning a bachelor's degree, however, trail "native students" by almost 20 percent in six-year graduation returns (NCES, 2003).

Low persistence rates of two-year college transfer students hoping to earn a bachelor's degree concern policymakers for reasons stemming beyond their commitment of supporting disadvantaged groups, as a majority of four-year institutions will see a growing applicant pool of students transferring from two-year schools (Ishitani, 2008; Rhine, et al., 2000). In her study of the impact starting at a community college has on bachelor's degree attainment, Boswell (2004) cited that over the past three decades, community colleges grew their enrollment by 375 percent. This increase was more than three-and-one-half times the rate of the next fastest-growing sector of higher education: four-year public institutions (Boswell, 2004). As a result of this trend, students enrolled in two-year institutions now comprise 36 percent of the total college student

population and almost 50 percent of all students enrolled in public higher education (Laanan, 2001, 2004; NCES, 2009). Of these students, 80 percent had an expressed goal to achieve a bachelor's degree (Rhine, et al., 2000).

Unfortunately, Tinto (2002) observed that only 27 percent of students starting at two-year institutions are able to earn a bachelor's degree in six years, compared to 65 percent of those that begin their enrollment at four-year schools. Even when statistical controls were employed to account for academic ability, overall degree plans, work responsibilities, high school grades, and college grades that would likely skew findings, students that start at two-year colleges are about 15 percent less likely to complete a bachelor's degree (Pierson, Wolniak, Pascarella, & Flowers, 2003). Long and Kurlaender (2008), using propensity scores and instrumental variables to triangulate the impact of starting at a community college to bachelor's degree attainment and to control for key student demographic and academic achievement variables, nearly replicated these projections, with even their most conservative model finding these students 14.5 percent less likely to complete a bachelor's degree in nine years than similar students that start at four-year schools.

Characteristics of Transfer Students from Two-Year Schools Believed to Negatively Affect Their Persistence at Four-Year Schools

A substantial body of research has identified a negative correlation between bachelor's degree attainment and students that begin at two-year colleges (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Long & Kurlaender, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pierson, et al., 2003; Tinto, 1993; Wang, 2009). Sources of the struggles these transfers are likely to encounter during their transition to four-year schools have also been well documented (Laanan, 2001, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Rhine, et al., 2000; Tinto, 1993). Literature finds that the boundless set of academic and

demographic variables shown to discourage persistence can manifest itself in all student populations, but the triggers most strongly correlated to attrition are significantly more pronounced among students transferring from two- to four-year schools (Boswell, 2004; Coley, 2000; Wang, 2009). As students do not randomly select their college of attendance, possession of these departure triggers may often distinguish the types of students that first attend a community college from those that initially enroll in a four-year institution (Long & Kurlaender, 2008).

According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, students first attending a two-year college are more prone to display the risk factors that prevent attaining a degree than those students first attending a private or public four-year institution (Coley, 2000). Delayed entry, part-time enrollment, full-time employment, financial independence, supporting dependents, being a single parent, and not possessing a high school diploma were identified as the seven risk factors that negatively influence student persistence and degree attainment (2000). The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that students at two-year colleges were three-to-four times more likely to exhibit each of these risk factors than those initially enrolling at four-year colleges, and nearly one-fourth of students at two-year colleges demonstrated four or more risk factors (2000). These individual characteristics and enrollment patterns seem to impact the academic and social integration into post-secondary schooling, which, in turn, militates against academic success and degree attainment (Astin, 1993; Chen, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

In addition to the high concentration of students within the two-year college population possessing these risk factors, students attending two-year schools disproportionately exhibit other nontraditional student characteristics that research connects to departure (Choy, 2002; Coley, 2000; Duggan & Chickering, 2008). There is a higher incidence of older, lower

socioeconomic status, first-generation, and racially and ethnically diverse students within the

two-year college population than students beginning their post-secondary education at

baccalaureate institutions (Coley, 2000; Horn & Nevill, 2006; Long & Kurlaender, 2008; Rhine,

et al., 2000; Wang, 2009; Zamani, 2000). These categories are often interrelated with one

another, and they frequently entail possessing at least one of the seven at-risk student

characteristics set forth by the U.S. Department of Education (ACE, 2003; Coley, 2000; Rhine,

et al., 2000).

Students that matriculate after the age of 21 are significantly less likely to graduate within

six years than those entering college at age 20 or younger (Ishitani, 2003, 2008). Rhine, et al.

(2000) found that the mean age of a two-year college transfer varied between 22 and 26 at the

time of transfer. The extended time it takes older students to earn a degree relative to

traditionally-aged students may be noteworthy in itself, as 64 percent of all students earning a

bachelor's degree completed it within five years (Choy, 2002). Because students from two-year

schools often attend only part-time or experience broken enrollment due to the responsibilities

that often come with being of nontraditional college student age, they are less likely to earn a

degree within five years, and thus are unlikely to ever earn a bachelor's degree (Coley, 2000;

Chen, 2007; Choy, 2002; Ishitani, 2003; O'Toole, Stratton, & Wetzel, 2003; Rhine, et al., 2000).

Socioeconomic status emerged as a mediating variable to student persistence, as it

appears to harbor cumulative forces that shape individuals' ability to succeed (Walpole, 2003;

Wang, 2009). There exists a strong positive correlation between family income and student

persistence (DesJardins, et al., 2002; St. John, et al., 2000; Tinto, 2006). In a study using national

datasets, students with family incomes ranging between $20,000 and $34,999 were 72 percent

more likely to depart than those coming from families earning $50,000 or more annually

(Ishitani, 2006). This great variation in persistence among socioeconomic subgroups is attributed to a variety of factors, such as the belief that the financial constraints of college tuition cause these students to depart so they can work to finance their education, or, that as low-income students, they attended K-12 schools that were taught by less effective teachers (DesJardins, et al., 2002; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009). Community college students are more likely to be of lower socioeconomic status, as 61 percent were financially independent compared to 35 percent of students enrolled in four-year institutions (Horn & Nevill, 2006). The high rate of low-income students attending community colleges is significant because just over one-quarter of students in the bottom 25 percent of the income distribution bracket earn a baccalaureate degree compared to nearly three-fifths of students in the top 25 percent (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009).

The disadvantage relative to bachelor's degree attainment of being a first-generation college student or belonging to an ethnic or racial minority has been thoroughly researched, with first-generation, non-white students proving to persist less than white students with college-educated parents (Choy, 2002; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; Ishitani, 2006; Long & Kurlaender, 2008; Martinez, et al., 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Zamani, 2000). In a sample of more than 4,400 students, those classified as first generation were considerably more likely to depart and never attend another institution (Ishitani, 2006). A multitude of factors are believed to detract from minority students' pursuit and completion of a bachelor's degree (Boswell, 2004; DesJardins, et al., 2002); variables leading to higher drop-out rates and lower graduation rates than their racial majority counterparts include minority students' propensity for having attended lower quality K-12 schools, being of lower socioeconomic status, and lacking focused career goals (DesJardins, et al., 2002; Zamani, 2000). Students first enrolling in two-year colleges demonstrate a higher regularity of identifying with

these categories than students first enrolling at four-year institutions (Boswell, 2004; Horn &
Nevill, 2006; Long & Kurlaender, 2008).

Research identifies discrepancies between the precollege academic characteristics of
students that begin at two-year vs. four-year colleges (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009). Academic
performance within a college-preparatory high school curriculum is widely considered to be the
strongest precollege influence on degree attainment, but many students initially enrolling in
community colleges do so because they lack this precollege academic profile and thus are ill-
prepared for college-level coursework (Adelman, 1999; Coley, 2000; Walpole, 2003). As such, a
significant portion of these students are required to take remedial courses during their early
semesters at a community college (ACT, 2007; Reason, 2009; Wang, 2009). Entrants to two-year
colleges are also more than twice as likely to decline taking the SAT or ACT during high school,
and those that do are about three-to-four times less likely to score in the highest test quartile than
students going to private or public four-year colleges (Coley, 2000). Still, the open-access
admission policy practiced at most two-year institutions allows even those students initially
ineligible for admission to a four-year college the chance to pursue a baccalaureate degree
through the transfer function after first establishing a post-secondary GPA (Hatton, Homer, &
Park, 2009; Laanan, 2001).

Sociodemographic factors have been found to influence high school performance, and
these same factors appear to continue to influence performance throughout college (Stage &
Rushin, 1993; Walpole, 2003). Evidence suggests that starting at a two-year college gives
students with poorer precollege academic performance time to improve their educational record,
enabling them to gain admission to a more selective four-year school than the four-year schools
attended by similar students enrolling right out of high school (Long & Kurlaender, 2008;

Pierson, et al., 2003). While attending their two-year school, however, students are increasingly less likely to receive college-level instruction, as a trend has accelerated in decreasing the academic rigor at two-year schools by increasing the number of remedial courses included in the curriculum (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). By becoming eligible for admission to the four-year school through establishing a transfer GPA at a two-year school that may be of lower academic quality, these students are often still not prepared for the academic rigor present at the four-year institution; therefore, they experience transfer shock (Flaga, 2006; Laanan, 2001).

Related to the importance of college GPA and academic rigor at the previous institution attended in predicting student success, Duggan & Pickering (2008) found that student standing upon entrance also matters. The more credits carried into the transfer institution, the higher the likelihood of persistence to degree (Ishitani, 2003, 2008; Rhine, et al., 2000). Freshmen transfers were less likely than sophomore transfers or native freshmen to graduate (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). Ishitani (2008) found that freshmen transfer students were 73 percent more likely to depart during their first semester than sophomore or junior transfer students. Early transfer is associated with lower persistence rates even when time to graduation is removed as a variable (Choy, 2002; Coley, 2000; Reason, 2009). Earning an associate's degree prior to transferring doubles the chances of attaining a bachelor's degree among these students nationally (Boswell, 2004).

It can only be assumed that the vast majority of two-year college students transfer to four-year institutions for the purpose of earning a bachelor's degree. What is known, however, is that two-year community college students transferring to a four-year institution identify with many at-risk student characteristics shown to negatively impact their ability to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Persistence Issues of WTCS Transfer Students to UWS Four-Year Schools

Disparities in students' persistence towards earning bachelor's degrees are present among the subgroups that comprise Wisconsin's higher education system. According to a 2009 study conducted by the American Enterprise Institute (Hess, et al., 2009), Wisconsin's baccalaureate institutions' collective six-year graduation rate was 55.6 percent for the spring of 2007. When including only the 13 public UWS four-year schools enrolling the greatest number of baccalaureate-seeking students in the state, the rate fell to 52.8 percent, and when omitting UW-Madison's large student population's 79 percent graduation rate, the rate further dipped to 50.7 percent (2009). Similar to aforementioned research regarding persistence, the authors of this study concede serious limitations to interpreting the statistics they put forth because they only measured graduation rates for students that matriculated as freshmen and did not account for those going on to earn a degree through institutional transfer (2009). Through an ambitious effort undertaken by UWS to track student access and success, however, a relatively large set of empirical data is available to assess transfer populations' retention and persistence patterns within the public post-secondary educational system.

Of the 120,000-plus students enrolled at one of the 13 UWS four-year institutions during the 2008-9 academic year, 14,896 had previously attended a different institution (UWS, OPAR, 2009). Of those students, slightly more than 40 percent of first-time transfers attended a Wisconsin two-year institution, with nearly 19 percent coming from a UW-College freshman and sophomore campus and just under 21.5 percent transferring in from a WTCS school (see Table 1). The rest of this population transferred from a different UWS four-year, Wisconsin private, out-of-state, or International institution (OPAR, 2010).

Distinct differences exist between the missions, academic programs, and student bodies that make up the UW-Colleges and the WTCS. According to the UW-Colleges' website, the 13 UW-College freshmen and sophomore campuses statewide promote the mission of offering a liberal arts general education curriculum aimed to prepare students of all ages and backgrounds for transfer to a bachelor's degree program (http://www.uwc.edu/). Unless special concessions have been made for the student, admission to a UW-College requires graduation from high school or GED and an ACT or SAT score (http://www.uwc.edu/). These UW-Colleges serve more than 14,000 students that attend their physical campuses or participate in their online programs (Vevea, 2010). Of this population, 58 percent enroll at the UW-Colleges as a first-generation college student, which is 17 percentage points higher than the incoming freshmen population to UWS four-year institutions (Nettesheim, 2009).

Taken as a whole, the students transferring from a UW-College to a UWS four-year school separate themselves from other transfer subgroups in terms of their academic and demographic characteristics (see Table 2). The UW-College transfer population has the lowest percentage of students transferring to UWS four-year schools as freshmen at just 12 percent (OPAR, 2009). Also, 88 percent attended their respective UW-College full-time, only 16 percent were 25 years of age or older, and just 6 percent were students of color, the lowest of all transfer sub-populations (2009).

Transfer students from the UW-Colleges are both retained to their second year after transfer and persist to graduation at a higher rate than any other group of transfer students to UWS four-year schools (2009). Eighty percent are retained to their second year and 72 percent graduate within six years (OPAR, 2009; Nettesheim, 2004). These graduation statistics are significantly higher than both state and national averages for transfer students.

By comparison, the WTCS consists of 16 colleges on 48 campuses and has as its primary objectives expanding the pool of skilled workers in the state's labor force, increasing post-secondary educational opportunities, and enhancing minority student participation and success (WTCS Board, 2009). The WTCS website also mentions improving opportunities for its students that seek to transfer credit to the UWS as a long-standing priority (http://www.wtcsystem.edu/index.htm). However, the WTCS student population in full, and the sub segment that transfers to one of the 13 UWS comprehensive and doctoral universities, differs considerably from that of the UW-Colleges.

WTCS schools are open-enrollment. Applicants do not require a high school diploma, GED, or standardized test score. In 2007-08, over 390,000 students were enrolled in a WTCS course, with more than 110,000 of these students enrolled in six or more credits (http://www.wtcsystem.edu/index.htm). Of the total student population, 14.8 percent, or a total of 57,766 students, were of minority status (WTCS Board, 2009); this percentage was higher than the State's 11.8 percent minority population represented statewide, and was nearly 6 percent greater than UW-College transfers (2009). The average age of a WTCS student was 34.8, with less than one in three being under the age of 25 (http://www.wtcsystem.edu/index.htm; WTCS Board, 2009). WTCS colleges are committed to providing services for disadvantaged students and those with special needs, as they imparted services to more than 104,000 disadvantaged students in 2009 (WTCS Board, 2009). This population includes students identified as academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, limited in English proficiency, displaced homemakers, single parents, and incarcerated (see Table 3).

The UWS comprehensive and doctoral colleges offered admission to over 74,500 WTCS transfer students from 1995-2010 with transfer cohort size increasing each year during that span

(UWS, OPAR, 2011). During the academic year of 2008-9, 41 percent transferred in as freshmen (OPAR, 2009). This rate was 17 percent higher than the next highest transfer population from WTCS, and 29 percent higher than all UW-College transfers that year (2009). Of all WTCS transfer students enrolling in the UWS that year, only 61 percent enrolled full-time, 35 percent were age 25 years of age or older, and 13 percent were students of color (OPAR, 2009). These percentages represented the lowest proportion of full-time enrolled students, but highest ratios of older students and those of color among all transfer groups to UWS four-year schools (Table 2).

When transfer student data is disaggregated, statistics reveal that nearly every student characteristic that is typically connected, in persistence research and theory, to student departure is more prevalent in the WTCS transfer population than in any other transfer sub-population. This prevalence of departure triggers may explain why these students perform poorly in terms of first-year GPA, second-year retention, and graduation rates relative to other transfer cohorts. The WTCS transfer population consistently exhibits the lowest average first-year GPA among all new transfer cohorts (OPAR, 2009). The second-year retention rate for WTCS transfers enrolling at the UWS from the fall of 1995 through the spring of 2010 was 66 percent (OPAR, 2011). Of the 34,984 degree-seeking WTCS transfer students entering the UWS from the fall of 1995 through the spring of 2005, only 33 percent graduated within six years (OPAR, 2011).

Academic Advisors' Role in Enhancing Transfer Student Persistence

Variables strongly-correlated to persistence in one group are often weakly or unrelated to the persistence of other groups of undergraduates (Davidson, et al., 2009). Programs and policies with a track record of success in improving outcomes for freshmen may not necessarily work for transfer students. Similarly, incongruence appears to exist between interventions that assist one

transfer population vs. another. Moreover, regardless of students' affiliation with a given subgroup, each individual handles the stress generated from attending college in complex and unique ways (Bray, et al., 1999). Therefore, even with increasingly greater knowledge of the triggers that commonly lead to departure in each subpopulation, little is known about the ways in which these research findings may be effectively operationalized into interventions that help students attain their degrees, as theories have far outstripped practice (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Upcraft, 1994). With no blueprint for campus-wide programs to mediate the vast array of departure triggers unique to each student, individualization of approaches to enhance retention and persistence may be most appropriate (Davidson, et al., 2009).

Academic advising is a service offered at many colleges that has the capability to respond to students' distinctive needs. Due to the early and consistent one-on-one interaction that typically characterizes the student-advisor relationship, academic advisors are ideally situated to best provide the personal connection to the institution that research contends is necessary for student persistence and success (Cuseo, 2004; Habley, 1994; Nutt, 2003; Roberts & Styron, 2010). By familiarizing themselves with their students' academic and non-academic concerns and needs, academic advisors are afforded the opportunity to help students clarify academic and career goals, foster their engagement in non-curricular areas of interest, steer them towards campus resources and services appropriate to their individual needs, build confidence and resilience, and promote self-advocacy and self-authorship skills (Kincanon, 2009; McGillin, 2003; Miller & Murray, 2005; Nutt, 2003; Peck & Varney, 2009). It is likely that more than one or two interactions are necessary to build a student-advisor relationship capable of bringing forth these student outcomes (Roberts & Styron, 2010). But, as academic advisors may be the sole

personnel that offer organized and structured attempts to nurture this type of sustained interaction with students, research engenders a strong presumptive link between effective academic advising and student persistence (McGillin, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Roberts & Styron, 2010; Tinto, 1993; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

In a review of the literature documenting the field's history, the late 1970s are given as the timeframe for when academic advising began to resemble an organized profession in U.S. higher education (Frost, 2000; Habley, 2000; Tuttle, 2000). With the creation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in 1979 and the increased advising-related research resulting from its formation, many colleges and universities organized formal advising programs to orient and advise students in an effort to strengthen their first-year experience (Frost, 2000; Tuttle, 2000).

Although the field is relatively young, the scope of academic advising is based on five widely held beliefs that establish the practical boundaries of the profession (Creamer, 2000). These beliefs are that the purpose of academic advising is student learning and development, its pedagogy is the art or science of teaching, its context is in educational environments conditioned by policies and practices that affect student goal achievement, it focuses on the whole person with all aspects of each student's background and circumstances considered, and the content is constructed knowledge about students' educational and life plans (2000). Allen and Smith (2008) suggest quality advising leading to student development can be defined as a multidimensional process that encompasses five domains virtually identical to these practical boundaries.

Advising services take different forms depending upon institution, but approaches to advising have historically been classified as either prescriptive or developmental (Crookston,

1972; Kramer, 2000; Mottarella, Fritzsche, & Cerabino, 2004). Prescriptive advising can be summarized as when the advisor assumes control of the advisor-student interaction, facilitating concrete task-oriented activities with students such as explaining degree requirements, course registration, institutional procedures, and making referrals to other departments (Mottarella, et al., 2004). In contrast, a developmental advising approach is typified as focusing on building a shared responsibility between advisor and student that leads to student intellectual growth, academic development, institutional involvement, independence, self-authorship, and the ability to make career connections (Kincanon, 2009; Kramer, 2000; Mottarella, et al., 2004). Due to findings in student development research associating institutional involvement and interaction with enhancing student outcomes, developmental advising has supplanted prescriptive advising as the dominant approach by professional academic advisors (Astin, 1984; Kramer, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Kramer (2000) advocates that a developmental approach fosters persistence to graduation and other forms of positive academic outcomes. However, there is a need for empirical research examining which advising approaches, methods, and variables are more effective for bringing about desired student returns (Mottarella, et al., 2004).

Gaps in Academic Advising-Related Research

Because student retention and persistence are both assessable, the influence academic advising has on these outcomes is also a measurable variable (Cuseo, 2004). A review of literature, however, resulted in a number of theoretical entries but a scarcity of studies that analyze an empirical link between academic advising and student persistence. Most published advising-related research regarding persistence has been viewed through the lens of other disciplines and heavily-reliant upon survey data generated from small, single-institution,

majority population samples (McGillin, 2000). As such, McGillin (2000) asserts that advising-related research largely fails to assess student change, attend to the individual and diverse differences between students, address long-term outcomes, validate assessment instruments and results, or allow for replication.

The limited research predominantly examines such areas as advisor behavior, advisor-type preferences (e.g., faculty vs. professional advisors), and student satisfaction with advising approaches. For example, Metzner (1989) found students' satisfaction with their advising experiences at a large public university had an effect on freshmen-to-sophomore retention, with those classifying their advising experience as "good quality" departing 25 percent less often than those that perceived their advising experience as poor quality and 40 percent less often than those that received no advising at all. Another study employed the Academic Advising Inventory to investigate students at a large Southeastern university for their preferences regarding the emotional nature of the advising relationship, depth of advising relationship, impact of advisor variables such as race or gender, and advisors' use of a prescriptive vs. developmental advising approach (Mottarella, et al., 2004). Few studies have examined advising practice from the advisor's point of view.

Research addressing student satisfaction or student engagement suggests that advising is a crucial service to improving persistence (Allen & Smith, 2008; McGillin, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Still, the practice of academic advising itself did not serve as the focal point of these studies, and, as such, its association with factors that have positive impacts on persistence was largely due to the perception of advisor-student interaction representing a high-level, purposeful activity connected to fostering student engagement (Kuh, 2009). Although student affairs research frequently supports the importance of advising in improving persistence,

particularly for special populations, it has yet to be quantified, and thus remains a vastly under-researched area of inquiry (Cuseo, 2004; Kramer, 2000; McGillin, 2000; Roberts & Styron, 2010). The overwhelming majority of literature specifically addressing the impact advising has on student persistence among special populations tends to be theoretical in nature, from the students' point of view, focused on assumptions of best practice, written by those in the advising field, and intended for an audience of peers.

Applicability of Advising Research to WTCS Students Transferring to UWS Four-Year Schools

Students transferring from the WTCS to UWS four-year schools are a population shown to be at risk for departure. In addition to their apparent high susceptibility to transfer shock, WTCS transfer students collectively exhibit an uncommon propensity for possessing nontraditional student traits that have been linked to departure across the larger student population. Research suggests that knowing the departure risk profiles of students may help improve educational practice for institutional personnel, such as academic advisors, by allowing them to target students at risk for departure and intensify their interactions with these students (Ishitani, 2008). But, research on advising special populations is generally restricted to very few broadly-defined groups and rarely goes beyond documenting the needs they commonly exhibit (McGillin, 2000).

Empirical studies expressly connected to enhancing two-year college transfer student persistence at four-year schools through advising were not located in the literature base. This gap in research may be owed to the assumption that students coming from two-year vocational or technical college often do not intend to transfer (Rhine, et al., 2000). The assumption is problematic to practitioners looking to consult research, as ever higher proportions of students

completing coursework in vocational programs have, in fact, been transferring to universities

since the 1970s (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). This pattern is certainly present in Wisconsin (OPAR,

2010). As statistics reveal that students transferring from WTCS schools drift towards exhibiting

broad nontraditional student characteristics, studies regarding advising approaches for

nontraditional populations may have a measure of adaptability to UWS four-year school

advisors' practices of working with these students.

Advising-related literature has at least minimally identified challenges students encounter

based on racial and ethnic group, enrollment status, age, and sexual orientation, as well as

addressing those who commute, have physical disabilities, are academically disadvantaged, or

are of low socioeconomic status (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000; Priest & McPhee, 2000;

Upcraft & Stephens, 2000). Literature concerning these special populations generally describes

the challenges these students face, identifies implications for advising, and concludes by offering

recommendations for taking a personalized approach, locating specific resources, and supporting

the students' unique needs (Gordon, et al., 2000).

A recurrence of the recommendation to personalize advising approaches to support the

unique needs of special populations emerges from within the literature base. According to

Upcraft and Stephens (2000), effectively advising special populations includes knowing each

student and being aware of both their academic and non-academic needs and concerns, having

familiarity with institutional resources, advocating for resources that are not available,

undertaking training to better understand today's diversity of students, developing relationships

with faculty, frequently evaluating policies and practices, and being alert for students' personal

problems that may negatively impact their learning. Kramer (2000) advocates for altering

advising approaches in relation to students' different educational levels, such as focusing on

setting goals and encouraging involvement with freshmen advisees whereas examining career

goals is more appropriate with seniors. When working with multi-cultural students, Priest and

McPhee (2000) encourage advisors to carefully consider how race, parent educational level, and

socioeconomic status affect students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills; knowledge of how these

characteristics affect students' preparedness to navigate the institutional academic and non-

academic culture is believed to enhance advisors' ability to provide more personalized advising

for multi-cultural students (2000). Ender and Wilkie (2000), propose that developmental

advising provides the necessary framework for advising students within an array of special needs

groups if advisors are dutiful in working with these students to define and understand their

academic competence, personal involvement on campus, and how their educational path will

validate their life purpose. In contrast, Mottarella et al. (2004) concluded that advisors' use of a

developmental or prescriptive approach was unimportant to the student, but rather the

establishment of a warm and supportive relationship leads to greater student satisfaction across

all student populations.

Although literature fails to specifically addresses how advisors can enhance outcomes for

WTCS students transferring to UWS four-year schools, the existing theoretical research on

effectively advising special populations offers advisors some perspectives to consider when

working with WTCS transfer students, as they are likely to possess one or more nontraditional

student characteristic. And, as a subgroup particularly prone to transfer shock, early and

increased interventions by advisors to ease the transfer transition throughout the first semester

may minimize its effect on first-semester GPA and ultimately lead to persistence (Hatton, et al.,

2009; Nutt, 2003; Thurmond, 2007). Advisors are even encouraged to inform students about the

drop in GPA that commonly occurs during the first two semesters of transfer, as it may

psychologically prepare them for transfer shock while at the same time push them to work harder toward maintaining their GPA (Laanan, 2001; Rhine, et al., 2000). It is suggested that advisors can also assist transfers in their transition by outlining graduation requirements, mapping out potential educational paths towards their desired degrees, and helping them understand the academic rigor they will face once classes start (Cuseo, 2004; Hatton, et al., 2009). The combination of limited theoretical research addressing how advisors can promote graduation in transfer students and that associated with enhancing persistence within special populations provides some reference points for UWS four-year school advisors to consider when interacting with WTCS transfer students. Still, more research is needed that addresses how advising practices can influence persistence decisions of transfer students from two-year schools to four-year schools.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This study employed an inductive qualitative approach to answering the research question. The research methods used take after those found in phenomenological and grounded theory studies. Phenomenological studies describe respondents' meaning of their lived experiences regarding a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the concept or phenomenon under investigation was the nature of UWS academic advisors' interactions with the WTCS transfer student population. In grounded theory research, the researcher generates a general explanation of a process shaped by the views of study participants (2007). Grounded theory studies are useful in establishing a framework for future research when a theory is not available to explain a process. In this study, academic advisors' approach to advising WTCS transfer students represents a previously unexplored process.

Incorporating elements of both phenomenological and grounded theory research was an appropriate qualitative methodology for this line of inquiry because it allowed the researcher to bring together and characterize numerous participants' reflections and concurrently identify respondents' significant statements on their shared experiences advising WTCS transfer students. Rich descriptions provided by individual participants focused on the distinctiveness of unique experience, in part by contrasting broader themes that emerged through analysis. Rooted in qualitative data, both larger themes and serendipitous responses revealed the essence of UWS advisors' approaches to advising WTCS transfers.

As demonstrated in the literature review, much of the research focusing on post-secondary education outcomes has utilized students as the primary study participants. Consequently, what research has uncovered about student persistence has largely come from

students' points of view. This study examined how academic advising professionals, a position believed to play a significant role in student persistence, attempted to influence that outcome in their interactions with students. The decision to interview participants to collect data regarding their lived experience aligns with Stake's (2010) rationale for employing interviews to conduct qualitative research. Interviews allow the researcher to "obtain unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed" and "find out about 'a thing' that the researchers were unable to observe themselves" (Stake, 2010, p. 95).

Though the body of knowledge examining the factors that impact student persistence continues to grow, it is uncertain how UWS four-year academic advisors actually incorporate theory derived from those findings into their interactions with WTCS transfers. In many cases, theory is often not known by practitioners; when it is known, seldom is it integrated into practice (Upcraft, 1994). Therefore, advisors themselves must illuminate the nature of their interactions with WTCS transfer students if the ways in which academic advising can improve persistence are to be understood. As a positioned subject, the researcher realized that personal experiences, prejudices, and biases serve to influence research and methods towards understanding that student-advisor interaction. For that reason, an appropriate lens to orient the qualitative analysis was needed.

The lens orienting this study is recognition that the researcher served as the instrument in collecting, translating, and interpreting interview data. Though personal experience cannot be entirely disregarded by the researcher during data analysis, divulging personal experience also allows the researcher to focus more fully on the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

Prior to undertaking this study, the researcher held an academic advising position at a UWS four-year institution from 2007-08. The researcher served in the same role at a private four-year college from 2008-2010. In those roles, the researcher advised many WTCS transfer students. Academic goals were a universal topic of discussion between the researcher and his advisees. Although students shared a variety of academic goals with the researcher during advising interactions, earning a bachelor's degree was clearly the most cited outcome they hoped to achieve. In the researcher's experience working with WTCS students who transferred without first earning an associate's degree, however, these advisees appeared significantly less likely than non-WTCS advisees to meet their stated academic goals. Drawing upon circumstantial interaction with these students, the researcher attributed these outcomes to student and institutional characteristics that seemed to create barriers to the students earning a degree.

In addition to holding the preceding perceptions of the student population under study, the researcher held the following assumptions regarding academic advising:

- Academic advisors can play a significant role in positively impacting student persistence.
- Academic advisors enhance students' college experiences when they consider individual student circumstances and address them accordingly.

The researcher found personal experience to be helpful during the data collection process. For example, having a background as an academic advisor allowed the researcher to discern, based on the response received, if a participant comprehended an interview question as it was intended. If a misunderstanding was detected, the interview question was reframed by including contextual examples that allowed the participant to respond to the specific question. Also,

personal experience helped the researcher realize when an advisor was reflecting upon interactions with a student population other than WTCS transfers. When this scenario occurred, the researcher was able to redirect participants back to focusing solely on the targeted population.

Although personal experience factored heavily into shaping many elements of the approach to the study, the researcher made a deliberate effort to control against interposing personal experience and focus on seeking only the participants' lived experience of academic advising when conducting interviews and data analysis.

Significance

This study sought to fill a void in the knowledge base. As demonstrated in the literature review, previous research has established a presumptive linkage between high-quality advising and improved student persistence. In spite of this relationship, the literature review failed to locate any studies attempting to characterize the advisor-advisee interaction from the advisors' points of view or research examining how considerations regarding student persistence are integrated into advisor-advisee interactions. The literature review, however, uncovered empirical data confirming that WTCS transfers to UWS schools trail other student populations in terms of graduation rates (OPAR, 2009). If academic advising has the ability to enhance student persistence outcomes, current practices may be falling short of meeting these students' unique needs. But, it is only after a picture of current practice emerges that implications for future research and practice can be explored. Therefore, research explaining UWS academic advisors' experiences advising this population and their views of the role they play in impacting these students' persistence is valuable.

This study was intended to illuminate *if* and *how* academic advisors perceived that advising interactions with WTCS transfers differed from other student populations rather than judge the effectiveness of that interaction. Nonetheless, expanding comprehension of the advisor-advisee interaction through inductive qualitative analysis of participants' reflections inherently provides a basis for examining current advising practices and how those practices might be improved to better serve the WTCS transfer population.

Participants

Professional academic advisors employed at UWS baccalaureate-granting institutions served as the participants for this study. The designations of "professional academic advisor," "academic advisor," or "advisor" in this study refer only to non-faculty staff whose position at a UWS institution is primarily working with students in an academic advising capacity. Faculty advisors were not considered for participation in this study because they advise students within their academic discipline instead of the general population. Academic advisors participating in this research, therefore, did not teach in a classroom setting, but they spent the better part of their day addressing a variety of students' academic, vocational, and personal needs (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). These needs can be generalized as requiring assistance in major and career exploration, course selection and registration, interpreting academic policy, navigating student service systems, and obtaining awareness of available academic and student affairs resources and opportunities. Finally, to ensure academic advisors possessed a depth of experience working with WTCS transfer students, only veterans of two-plus years in academic advising were asked to participate in the interview process.

Participant selection. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Initially, the researcher intended to interview a cross section of academic advisors from each of the 13 UWS baccalaureate-granting institutions to gain a wider understanding of advisor-WTCS transfer student interaction occurring within the state. However, UWS data reporting that WTCS transfer student enrollment and graduation rates vary widely between each UWS baccalaureate-granting institution justified the use of parameters in the selection process by limiting study participants to certain institutions of employment (OPAR, 2010).

It was necessary for participants to hold their position at a UWS institution enrolling a relatively large number of WTCS transfer students to increase the probability and frequency that advisors encountered students from this population in their role as an advisor. As such, using 2008-9 OPAR data, UWS institutions enrolling 100 or more new WTCS transfers in 2008-9 were identified (see Table 4). All academic advisors employed at institutions meeting this WTCS transfer student enrollment threshold were given initial consideration, while the rest were eliminated (OPAR, 2009). Institutions meeting these criteria were UW-Eau Claire, UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Parkside, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Stout, and UW-Whitewater (OPAR, 2009).

The three institutions enrolling the largest number of new WTCS transfer students were UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, and UW-Stout. In spite of their institutions' high WTCS transfer enrollment, advisors from these schools were eliminated from consideration for logistical reasons. Largely due to their enrollment size, UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee have varied advising formats and services for transfer students. Transfer students at UW-Madison typically only see a departmental or faculty advisor and not a generalist academic advisor (personal communication, April 9, 2012, UW Madison Center for First Year Experience). At UW-

Milwaukee, academic advising is decentralized as each of the Schools and Colleges provides its own academic advisors to their majors (http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/access/firstyr/advisingbrochure.pdf). Academic advisors from UW-Stout, on the other hand, were removed from consideration because all transfer students are assigned a faculty advisor upon matriculation, and they bypass meeting with an academic advisor regardless of previous credits earned (personal communication, February, 15, 2011, UW-Stout Director of Advising).

Of the remaining institutions, the six-year graduation rates of WTCS transfer students belonging to the 2002 transfer cohort were assessed. After this analysis, academic advisors from UW-Eau Claire and UW-Green Bay were removed from consideration for participation in this study, as the numbers of WTCS transfer students graduating in the spring of 2008 was less than the other four institutions. These relatively low numbers of WTCS transfer graduates made it less likely academic advisors would have sustained advising relationships with WTCS transfers. Therefore, academic advisors from UW-Oshkosh, UW-Parkside, UW-Stevens Point, and UW-Whitewater constituted the sample for this study. All four of these UWS institutions support academic advising staffs, those staffs are charged with advising all transfer students not automatically assigned a faculty advisor, and each institution graduated the most WTCS students from the 2002 cohort. Directors of Advising at these institutions were contacted by the researcher for permission to interview members of their staffs. Directors of Advising forwarded participation requests by email to their staff. Contact information for academic advisors willing to participate was then provided to the researcher and interviews were scheduled.

Nineteen academic advisors agreed to participate. Study participants averaged 6.97 years of experience in their position, with five years representing both the median and the mode. Nine

participants were employed at UW-Whitewater, four from each UW-Oshkosh and UW-Stevens Point, and two from UW-Parkside. The disproportionate ratio of UW-Whitewater participants was most likely due to the timeliness of interview requests. The researcher approached UW-Whitewater's Director of Advising about his staff's participation during the break between the fall and spring semesters, when students were off campus. Academic advisors from UW-Oshkosh, UW-Parkside, and UW-Stevens Point were asked to participate during the spring semester. Of the 19 participants, five were males. No honorariums were offered to participants.

Conceptualization of WTCS Transfer Students

As described in the literature review, students transferring to UWS four-year schools from the WTCS vary greatly in terms of age, college credits earned, precollege preparedness, race, socioeconomic class, and so on in comparison to other student populations enrolled at UWS four-year schools. Before reflecting upon their experiences advising WTCS students, however, the researcher requested study participants to: 1) only consider students who previously attended a WTCS institution for the vast bulk of their credits and disregard those students practicing multi-institutional enrollment; and 2) focus only on students who had not earned an associate of arts or sciences degree (few credits from associate's degrees in applied sciences transfer to the UWS). The researcher chose not to limit participants' conceptualizations of WTCS transfer students to other specific variables in an effort to gain insight into the ways academic advisors form generalizations about this population.

Requesting participants to disregard advisees showing patterns of multiple-institution attendance was done as an attempt to prevent academic advisors from considering those students using WTCS solely for accelerating the time to degree at their primary institution (i.e., by taking

summer or online courses while attending classes at a four-year campus during the fall and spring semesters). The rationale for asking participants to only consider WTCS transfers yet to earn an associate's of arts or sciences degree was due to the researcher's own anecdotal experience working with WTCS transfers. WTCS transfer students without an associate's degree of arts or sciences typically have more general education credits to earn, are less likely to be a declared major, and consequently much more likely to initially meet with an academic advisor over a faculty advisor. As reviewing transcripts and identifying students' academic status are essential functions of an academic advisor's role, the researcher accepted on good faith that participants were able to delineate which advisees fit within these criteria and reflect primarily on them when prompted.

Data Collection and Analysis

Pilot study. The research questions regarding academic advisors' roles or facilitation of the advising process were not drawn from any research study or tool, but were developed after a review of the literature was completed. However, the researcher used Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual framework as a guide to safeguard against researcher bias in exploring participants' reflections toward their roles in student persistence. The framework categorizes all factors impacting student outcomes under four broad concepts. Using these constructs to formulate interview questions regarding student outcomes and persistence prevented the researcher from imposing specific student or institutional variables for participants to consider when reflecting upon their advising practices. To further limit opportunity for bias in the data collection and analysis processes of the lived experiences of others, a pilot study was developed. By conducting a pilot study, the researcher was able to obtain participants' feedback regarding the questions asked during the interview protocol. The pilot study also served to ensure fidelity

to the research question and keep the interviewer and interviewee focused on the discussion of advising transfer students.

The initial interview instrument (see Appendix A) was piloted with three individuals who either currently or previously advised students. The first participant had completed her first year of advising at a private baccalaureate institution. Although she did not meet the criterion of serving in her position for two years, her participation in the pilot study was particularly useful in drawing out many issues that new advisors may not anticipate or may be unprepared to address when working with transfer students. The other two participants possessed at least five years of advising experience. One served as Director of Advising at a four-year private institution. Her insight was helpful in shaping the interview protocol by giving voice to many of the broad issues her academic advising staff faces when advising different student populations. The final participant had recently left his position as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution to become assistant dean for student services at a two-year public institution. His reflections on the transition from working with students at a four-year college to those at a two-year college were valuable in helping to identify areas of bias advisors potentially hold at four-year schools, and, consequently, the bias within the interview questions. Of greater significance to shaping the interview instrument was his sharing of unprompted, meaningful, anecdotal experience pertaining to the research question, as it demonstrated that the interview guide was less than adequate for determining the course of the inquiry, and that fidelity to the question was much more important than fidelity to the guide.

Pilot interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. These pilot interviews afforded the opportunity to revise or remove questions, add new ones, and rearrange the sequence for increased clarity of the interview. They also allowed for interviewees to provide feedback about

relevant issues concerning academic advising that would not have been captured through structured interview questions. After conducting these pilot interviews and receiving feedback from participants, it was clear that the interview format was flawed in several ways. It was too confining for rich, unprompted responses. Questions forced the issue that transfer populations are different and should be advised accordingly. This imposition prevented interviewees from supporting or refuting the researcher's assumptions on their own terms. Therefore, the interview instrument was revised to ensure that questions regarding persistence were more open-ended in exploring whether advisors took into account the constructs set forth by Terenzini and Reason (2005) during advising interactions, and if those constructs factored into their advisement of WTCS students. Suggestive lines of inquiry that remained of particular interest to the interviewer were omitted from the instrument as base questions and reserved for use only as probes when interviewees independently offered responses that invited further discussion on the subject.

Collection. Through an in-person, in-depth, and semi-structured interview process that was conversational and open-ended in nature, the researcher asked 19 academic advisors to reflect upon their personal experiences advising students (see Appendix B). Interviews were conducted at each academic advisor's campus office and lasted between 35 and 80 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.[2] Field notes were taken both during the course of the interview session and immediately following. Using interview transcripts, the researcher wrote summaries of each participant's interview session to use later as a frame of reference when analyzing data (see Appendix C).

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[2] For readers interested in reviewing interview transcripts, electronic copies are available upon request by contacting the researcher at qcmullikin@wisc.edu.

The interview protocol began with broad questions that inquired about participants' academic advising positions and their views of the roles advisors play in influencing student outcomes. The interview then followed a course of questions exploring how advisors perceive their roles in the student persistence puzzle. After establishing a context for advisors' general approach to advising students and view of their role in persistence, the second part of the interview protocol asked participants to narrow their self-reflection to interactions with WTCS transfer student-advisees. Questions investigated how academic advisors interact with WTCS transfer students, the student characteristics they take into account when advising these students, and how they feel their practice influences persistence within this population. Drawing heavily from the conceptual framework, this section of the interview again asked participants to share their consideration of variables in the four domains that play a role in influencing student persistence, as identified by Terenzini and Reason (2005), and how this consideration may be influencing their practice.

Analysis. Each participant was asked the same general questions, but great flexibility was granted for individuals to share distinctive responses that could deeply augment the study. Field notes were also taken during participant interviews. Following the data collection process, the researcher revisited participants' interview transcripts and field notes to write summaries of interview sessions. Data analysis of interview transcripts was aided by NVIVO 9. Using NVIVO 9, participants' responses to each interview question were bracketed into clusters. Clusters of responses to each particular interview question were then analyzed individually for "significant statements" that described participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). Those significant statements crystallized both the unique themes of individual encounters and identified commonalities across interviews.

As the researcher began synthesizing data, the need for an organizational framework became apparent. Terenzini and Reason's (2005) framework proved sufficient only for exploring participants' perspectives of variables that impact persistence, not for reporting results. Categorizing the entirety of academic advisors' responses into recurring and distinctive themes required an instrument more conducive to illustrating the nature of interactions between two individuals. After considering several student persistence-related frameworks, the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS): Standards for Academic Advising (Gordon, et al., 2000) was chosen as the organizational framework for reporting academic advisors' reflections. As the CAS Standards provide broad goals to guide academic advisors' practices, without specifying methodologies for reaching those ends, they served as a more applicable framework for organizing participants' perceptions regarding their facilitation of the advising process.

In reporting findings, participants' significant statements were added to accentuate the researcher's interpretation of academic advisors' reflections of key topics. The specific quotations chosen most often represented a general consensus shared among interviewees regarding a topic or issue, but also intermittently highlighted one interviewee's unique perspective.

Validity of findings was further achieved through member-checking. For the purposes of validation, the researcher frequently conducted member checks over the course of the interview session to achieve clarification of responses. In addition, interview summaries were shared with several study participants to verify the researcher's interpretation of responses.

Limitations of Methodology

Even by employing the appropriate methodology for the course of study, a number of limitations still exist:

- The researcher relied exclusively on participants' reflections. The researcher did not observe actual practice, review written or audio correspondence between advisors and advisees, or cross-examine WTCS students about their perception of advising interactions with interviewees. Seeking only academic advisors' viewpoint of their practice, however, was intentional, as a review of the literature base illustrated academic advising research is predominantly approached from the student perspective.

- Even when limiting the participants to those having held their position for at least two years, great variance existed between academic advisors in the actual number of WTCS transfers they interacted with in an advising capacity. The researcher did not attempt to tabulate those differences, but made references to participants' transfer advising experiences in writing interview summaries.

- When sharing their experiences, it was uncertain if participants only considered the desired targeted population of non-associate degree earning WTCS transfers that earned the vast majority of their credits before transfer at a WTCS institution. In retelling their experiences, advisors at times may have inadvertently confused their interactions with other student types not under study, such as other transfer sub-populations or WTCS associate's degree-earning transfer students. The researcher was cognizant of the potential for this situation to occur, and was

careful to redirect respondents back to the targeted population whenever it became apparent.

- Field notes made clear that some participants gravitated toward focusing on one type of student characteristic within the WTCS transfer population, such as academic ability, age, race, etc., perhaps limiting their conceptualization of the broader WTCS transfer population. In these instances, the researcher interpreted a participant's singular focus on a given characteristic as one that had a significant impact on the advising process.

- Some respondents seemed to primarily focus their reflections to a particular major WTCS transfer students pursued, reducing their sharing of WTCS transfer advising experience to issues related to a narrow segment of students who shared the same academic interests. When WTCS transfers pursuing a particular field were inordinately discussed by a participant, however, the researcher took field notes as a reminder to explore the reasons for the emphasis on that academic area.

As stated previously, the literature review revealed a shortage of empirical studies that connect advising practices to student persistence. This study did not attempt to fill this void, as it did not measure the actual impact advising had on these student outcomes, but recognizes that connection remains an understudied area in need of future research.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter details academic advisors' general reflections of their roles and approaches to practice. It employs the CAS Standards as an organizational method for illustrating advisor-advisee interaction. Next, the chapter explores the student outcomes participants hope to cultivate through academic advising. Particular focus is given to participants' views on the relationship between academic advising and student persistence. Findings derived from academic advisors' reflections of working with the general student population provide context for the chapter's transition into synthesizing participants' perceptions of advising WTCS transfer students. The synthesis of academic advisor-WTCS transfer student interaction begins with academic advisors' views of WTCS transfers' experiences upon enrolling at the UWS four-year institution.[3] The chapter concludes by again using the CAS Standards to illustrate how academic advisors perceive WTCS transfer status shapes their advising interactions.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Their Roles and Approaches to Practice

"I think so many people perceive the role of an advisor as someone who helps students pick classes."-Tami

"...that's what most people think of as advising, 'these are the courses you have to take and this is how you register for them.' That's a very small piece, I think, of what advisors do."-Lisa

The preceding quotes reflect interviewees' collective assertion that academic advising serves a larger role in enhancing student success than offering course recommendations. Although interviewees agreed that course selection guidance is a primary and important obligation connected to their position, they described facilitation of the process as a fairly

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[3] The variables study participants identified as impacting WTCS transfers' experience upon transferring to a UWS baccalaureate institution proved to align with Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual framework. For organizational purposes, however, the decision was made to not report findings within this framework.

prescriptive exercise after more meaningful elements of the academic advising exchange have

been established with the student. In reflecting upon her advisees who viewed the academic

advising session solely as a time to receive class selection assistance, Jill said it "seems like a

waste of my advising time and your advising money to just sit here and pick classes from lists."

Abe agreed, stating, "I'd like to think we, or, I feel like I, want to be a little bit more

developmental than that."

Interviewees universally affirmed that academic advising involves more complex

processes than assisting students in class selection but had difficulty summarizing the nature of

their position. When asked to describe her role, Kim responded, "I think in general when people

ask me what I do, I think it's hard to get real specific." Most participants resorted to listing the

common tasks they routinely perform during academic advising interactions and the outcomes

that they hope students achieve through participation in that interaction. The tasks and outcomes

cited varied greatly among participants without discernible patterns emerging among academic

advisors of the same institution, years of experience, or gender. In their entirety, however, the

extensive list of descriptive terms interviewees used to describe their roles, combined with the

specific examples they provided about their interactions with students, resulted in a broad

conceptualization of their position materializing: academic advisors believe they enhance student

success by assuming a number of ambiguous and intertwined roles.

Interviewees viewed the roles they play as being fluid in practice, finding it difficult to

designate when one ends and another begins. Moreover, interviewees felt they adjust their roles

in accordance with each advisee's differing needs. Therefore, academic advising was described

as a dynamic process shaped by the uniqueness of the individual being advised. Jill gave voice to

the variability in academic advising interactions when she stated, "I think I just have to size up

every student as they come in and try to figure out, 'How much help are you going to really

need?'"

Although communicated in many different ways, the roles interviewees described

themselves as fulfilling for their advisees aligned with the goals comprising the CAS Standards

(Gordon, et al., 2000). The CAS Standards identify the following objectives of academic

advising practice:

- *Assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance (values clarification; understanding abilities, interests, and limitations)*

- *Assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education*

- *Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives*

- *Assisting students in developing decision-making skills*

- *Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs*

- *Referring students to other institutional or community support services*

- *Assisting students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans*

- *Providing information about students to the institution, college, academic departments, or some combination thereof*

The alignment between interviewees' perceptions of their roles and the CAS Standards

allowed for findings to be grouped within an organizational framework; however, it is important

to note that utilizing this framework to report interview results is not meant to suggest the CAS

Standards represent a typical progression through the advising process. Rather, the CAS

Standards offer a nonlinear framework for understanding academic advisors' perceptions of both

their roles and the spirit of interactions with students.

Assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance.[4] All 19 interviewees demonstrated, through direct statements or within descriptions of their advising interactions, that they attempt to cultivate advisees' self-understanding and self-acceptance. They explained that new students often enter the advising process lacking the ability to communicate their reasons for attending the university beyond the desire to earn a degree. As this scenario occurs frequently when working with new advisees, interviewees believe they are likely the first individuals that challenge students to question where their values, abilities, and interests lie.

Academic advisors listed specific activities they conduct to help students answer these questions. These activities include administering and discussing various strength and value inventories, facilitating formalized major exploration interventions, and consulting previous academic performance variables such as grades or standardized test scores. Of these examples, only academic performance emerged as a universal reference point the advisors use to help students begin to consider their academic abilities and interests. Lisa illustrated her use of academic indicators to guide the advising process:

> Certainly, their academic preparation is a consideration: were they a strong student in high school? Were they an average student in high school? Were they a weaker student in high school, and is that a reflection of the effort they put in or their actual academic ability and preparation? So, I have those kinds of conversations with students to try and figure that out.

Several academic advisors expressed a desire to devote more time to facilitating formalized self-discovery exercises as a way to enrich academic advising interactions beyond grade discussion and its impact on course selection. They stated that the large number of advisees they must see each semester, coupled with most advisees' general lack of initiative to properly prepare for the advising appointment, preclude them from doing so. Jill summarized

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[4] A number of CAS Standards are abbreviated as headings in the Findings Section.

this predicament, explaining that her large caseload and advisees' typical unpreparedness prevented her from helping students see the "big picture" of college attendance:

> …at the end of the session I'll always say, 'Sure wish we could have talked about other stuff, try to come more prepared next time so that we can have those discussions, cause I think those are more valuable'… Some people are real good about sending those students away and making them come back for a follow-up meeting. I have to admit, with the number of students that we have, it's hard to do that, or if you do that too often, you'll never get them all in and then those students are taking a second meeting time away from people who haven't gotten in yet at all. So ideally we tell them 'come in at the beginning of the semester once so we can talk about big picture stuff and then come in again'…

Interviewees attributed limited time and student unpreparedness to fully engage in the academic advising process as the reasons they were likely to forego using formulaic self-discovery approaches; instead, they simply ask their advisees to talk about their academic and non-academic interests, priorities, strengths, and weaknesses. Interviewees used the responses garnered during these discussions as prompts in helping students better examine, clarify, and accept their personal attributes. Academic advisors, therefore, depend upon students to disclose personal information if they hope to accomplish this objective. But, collecting information is not always easy, as Jeff explained:

> I mean, for the most part you can kinda have a cookie cutter experience or kinda approach to a student looking at their ACT scores or looking at what high school they came from…. and then I also think it depends on the amount of information that they reveal to you. Some students are really talkative, some are like pulling teeth, you can't get anything out of them...

When advisees have trouble identifying, understanding, or accepting their own attributes, most interviewees find it necessary to draw this information out. Interviewees contend mutual understanding of individual circumstances between the student and advisor is paramount to personalizing academic advising interactions. Interviewees vary widely in their methods for

uncovering this information, but most subscribed to actively probing students to share personal attributes. In recounting her approach, Janelle said she will:

> "really try to question them, 'well, you've done this class so what are you learning from that, how do you see it helping you in the future?' So not so much about the role of 'let's do this checklist' but start with the 'what are you learning right now, how's it helping you to determine who you are and what you're doing?'…"

Larry probes passively, prescriptively presenting options of courses and majors available to students at his institution. He begins in this manner to elicit reactions toward academic programs and encourage feedback from advisees about their interests while he listens carefully to detect any underlying statements he can use to help them better clarify interests:

> I really think listening is the key cause sometimes the student or the advisee really don't hear what they're saying sometimes too…and sometimes I'll like to say, 'Well from just listening, here's what you're saying,' you know? A lot of times they come in and they talk and are undecided but as they talk they're leaning one way or the other and they don't know what, you know, but they still think they are totally undecided but they are constantly talking maybe this area, this area, this area, and all of a sudden this other area is kinda, 'Since you've been in here you've been talking about this and you seem to have a stronger interest here than this other thing over here.' So that's why I think listening to me as an advisor is really a key thing.

Interviewees share a variety of techniques similar to Janelle and Larry when facilitating students' reflection and clarification of values, interests, strengths, and limitations. Again, most interviewees utilize academic performance measures as a reference point for their own understanding of students' abilities and possible interest areas, but they appear to depend more heavily on dialogue with students to uncover this information. Academic advisors felt that conversing with the student is a more holistic approach than grade discussions in assisting advisees make important self-realizations. These conversations also help the advisor better

understand the student's unique circumstances and how he or she might be better advised in light of those circumstances. Gina explained why she must consider variables other than past academic performance to personalize the advising interaction:

> We have students that are traditional in age, but nontraditional in their family situation. I visit with students that are either single moms or single dads, or have been through a divorce, they work forty hours, or they have one or two kids and are still trying to go to college in the hope of getting a better career. So, my advising sessions, I talk about a lot of things. What are their aspirations? What are their values? Where do they see themselves five years down the line? So, we talk about their interests, their values, and then try to go from there…

Assisting students in considering their life goals. As students reveal their abilities, values, and interests during the academic advising process, academic advisors make inferences regarding how these attributes might relate to life goals. At the same time, their academic advisors assess advisees' readiness for examining this connection, reiterating a need to "meet each student where they are" in their stage of development.

The vast majority of academic advisors interviewed believe they adjust advising interactions in accordance with their perceptions of each student's unique situation. For example, they would choose not to belabor conversations or activities to bring about better self-understanding with those students they believe demonstrate a clear sense of how their abilities align with their goals. Still, academic advisors largely felt all students can benefit from being challenged to reflect on how their interests and aspirations match with their strengths and limitations. Several also mentioned that even the most self-aware students demonstrate a need for learning how to broaden and enhance their attributes through the opportunities available to them at the university. Interviewees felt academic advising can do much to fulfill this role, as Janelle explains:

I feel that the role is to provide support and questions to get students to think about how their interest, their skills, values fit with what direction they may be going in the future, and that even though they might find one particular major area that interests them the most, how everything else that they're doing in college can help them be more flexible in the future.

Similar to most of their responses regarding their advising approaches with students, interviewees help students connect interests, skills, and values to academic and career goals through engaging in open-ended conversation. Gina described in detail a time when she helped a student put career goals into perspective with her priorities, through a series of conversations:

I remember one time I had a student who wanted to be a lawyer. She was dead set on becoming a lawyer and we were looking at political science courses, and she wanted to be a criminal justice type lawyer, so we were looking at those areas. And then, as we talked over the span of two semesters, I found out that family is very important to her and she would like to be available for her family. She was planning to have a big family, more than one or two kids, and then we talked about if she was planning on being a lawyer and in the criminal justice field, you have to spend lots of hours from here, you know law school, preparing for LSAT, and your family has to take a backseat for a while. You are going for a career that needs a lot of time and effort, so you can't have both at the same time. Once we started those conversations, she realized that maybe that wasn't the best situation for her. So, I think now, she has a boyfriend and I think a small child, she's planning to still go for a law degree, but looking more into government types of jobs where she can be like, not a DA, but you know, more secure in types of timing. She can go to work at 8 and leave at 4. You know, those are the types of things you try to help students with because she had no clue, all she knew was that she wanted to be a criminal lawyer.

Academic advisors routinely described a propensity for their advisees to possess a pre-determined career goal that they had not fully researched nor evaluated for its alignment with their skills, values, and interests. When goals seem to be in opposition to an advisee's attributes, academic advisors devote time to helping them reflect on the reasons behind their decisions. These conversations often result in academic advisors encouraging students to explore other

career options that better suit their abilities. Although Frank is admittedly more candid with his advisees than are his colleagues, he expressed a common feeling that academic advisors have a responsibility to challenge advisees to think critically about their skills before settling on a career path, even if it fits their interests:

Be realistic with them. If they have a 16, 17, 18 or 19 ACT, and they don't have good math, like a 17 math, they should be told like pre-med is not their gig. You know what I'm saying? If they are weak in math and science they need to be told that anything in the medic…and I think they need to be told, realistically, with the low ACT, if they can be a teacher. Can they pass that PRAXIS exam? I think that's very critical for our staff to realize true expectations. You know, okay, my son…I'll give an example, my son, wanted to be an accounting major, he's got three C's in his accounting classes and I looked at him last night and I says, 'You got a 2.5 in accounting, you really like accounting?' and he says, 'No, I work really hard and don't do….' And I said, 'Then maybe you shouldn't be an accountant. Switch over to business management, or human resources, or whatever…..' that's our job to do that, you know.

Rosy agreed that academic advisors sometimes need to use their expertise and experience to help students set realistic expectations, even if they conflict with stated goals:

I can see from a student's ACT scores maybe that their ACT scores are a little bit lower or maybe they placed in math 40 but they want to be a doctor and be a heart surgeon, then we'll talk about what the requirements are for that and that they know so they have realistic goals that they can meet to get there if that's what they want to do, and understand that, well, maybe if they discover that, 'Okay, math 40 was a real challenge for me, how am I going to get through calculus?' That's okay to explore other avenues while you're trying to reach that goal too, and keep your options open.

Academic advisors provided numerous examples of assisting students consider careers that better fit their skills while still appealing to their interests. Often, academic advisors' suggestions regarding careers are options the student had not previously considered or knew existed. In exchanges regarding extra-curricular involvement or career preparation, interviewees draw upon their past experiences working with students who expressed similar interests for

suggestions on how to enhance an advisee's experience. They also utilize their knowledge of the opportunities available at the institution to provide perspective and advice for ways advisees could achieve their goals. Additionally, interviewees rely on the information they have learned either directly or anecdotally from visiting with academic departments, talking with fellow academic advisors, or reading informational literature to enrich students' understanding of their opportunities.

Academic advisors more frequently elaborated on how their advising interactions help students match life goals with personal variables than on their approach to ensuring students understand the purpose of higher education. Still, a number of interviewees mentioned they feel responsible for communicating the institution's mission and the rationale behind educational policy. These interviewees also shared that they are equipped with answers for students who question the purpose of taking general education courses or how college course requirements relate to their career, without referring to the reasons blindly as "policy."

Tami encapsulated many of the responses interviewees provided regarding the role of helping students link personal attributes to life goals when she said an advisor's role is all-encompassing in assisting students in "figuring out a major that's a fit for their interests and skills or helping them understand the value of the General Education or understanding institutional policies or get connected to opportunities or think about their future life and career goals."

Assisting students in developing an educational plan. Helping students develop educational plans that align with their life goals is a role interviewees universally identified as connected to their position. Academic advisors stressed that their approach to helping students formulate an educational plan is not a process accomplished in isolation from other elements of

their interactions with advisees. As aforementioned, academic advisors help advisees identify their interests and abilities while concurrently assisting them connect those attributes to life goals. But, during these interactions, academic advisors are processing the information students provide to formulate a set of educational options (course selection and major exploration) they believe to fit the student's abilities and goals.

Connecting students to an appropriate major early on in their academic careers was cited frequently as an important responsibility of academic advisors. An academic plan provides structure to students' college experiences. Gina explained that her "advising is very much focused on helping them choose a major and a career because I don't want them to be here with me forever just taking GENED classes or classes that don't make any sense to them."[5] Interviewees understand that many students rely on academic advisors' knowledge of the institution and its educational offerings, policies, and climate to help them choose an educational plan that is a "good fit" for their abilities and goals. But, academic advisors displayed a strong commitment to requiring students to make their own academic decisions. Instead of steering students toward an educational plan, interviewees said they can best help students by offering options relevant to their goals, and then providing perspective as students consider how those options relate to their goals. Abe described his approach to this process:

> [I tell them] 'I'm not here to tell you what to do. I'm not here to point you, certainly, I'm here to help you find a direction but I'm, I'm not going to lead you down a path, you know? I'm here to talk about your ideas, your thoughts, your concerns and give you some options.'

Morna agreed that her role is to support students in choosing their paths and not mandate what is a good choice for them. She said, "we are not here to tell them what to do, we're not here to force them what to do, we're here to help them figure out the path. It's a, we're working

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[5] GENED refers to General Education.

together, it's a partnership." Abe and Morna's views of their roles as an educational resource largely captures interviewees' sentiments about helping students develop educational plans. Interviewees feel responsible for using their institutional knowledge to make students aware of academic programs that might appeal to them based on the details students provided during advising interactions and the requirements those programs entail. Once this information is provided, academic advisors offer an educated perspective on any number of issues students feel important to consider in making academic decisions. But, interviewees are careful to let students know they have complete freedom to make their educational decisions.

Most interviewees shared that they attempt to always be developmental in their advising approaches, but that some activities in educational planning require them to be prescriptive. Various examples of taking a prescriptive approach to educational planning were referenced, such as outlining timelines or course sequences, but these processes occur only after students decide for themselves what they intend to study based on their interests and goals. Most academic advisors mentioned helping students develop two- or four-year plans based purely on course catalogs and timetables during the advising interaction. Still, a number of interviewees shared that they still find ways to take an individualized approach to these activities by drawing from the information they learn about advisees during their interactions.

> …you have that student that, you know, has a horrible ACT and math. They tested in some remedial math or some deficiency math and now you look at their transcript and you start talking to them about math, you know, 'I see that you might be a little weak in this area,' and then it comes out of them saying, 'Yeah, I can't, you know, I struggle with math, you know, it's not my favorite subject, I've always struggled with math,' you know, so sometimes you can help in situations where well maybe they shouldn't start out with math that first semester, you know, maybe they should get used to college life first and then take their hard course the second semester. -Larry

Despite some interviewees' use of prescriptive approaches to class scheduling and sequencing, the consensus echoed Tami's belief that advisors are "someone who should be empowering students to take responsibility for their own education, their own academic plans, their own life and career goals."

Assisting students in developing decision-making skills. A responsibility to develop advisees' decision-making skills surfaced frequently within academic advisors' reflections of their roles. Interviewees largely contended they improve students' decision-making abilities directly and indirectly throughout the advising relationship. Most advisors referenced that they "help students make decisions," but descriptions of methods used to develop decision-making skills were non-specific. Instead, responses demonstrated academic advisors concentrate more on evaluating the ability than attempting to improve it:

> Decision-making ability, background, you know, how they've made decisions in the past or what, what, how many decisions they have the freedom to make in the past. Students become, when they enter college, many very overwhelmed by the amount [of] choices they have and the decisions they now need to make, and some are more equipped to do that than others. Some haven't really had to make any decisions for theirself, for themselves before so that, because I work with a lot of first-year college students, which are, on our campus, primarily fresh out of high school students, that's a big thing that I'm gauging with the student is their maturity level, their decision-making background and ability. -Lisa

Several interviewees provided more detail about their roles in developing students' ability to make decisions. They tied their role in enhancing decision-making skills to their position's status as an available informational resource for students to consult, believing students' confidence in decision making grows by knowing they have a supportive professional with whom they can share their ideas, discuss options, ask advice, and obtain accurate information. A number of academic advisors also shared that they model decision-making

techniques during advising interactions by helping students gather information regarding the decisions in question and the factors involved, laying out available options, and discussing the pros and cons of each choice.

> I guess if I would look at myself and say, 'What do I , what do I do?' it's kind of talk about, you know, what are the steps? What can you do to gather information? A sounding board I think is what I, I often find myself saying that to students, I'm, I'm a sounding board for you. -Abe

> So, I ask them questions trying to elicit the response from them as to 'what are the issues at hand, what are my alternatives? What are the questions that come to my mind? If it's situation A, then I'm supposed to ask these questions. If it's B, then I should be asking these questions'….my philosophy is that, 'I'm not an enabler in the sense that I feed you the information, I'm an enabler in the sense that I will give you all of the information you need and you have to make your decision.' Again, requiring them to make those decisions because what is good for them…they are the best judge of that. I should not be doing that for them. -Gina

The majority of interviewees, again, did not provide great detail about their methods for improving students' ability to make sound decisions. Most described their role in enhancing students' decision-making capabilities as providing students with information relevant to the given decision or directing them to resources that may offer supplemental information to consider, then serving as a supportive person to discuss concerns thereafter.

Providing accurate information. Interviewees maintained that teaching is a primary responsibility placed upon them by both their advisees and the institution. Every student must know certain baseline information to navigate the institution, and interviewees agreed that they are charged with passing this general knowledge on to their advisees. Information pertaining to academic and institutional policy, registration procedures, and campus resources and

opportunities was consistently cited as the broad concepts they routinely communicate to all of their advisees during initial advising exchanges.

In early advising sessions, Mary educates her advisees about basic academic and institutional policies such as how to "understand the major that they are declared, to understand the curriculum for that major, to also understand a little bit in terms of the jobs or careers associated with a chosen major, and to understand the general education program at that institution and any other requirements in terms of course work for the students…academic things like GPA, their performance in their classes, how does that affect their academic standing, whether they're in good academic standing, term honors or whether they're on probation…" Olive reiterated an initial need to explain curriculum, major requirements, and terminology before adding "I think that every student should know WINS and how to register on WINS…how to add, how to drop, how to change professors."[6] In addition to explaining academic program policies and registration procedures, Suzy reflected numerous interviewees' beliefs that a large part of an advisor's role is "to help inform students of the different resources available to them." Carrie summarized her responsibility as "teaching them the resources that are available to them and really helping them navigate the system."

After interviewees recounted the information they imparted during typical interactions with advisees new to campus, the commonalities pertaining to the perceptions of their role as information provider diverged. Several interviewees contended that general academic policy, registration procedures, and resource referrals represent the extent of information they feel compelled to teach students. Once Frank explained degree requirements and registration procedures, he felt "they are responsible, they should not have an excuse not to know how to

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[6] WINS is a computer-based student service program that allows students to self-perform a number of functions, including course registration.

graduate or know the course sequence because it is all there now." Advisors such as Frank hold students accountable for initiating the information-gathering process on their own terms by asking the questions they feel are important. As an academic advisor, they serve purely as an informational or referral resource to student-initiated questions.

Conversely, most interviewees view simply communicating standardized academic information and task-specific directions to each student as falling short of utilizing their full capacity as an academic advisor to promote college success. They feel there are other teaching opportunities they could proactively provide to help students succeed at the university. These interviewees shared that they assess each advisee's college readiness before deciding on additional information they will impart as well as on their methods for teaching it. Students' previous academic record, maturity, personality characteristics, social cues, and self-disclosure of personal background and interests were commonly cited by interviewees as important traits and variables to consider when working with students. Aaron shared an example to contrast the information that different students might require and provides his basis for making that determination:

> Each student is different, so if I have a student that is a first-generation college student, I think I'm more likely to, in our half-hour meeting, more likely to go over, 'How are you doing? What adjustments are you making in college? What are your study habits like?' As well as emphasizing the use of the different tutorial centers. This is a list of different academic support services. You know, less about, necessarily, 'This is what you need to take next semester. This, this, and this.' More of, the present, and what you can do to better yourself. Now, when I see a student that is coming from, you know, let's say, Marquette High School with a GPA, or an ACT of 29, that student comes in here and says, 'I want to go pre-med, I know exactly what I want to do,' well, that's more or less talking about the future saying, 'I hope you know, if you want to go to Madison for med school this is the GPA you want to have. It's imperative you get into Chem 102 because it's going to be this, this and this…' So, it's more talking about the future, whereas with

some of the other students, where they are first-generation students, you know, and their SES is a little

lower, you know that, talking about the different support services and living in the future…..or, living in

the present rather than focusing on the future because that student might be in remedial math and it's going

to be a five-year plan unless they take summer school. That can be completely overwhelming for some of

those students. -Aaron

Aaron's response illustrates how interviewees often rely heavily on their own intuition to gauge the topics students would benefit from covering in an advising session. Because of the wide range between students' college readiness, academic advisors differentiate instruction to avoid overwhelming them with information and causing anxiety. They may choose to teach only a few concepts until the student has had time to internalize the information, as Jeff explained about his advising approach, "Some students I feel like they're completely overwhelmed and they really don't have any idea of what's going on. I may slow down, I may not even go over a lot of the different things and I'll just hit home on two points."

Sifting through the specific examples and explanations of the information they provide students illuminates that many academic advisors view themselves as teachers of the important information students need to be successful. All interviewees shared that explaining basic concepts and procedures needed to navigate the university is closely tied to their position's responsibilities. All but a few interviewees attempt to take on a larger teaching role beyond dispersing prescribed information. Similarly, many interviewees appear to differentiate instruction in terms of delivery techniques and content they address based on students' characteristics and needs, as Carrie described:

…a student that doesn't know where to begin, it's kind of educating them on our online resources and

where they can look for information and kind of starting from square one, whereas the student that has

some things already mapped out, we can maybe work more on career development and some of their

academic interests, and looking at independent studies and internships. So, I think it goes in a little bit

different direction and we're able to get to that end point a little faster with a student that is prepared.

Jeff agreed:

> If they're already struggling in math 40 or 41, which is developmental algebra, you know, we don't need to
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> go over a four-year plan and we don't need to go over what it takes to get into the College of Business at
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> this point. We just need to focus on that first semester.

Even with discrepancies surfacing in perceptions of their teaching responsibilities,

interviewees stated that providing information regarding general education and an advisee's

major's curriculum, registration procedures, and locating resources is essential in helping to

empower students and promote academic success.

Referring students to other institutional or community support services. Academic

advisors feel they help broaden students' college experiences in ways that span beyond the

classroom. In describing their advising practice, each interviewee demonstrated that they

commonly refer students to institutional resources that support their unique interests and needs.

The resource referrals they cited ranged from specific individuals to community offerings.

In many of the same ways academic advisors contended that they shape the entirety of

their approach to advising students, interviewees combine the information they obtain from

advisees with their institutional knowledge to make appropriate referrals to institutional services

or opportunities. They consider academic performance, students' self-reported concerns and

issues, and their own intuition to direct advisees to services and opportunities they feel can

benefit them.

Tutoring services, including math labs and writing centers, represent the most prominent

referrals academic advisors provide students. In fact, tutoring-related services' information

revealed itself to be standardized information academic advisors address during initial appointments with students. Interviewees intend to make their advisees aware of which tutorial services are available for their use and how to access them regardless of whether students exhibit a need. Jill echoed a shared sentiment among academic advisors when she said it is her responsibility to:

> …make sure that they know about the tutoring learning center and what types of tutoring are offered there and, you know, we have content and then what we call reading and writing tutoring, and how you might use reading and writing tutoring to actually help you with content if that's not offered, they're kind of the ins-and-outs of how the tutoring center works.

Interviewees refer students to tutoring services throughout the academic advising relationship, encouraging their use whenever students display academic concerns. Some advisors said they try to help students analyze the roots of academic problems, such as study habits, but more often than not refer them back to the course's professor, study groups, or tutoring services, as their role is to provide students options for where to seek academic support. Suzy described her typical approach to working with students she knows to be struggling with academic work:

> I think, you know, I've really tried to just encourage them to reach out and talking with the instructor, go to the Tutoring Center, get to know somebody in the class, but I guess I don't really go beyond that, beyond that point just because of time constraints.

Several academic advisors brought to light that students come to advising meetings seeking academic support even when class performance is not an issue. In talking about the information she provides to students, Olive takes responsibility in referring students to appropriate personnel if they have specific questions about an educational path or career plan that span beyond her knowledge as a 'generalist':

> I think we are responsible for making sure the students know the correct people, based on their major, their academic department, and their college. You know, the College of Business is in _____ Hall, so they

should know that if they have specific questions that they should go there because you know that is where they are going to be advised later on down the road anyway. So I think that making sure they are aware of the correct people based on their major, their career, their academic program….so, I think we have those responsibilities.

Interviewees emphasized that students often require support services that are not strictly academic in nature. Advisees seem to rely on their advisors to either know the answers to any questions they have concerning the institution or point them in the direction of someone who does. As Kate said, academic advisors are "that point person for someone who has questions about academics, or financial stuff, or residence life, to be that person that knows most of the information, maybe not a master of all of them, but, you know, a jack-of-all-trades." When summarizing her advising approach, Kim explained her consideration for students' backgrounds before offering referrals:

> …if I'm working with a student who I know has no brothers or sisters or no, you know, family that's attended college, I think that that's a particular characteristic that you know I need to be sensitive to and maybe spend a little bit more time explaining the resources and referring them out to the right campus facilities and programs and stuff that will be able to get some of their questions answered.

Finally, interviewees shared that they try to help students develop support networks that foster student involvement. They refer students to clubs and organizations, work-study opportunities, extra-curricular events, and any number of other activities that promote students' involvement outside of the classroom. As they do with helping students connect academic interests and values to educational and career goals, academic advisors again probe for students' interests during the advising interaction to make referrals they believe will appeal to them.

Interviewees provided substantial feedback regarding their role as a referral resource; with the variety of resources they refer students to spanning academic, administrative, and social aspects of college attendance.

Assisting students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans. Similarities across interviews revealed that academic advisors view their role as a professional who provides students information, options, advice, and insight, but charges advisees to make their own decisions. Within the descriptions they shared about their roles, interviewees recounted instances when students misjudged their own abilities, interests, or obstacles and looked to the advisor to help adjust old goals and plans or establish new ones. Lisa provided her perspective about the responsibility she feels to help students reassess and readjust goals:

> I don't think that advisors should assume when students come in that they have the answers to those questions, and students may think they do, but those answers often change. What they want to do while they're here and those reasons change so it's our job to help them through that process of figuring all that out and adjusting when their initial goals or aspirations change, and helping them make a plan as they're going through…

Academic advisors referenced students' goals changing due to interests, but more frequently shared that their assistance in helping reevaluate goals comes as a result of students overestimating their academic ability to succeed in a specific academic program. When students struggle or fail to meet program requirements for their expressed major of choice, academic advisors help them assess and decide on other educational options that lead to similar career goals. Aaron provided an example of how he might help students reframe their goals and plans after students struggle academically:

> …let's say their first semester they get a 1.2 and they want to go into business where business is a 2.8. I think it is our job to reevaluate things with the student and say, 'These are some other majors that are in the area of business.' You will not get a BBA, but you'll have some of that background, you know, whether it is a Communication degree where you are talking with people, and sales, and stuff like that.

Handling student situations such as the one Aaron described proved to be fairly commonplace among advisors. In a conversational manner, similar to the way they originally help students identify their interests, strengths, and goals, academic advisors use tangible information such as recent academic performance in follow-up interactions to help students realize and accept the limitations preventing them from achieving a goal. Once limitations or obstacles are established, they assist students in reassessing their strengths and interests, provide corresponding academic options, and help them establish new goals. Frank talked about a student to whom he suggested a new educational plan to consider after repeated attempts to obtain his original goal:

> One kid wants to be in education…can't pass the Praxis. You know he can't….the damn PHYS ED kid can't pass the anatomy and phys. But, the kid's a real verbal kid, he's a wrestler, so he went over to Communications and he's doing real well. He goes over to comms and he gets two A's in those courses and it's because he can bull, he can bull****, he's a good talker. Well, he can do well in those classes.

Helping new students develop a broad educational plan that allows them to choose a number of options later on in their academic careers, or having students consider "fall-back" plans in early advising appointments, are techniques several academic advisors employ with students. They mentioned proactively coming up with options that would help later on in case a need arose to transition to new goals and plans. Academic advisors utilize and share tacit knowledge with students about specific academic programs to illustrate to their advisees why they should prepare for scenarios of original goals not working out:

> I always tell them, 'You've got to have a plan B because I don't know what your odds are of getting into that program. So yes, plan A is nursing, I encourage you to, I will make effort that you try and get into that, but you need to have a plan B.' So, those would be some institutional variables in my mind that, 'Yes this is your program, but what is your plan B in case you don't get into that program?' -Gina

Interviewees felt that even those students not in danger of falling short of their goals expect their academic advisors to monitor their progress. Like others, Frank explained that most students "just need to be reassured on things." Students rely on their academic advisors to serve as a "second set of eyes" and make sure they do not overlook any requirements needing to be fulfilled. Therefore, academic advisors continuously help advisees monitor progress toward expressed goals, as well as reevaluate and adjust academic plans if necessary. Interviewees said they assume this role during their first meetings as they know from experience new students' interests and goals are likely to change early and often.

Providing information about students to the institution, college, academic departments, or some combination thereof. In addressing the individual responsibilities placed upon their position, a number of interviewees cited keeping statistics for their office, serving as a liaison to an academic department, or tracking and monitoring "at-risk" students' academic performance. These responsibilities would likely pertain to providing information about students to the institution, college, or academic departments. Additionally, the researcher's own experience supports the assumption that academic advisors commonly have various information-reporting responsibilities connected to their roles. When asked specifically to describe this role of an academic advisor, however, no interviewee went into further detail beyond stating they provided student information to various stakeholders.

Additional finding: Building relationships. Although academic advisors did not reflect upon their roles to fit within the context of fulfilling standards, the CAS Standards offer a framework to categorize findings. Interviewees' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities by and large aligned with these standards. Interviewees, however, attached an additional role to their

positions that exists outside this framework. In talking about their roles, academic advisors repeatedly identified relationship building as a responsibility they hold for themselves.

Most interviewees associate an aptitude for forming relationships with students as the driving force behind effectiveness as an academic advisor. When a relationship does not exist, academic advisors find students are apprehensive about fully sharing their backgrounds, interests, abilities, goals, and concerns. In these cases, the advising interactions are not productive. Lisa explained the importance she places on the student-advisor relationship to her advising process:

> An academic advisor, if they're doing it right, really should begin every interaction with a student by having that relationship building first and foremost, an advisor needs to be someone that the student trusts and wants to form a relationship with and feels comfortable with.

The multitude of techniques academic advisors described about their approach to cultivating relationships can be briefly summarized as familiarizing themselves with students' backgrounds, exhibiting respect and concern for their well-being, establishing trust by offering accurate information and poignant advice, and being welcoming and accessible. Academic advisors feel students are likely to respond to this approach and demeanor by being receptive to the academic advising process. Gina offered her perspective:

> …building that relationship on mutual respect and trust I think is important. And, taking it from there….you can only advise so much, but unless they know that you care, and unless they have that belief in you, they're not going to listen to you. So, when I see my students, I don't start lecturing that you should do this or you should do that, first thing is I need to know who they are.

When students know their academic advisors are supporting them in the college environment, it helps "them feel comfortable to ask questions," as described by Carrie. Students' questions, in turn, allow academic advisors to further assess their needs beyond requiring an

understanding of prescribed information. With students' needs known, academic advisors

individualize the advising interaction.

Without referencing specific student development theory to support their beliefs, 12

interviewees shared the conviction that most students needed to form a "connection" with at least

one individual on campus who had their best interests in mind to be successful. Interviewees feel

they help steer students in the right direction to make these campus connections. Many believe

they themselves fulfill students' needs for a campus connection, and, because of that, promote

student success. Jamie explained how she hopes her students view her as playing a positive role

in their college experiences: "Success, I think…leaving college feeling like people wanted you to

succeed, so at least you had some connections, so hopefully I'm, if possible, one of those."

The role of building relationships does not fit within the eight CAS Standards, but

interviewees overwhelmingly recognized it as a responsibility of their positions. Therefore,

building relationships appears to simultaneously contribute to satisfying CAS Standards while

also representing a by-product of fulfilling those Standards during academic advising

interactions.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of the Student Outcomes They Seek to Enhance

Over the course of an interview, each academic advisor communicated a multitude of

student outcomes they strove to promote through their interactions with students. A majority of

these desired outcomes were inherent within the advisors' descriptions of their roles and

responsibilities. For example, all interviewees recognize providing accurate information as a

function of their position. Naturally, academic advisors feel students' comprehension of the

information advisors communicate to them constitutes a desired outcome. But, when asked

pointedly to identify desirable outcomes they hold for their advisees, interviewees echoed a hope

that the academic advising process culminated in reaching an overarching goal of equipping students with the knowledge, skills, confidence, and sense of responsibility needed to independently manage all aspects of their educational experience.

Interviewees referred to this outcome in many ways, such as "taking ownership," "gaining academic independence," "empowered," and "becoming self-advocates." Despite variability in labeling, students' independence in successfully navigating the university represents the end result interviewees link to their successful facilitation of the academic advising process. They conveyed that their sharing of institutional knowledge and providing assistance towards skill development are aimed at enabling advisees to become responsible for their own education. Successful academic advising for many, therefore, is characterized by advisees gradually needing less academic advising services. Or, as Rosy said about the outcomes she hopes to foster, "In some ways I kinda want to put myself out of a job." Similarly, after providing a thorough description of her advising approach, Janelle replied, "My outcome is that they don't need me anymore."

Most interviewees were not as forthright as Rosy or Janelle in their responses regarding students assuming competent ownership of their academic careers. Still, their responses demonstrate they hold the same goal of delivering a comprehensive advising intervention that imparts students' the ability to transition to the university and increasingly take ownership of their college experience by tailoring it to their specific needs, interests, and goals. This maturation process results in academic advisors becoming progressively less "hands-on" in terms of steering students toward answers.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Their Responsibility and Influence toward Persistence

  Responsibility toward persistence. Only Larry and Kim cited student graduation as an outcome they sought to achieve through the academic advising process prior to being asked directly about their perceptions regarding academic advisors' relationship to student persistence. When asked specifically to share their views about their role in persistence, academic advisors mutually contend that many variables determine whether a student succeeds in college, but earning a degree is ultimately each student's responsibility alone. Seventeen interviewees, however, allowed that they have a measure of accountability in ensuring their advisees graduate, but they vary in both the reasons why and the degree to which they feel responsible for this outcome.

  Academic advisors' sense of responsibility toward persistence was expressed as an obligation they owe to both their institutions and advisees. Interviewees shared that student graduation rates are important to administration, and thus, there exists an implied responsibility for academic advising to help students persist. Gina referenced this institutional goal as the reason she and her colleagues "need to make sure [students] persist in their tracks and graduate in four or five years." Jamie, conversely, believes her students' ambitions dictate that she view persistence as an important advising outcome because "probably 90, 90-95% of the students, that's what they want - is to obtain a degree - so then I guess I see that as also my goal is for them to do that." A number of interviewees shared similar sentiments, expressing that their responsibility is to assist students reach their goals. As most interviewees subscribed to Rosy's assumption "that they're all here to earn a degree," they hold themselves accountable for helping students persist. Mary tied the shared institutional and student objective of graduation together in stating why she feels responsible for her advisees persisting:

I also see that this institution is kind of like a business - okay? We are kind of like selling, you know, that

degree which I think is worth something and beneficial to have. But yes, this is in some ways kind of like a

business, then yes, we want people to, to stay here and that's usually, you know, their goal is they want,

you know, to be happy here and, and, and learn things obviously and improve their intellect, but yes, they

want to get that diploma that means something in the real world, that diploma, you know, an employer is

going to see that and it's going to be worth something and it's going to represent a lot of things so, so yeah,

if this was a business, of course I wouldn't want to lose my customers.

Although most academic advisors agree that their responsibilities to the institution and their advisees necessitate they view graduation as a desirable outcome, their responses were mixed in terms of the liability they feel when students either voluntarily depart or involuntarily fail to persist.

Interviewees revealed their advisees' best interests take priority over any institutional goals regarding student outcomes. They recognize that not every advisee is suited to their university's environment and that it would be unethical to attempt to foster a misaligned outcome for that individual. Contending that graduation rates should not guide every advising initiative, Abe explained, "Persistence is important but it's not the, I think student's kind of determine what they need sometimes and sometimes what they need isn't here." Lisa also believes "not every student can or should" persist, and will not impose upon her advisees that graduation alone defines their success or failure. Five interviewees even volunteered that they had helped students decide to leave their institutions to pursue other options that better fit their interests and needs. Similarly, academic advisors did not hold themselves at fault when advisees failed to persist when they were academically unfit for the institution or did not take their responsibilities seriously. Therefore, interviewees only assume accountability for advisees' persistence when the advisee personally holds graduation as a goal, is suited to the academic environment, and assumes responsibility as a student.

Two interviewees disagreed that their positions entail a responsibility to see their advisees graduate. Frank and Olive both felt that they were answerable to the institution for providing students accurate information regarding policy, procedures, resources, and majors. Application of that information in becoming academically successful, however, was entirely their advisees' prerogative. Frank described his feeling that academic advisors should not be held responsible for students making it to graduation, "I think we can tell them things, but I still think motivation and persistence comes internally." Olive elaborated on students being entirely accountable for their outcomes:

> …as an advisor, we're here in place, all of our students have to see us, it's a requirement. They are the ones that have the ultimate responsibility in seeking us out, coming to the appointments. We can't teach them all of that if they don't come to the appointments. So, I, no, I don't think it's totally my responsibility if they don't come back.

Influence toward persistence. Most academic advisors feel a sense of responsibility for helping students achieve goals, but ultimately hold students accountable for their own outcomes because they must satisfy academic requirements. Rosy punctuated this viewpoint, "They don't want me taking their chemistry tests for them." As such, academic advisors contend that their advisees' graduation rates are not representative of their advising effectiveness because too many other factors contribute to student persistence. Furthermore, academic advisors pointed out students eventually receive advising from faculty advisors as their academic career progresses. Thus, depending on choice of major, interviewees' advising relationship with students rarely spans beyond three or four semesters. Despite these qualifiers, 18 of 19 interviewees believe they are positioned to positively influence student persistence through the academic advising process. In providing academic advising during students' first semesters of enrollment, they lay the groundwork in enhancing persistence. Abe commented about his role in impacting persistence in

students' early academic careers: "I kind of joke sometimes, I feel like I, I feel like I lay the foundation sometimes but I don't see the house go up."

Interviewees believe students' effective use of academic advising resources is pivotal in enhancing their ability to persist. "I think it would be very hard for a student not [sic] to get to graduation if they didn't have any advising," Kate said about academic advising's role in promoting student persistence. Academic advisors referred back to the nature of their position, in terms of its multiple roles and responsibilities, as to why they serve as such a powerful influence on graduation rates. They perceive that students often come to college with uncertainty about their interests and goals, college policy and procedures, educational options and requirements, resources available to them when experiencing academic or personal challenges, and opportunities to enhance satisfaction with their overall college experience. If left unresolved, students struggle with transitioning and finding success in the college environment. Interviewees believe they are the college personnel that expose and clarify students' uncertainty towards these issues. Additionally, they repeatedly insisted that the student-advisor relationships they foster are equally integral to producing graduation returns, as they instill confidence that interests are being looked after by a qualified professional member of the campus. Morna and Kim explained students' reliance on their advisor for both information and support to persist:

> …probably the only consistent person that they have here on campus that they can talk to on a regular basis when needed and when they have questions, and we get questions about everything, not just classes. They see their instructors, but their instructors don't sit here like we do one-on-one. You know, if they're having a problem at home or with a roommate or financial aid or this and that, they can't go to their instructor, so we are the only person other than perhaps their friends, that they can get qualified professional advice from about any and everything. –Morna

…having an advisor who cares about the student, I think, really makes all the difference in, in students persisting on campuses and my previous experiences have kind of all stated that if students make one connection with the faculty staff on campus, one person that they feel like they can connect with and get what they need from, they're more likely to persist. So if I, as an advisor, am, am that one person for the students, as long as they, they know that they can come to me, I think they're more likely to persist. -Kim

Academic advisors argued that a qualified, trusted resource is especially important for freshmen to know they can consult when needed. They serve as that "security blanket" for freshmen, providing them the confidence of knowing that they do not have to navigate the institution on their own. As academic advisors' largest advisee population is first-year students, they are instrumental in easing the college transition which contributes to first-year retention and leads to persistence.

…it's confusing to navigate everything that they need to know their freshman year and I think that my job is to kind of help them navigate all of that. And if I, if I feel like I'm introducing them to the right resources, I'm answering their questions, I'm available, that that's going to I guess help them persist and move on because they're getting all the information they need from their advisor. -Kim

Academic advisors believe the advising relationship they build with students, characterized repeatedly as providing them information, insight, advice, and support, has a powerful but immeasurable impact on student success. Therefore, even though the advising relationship ends prior to graduation, advisors feel that student persistence is a residual effect of the advising process.

I kinda see the impact that we have carries on two or three years down the line. I guess I would say that you know what I do, do or what we do our first year or through their second year does carry on to their second, or third, or fourth year towards that graduation day. -Jeff

Suzy agreed that academic advising continues to benefit students throughout their academic careers, stating that she conveys the baseline information needed to navigate the

university and prepare them for working with faculty advisors that advise on academic and career-related issues:

> …hopefully get them to the level of putting their own ideas off into it so when they're meeting with their advisors in sophomore, junior, senior year that they're prepared, they know exactly what they need to do to get to graduation.

Finally, Mary shared her belief that academic advising contributes to persistence, stating that access to an informational resource is fundamental in helping students navigate the college environment:

> I'm not saying that, you know, we work miracles and it's all because of us, but I just, I really feel that somebody comes in, they have questions, they get their questions answered, even if they're not happy with their answers, at least they feel like okay, I can go there and I can get, you know, some type of assistance and we do, we use our jobs not just to help people pick out classes but we use our jobs to I think, you know, to help a student get through college.

Frank was the lone interviewee who disagreed that academic advisors positively impact students' ability to persist, citing students' motivation as the sole determinant in chances for graduation. He believes that students demonstrating a strong internal drive to graduate find a way to do so without assistance. In spite of verbally expressing this belief, he referenced playing a significant role in satisfying students' needs for information, connecting them to appropriate majors and resources, providing them an academic plan, and offering advice and support. Still, when asked directly about his impact on student persistence, he maintained that "a kid that's not very persistent and not very goal-oriented is going to see me twice a semester and now I'm goal oriented and persistent. It's not going to happen."

Except for Frank, however, academic advisors believe that the roles they embody and the responsibilities they assume in their advising relationships with students contribute to persistence. When asked how their consideration for persistence is embodied in their academic

advising approaches, their answers were largely vague and failed to expand upon their previous reflections regarding their roles and responsibilities as an academic advisor. Rather, academic advisors continually reinforced their beliefs that their assistance toward helping students come to realizations, exploring academic programs in alignment with their attributes, developing an academic plan, providing information about policy and resources, evaluating their progress towards goals, and serving as a reliable resource when questions arise contributes to students reaching their educational goals. As academic advisors in this study claimed students most often identify graduation as their primary goal, the vast majority felt their facilitation of the advising process contributes to helping advisees attain their degrees.

As student persistence is a primary focus of this paper, further elaboration on academic advisors' perceptions of their role in this outcome will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of WTCS Transfers' Adjustment and Persistence at UWS Four-Year Institutions

Interviewees' advisees predominantly consist of new freshmen and continuing students undecided in their major, but they do advise other student populations. They also advise new transfer students yet to attain sophomore standing, choose a major, or gain admission into a competitive-entrance program such as nursing or education. Their transfer advisees include those who attended a WTC prior to enrolling at the UWS four-year school. Interviewees were asked to reflect upon their experience advising this transfer sub-population.

The majority of interviewees prefaced their accounts of advising WTCS transfers by first emphasizing that each student exhibits his or her own individual traits despite affiliation with any subgroup. Yet, even those most careful to indicate each student was unique acknowledge that the WTCS transfer population is distinctive from other sub-populations they advise. In their experience, interviewees had generally come to believe previous WTCS experience fails to

benefit students intending to transfer to a UWS four-year institution. Rather, WTCS enrollment is often viewed as detrimental to students' transition to the UWS four-year institution environment. Additionally, interviewees generalized a number of characteristics to the WTCS transfer population that impact their UWS experience in terms of campus adjustment and ability to persist. Within these reflections, academic advisors provided insight into their consideration of WTCS transfer status in facilitating the advising process. Finally, academic advisors spoke to their approaches to easing adjustment and promoting persistence for their WTCS transfer advisees.

Advantages of WTCS enrollment prior to UWS four-year institution enrollment. Academic advisors offered only limited positive feedback about the benefits WTCS enrollment fosters for those students transferring to the UWS four-year institution. In fact, "experience" emerged as the sole advantage interviewees believe these students gain as a result of their WTCS attendance.

Several interviewees stated that WTCS transfers have a better understanding of the college environment than new freshmen, which made them better able to adjust to a UWS four-year campus. Only Kate and Carrie, however, connected this experience to specific benefits of adjusting to the UWS institution:

> Well, like I think the readiness of them to be here you know specifically, I, I guess I would judge the 2-year student to be more ready to come here than a, a new freshman just because they know the ropes of a college, they know how important it is to get to class, and how much studying you have to do usually… -Kate

> I feel like they are a little bit more savvy about understanding the educational process and understanding the scheduling, understanding what is expected of them a little bit more. -Carrie

Other interviewees mentioning that WTCS transfers benefit from their WTCS experience

provided only vague reasons to support their opinions. For example, Abe said that WTCS transfers have a better sense than freshmen of what academic subjects mean, such as sociology. Larry commented that WTCS transfers benefit from having worked with a professor before. Gina echoed Carrie in finding them "savvy." They did not elaborate further on how this experience bestows an advantage upon entering the UWS, and the benefit of experience was relative only to new freshmen and not transfers from other institutions.

Academic advisors offered slightly more feedback regarding their perceptions of student characteristics WTCS transfers commonly exhibit that appear to engender a positive connotation. In their reflections of working with these students, several academic advisors commented that they tend to be excited about attending the UWS and driven to succeed more so than other populations. Similar to advisors' reflections on experience, their reasons were vague regarding how excitement and motivation benefitted students' UWS careers.

Two academic advisors mentioned that WTCS transfers come in more enthusiastic about being on campus than most of their other advisees. Aaron finds:

> …they are so excited to be here that their willingness and their openness is so much better… A lot of the technical students, they're just excited to be at a four-year campus instead of going to a place that looks like an apartment building…they're coming here where you have halls and buildings and students walking around. You know, I think that that really helps them a lot. It's just the whole social experience here.

Aaron feels strongly that WTCS transfer students' happiness and fervor of being on the four-year campus is to their benefit in making a successful transition. Larry also noted his WTCS transfers are usually more enthusiastic than his other advisees:

> Those students, you know, if they've been successful there, usually are coming in with the attitude of, 'Hey, I'm excited about being here, I'm looking forward to starting,' and probably more so than a transfer student that just is switching schools or, 'I want to get back to home' or you know, 'I didn't like my experience, I was too far away from home and I'm coming back to _____.' -Larry

Linked to excitement, several academic advisors alluded to their WTCS transfers commonly demonstrating more motivation, drive, or focus concerning their academic pursuits than other student sub-populations. Interviewees find WTCS transfers are frequently attaching their enrollment at the UWS to career advancement or change, proving something to themselves and others, or paying for their education themselves. As such, interviewees believe both this internal and external motivation is a benefit to students' degree pursuits.

> …they come and tell me, 'You know, I've wasted all these past 5, 7, 10 years. I've been kind of wild, and, you know, just…I've been to Arizona, or just went there. And, now I'm back to Wisconsin and to family. I know exactly what I want to do, and I just want to finish up.' I find them motivated enough. -Gina

> I think that comes with working with students that started at the Tech who I know placement testing or high school background did not necessarily set them up to dive right into a UW School or any 4-year college, so this is kinda their way to prove that they can do college. -Jamie

Some interviewees believe WTCS educational experience impacts the advising exchange. They feel that WTCS transfers grasp procedural information more quickly than new freshmen. This comprehension allows advising interactions to focus on topics that are more individualized to specific needs and interests. Additionally, interviewees feel previous WTCS experience gave students a greater appreciation for the advising process and prompted them to consult advisors as a resource more often.

Advisees linked WTCS transfers' motivation to a high level of conscientiousness about their academic plans. Interviewees find that this diligence surfaces in advising interactions, as WTCS transfers particularly rely on them for extra advice and assistance to ensure they are on track to meet their goals. But, academic advisors also expressed that WTCS transfers' drive sometimes makes for frustrating advising interactions when they disregard advice and enroll in

more credits in an effort to lessen their time to degree, or rely on the advising relationship to quell every anxiety regarding course scheduling.

Disadvantages of WTCS enrollment prior to UWS four-year institution enrollment.
Academic advisors view the WTCS population to be at a disadvantage in making successful academic and social transitions to the UWS campus. Interviewees explained that WTCS transfers' campus adjustment difficulties result in less likelihood of realizing academic success, maximizing opportunities, or finding satisfaction in their UWS educational experiences. Academic advisors identified three factors as the basis for holding these perceptions: 1) there are stark differences between all aspects of the UWS and WTCS institutions; 2) WTCS transfers' fail to attain accurate transfer policy; and 3) that their WTCS transfer advisees more often face circumstances that complicate their UWS enrollment. Interviewees' perceptions of these issues are divided below for reporting reasons only. In sharing their general reflections of advising this population, interviewees continuously alternated between, or merged together, these three variables in theorizing why WTCS transfers advisees often struggle at the UWS.

Heightened rigor. Interviewees observed that WTCS transfers are prone to struggle with various academic aspects of a UWS four-year institution. Experiencing heightened rigor at the UWS four-year institution was most commonly cited as the root cause of their academic hardships. Seventeen of 19 interviewees believe the WTCS is less rigorous than their UWS institution. Jill's opinion that her institution's courses are simply more difficult than WTCS courses and that WTCS transfers initially struggle with this heightened rigor was a recurrent theme across interviews:

> I don't want it to sound arrogant, I don't want it to sound elitist, but those classes just are not as rigorous as they are here…I mean, I don't think it, that they would say that the Tech Schools are akin to high school level rigor, I think it is a step up from high school level rigor but I think they, they, it's always kind of a

rude awakening to them about how much more difficult the classes are here....great grades over at the Tech

aren't going to necessarily mean that they're going to sail through classes here.

Interviewees also explained that the routinized study skills and time management techniques students developed, in conjunction with the course-credit loads they managed while at a WTC, often are not sufficient at the UWS four-year institution. Therefore, except for Jamie, who believes the academic demand is equal, interviewees agreed with Larry that WTCS transfers will find classwork to be "a little more challenging here" and that more time and effort will be needed to match the level of academic success they experienced at their WTC.

In addition to WTCS transfers plainly finding classes to be more challenging at the UWS four-year institution, academic advisors believe that curricular misalignment is largely to blame for these students' struggles with rigor. They also attribute WTCS transfers' hardships after transfer to their previous WTCS courses being diluted or misaligned in terms of content. For example, Kate described how students who fulfilled UWS course pre-requirements at a WTC are surprised at their unpreparedness for the next sequential course at the UWS institution. She paraphrased a common scenario she hears from her WTCS transfer advisees majoring in accounting: "If I already took Accounting 249 and another class at, you know, _____TC, why is this next accounting so hard here?" Gaps in course substance, she explained, illustrate that they missed content needed to succeed in the subsequent course through no fault of their own. Therefore, nearly all academic advisors agree with Kim that WTCS transfers are "probably going to be less prepared" for the UWS four-year academic environment as a result of less-rigorous and misaligned WTCS coursework.

Contrast in academic environment. While 17 interviewees cited rigor as an obstacle to WTCS transfers' transition to the UWS four-year campus, all 19 assume differences in educational philosophy and focus, instructional methods, and classroom experience pose a

challenge. During advising sessions, academic advisors said WTCS transfers frequently express that the academic culture at the UWS campus is much different than that at the WTC, and that it is difficult to adapt to these changes after growing accustomed to the nature of WTCS education.

Academic advisors observed that WTCS transfers, in general, have more difficulty finding relevancy in the courses they are taking than other sub-populations. Morna explained that it is hard for WTCS transfers to grasp the rationale of general education courses when at the "WTC you go in and you take the classes that are relevant to what it is you're going to do and all these other 60 credits of things that have absolutely nothing to do with your business degree you don't take." Interviewees also assume this population's experience in hands-on, practical, and applied courses at the WTCS is the reason many struggle to attach value to taking courses not directly related to a career. Lisa provided the most extensive summary of this frequently cited challenge advisors attach to WTCS attendance:

> The Technical Colleges are much more, I think, practical application of knowledge. How do you use it in an actual job, what, and students can very literally see connections between what they do in the classroom and what they do, what they're going to do in their job. And just the way the class is structured, much more hands-on, much more, very much more practical versus coming to a four-year institution where you have to take general education courses that on the surface seem highly irrelevant to anything you would do in your future career. The courses are much more reading based and writing based and asking you to think about and reflect on how you feel about this or to research this from different angles and so it can very much feel irrelevant, unimportant, busy work, how is this going to help me because they've been in this situation where they're seeing and is being, and the lines are being connected for them on how it's going to translate and that doesn't happen, at least not at the beginning, when you get further into a major, you get a little more of that sometimes, but not always so that I think creates a huge challenge.

Academic advisors feel the change in curricular focus is far greater for WTCS transfers than any other transfer population. They also suppose freshmen adapt to the educational structure

of the UWS better than WTCS transfers because they have yet to be socialized into a higher

education curriculum that diverges from this format. Abe explained this predicament:

> It's almost like sometimes the more credits they have brought in from the Technical Colleges they might
>
> have you know, it's almost like they become more ingrained in the, in a different way of approaching
>
> things so it's, it seems, I think the Technical College students sometimes have a hard time grasping the
>
> rather fuzzy nature of majors to careers to the world of work.

In addition, interviewees pointed to a tendency for WTCS transfers to express a hardship

in adapting to the stark contrast between instructors' teaching styles, accessibility, and grading

policies as well as the sheer size of class enrollments. As aforementioned, interviewees believe

courses are more rigorous and theoretical at the UWS four-year institution. But, they also feel the

WTCS did not prepare its students for the fast-paced and lecture-heavy courses that dominate

UWS four-year institution instruction. While at the WTC, their advisees grew accustomed to

smaller class sizes, interacting and receiving individual attention from their professors, and being

graded on numerous minor assignments throughout the semester. As the UWS institution's

academic environment and culture are polar opposites from the WTCS experience, interviewees

said it was only natural that their students would struggle academically. Although several believe

the WTCS instructional model of smaller class sizes, more accessible professors, and hands-on

instruction is quite possibly superior to the UWS model, they suspect students' immersion into

that educational atmosphere impedes their ability to adapt after transfer. Jamie and Lisa

explained this point of view:

> You know, there is a segment of the Technical school students who aren't quite ready. I'll be honest with
>
> that. That because of that individual attention they're really not necessarily ready for the bigger class where
>
> you do a lot of stuff on your own and you maybe have two tests and that [sic] I've heard from a lot of
>
> students too is, 'Wow! I knew, I've heard that,' but they didn't know what that was like so that was a hard
>
> transition for them too. So I'd say those are the kind of things that I see. You do have people who are a

little more aware, but you have a lot who aren't quite ready because they liked that and that's why they

chose to start off at a Technical school. –Jamie

Very often they have a difficult time transferring and being successful at _____, that's what I know,

because the type of learning and class environment is very different from the Technical Colleges to the four

year. -Lisa

Frustration with transfer process. Interviewees expressed that WTCS transfers'

academic plans while attending the WTC often created a barrier to academic success at the UWS

four-year institution for reasons other than discrepancies in courses' rigor, pedagogy, and

classroom environment. As a result of misinformation or misunderstanding about the transfer

process, students' course selections while at the WTC frequently fail to align with UWS

academic policy. WTCS transfer advisees routinely learn during orientation that their WTC

courses did not transfer, transferred in only as elective credits, or did not fulfill the necessary pre-

required courses needed to either begin or progress in their chosen majors. Consequently,

interviewees believe WTCS transfers lose credits and class standing to the transfer process, are

required to repeat courses of similar content to fulfill requirements, or must delay their academic

progression more than any other transfer population. Rosy and Jeff offered summaries of the

frustrations WTCS transfers are prone to encounter when transferring to the UWS four-year

school because of misunderstanding or misinformation about transfer policies:

> …a lot of time they sorta lose some of their credits because we don't take all of the same credits and so
>
> they, they feel like they're transferring in here with 45 credits and then they get to campus…, they found
>
> out they have 10 and so that's very frustrating for them because they feel that they, you know, lost two
>
> semesters of work, and then it's sometimes the, the level of classes aren't congruent and so, you know,
>
> maybe they're a pre-business major and they've taken accounting, you know, at their, at their school but it
>
> doesn't count over here so, you know, they're feeling like, 'Well I already took that,' and it's hard to
>
> explain that, well it's a different level course, it doesn't meet the requirements here, so sometimes they feel

like they have to repeat classes and that can be very frustrating for them too. -Rosy

…they are students here, and they have no idea, they've done two years worth of credits, they didn't complete their Associates but they got somewhere close to 60 credits. First off, they figure out that maybe half of those credits didn't even transfer over and they don't even realize it and then second of all they realize that some of the classes that they've taken don't apply to the program that they want to do here and it's as if they're, you know, they did four semesters worth of work at a 2-year school and they really only had one semester's completed worth of work here at _____. So lack of knowledge of the program, lack of knowledge when it comes to transferring, what will and will not transfer over, those are probably the two biggest things, so, and then I think lack of advising, I guess their advising experience based on what they have told me or certain students have told me is definitely not the same that they would get here as far as the attention to detail and the things that we review. -Jeff

Interviewees believe the "disconnect" students experienced between their WTCS coursework and UWS transfer credit policies has cumulative negative effects on their likelihood of academic success. Janelle reflected on the disaffection her WTCS transfer advisees have had towards the UWS in not valuing their time, cost, and effort at the WTCS:

The first thing that comes to mind is their frustration coming in with that they've taken quite a few, even those that haven't earned an Associate's Degree, that they've taken quite a few classes there and they don't transfer here. So they may have done 45 credits at the Tech and then they come here and feel like they're starting over…you have somebody who's just gone to school for two years and they come here and you tell them, 'Hey, that's great, but you have another four to get a Bachelor's Degree,' and a lot of times the frustration is, 'I just, I just put in these two years, I'm getting a Bachelor's Degree six years and all this money for that?'

In contrast to courses failing to transfer in as credits, a number of academic advisors mentioned that WTCS transfers are occasionally negatively affected by transferring from the WTCS because they took too many transferrable credits without choosing a course of study. Olive explained that even those WTCS transfer students who researched transfer equivalencies to

align their WTCS courses with a given UWS four-year institution's course requirements are at a

disadvantage if they stayed too long at their WTC:

> …a challenge I have seen before is a student comes in with a good majority of their geneds done and then
>
> now, you know, what do they take? So, if they're not really 100% sure about, you know, business, or
>
> education, or whatever, well now all of your geneds are done so now we have to find other options and
>
> classes for you to take that may not necessarily count if you don't end up pursuing that particular major.
>
> -Olive

Similarly, WTCS transfers sometimes successfully transfer in many credits while

preparing for a specific major at the UWS four-year institution prior to enrolling, but somehow

failed to satisfy a key pre-requirement for their course of study. This oversight, or misguided

choice, delays their entire academic progression until the course, or sequence of courses, is

completed. With so many credits already satisfied, there are few meaningful classes toward their

degree in which to enroll. Although academic advisors attested that this situation could happen

with any transfer student, they find WTCS transfers experience this scenario significantly more

often because they failed to complete math requirements for certain majors prior to transferring.

Moreover, interviewees observed that WTCS transfers traditionally score poorly on math

placement exams, which require them to pay and complete two semesters of un-credited,

remedial math courses before even taking the math course needed to begin or progress in their

program. Interviewees communicated that this common scenario denotes a serious flaw in

WTCS academic planning. Academic advisors shared a number of reflections illustrating their

experience of working with WTCS transfers that were unaware of the nuances of their

institution's major requirements prior to transfer, and their ensuing frustration:

> …a lot of students don't realize any of the requirements that they need to do or what is expected of them
>
> prior to coming here. It's like, aah it's too late, it's after the fact, you should have known all this or most of
>
> this stuff before you come… -Jeff

Although interviewees were asked to reflect on advising the WTCS transfer population yet to earn an associate's degree at the WTCS, many were adamant that WTCS transfers' greatest frustration comes as a result of failing to do so. Academic advisors contend that their WTCS transfer advisees are rarely aware that an earned WTCS associate's degree would allow them to satisfy nearly all of their general education classes and significantly shorten their time to degree. Therefore, academic advisors attribute much of the frustration transfers experience to ignorance of this policy. Still worse, these students appear to learn about this policy only after leaving the WTCS where they could have finished these requirements. Aaron illustrated an extreme case of an advisee transferring just short of earning an associate's degree and the impact it had on her credits:

> …she took somewhere between 68-73 credits there, I'm not sure, but she transferred in 6. That's unreal. You know, and I said, 'You didn't know this going in?' And she said no, nobody told her. And, I don't know if nobody told her, I don't know, of course, that's…somebody could have said, 'I hope you know that if you don't finish this, this is what's going to happen.'

Finally, academic advisors believe that all transfers are at a disadvantage to transitioning to a new institution their first semester because of the transfer process. Interviewees explained that first-semester transfer students typically register after current students due to the scheduling of orientation dates. As such, many classes that transfers need to satisfy requirements or progress in their major are closed for enrollment. Depending upon the number of credits transferred, there may not be meaningful courses in which students can enroll. Interviewees, however, did not discuss this disadvantage as being more or less intensified in the case of their WTCS transfer advisees.

Most interviewees emphasized that the academic struggles of WTCS transfers at the UWS cannot be isolated to one factor, such as the WTC failing to properly prepare them

academically for UWS classroom rigor and the educational environment. They continued to stress that each student has individual circumstances that lead to their respective academic outcomes, sharing that many WTCS transfers thrive just as well as any other student. But, after these provisions, interviewees acknowledged the WTCS transfer population seems to be adversely affected by the heightened rigor of UWS coursework, misalignment between WTCS and UWS curriculum, stark contrast in educational focus and setting, and failure to know transfer policies.

Social Integration. Academic advisors theorized that all transfer populations are at a disadvantage in socially integrating into a new campus. They feel freshmen are predisposed to identify with one another as a result of their age and sharing of the same experiences in transitioning from high school to college. Transfers, they feel, do not receive the benefits of beginning their college enrollment at the new institution with a distinct admission class and must put more effort into making social connections. Hence, academic advisors generally do not separate the social disadvantages WTCS transfers experience from the challenges all transfers have in making a social transition, as the following statements illustrate:

> …there's not the support of like maybe for the freshman coming in that they have, they're connected with other people that they know are new freshman. These people may not know who else is a transfer student, who else has gone through the same things that they have, who can they connect with? -Janelle

> …anytime you transfer in, you're not connected to the class you came in with. And you're not connected to the campus at all. Especially January, it's a s*** time to transfer. Because everybody's got their cliques and stuff …-Frank

> I mean it's tough for them to adjust because everyone else has that common body of knowledge, they're living in the dorms, they're eating at the dining halls, they're doing social activities together, going out,

going to parties, hanging out, what have you, so there's much more of a bonding connection with those types of students versus students who don't know anyone that's coming in from their previous school where lots of incoming seniors know people from their own high school class, know people from surrounding high schools, people that they've competed against in athletics or extra-curricular activities, so I think it's easier to adjust than being thrown into an environment where everyone, I don't want to say knows everybody, but they kinda know what's going on around them. -Jeff

I would think that they would take longer to become acclimated whereas with you know a new freshman, you know, we say Welcome to _____, you're the freshman, you know, the class of 2013 and you're like a member of this group and you go through orientation for a couple days, it's a great way to meet people and you know that you're facing the same thing as 2000 other people and you may live on campus in a residence hall and that's a great way to meet, you know, somebody but if you're transferring there's a chance that you don't live in the residence halls or if you do, you know, you're put into a situation where people may already know each other and you maybe feel like the odd person out so I think that could be significant. -Mary

Unlike their ruminations regarding academic challenges that WTCS transfers commonly face, few interviewees speculated on unique social disadvantages resulting from first attending a WTCS institution prior to UWS transfer. Most shared that either they sense no difference in WTCS transfers' ability to socially connect to campus or they do not observe these students in the social environment frequently enough to judge their assimilation. Many interviewees conjectured that there likely exists a distinct difference in this population's social integration as a whole, but any disadvantage they experience would be due to characteristics germane to the population and not a result of WTCS attendance. The personal attributes academic advisors link to the WTCS transfer population as deterrents to social integration (e.g. commuter status) will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Separate from the many generalizations academic advisors provided about the student and personal traits WTCS transfers commonly exhibit and their effects on social integration, a small number of interviewees share the belief that WTCS attendance itself puts students at a heightened disadvantage over other transfer populations in making social connections at the UWS campus. They feel that the nature of the institutional setting at the WTCS instills a narrow perspective of the college experience, making WTCS transfers prone to viewing college purely as a site for taking classes. Jeff said students coming from a WTC are used to an environment where, "basically you show up, you do your stuff, and then you leave. You're not really exposed to that campus life," whereas Suzy questioned if they were "sold on that they're here for more than just schooling."

Academic advisors characterize the social environment at the WTCS as taking classes in isolation. They believe indoctrination into this educational environment prevents students from seeing the value of study groups, participating in non-required academic and non-academic involvement, or making campus connections through extra-curricular activities and organizations. Advisors perceive transfers from other institutions to be more conditioned to seek out academic and non-academic social activities that supplement their classroom experience and strengthen their campus social connections. Interviewees feel WTCS transfers' narrow mindsets toward the important social aspect of being a college student has negative consequences toward their academic success, ability to maximize opportunities, or find fulfillment in their college experience.

Characteristics of WTCS transfers affecting adjustment and persistence.
Interviewees did not assign their WTCS transfer advisees' difficulties in adjusting to the academic and social environments of the UWS-four-year institution solely to their WTCS

educational experience. They also generalized personal attributes to this population that pose barriers to UWS college success. These qualities are lower academic ability, being of nontraditional age, and commuting to campus. Some academic advisors stated that the commonly-shared characteristics they attach to this population may have actually been the reason they chose to enroll at a WTC initially, but were not themselves products of WTCS attendance.

As aforementioned, nearly all academic advisors feel that the curriculum at their institutions is more rigorous than what WTCS transfers had previously experienced at their WTC. A number of interviewees, however, feel that WTCS transfers' struggles with rigor are owed to marginal academic ability. Ten academic advisors specifically stated that their WTCS transfers are likely to be of lesser academic quality than students from other sub-populations and thus less suited for UWS coursework. This perception was especially prevalent in terms of math ability, as interviewees frequently cited a tendency for WTCS transfers to struggle with UWS four-year school math requirements. Several reinforced their assumptions about WTCS transfers' academic qualifications by explaining that many were originally denied admission to the UWS four-year institution when applying as new freshmen. The following assumptions highlight academic advisors' views regarding WTCS transfers' penchant for being less-skilled than students from other populations:

> If somebody goes to a technical college right out of high school, they're probably not that good of a student in general. That's it. So, if I see technical college on someone's advising report, I'm not thinking that they're a great student. Now, there are a lot of students that are very intelligent at a vocation, at a trade, that can do very well. But, in general, I'm sure there are probably studies that have been done, the upper 20% of Wisconsin's high school population…very few of them go to technical college. –Aaron

They may have been the bottom barrel and came in and, you know, persisted, and worked hard but perhaps they didn't have the, you know, the academic skills to make it once they get to a four year. –Morna

I mean, a great kid usually doesn't just go to technical college. A valedictorian doesn't go to technical college. Alright? It doesn't happen… -Frank

…they started there because they didn't meet the qualifications to get into a University. –Kim

…probably a majority of our WTCS students are students who were denied admissions here. –Larry

As these opinions demonstrate, it is common for interviewees to assume that WTCS transfers' academic struggles are unavoidable, as they are merely less academically equipped than students transferring from other institutions or direct freshmen admits. Although nearly all interviewees feel that the inordinate amount of academic difficulty WTCS transfers commonly experience due to rigor is at least equally owed to factors other than academic ability or potential, the sentiment that many feel academic struggles are due to academic ability cannot be dismissed.

Academic advisors also believe age greatly impacts the college experience, and that it is common for their WTCS transfers to be "slightly older" or of "nontraditional age." Several interviewees feel that older students benefit academically because they are more focused and driven to obtain or advance a career. Most, however, believe that their nontraditionally-aged WTCS transfers experience a disadvantage to academic success after transfer because the educational structure of the UWS four-year institution caters to full-time, traditionally-aged students who typically do not have responsibilities associated with older students.

Interviewees stated that their older WTCS transfer advisees seem to have trouble balancing work and familial commitments with academic responsibilities because UWS four-

year institution courses are offered at inconvenient times for their lifestyles or consume more of

their time than WTCS courses due to heightened rigor. They also contend that older WTCS

transfers claim they lack the time to utilize necessary resources because of their schedules. Jeff

described an example of the incongruence between older WTCS transfers' needs and his

institution's educational format:

> You're dealing with your family, you're struggling with two part-time schedules, she's an adult student so
>
> she was feeling kinda neglected, things really weren't set up for her needs. Well, we're not, we're
>
> encouraging adult students to come back but we're not an adult campus, we're a 4-year institution… -Jeff

Interviewees also shared that older students are often at a financial disadvantage because

they cannot afford to reduce work hours while attending school since their incomes are needed to

cover the costs of their education and support their families. Interviewees find their older WTCS

transfer advisees are averse to campus involvement for many of these same reasons. They rarely

devote time to non-required academic or social activities because their time and financial

flexibility to do so is limited.

Finally, academic advisors perceive that older WTCS students invariably view their

education with a strong career-oriented focus. They believe this focus often represents an

obstacle to finding relevance with educational policies that require students to take courses

seemingly unrelated to their majors. Older students also often fail to attend non-required campus

involvement opportunities. And, finally, they have trouble finding common ground with

classmates much younger than them. Therefore, interviewees feel the propensity of WTCS

transfers' to be of nontraditional age frequently presents an obstacle to their UWS academic

success and social experiences.

Several interviewees believe traditionally-aged WTCS transfers generally adjust to

campus better than their older counterparts. Many qualified this view, however, with the caveat

that traditionally-aged WTCS transfers' transitions can be equally as difficult if they are commuters, as they often share many of the same circumstances as nontraditionally-aged students. Commuters, most academic advisors contend, are severely prone to experiencing difficulty connecting to campus academically and socially. They feel commuter status typically denotes a student that must work significant hours per week, faces difficult financial situations, and possesses a narrow view of what comprises the college experience. There was general consensus among academic advisors that commuter status negatively impacts all students due to the isolationism it fosters. And, most academic advisors shared Aaron's unsolicited belief that, "I think a lot of the populations that are out of the technical schools are commuters."

Although a significant percentage of academic advisors speculated that WTCS transfers have less academic capital than other students, their reflections regarding the negative impact of this population's tendency to be of nontraditional age and commute to campus revealed these two variables to be the most significant across interviews. Even interviewees who attached academic struggles to academic ability exhibit the belief that age and commuter status are more impactful on students' success at the UWS four-year institution than academic ability, as Jeff described:

> I think it depends on the age of the student regardless if they're a transfer or not. Whether they're an adult student or not, whether they're working full time, whether or not they have a family commitment, they're commuters or not, I mean, for the WTCS students who live on campus or live off campus in the city of _____ I don't think they have as difficult of a transition time cause they're fully invested in the whole college experience. Not everybody is able to do that you know, I still have to maintain my job 40 hours a week or I cut down to 30 hours a week I still have to pick up my kid from school, their adjustment is much more difficult.

Transfer Shock and Student Persistence. Eighteen of 19 interviewees acknowledged that their WTCS transfer advisees have difficulty adjusting to the UWS institution. As illustrated

in the preceding sections, they observe the difficult transition process to stem from a number of factors involving differences between institutional systems, personal attributes these students are likely to exhibit, and either misunderstanding or misinformation regarding UWS transfer policies. As such, most academic advisors were not surprised that WTCS transfers have high attrition rates and lag behind other sub-populations in persisting to degree.

Interviewees' perspectives on WTCS transfers' capacity to persist at the UWS four-year institution and the factors impacting that ability varied little from their views of WTCS transfers' adjustment. Most continue to hold the assumption that WTCS transfers' ability to persist depends upon each individual's circumstances, but find this population seems to be at a disadvantage regarding college success for the same reasons they face challenges in initially adjusting to the UWS institution's academic and social environment. Furthermore, academic advisors feel that students' ability to quickly adjust to the UWS four-year campus directly correlates to their chances for long-term academic success. Also, frustration upon learning of the low number of credits that transferred and, consequently, the extended time required to earn a degree surfaced several times as a deterrent to WTCS transfers' persistence. Interviewees, however, were split in acknowledging a higher attrition rate occurs among their WTCS transfer advisees.

Academic advisors were more committal in sharing their observations concerning WTCS transfers' propensity for experiencing transfer shock. Twelve interviewees feel that the WTCS transfer population experiences a higher frequency and intensity of transfer shock than other transfer populations. Their reasons for holding these perceptions are again generalized to heightened rigor, contrast in institutional environments, academic ability, and facing common circumstances that hinder social integration. Mary and Olive described their familiarity with WTCS transfer advisees experiencing transfer shock due to a change in academic rigor:

…through my experience I have made note of times when I've been looking through a student's record – their advising report – and I've seen, okay, that person transferred from a Technical School and I see the classes and the grades and then I see that their first semester here at _____, they did not get good grades they did not get good grades, and that has happened to me several times. I have made note of that and I'm trying to think if I've ever actually like talked to somebody about, you know, well, why do you feel like your GPA took a dip after you've been here one semester compared to the GPA that you brought in from the Technical School. I don't know if I've ever really asked somebody that, Maybe I have, maybe, you know, I guess it just seems to me that it's rigor of the classes, just the, the level that is expected of them…

-Mary

Because, as I said earlier, the technical colleges….I don't want to use the term "easier", but I think academically, you know, they do maybe require less work or less studying than something here. So, that might be a reason why they…the transfer shock happens. Because they think they can get by with the number of hours they studied and everything at the technical college and then they come here, you know, and take two 5-credit labs, and you know, calculus or whatever, and they think it will be just as, you know….not as easy, but, and that causes a shock I guess. -Olive

Jeff, Lisa, and Kim explained that the institutional environment in its entirety is likely to induce transfer shock for WTCS transfers:

I would say yeah, there definitely would be more of a shock value for those students than students that come from other four-year institutions. It's the ones who come from four-year institutions have already done everything. They've had that initial transition from high school to college, and coming to another four-year institution, it's kinda the same thing, they're exposed to that, they know what it's like… -Jeff

There's a lot, I think, there's a lot less hand holding at the four year versus the Technical College so you have, are expected to figure out a lot more stuff on your own, so I think that the transfer shock is more for a Technical College student because it just encompasses so many more things than maybe a four year to a four year. -Lisa

> I do think any student that comes from a two-year college is going to have some sort of a shock experience, especially if they move on campus, that's going to be a whole new experience. If they get into a lecture hall of you know 150 or 200 students, that's going to be a different experience for them obviously than probably what they're accustomed to, and just being, having to learn everything about the institution all over again and not having their, the resources that they got accustomed to having at that other institution. -Kim

Janelle reflected on WTCS transfers experiencing transfer shock as a social obstacle they must face:

> I think that's a built in support system when you're going to school …school right out of high school you're going to the local technical school with a number of people you knew – it's kind of an extension of high school in some ways for them and then a number of times they are coming up here without maybe one of their friends, maybe nobody so then they are choosing here….. So I see that potentially being really difficult if they aren't invested in why they're coming here, because they are leaving not only a safer school because they they've been there, but they're leaving their support system behind. -Janelle

Most interviewees similarly hold the view that the incalculable academic and social environment differences between institutions, coupled with personal factors they observe WTCS transfers are likely to exhibit, results in transfer shock resonating more frequently within this transfer population. A number of academic advisors, however, were reluctant to assign a heightened frequency of transfer shock among WTCS transfers because they feel that all transfer populations are susceptible:

> I wouldn't, I feel like I wasn't honest if I answered that one because I don't have a good feel for that. I think transfer students in general, transfer shock in general is a problem right. And I don't know that I could say disproportionately it affects them… -Jill

Finally, Larry and Aaron expressed that WTCS transfers' adjustment is sometimes easier because of their excitement to be on a university campus, but qualified their statements as pertaining only to those WTCS transfers of traditional age. Gina was the lone exception to

academic advisors believing that all WTCS transfers face a difficult adjustment in transitioning to the UWS, stating:

> I don't see much of a transfer shock here. I see them doing well in their classes…if they plan and strategize and if they take a lesser load, they know what classes to take, and I advise them accordingly. I think our students do pretty well, I don't see very much of a transfer shock really.

Academic advisors frequently commented that their institutions do little to ease transfer shock and appear to concentrate more on helping freshmen adjust to college life than they do for transfers. This sentiment surfaced repeatedly regarding the abbreviated orientation sessions transfers are provided in comparison to new freshmen. By offering a less-comprehensive orientation to the UWS campus for transfers, academic advisors believe transfers are deprived of the chance to form peer connections or become aware of academic and social opportunities. Abe faults differences in orientations between transfers and freshmen to a common misconception:

> I think we sometimes make assumptions about what a transfer student knows and that isn't always accurate. Somebody's maybe only been a, on campus a semester, one semester somewhere else probably isn't that much more acclimated to University life than anybody, you know than a true freshman is.

Interviewees believe WTCS transfers are at a disadvantage in making an adjustment to a UWS campus, and consequently, are less likely to be retained and persist to graduation.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Their Advising Practices When Working with WTCS Transfers

As a result of their experiences advising WTCS transfer advisees, academic advisors were able to identify many factors they believe affect WTCS transfer students' abilities to make academic and social adjustments to UWS four-year institutions. With few exceptions, the recurring circumstances interviewees generalized to the WTCS population were viewed as negatively impacting their transition. Heightened rigor, stark contrast in classroom and instructional environment, and frustration with transfer processes and policies surfaced as

obstacles these advisees experience at the UWS as a result of their WTCS attendance. Difficulty in forming social connections and an aversion to campus involvement represent traits that prevent WTCS transfer students from maximizing their UWS four-year experience. Gaps in academic ability, being of nontraditional age, and commuting to school were recurring characteristics interviewees assigned to WTCS transfers that create barriers to UWS academic success. When describing these factors, academic advisors were asked how they responded to them through the advising process.

All 19 interviewees consider the WTCS transfer population to be a distinct sub-group. Eighteen believe these transfers commonly experience a particularly difficult adjustment to the UWS four-year institution. Similarly, many suspect there exists a heightened frequency of attrition due to the variables they generalize to this population. Beyond reviewing transfer credits as they would with any transfer student, however, academic advisors feel that WTCS attendance itself is not a meaningful variable to consider in shaping the advising approach. Consequently, academic advisors do not perceive that they pre-emptively advise WTCS transfers in a manner unique from other populations. In fact, just seven academic advisors stated that they review students' previous institutions of attendance prior to their initial advising interactions.

Two rationales emerged as the grounds on which interviewees chose not to advise WTCS transfers differently from other populations. The majority expressed that they adjust advising interactions in accordance with each student's individual circumstances and needs as they become known:

> I don't feel like I advise Technical College students differently, I think I have a general style that's then influenced by the individual that I'm working with. -Lisa

A less-prevailing thought several advisors shared was that their standardized advising approaches encompass a universal set of information that satisfies all students' needs:

> …we don't really personalize advising, hoping that our advising is comprehensive enough that it is hitting
>
> everybody. -Jill

Regardless of ideology provided, interviewees' depictions of initial meetings with WTCS

transfers virtually mirrored the reflections they shared about their advising process with a non-

specified population. At a minimum, they attempt to familiarize themselves with students'

backgrounds, discuss their goals and concerns, and impart basic information about university

policies, opportunities, and resources. Most academic advisors, however, stated that they try to

provide more than prescriptive information when facilitating the advising process. Throughout

the interaction, they take note of the specific attributes, interests, goals, and concerns students

reveal about themselves to determine how they can best serve their needs. When particular needs

arise, advisors draw on their institutional knowledge and past experiences of working with

students who have faced similar circumstances in order to offer perspective, advice, or referrals

to appropriate resources. This approach to personalizing the advising interaction to WTCS

transfers' needs is not unique from any other students they advise, as Carrie described:

> I always look at them as the individual, whether they are freshman, transfer, nontraditional, traditional, and
>
> try to understand their background and their story basically. And then, move forward from there.

Therefore, their reflections of advising WTCS transfer students also align with the

Standards for Academic Advising. Although they feel their advising technique does not

proactively change when working with WTCS transfers, they allow that exchanges with this

population often entail addressing a common set of topics regarding potential obstacles to their

UWS education. The recurring topics interviewees cited directly correlate to the disadvantages

they commonly observe WTCS transfers experiencing in adjusting to campus.

Assisting WTCS transfer students in self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Academic advisors do not use distinct methods for assisting WTCS transfers to assess their

abilities, interests, or limitations. But, interviewees feel it is especially important to understand the reasons why these students transferred to the UWS, as it offers them insight about their advisee's unique circumstances. The information they learn about the advisee's background is vital in personalizing the rest of the interactions to address the unique factors that potentially impact a student's experience.

Using their WTCS transcripts as talking points, academic advisors find that WTCS transfers are often forthcoming about their previous educational experiences, the barriers they faced to academic success, and their concerns about the UWS academic environment. They also find WTCS transfers frequently have clearly-defined academic interests, particularly those of nontraditional age. As WTCS transfers are likely to share the self-realizations they have made about themselves, academic advisors may not spend as much time helping WTCS transfers explore their personal qualities as they do with freshmen.

Assisting WTCS transfer students in considering their life goals. Academic advisors observe WTCS transfers to be more career-driven than most students they advise. Interviewees qualified this statement to WTCS transfers typically being older than other advisees, but feel traditionally-aged WTCS transfers exhibit this quality frequently as well, due to family and employment factors. Consequently, academic advisors expressed that advising interactions usually require less time helping WTCS transfers explore majors because these students are likely to have made that decision prior to transfer. Interviewees also noted, however, that this population routinely fails to connect their academic and career interests to campus opportunities existing outside of the classroom. In response, several academic advisors stated that a recurring element of their advising interactions with WTCS transfers focuses on finding opportunities to supplement their college experience. Janelle explained:

I'll talk about okay, so what are you doing here? What's going to make you different when you come out of here than everybody else who has the same degree? So what kinds of thing can you connect with on campus that are going to give you some of those skills or leadership opportunities or connections with other people that maybe you won't get if you just come here and take a class and leave?

Due to WTCS transfers' propensity for viewing college education as singularly linked to their current or future career, advising interactions with these students also typically require more discussion about their UWS institution's general education curriculum. Students question the relevancy of taking classes not directly linked to their choices of major and future career, which require academic advisors to discuss differences between the WTCS and UWS four-year institutions' academic missions. Academic advisors provided no distinct approaches to explaining its importance, but referenced that these conversations occur more often when advising WTCS transfers.

Assisting WTCS transfer students in developing an educational plan. Interviewees shared that developing educational plans is often the most difficult component of the advising process when working with WTCS transfers. The many factors related to the nature of the UWS four-year institution in terms of rigor, transfer credit policies, and course scheduling make educational planning that matches WTCS transfers' goals with their circumstances challenging.

Academic advisors described numerous situations where WTCS transfers were committed to an educational plan that they were unable to meet due to course offerings conflicting with their non-academic commitments. They also provided a number of examples describing WTCS transfers' frustrations with needing to repeat courses, being unable to enter majors in a timely fashion, or facing delays in their desired graduation dates as a result of transfer credit issues. Still, there is little they feel they could do differently from the advising perspective when these situations arise because they are confined to institutional policy and also

have no control over students' limitations. As such, most academic advisors explained that they are resigned to discussing goals, examining potential barriers, and offering students their perspectives about the marriage between goals and the unique factors of students' individual circumstances.

In interviewees' experiences, however, WTCS transfers regularly choose to disregard academic advice that means lengthening their time to degree. These students often discount academic advisors' perspectives on heightened rigor and suggestions for taking manageable course loads in their first semester until they became comfortable with the new educational setting. As students hold final decisions regarding their education, interviewees expressed that they can only offer views to consider when developing students' educational plans. Gina offered an illustration of educational planning with WTCS transfers:

> I focus more on quality rather than quantity and I try to explain that to them. I say, 'There is no point signing up for 15, 18 credits in the hope that you'll get done faster but then you end up getting C's and D's and even F's. Then you have to repeat those classes. Normally, you will end up actually taking longer. Let's focus on quality. And, if one semester, let's strategize. If you have to take a lighter load, one course less, let's do that. But, you have to promise me that you're getting no less than a B.' So, I have those conversations much ahead of that semester. So they know that this is coming and I have to be prepared.

Assisting WTCS transfer students in developing decision-making skills. Interviewees talked extensively about helping WTCS transfers make decisions by considering their goals, factors involved, and possible alternatives. They repeatedly mentioned that WTCS transfers typically have more factors to consider when making decisions, but they are also often more mature about making them. Interviewees' reflections suggest that they again model the decision-making process for these students, but their process for doing so is not unique from that for other populations.

Providing WTCS transfer students accurate information. Academic advisors universally stated that they provide WTCS transfers standardized information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs. Interviewees, however, find that WTCS transfers often demonstrate a need for additional topics to be addressed. Although they try their best to individualize the information they impart to each student, many interviewees believe WTCS transfers benefit from a discussion about the differences they will encounter between aspects of the WTCS and the UWS four-year institution. Moreover, a number volunteered that discussing institutional differences is not necessary when advising transfers from other institutions because they feel these transfers are coming from institutions that had similar environments. Interviewees particularly shared that they attempt to address heightened rigor, the importance of campus involvement, and resources that may not have existed at a WTC. Kim provides a thorough summary of the topics many academic advisors said they focus on covering in their initial interactions with WTCS transfers:

> I would definitely talk with them seriously about the amount of work that would be required and, you know, whether they should do a full-time load at 12 credits or a full-time load at 15 credits, I would talk with them about the amount of work that's required and, and how that could differ between here and the Technical College. You know other than just saying these classes, you know, will be different or may be different than what you're accustomed and explaining that there are resources to them on campus to be able to help support that, like the Tutoring and Learning Center and some of those, I guess in my initial conversations it would be just making sure that they, they know there might be a difference, and then from there kind of giving them the support that they need as they go through the semester.

Interviewees said that they commonly discuss transfer credit policy with WTCS transfers extensively, as these students more often express frustration with the process. Academic advisors that referenced WTCS transfers' frustration with the transfer process are conflicted in how to best address the situation because they are unsure of who is at fault between WTC personnel,

UWS admissions, or the student. In addressing this sensitive issue, several interviewees said they attempt to validate their WTCS advisees' WTC experience as meaningful even though the UWS does not accept their credits. Others connect WTCS transfers to personnel that can help them appeal transfer credit decisions. Interviewees also said they understand that students need to voice their frustrations before they are ready to move forward. Mary explained that she uses transfer credit frustrations as teachable moments:

> I try to explain okay here is our policy, here's why we have this policy or, you know, I may not know all the answers but I can, I can refer you to the person who does. And I try to turn it into a learning moment, especially if it's a person who came here and they really didn't fully think about their decision to transfer. 'Why do you want to come to, to_____? Why haven't, you know, you researched different majors, why haven't you researched admission requirements to different majors?' That has to be, I think, you know, personal responsibility, you have to ask questions and I don't think, you know, somebody is not going to, you know, give you accurate information or, or deliberately, you know, overt something from you so I think, you know, some people just don't fully think it through the consequences of that decision.

Academic advisors find the WTCS transfer population to be too diverse to anticipate what information will need to be imparted during an advising interaction. Rather, they allow specific circumstances these students encounter to surface during the advising exchange and provide information relevant to those conditions.

Referring WTCS transfer students to other institutional or community support services. Interviews revealed that academic advisors refer WTCS transfers to institutional resources more than any other population. The heterogeneity of the group appears to have much to do with this trend. As academic advisors largely attach the stigma of initially struggling with academic rigor, tutoring and tutoring-related services emerged as the resource academic advisors almost prescriptively refer WTCS transfers to for support. In addition to making students aware of tutoring resources, academic advisors cited placing importance on WTCS transfers finding

ways to make campus connections. Throughout their advising interactions with students, they

attempt to make appropriate suggestions for campus involvement and social interactions.

Believing WTCS transfers are more protective of their time and effort, interviewees stated that it

is important to ensure their suggestions are specifically targeting students' needs and interests if

they hope to influence their involvement. Given the particular student's needs, these referrals

might include the adult resource center or career-related student organizations. Mary described

how students' needs dictate her referral decisions:

> You know, just referring them to resources based on the comments that they have given me. You know, if I can
> see that somebody looks like an adult learner and they tell me, you know, I say, 'Well, where do you, you
> know, study in between classes?' I could, you know, refer them to the Adult Resource Center or trying to think
> what else, I don't know, just knowing what resources we have on campus and then trying to make appropriate
> referrals.

Assisting WTCS transfer students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward

established goals and educational plans. Academic advisors did not supplement their previous

reflections of helping students evaluate or reevaluate progress towards degrees when advising

WTCS transfers. They do find WTCS transfers often desire more assurance that they are

progressing towards their goals than freshmen or other transfer populations. They assume this

need for affirmation is because the time and money they sacrifice to attend school is more

limited than that of other students. Similarly, academic advisors observed that WTCS transfers

regularly inquire about upcoming semesters' course schedules long before they are created so

that they can balance their other commitments with school. Interviewees again described them as

being more meticulous about course scheduling because they often balance more commitments

than the general student population. Aaron paraphrased a typical exchange to illustrate how these

students' academic goals often require more consideration than those of students whose primary

commitment is school:

> I will find a lot of students that will say, 'Okay, I only want to take 12 this semester just to kind of get my
>
> feet under me and…..' All that stuff. 'Okay, well this is what's going to happen if you do. Nothing wrong if
>
> you don't.' You'll get some students that say they want to take 18. 'Okay, well I hope you know that 18 is
>
> the maximum, and we have very few students that do that, but if you are committed….what are you going
>
> to do? You know, they always say that for every hour in class it's an hour and a half out of class, so based
>
> on the amount of credits this is the amount of hours you're going to have per week outside of class. Do you
>
> have a family? Do your kids go to daycare? What are you going to do?'

Academic advisors find that some WTCS transfers enroll at the UWS to pursue a specific

degree for which they lack the entrance requirements. Paralleling previous responses regarding

students that fail to meet requirements, advisors refer WTCS transfers to specific academic

policy, inform them of the steps needed to become eligible for entrance, and explore related

majors that align with their career goals as they would any student facing the same situation.

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of the Methods They Employ to Ease Adjustment and Improve Persistence within the WTCS Transfer Population

The vast majority of academic advisors believe WTCS transfers are particularly prone to

a difficult adjustment to the UWS four-year institution. When working with new WTCS

transfers, however, very few proactively address the concept of "transfer-shock" in a more in-

depth manner than alluding to the UWS four-year campus being a different environment than the

WTC. Unless a WTCS transfer advisee volunteers that they are having trouble adjusting to

school, most academic advisors assume they are performing well. Olive explained that transfer

shock is an unpredictable phenomenon to assign to students before grades post because "you

can't really tell if they're going to engage in a transfer shock until you've seen their first

semester grades, right?"

Once grades are posted and transfer shock becomes apparent, academic advisors discuss with WTCS transfers the conditions they believe caused their poor performance and offer suggestions for revising their approach to their UWS education. As such, academic advisors' tactics for addressing transfer shock parallel their general advising process when working with other students who experience a poor semester.

Similar to transfer shock, academic advisors did not identify unique advising techniques they employ in an effort to encourage WTCS transfer advisees' persistence. To cultivate persistence, interviewees believe they help struggling WTCS transfers by promoting critical reflection upon their academic plans, the rigor involved, and their unique circumstances before offering perspective and exploring possible solutions to enhancing academic success. Previous WTCS attendance has no bearing on academic advisors' approaches to influencing persistence. Morna illustrated academic advisors' stance that student categories do not change advising methods:

> No matter where they started from, once they're here, they're here and we're going to do everything in our power to make sure they stay here. And if they are not where they need to be academically, we've got resources for that.

In fact, most academic advisors stated that they are unaware of persistence trends among sub-populations and feel there is little they could do differently in the way of promoting persistence in one population more than another. Many further pointed out that advising relationships with WTCS transfers are often brief because these students' accumulated credits quickly move them on to a major advisor, which left little time to impact their persistence.

Summary of Findings

Role and general approach. Academic advisors had difficulty describing the nature of their positions. Collectively, however, interviewees delineated their roles through the responsibilities and objectives they attach to the position. Their roles can broadly be described as assisting students in defining their interests, limitations, and goals; assisting students in making educational plans that correspond to interests, goals, and circumstances; and serving as a resource for institutional information, referrals, support, and guidance. As part of this role, they help students schedule courses, but academic advising entails many more far-reaching student interactions than this process.

In reflecting upon their general approaches to academic advising, interviewees believe all students are unique. The individuality of each advisee requires that academic advisors tailor the facilitation of the advising process to match distinct interests and needs once basic academic and institutional information is conveyed. Personalizing the interaction to meet students' needs is made possible by academic advisors familiarizing themselves with students' individual circumstances. This familiarity with students' backgrounds predominantly comes through open-ended discussions. Once advisees' variables are known, academic advisors draw on their institutional knowledge and past experiences of working with similar students to individualize the advising interaction.

Academic advisors' reflections of their roles and approaches to practice align with the framework the CAS Standards afford. In terms of this conceptual framework, interviewees only minimally addressed their role in providing student information to stakeholders. Building

relationships emerged as an essential aspect of an academic advisors' role, though it was not included as a CAS Standard.

Intended student outcomes. The objectives interviewees believe indicate their effectiveness as academic advisors are their abilities to build relationships with students and to fulfill advising objectives redolent of the CAS Standards. Academic advisors hold that meeting these advising objectives nurtures the intended outcomes for students successfully transitioning to universities and empowers them to take responsible ownership of their college experiences.

Responsibility and influence toward student persistence. Academic advisors hold student persistence and graduation as an important academic outcome. Nearly all interviewees assume a measure of accountability in fostering students' ability to graduate. They cited an obligation to both the institution and students as the reasons they view graduation outcomes as linked to their positions. Students' best interests, however, take precedence over any consideration for the institution.

Collectively, academic advisors feel they positively influence persistence. Interviewees contend academic advising is paramount in helping students adjust to the institution through the essential information, guidance, and support they provide. Academic advisors feel students need a consistent resource to ask questions of, discuss options and concerns with, and ensure their adherence to academic requirements. Academic advising, they believe, serves these roles. Therefore, many interviewees stated that the impact of the academic advising process in its entirety has residual effects on students' persistence long after their initial adjustment to the institution.

UWS four-year institution adjustment and persistence experienced by the WTCS transfer population. Compared to other populations they advise, most academic advisors observe their WTCS transfers to be at a disadvantage to successfully transitioning to the UWS four-year institutional system, maximizing their college experiences while there, and persisting to their degrees. The reasons for these perceptions are broadly identified as the stark differences between each system's academic and social environments, students' failures to attain accurate transfer policy, and the population's tendency to possess certain qualities or face circumstances that pose barriers to their ability to succeed at the UWS four-year institution.

Advising practice when working with WTCS transfers. Academic advisors' perceptions of their advising practices with WTCS transfers are not unique from those with students of other populations. Interviewees, however, acknowledged that academic advising interactions with WTCS transfers often require them to address specific issues outside their broad facilitation of the advising process due to recurring traits and conditions this population manages. They attribute these circumstances to students' personal characteristics and do not believe they are a result of WTCS attendance. In fact, less than half of interviewees familiarize themselves with transfer students' institution of transfer prior to conducting academic advising sessions. Many alluded to viewing all transfer advisees as a single population, only different from freshmen with respect to carrying prior credit.

Methods to ease adjustment and improve WTCS transfers' persistence. Academic advisors predominantly confined their reflections of WTCS transfers' adjustment difficulty to academic matters. In meeting with WTCS transfers for the first time, interviewees do not proactively address potential adjustment issues. When students self-disclose experiencing a difficult transition, however, academic advisors rely heavily on making referrals to tutorial

services and encouraging students to speak with their professors. If transfer shock does not

become apparent until after grades are posted, academic advisors help struggling WTCS

transfers reconsider how to balance their educational plan to better align with abilities and life

situations.

In terms of persistence, academic advisors fail to provide techniques different from their

basic practice with all students. They feel the entirety of their academic advising practice serves

to help students persist if students possess the ability and desire to do so.

Academic advisors' perceptions of their academic advising interactions with WTCS

transfers. In sum, academic advisors perceive that their initial facilitation of the advising

process generally does not change in response to students' pre-enrollment status, but allows that

WTCS transfers often resulted in more in-depth interactions than freshmen or other transfer

students. Interviewees characterize WTCS transfer advising interactions as regularly involving

more complex issues to consider in academic planning due to circumstances freshmen and other

transfers are less likely to face. As academic advisors firmly established their role is to help

students realize success, they attempt to help WTCS students analyze and overcome the

obstacles that stand in their ways to adjustment, fulfillment with their college experiences, and

persistence to graduation.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study sought to examine advising interactions between academic advisors at UWS baccalaureate institutions and WTCS transfer students. Particular to the advising interaction, this study explored academic advisors' perceptions of factors affecting WTCS transfers' adjustment and persistence after transferring to the UWS four-year institutions and their corresponding sensitivity to those factors when facilitating the advising process. Interviewees' reflections on their roles, general advising practices, and relationships to students' persistence served as the context for assessing their interactions with WTCS transfer students.

Academic advisors made surprisingly few references to theory, research, or training when explaining the principles that guide their approach to advising students, views on persistence factors, or perceptions of the WTCS transfer population condition. Still, interviewees' statements concerning academic advising objectives, their roles in persistence, and perception of traits and circumstances characterizing the WTCS transfer population align with major findings present in the literature base.

Roles of Academic Advisors and Approach to Advising

The wide spectrum of participants' perceptions regarding their role as an academic advisor can be condensed into helping students define interests, concerns, and goals; assisting students in making corresponding academic plans; and serving as students' resource for institutional information, referrals, support, and guidance. Although they did not attribute the formulation of these views to specific sources, this conceptualization replicates the purposes and goals assigned to academic advising spanning nearly 40 years of literature (Allen & Smith, 2008; Creamer, 2000; Crookston, 1972; O' Banion, 1972).

Interviewees' perceptions of their approach to fulfilling these roles proved more difficult to conceptualize. Academic advisors' synopses of their practice were vague, non-sequential, and failed to identify methodologies that guide their facilitation of the advising process. What can be confidently extracted from the data is that academic advisors prescriptively provide basic information about foundational policies, procedures, and resources during initial advising meetings with new students. Depictions of their advising approaches (and interactions in general) after fundamental information is imparted, however, can only roughly be described as engaging in conversation where both they and the student ask questions and provide each other feedback until students arrive at decisions regarding their educational plans, resource utilization, and co-curricular involvement. The student-advisor exchange, therefore, appears to be a cyclical process where students continuously share a variety of personal information and concerns while the academic advisor responds with corresponding information and guidance followed by still more questions. This process results in fluid advising interactions unique to each student. As such, academic advisors' approaches to practice lack a formal structure or definite continuum to the sequence of student-advisor interactions apart from teaching standardized information during the preliminary advising appointment.

No two academic advisors' reflections of their advising approaches paralleled one another. However, similarities emerged across interviews regarding the intentions that academic advisors have for advising interactions. These recurring advising objectives prompted the researcher to explore the literature base for an organizational framework that would serve to illustrate what exactly interviewees are hoping to accomplish during the advising process. Collectively, the objectives academic advisors shared regarding the assistance and information

they routinely provide to all students largely agree with the benchmarks outlined by the

Standards for Academic Advising (Gordon, et al., 2000).:

1. *Assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance (values clarification; understanding abilities, interests, and limitations)*

2. *Assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education*

3. *Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives*

4. *Assisting students in developing decision-making skills*

5. *Providing accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs*

6. *Referring students to other institutional or community support services*

7. *Assisting students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans*

8. *Providing information about students to the institution, college, academic departments, or some combination thereof.*

Academic advisors employ a nonlinear, conversational approach to meeting advising

benchmarks. Academic advisors often revisit these objectives over a series of advising

interactions with a student as new issues arise (e.g., a student decides to change majors). Meeting

CAS Standards related to providing information on policies, procedures, or resources is typically

met through a one-way transfer of information. Apart from this prescriptive element, advising

objectives are predominantly addressed through unscripted exchanges driven by advisees' needs

and questions. Understanding that a routinized pattern is not followed, it appears that academic

advisors in this study attempt to meet Standards 1-3 and 7 simultaneously in early advising

interactions and whenever advisees' educational plans change. Standards 5 and 6 are often the

first exchanges that occur between academic advisors and their advisees. Standard 4 emerged as

an objective advisors fulfill throughout the entire series of academic advising interactions.

Standard 8, conversely, was not addressed by interviewees when they summarized the roles they

play.

It is important to note that not every academic advisor explicitly touched upon attempting

to fulfill each Standard. Standards 5, 6, and 7 clearly emerged as the chief objectives academic

advisors in this study attempt to achieve in practice. For example, it seems common for an

academic advisor to let advisees indicate their choice of major (taking for granted Standards 1-3

were met independently by the student) and then concentrate solely on providing information

about the academic policies, resources, and status toward fulfilling requirements regarding the

particular major identified.

Despite evidence suggesting that not all academic advisors attempt to meet every

Standard with each student, the CAS Standards offer a fairly complete framework to illustrate

academic advisors' goals for practice. In fact, there is a high likelihood that interview

participants who failed to provide reflections of their advising interactions that align with

meeting Standards 1-3 routinely help students come to self-realizations and make corresponding

educational plans. Therefore, as the CAS Standards are endorsed by NACADA, most academic

advisors in this study largely described an adherence to "best practices" without demonstrating

an awareness that formal guidelines were available to follow when facilitating the advising

process.

The CAS Standards, however, fail to identify a major objective all academic advisors

connect to their practice. Absent from the CAS Standards, interviewees emphasized that

accomplishing advising objectives hinges on their ability to form trusting relationships with

advisees. As such, establishing strong relationships with advisees is a primary role of academic

advising and an advising objective evident in academic advisors' approaches to interacting with students. Trusting relationships result from advisors' ability to build rapport by learning and valuing students' backgrounds. When strong rapport exists, advisees more openly express their goals and concerns which, in turn, allow academic advisors to better assist students in their educational plans, offer more poignant advice, and make more meaningful referrals. These sentiments align closely with extant advising literature stressing the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship in enhancing student success (Mottarella et al., 2004). In particular, interviewees' statements regarding the value they place on the advisor-advisee relationship echo Nutt's (2000) conclusions that successful one-on-one advising is based on advisors' use of strong interpersonal skills to adeptly draw out and address issues important to the student.

Student Outcomes Academic Advisors Seek to Enhance

Academic advisors hold empowering students to establish and achieve their educational, career, and personal goals as the primary student outcome they hope results from their practice. Each aspect of the advising process is purposeful in enhancing this outcome. Proficiency in carrying out CAS Standards strengthens academic advisors' ability to establish credibility and trust with advisees. At the same time, advisors' ability to build strong relationships increases their capacity to achieve CAS Standards. As such, these advising objectives are mutually dependent upon one another and together foster the broader goal of enhancing advisees' independence and confidence in making informed decisions regarding their college experiences. As advisees consume the information and guidance academic advisors provide to meet advising objectives, they become better self-advocates for their academic, career, and social needs. Through academic advising, therefore, academic advisors seek to provide students the tools to successfully recognize their attributes and reach their individualized educational goals. These

results are reflective of the desired student outcomes literature attaches to academic advising (Kincanon, 2009; McGillin, 2003; Miller & Murray, 2005; Nutt, 2003; Peck & Varney, 2009).

Academic Advisors' Responsibilities and Influence toward Persistence

Academic advisors expressed the belief that advisees share a universal goal of earning bachelor's degrees. They also identified student retention and persistence as important institutional outcomes. Perceiving degree attainment to be a mutual goal for students and the institution, academic advisors attempt to help promote persistence through academic advising. Interviewees' statements regarding student persistence, both in general and with regard to academic advising's impact on the outcome, coincided with conclusions found throughout student development, academic advising, and persistence literature.

Academic advisors made numerous statements synonymous with a fundamental student development theory that finds students' ability to persist is influenced by a vast array of factors (Braxton 2000; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2009; and Tinto, 1993). Moreover, the factors interviewees frequently identified (e.g., high school performance) as linked to student persistence invariably fell under one of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) four domains: precollege characteristics and experiences, organizational context, student peer environment, and individual student experience. Therefore, despite failing to cite specific literature to support their assumptions regarding the factors linked to student attrition, academic advisors were cognizant that persistence outcomes are reliant upon a wide array of variables that impact each student in unique ways.

Interviewees in this study varied in the degree of accountability they accept for their advisees' persistence. They contend that many factors leading to attrition are often beyond the

scope of academic advising to address. For example, academic advisors do not determine who is admissible to the institution nor do they have control over the amount of financial aid awarded to a student. Academic advisors simply inherit advisees and their circumstances and try to help them offset any barriers to academic success as best they can through the advising process. Therefore, most academic advisors recognize persistence as an important outcome and one that they positively influence, but do not take responsibility for student attrition.

It stands to reason that without the benefit of advising, students would have difficulty understanding essential policies, making informed decisions regarding educational planning, or feeling supported in the college environment. By virtue of meeting with students early in their academic careers, academic advisors become their advisees' main source of guidance for navigating institution policies and procedures. The institutional knowledge and hindsight gained from working with students who have exhibited similar characteristics, interests, and circumstances to those of current advisees allows academic advisors to provide expert advice about all aspects of advisees' educational planning. Interviewees subscribed to these viewpoints about academic advising while also realizing their position likely puts them at the forefront for providing students the opportunity to form a connection with a campus professional. Hence, interviewees' perspectives of the positive impact academic advising has on persistence parallel connections drawn between academic advising and persistence found in the research base (Habley, 1994; Kuh, et al., 2006; and Tinto, 1993). Academic advisors perceive their tactics for enhancing persistence, however, are embedded in their general approaches and do not engender techniques separate from relationship building or meeting CAS Standards.

WTCS Transfer Adjustment and Persistence

Interviewees participating in this study were academic advising generalists working in advising centers predominantly responsible for advising first-year and undecided students. Several interviewees estimated that over 90 percent of their advising population is freshmen. When not asked to reflect upon a specified student population, most interviewees were inclined to use their experience advising freshmen as a frame of reference when generalizing about their practice. Each academic advisor selected to participate in this study, however, also advised WTCS transfer students and transfers from other schools. It was hoped that the unbalanced ratio between the WTCS transfer students and freshmen in interviewees' advising populations would accentuate the contrasts between academic advisors' perceptions of their interactions with WTCS transfer students and delineate their views on this population's characteristics, adjustment, and persistence.

Academic advisors observed that WTCS transfers are apt to share common characteristics that distinguish them from other student sub-populations. Without providing the researcher any inclination that they had the benefit of data, academic advisors' generalizations of WTCS transfer students agree with statistics reported by the WTCS Board (2009) and UWS OPAR (2010). Interviewees' perceptions of WTCS transfer advisees typically being older, financially responsible for supporting themselves, and less academically prepared in terms of high school performance and standardized test scores align with WTCS student data (Wisconsin Technical College System Board, 2009). Interviewees' observations that WTCS students often transfer in fewer credits than other transfer populations are substantiated through research determining that WTCS students are significantly (17 percent) more likely than other transfer populations to transfer in as freshmen (OPAR, 2009). Although the assumption is not verifiable

through available research, academic advisors also remarked frequently that their WTCS transfers are nearly always commuter students.

The characteristics that interviewees of this study feel WTCS transfer students commonly exhibit are also supported by research on the national two-year student population. Academic advisors most commonly distinguished WTCS transfers from freshmen and other transfer populations through assumptions made regarding their academic characteristics. There is a widespread sentiment among interviewees that students starting at WTCS institutions likely lack the precollege academic profile of students starting at a UWS four-year institution or transferring from another UWS four-year institution. These assumptions align with the National Center for Educational Statistics findings (Coley, 2000). There is also a general consensus that WTCS institutions' academic climates are less rigorous than those at UWS four-year schools, but that transfer policy between the WTCS and UWS allows underprepared students admission. These perceptions again agree with literature addressing two-year students' profiles entering four-year institutions and the misalignment between two- and four-year schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Flaga, 2006; and Laanan, 2001). Taken together, academic advisors' statements regarding WTCS transfer students' background echo research that finds that students who initially enroll at a two-year institution are distinguishable from those that enroll at a four-year institution (Long & Kurlaender, 2008).

Although study participants share similar perceptions regarding the traits that WTCS transfers commonly exhibit and the circumstances they inordinately face, there is less consensus regarding the WTCS transfer population's ability to adjust or persist at the UWS four-year institution. Academic advisors appear to be unacquainted with data regarding WTCS transfer students' academic performance or persistence outcomes despite available research reporting on

first-year GPA, retention, and graduation as disaggregated by students' matriculation status (OPAR, 2009). Within the interview protocol, academic advisors were informed that WTCS students transferring to UWS four-year institutions lag behind other populations in retention and timeliness to degree but were not provided specific information regarding retention or persistence outcomes of WTCS transfers at their respective institutions.[7] Most interviewees, however, suspect that these negative trends occur within their institutions' WTCS transfer populations. Several chose not to speculate on WTCS transfers' persistence outcomes without consulting data. A small few hold misconceptions that WTCS transfers fare better academically at their institutions than most other student populations with respect to these outcomes. What is clear from these responses is that academic advisors in this study have not familiarized themselves with research regarding the academic outcomes of WTCS transfer students at their institutions.

Despite interviewees' lack of accurate information regarding academic outcomes of WTCS transfers, the majority believe that these students are at a disadvantage regarding UWS four-year adjustment relative to other transfer populations. The challenges they attach to WTCS transfers' campus transition are commonly associated with unpreparedness for UWS four-year school coursework and classroom environment. Interviewees feel that new transfers from other four-year institutions are more likely to be prepared for their institution's academic culture. These assumptions match research finding that transfers from four-year schools fare better than two-year transfer students in terms of persistence (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009). Academic advisors' assessments of WTCS transfers' institutional transition as compared to new freshmen

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[7] Immediately prior to the interview protocol (Appendix B) switching focus from the general student population to the WTCS transfer population, interviewees were informed: "UW-System Research finds that transfer students from WTCS schools lag behind other populations in terms of retention and timeliness to degree."

is more mixed. Some academic advisors presumed freshmen adjust better due to their affiliation with an incoming class, receiving better orientation programming, and increased likelihood of campus involvement while others stated that WTCS transfers' previous higher education experience benefits them over new freshmen.

The same issues that interviewees identified as barriers to adjustment resurfaced in their views of WTCS transfer students' persistence outcomes. Most academic advisors again feel that WTCS transfers are less likely to graduate than other students due to possessing an inordinate amount of departure triggers. These suppositions align with research finding that freshmen and lateral transfers persist to graduation at virtually the same rates, whereas two-year student transfers to four-year institutions trail both populations (Adelman, 2006; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; NCES, 2003). Clarifying that they rarely observe students in the campus social environment, interviewees only assume that WTCS transfers are often at a social disadvantage to adjusting to the institution due to facing variables related to age, employment, and finances. Still, participants do not attribute a lack of social involvement to WTCS transfers' attrition. This assumption conflicts with major conclusions present in the literature base, which find that campus involvement is closely tied to student persistence (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1993).

Advising WTCS Transfers

Academic advisors in this study do not believe they diverge from their general advising process when interacting with WTCS transfers. As with all students, they feel they set about forging relationships while meeting advising objectives that data analysis has matched with the CAS Standards. If these objectives are met through advising, interviewees believe that students of any status are empowered to successfully navigate the institution and develop individualized

educational plans that match their abilities, needs, interests, and goals. Therefore, interviewees maintain that their approach to advising does not change, only the issues at hand as they relate to students.

Interviewees expressed an understanding that there exists a staggering amount of variability within any given sub-population. As such, interviewees address barriers to WTCS transfers' academic success only after they manifest themselves during advising interactions or over the course of the advisee-advisor relationships. Their approach to uncovering variables and concerns mirrors that of their interactions with all students that they advise. When barriers to academic success emerge while working with WTCS transfer students, academic advisors' manners of addressing them also did not deviate from what they described as their normal practice. For example, if students are struggling with coursework, academic advisors assist them by analyzing the problem, drawing on experience, and offering guidance and options.

Interviewees shared only two observable differences pertaining to their advising interactions with WTCS transfers vs. other populations. They expressed a frequent need to consider a wider variety of unique circumstances when assisting these students in their educational planning and a cause to stress the importance of campus involvement. The circumstances they feel they inordinately address when working with WTCS transfers are again found throughout the literature base (e.g., academic ability, employment). Encouragement toward campus involvement is dictated by students' interests and needs. Still, interviewees do not operationalize their attention to these issues differently from their interactions with other students they advise. But, to the extent that study participants described an awareness that WTCS transfers represent a special population, individually probe for academic and non-academic needs and concerns, and personalize advising issues to the individual, their advising approaches

conform to recommendations of advising special populations in the literature base (Ender & Wilkie, 2000; Upcraft & Stephens, 2000).

Advising Methods to Ease Adjustment and Improve Persistence at UWS Four-Year Institutions within the WTCS Transfer Population

Academic advisors do not appear to have an answer for improving WTCS transfers' persistence through academic advising beyond their current practices. Similarly, literature only offers that high-quality advising leads to enhanced persistence (Cuseo, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Research does not systematically identify a specific advising technique or approach as leading to improved persistence. Perhaps there is no particular strategy that can be used to foster improved persistence among WTCS transfers, just better advising.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Purpose

Academic advisors are situated to form meaningful connections with relatively large numbers of students. The one-on-one interactions that characterize the academic advising process afford academic advisors valuable insight into students' college experiences. Advisors often serve as their advisees' primary confidant regarding the vast array of issues they encounter while enrolled at their institutions. Through their accumulated experience of working with a wide spectrum of students, academic advisors become familiar with the recurring barriers to educational success and college satisfaction that certain sub-populations at their institutions are likely to face. As professionals charged with promoting student success, academic advisors' methods for addressing these issues and perspectives on how to improve student success are important to consider.

WTCS students experience difficulty adjusting academically and persisting after transfer to UWS baccalaureate institutions. WTCS transfers at UWS baccalaureate institutions trail both freshmen and other transfer populations in first-year retention and graduation rates. As WTCS districts increasingly become entry points for students pursuing their bachelor's degrees at UWS baccalaureate institutions, the achievement gap in degree attainment after transfer is of growing concern.

Since WTCS students transferring to UWS baccalaureate institutions struggle to graduate, and academic advisors are theoretically positioned to enhance academic success, research into their experiences interacting with this population is valuable. This type of research leads to greater understanding of the barriers WTCS transfers face and the impact of these

barriers on persistence. Additionally, insight into this interaction provides a foundation for examining academic advisors' practices of improving educational outcomes. With these suppositions serving as the basis for investigation, this study sought to explore academic advisors' perceptions of their advising interactions with WTCS transfer students.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher was intrigued by student development and student departure theory regarding the factors impacting student persistence. Terenzini and Reason (2005), synthesized these factors in their extensive review of literature. They identified four domains that affect all student outcomes, including persistence:

- precollege characteristics and experiences

- organizational context

- student peer environment

- individual student experience

As variables associated with these domains impact student outcomes, it is crucial for academic advisors to be cognizant of the conditions that present potential barriers to achieving success in these areas. They must evaluate the presence of these conditions and provide counsel when needed. Using this broad conceptual framework to inform the interview protocol allowed for a non-confining inquiry into the variables academic advisors assess in their interactions with WTCS transfers and how their assessments of these variables' impacts on this population shape their advising approaches.

Though Terenzini and Reason (2005) offered a framework in which to ground the questions asked in the interview protocol, it contributed little to structure the reporting on the nature of advising interactions. As such, a framework that allowed for more opportunity to portray aspects of the actual advising process was deemed necessary during the analysis of findings. In reporting findings, the CAS Standards (2000) provided a more adequate framework to group academic advisors' perceptions of their facilitation of the advising process.

Literature Review

The initial literature review was performed before interviews were conducted. As such, it influenced the research approach. Student development theory, particularly literature addressing retention and persistence, constituted the bulk of the literature reviewed for this study. Because more WTCS transfer students fail to persist than other sub-populations, the decision was made to examine factors that research identified as "departure triggers." Literature addressing the factors leading to attrition nationally among two-year college student transfers added to the researcher's understanding of the barriers WTCS transfers are likely to encounter when transferring to a UWS baccalaureate institution. To verify WTCS transfer students' academic outcomes after transferring to UWS baccalaureate institutions, quantitative data collected by both the WTCS and UWS was consulted. Finally, academic advising literature was reviewed to locate research linking academic advising to student outcomes, best-practice methodologies, and other relevant research that might serve to inform the study.

Methods

Academic advising research is largely theoretical. It predominantly examines academic advising practice by using students as participants. This study employed an inductive qualitative

approach to describe the nature of academic interactions from the perspective of academic advisors. As an exploratory study, it did not build upon previous research.

Through an open-ended interview protocol, academic advisors from UWS baccalaureate institutions reflected upon their practice of academic advising. Over the course of the interview session, participants shared their perceptions of: 1) their roles as academic advisors and their general approaches to providing academic advising; 2) the student outcomes academic advising should seek to enhance; 3) their responsibility and influence toward student persistence; 4) UWS adjustment and persistence experienced by the WTCS population; 5) their advising practices when working with WTCS transfer students; and 6) the ways they attempt to ease adjustment and improve persistence within the WTCS transfer population. The interview protocol also provided an implicit opportunity for participants to draw linkages between their practice of academic advising and student development and student departure theory.

The protocol began with a series of questions designed to examine academic advisors' views of their roles and general approaches to advising students. Interviewees' responses served as the context for analyzing *if* and *how* interactions with WTCS transfers engendered taking on roles or employing approaches they felt were dissimilar from their experiences advising other student populations.

Synthesizing participants' reflections on academic advising into themes resulted in the emergence of commonalities across interviews while also highlighting instances when academic advisors' perceptions or experiences diverged from the norm. These commonalities and unique responses, in turn, shaped the findings section.

Findings

Academic advisors in this study do not follow a methodology when advising students. Instead, they are guided by a relatively non-standardized set of advising objectives. Beyond providing students a common set of basic formation in terms of policy, procedures, and resources, academic advisors appear to set their own goals for practice. Data analysis, however, concluded that there is general consensus regarding the objectives interviewees consider to be fundamental to their role. These objectives largely mirror CAS Standards. By satisfying these benchmarks throughout the advising process, academic advisors empower students to take informed and responsible ownership of their college experience.

Participants' operationalization of these objectives into practice can loosely be characterized as becoming acquainted with their advisees' interests, abilities, goals, and needs through open-ended conversation before addressing each in kind. Relationship building is an important component of the interaction because it prompts advisees to be more open about their goals and concerns. Over the course of the advising relationship, academic advisors assume roles in response to students' needs as appropriate. For example, they often take on teaching roles in their initial meetings with students. As an advisee becomes more familiar with policies, procedures, and resources, academic advisors often assume the role of providing perspective during students' decision-making processes. When students experience difficult academic or personal circumstances, the academic advisor may serve as a confidant or referral resource.

Academic advisors do not appear to view student persistence as a factor driving the advising process. Rather, they focus on assisting students in looking out for their best interests when making educational decisions by setting goals, using resources, and taking advantage of

campus opportunities that enrich their overall college experiences. Therefore, enhanced persistence outcomes are naturally linked to advising as the advising process improves students' ability to make informed decisions.

Academic advisors contend their advising approach remains unchanged when working with WTCS transfers. Collectively, they acknowledge that transfers from the WTCS represent a special population prone to exhibiting characteristics that impact their ability to be successful at the UWS baccalaureate institution. But, being a WTCS transfer does not constitute a meaningful variable that academic advisors feel necessary to consider when facilitating the advising process. They view the subgroup as too heterogeneous to impose a set of characteristics beyond a broad generalization. Rather, academic advisors drill down one level below the broad student characteristic of WTCS transfer status when advising these students. Using the same methods they would with any student, academic advisors attempt to uncover and address more specific traits such as family dynamic, academic ability, and employment situation. Therefore, academic advisors in this study perceive that the only discernible difference between advising WTCS transfers and other students is that the WTCS transfer population shares a propensity for exhibiting more variables to address during the interaction.

When working with WTCS transfers, academic advisors hold objectives that mirror those of working with freshmen and other transfer students. Academic advisors are largely cognizant that WTCS transfers find adjusting to their institutions difficult, but believe they do all that can be done within the scope of their positions to promote adjustment and persistence. They place a limit upon the positive impacts academic advising can foster toward WTCS transfer persistence because taking full advantage of the assistance an academic advisor provides toward adjustment and ultimately degree attainment is the student's choice alone.

Limitations of Study

The researcher recognizes potential limitations of the methodology. The anticipated limitations were related to the study relying exclusively upon participants' perceptions of advising interactions. The researcher did not verify the accuracy of interviewees' perceptions through observation of the interactions or by cross-referencing the students they advised. There was also no data available to analyze the number of WTCS transfer students an interviewee advised or interviewees' WTCS transfer advisees' academic outcomes. Finally, when interviewees were asked to share their reflections of advising the WTCS transfer population, there were concerns that they may integrate their experience advising students from untargeted populations or focus too much attention on a given student characteristic or choice of major. The researcher justified using the study method in spite of these limitations because only limited research on academic advising comes from the advisor perspective and personal experience as an academic advisor allowed redirection of participants' focus if necessary.

During data analysis, however, other limitations of the study became apparent:

1. In this study, major themes regarding research questions reached saturation even before all 19 interviews were completed. Still, additional interviews may have provided more data to support conclusions.

2. Interviews were conducted during the work day. Although most were scheduled for at least one hour, the conversational format of the interview occasionally led to interviewees "rushing" near the end of the protocol to answer questions. As a result, it was likely that more reflective answers would have been offered if not for time constraints.

3. In composing interview summaries, the researcher came to realize interviewees did not reference specific methodologies, literature, or training as guiding their approach to interacting with students.[8] The researcher did not question interviewees about their educational backgrounds, initial training, or professional development pertaining to academic advising. In hindsight, this information would have augmented a number of aspects of the study, particularly the researcher's ability to make implications for practice and recommendations for future study.

4. Academic advisors were not asked to isolate reflections of their interactions to a specific encounter, such as the initial advising appointment with students. Interviewees frequently self-identified the context they were considering before reflecting upon the nature of the interaction, but in retrospect, the interview protocol should have first inquired into academic advisors' approaches to the initial meeting before exploring the long-term interaction embodying the advisor-advisee relationship.

Implications

The results of this study illustrate that academic advisors believe they advise WTCS transfers in the same manner as other populations despite quantifiable research which reports that this population struggles to adjust academically and graduate from UWS baccalaureate institutions.

The research findings lead to a number of implications for practitioners and Directors of Academic Advising to consider:

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[8] Mary and Tami both made brief references to student development theories studied in their graduate programs when making assumptions of factors affecting students' adjustment and persistence. These interviewees did not connect specific theory to their facilitation of the academic advising process.

1. Academic advisors should be made aware of the WTCS transfer population's academic performance at their institution (first semester GPA, first-year retention, and graduation rates). Currently, academic advisors' perceptions of this population's outcomes are purely speculative and can lead to misconceptions. Staying up-to-date with accurate information regarding the academic outcomes characteristics of student populations increases the likelihood of greater sensitivity in assessing and addressing potential barriers to success.

2. Because WTCS transfers have been shown to have lower first-year retention and overall persistence rates, perhaps academic advisors' contentions that their advising practice is universally effective with all student populations is misguided. As WTCS transfers routinely exhibit characteristics that pose barriers to their academic success, academic advisors may benefit from literature and professional development opportunities that provide alternative perspectives to advising students to account for these barriers. For example, the academic advising professional organization (NACADA) offers substantial professional development literature and opportunities addressing considerations to be made when advising students identifying with a particular nontraditional, minority, gender type, or at-risk population. As transfer students from two-year colleges, including WTCS schools, commonly exhibit a variety of traits shown to put them at risk regarding academic difficulty, professional development opportunities could assist advisors in becoming more responsive to each student's unique academic and social profile.

   Additionally, research on the conditions affecting persistence of WTCS transfer students has the potential to be integrated and expanded into professional development aiming to increase advisor capacity to ease this population's transition to the institution

and increase the chance of persistence. Theories of best-practice approaches can be communicated and strengthened through professional development interventions, which, in part, can be evaluated for effectiveness through a combination of student-advisor relationship surveys and institutional data reporting first semester GPA, second semester retention rates, and graduation rates. The limited theoretical research addressing how advisors can promote graduation in transfer students and that associated with enhancing persistence within special populations provides some reference points for UWS advisors as well as developers of professional development interventions. Still, more research is needed that explores how advising practices can influence persistence decisions of transfer students from two-year schools to four-year schools and the most effective ways findings can be implemented into professional development programs to enhance outcomes.

3. There exists a limit to the impact academic advising can have on WTCS students' abilities to adjust and persist. Academic advisors address students' limitations by assisting with course selection, making referrals to appropriate resources, and discussing time management and study skills techniques. But, there are numerous other institutional conditions that negatively impact WTCS transfers. Most academic advisors emphasized that orientation and other student programming for transfer students are deficient, the transfer process is routinely a source of frustration for WTCS transfers, and elements of the academic environment are not conducive to these students' learning.

Persistence must continue to be a collective institutional effort, and academic advisors are afforded unique insight into the multi-connected issues impacting persistence from their students. Academic advisors' sharing of that information with faculty and staff

can help shape practice to meet unique student needs and bring about improved outcomes. Within this study alone, academic advisors suggested improving orientation programs, promoting associate degree attainment before transfer, and considering offering course formats that align with students' learning styles. These proposals may prove unattainable, but nonetheless, there is a need for academic advisors to seek a platform for informing policy in the areas of admissions, academic affairs, and student affairs.

4. Academic advisors assign disadvantages to WTCS transfers that impact their abilities to adjust and persist at UWS institutions. Most place a measure of blame on a number of factors. The majority find the WTCS at fault for not properly preparing its students for UWS course content or informing its students about transfer policies to the UWS four-year system. A small minority elaborated on both institutional systems being culpable for not collaborating to ensure course content is better aligned and transfer policies are properly communicated before transfer. Most interviewees also feel WTCS transfers are liable for not researching requirements and properly preparing themselves for UWS study. Still others criticize the transfer admission policy of the UWS four-year institution: some claimed it is too biased against WTCS transfers, while others felt it allows unprepared students to successfully gain admission through the transfer process. In any case, the supposed flaws academic advisors detect in the WTCS to UWS four-year institution transfer function warrant further investigation to inform policies and procedures that might yield better student outcomes for WTCS transfers.

5. Academic advisors express using an intuitive approach to facilitating the advising process. However, most participants' interview sessions suggest they rarely take the

opportunity to self-reflect upon their practice or discuss advising methods with their colleagues. This apparent lack of regular self-reflection and peer discourse calls for an increased effort by Directors of Academic Advising to find opportunities that encourage academic advisors to more frequently and critically examine their own practice of working with students.

Recommendations for Future Study

The research base examining academic advising's impact on student development continues to grow, but few empirical studies measuring academic advisors' effectiveness in enhancing student outcomes were located in a review of the literature. As academic advising has been positively linked to student persistence theoretically, more research is needed to quantitatively explore its impact on graduation outcomes. In terms of academic advisors who are intent on improving the outcomes of WTCS transfers enrolling at UWS baccalaureate schools, research investigating the impact of academic advising on persistence for student populations inordinately at risk for attrition is even more crucial.

In addition to suggesting an infusion of quantitative studies targeting academic advising's capacity to enhance persistence be conducted, the following recommendations for future study are proposed for advancing academic advisors' practice in promoting persistence in the WTCS transfer population:

1. A particular aspect of academic advisors' reflections on their role and practice invites further exploration. Nearly all academic advisors indicated that their advising interactions are "developmental" in nature. As there was no trace of a progressive structure for the issues academic advisors cover during a second, third, or fourth meeting with an advisee,

it remains unclear how academic advisors go about systematically "developing" the student. Furthermore, academic advisors continually shared aspects of their approaches the researcher interpreted as a prescriptive element to the advising process. Although many academic advisors spoke at length regarding their approach to developing advisees' self-awareness when making educational plans, participants' reflections of their overall practice reveal an emphasis on fulfilling the largely prescriptive objectives of CAS Standards 5, 6, and 7. Therefore, academic advisors may have characterized their advising approaches as developmental because it is a socially acceptable response within the field, but over-emphasized their actual use of developmental advising techniques. In all likelihood, academic advisors are using both prescriptive and developmental approaches when interacting with students. Future research examining academic advisors' actual facilitation of the advising process would provide a clearer picture of what practices are currently being used at UWS institutions as well as advisor proficiency in providing students developmental advising.

2. Related to the previous recommendation, academic advising interactions between advisors and WTCS transfers should be observed to assess differences in academic advising approaches. The current study examined academic advisors' perceptions of their interactions, but study participants did not perceive that they advise WTCS transfers differently from other student populations. However, nuances in their approaches when advising WTCS transfers emerged from data analysis. Their reflections of advising interactions made clear their belief WTCS transfers often exhibit traits that negatively impact their chances for academic success, adjustment, and persistence. Furthermore, academic advisors address these topics and tailor their approaches in relation to issues as

they arise over the course of the interaction. For example, some interviewees reported talking less about personal qualities with WTCS transfers because they assume these students have previously come to some self-discoveries. In other instances, academic advisors spend more time talking about issues they rarely address with other students such as the commuting dynamic, importance of general education, or credit-load management. Therefore, observation of actual academic advising interactions would further the current study by verifying or refuting advisors' perceptions concerning *if* and *how* academic advising interactions with WTCS transfers contrasts from those of other populations. The CAS Standards would provide a suitable research framework for evaluating these differences.

3. Expanded UWS tracking of WTCS transfers' academic performance, to include disaggregated data on retention and persistence at each institution, by student characteristic, is needed. Currently, data provides extensive demographic profiles of the entire population of WTCS transferring to the UWS (OPAR, 2009). But, the profile of WTCS transfers is not further separated to track the outcomes of students exhibiting a given characteristic after transferring to a specific UWS baccalaureate institution. For example, data does not provide the academic outcomes for WTCS transfers 25 years and older who transfer to UW-Platteville. This research would identify persistence trends among sub-groups within this heterogeneous population to inform not only academic advisors, but also academic and student affairs policymakers.

4. Laanan (2004) created the Laanan-Transfer Students' Questionnaire (L-TSQ) to research two-year transfer students' psychological, academic, and social adjustment after beginning at four-year colleges. His findings led him to posit that the same questionnaire

could be employed at every institution and the resulting data used to develop and

implement more effective student advising interventions (2004). Use of Laanan's

questionnaire at UWS baccalaureate institutions would allow advisors to have knowledge

of students' expectations and compare them with historical trends of transfer student

success at their respective institutions. Results from this questionnaire would have strong

potential to inform academic advising practice. They would help advisors identify the

WTCS transfer population's most keenly-felt departure triggers, thereby suggesting

which gaps in advising practice might be occurring and subsequently targeted during

advising interactions.

5. Finally, several academic advisors in this study volunteered that their advisees complete

evaluations of the advising they receive. Several interviewees stated that they know they

are doing a "good job" because their student evaluations are positive. Again, findings

from this study report that academic advisors believe they facilitate the process similarly

with all students. But, as the advisors working in advising centers most often advise

freshmen students, positive results may be skewed by the large ratio of freshmen students

completing evaluations. Perhaps advisors' facilitation of the process is more appropriate

to freshmen. Disaggregating evaluations by sub-group for individual academic advisors is

necessary to inform practitioners of the quality of advising that WTCS transfer students

feel they receive and improve future facilitation of the advising process when working

with these students. Moreover, disaggregated evaluation results by each advisor and by

student sub-group would allow for identification of those advisors who are particularly

effective at working with WTCS transfer students, who, in turn, can offer insight to their

colleagues.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study Interview Instrument

Introduction

Student development literature often focuses on "achievement gaps" that exist between different student sub-groups. Sub-groups are most often categorized by race/ethnicity or socio-economic class. As advisors, we realize that students fit into many other categories that may also impact various academic outcomes such as GPA, retention, and timely persistence towards a degree. For example, in Wisconsin, we know that students differ in these areas depending on the way they matriculate to four-year schools (transfer v. non-transfer). Since you work closely with students, I am hoping to learn more about your interactions with students within different sub-groups. This study will inform the field as to how advisors are currently working with specific student populations. As such, it is important for your responses to be as candid as possible. Pseudonyms will be used in all cases when reporting findings.

Background Questions

1. As we get started, I'd like to know a little bit more about your position. Can you tell me your title and the duties required of your role?
2. Can you tell me how long you have been in this position?

Advising Philosophy and Approach Questions

What should the role of an academic advisor be?

What should they be responsible for?*

What is important for an advisor to be able to do proficiently in their effort to help students succeed in college? How should their effectiveness be judged?

Is student persistence something you consider to be a function of your job?

How is your consideration for student persistence embodied in your advising approach? (pay attention to traits of developmental and prescriptive approaches)?

How do you support the advisees you know are struggling?

Differentiating Advising Questions

As an advisor, what information do you think every student needs?

-Do you teach that information differently to different types of students?

-Can you take me through how you go about figuring out what a particular student needs, how you convey that info, and how you determine your effectiveness at meeting those needs?

What do you feel are important variables to consider in your approach to advising students? Can you elaborate?

Probe for student pre-college experiences /individual student experience/institutional context/peer-associated factors if interviewee asks for clarification of the term "variable."

How does your consideration of these variables shape your advising approach?

Do you do anything in particular during advising assumptions you feel promotes student persistence?

Transfer Student Sub-Populations Questions

Do you find advising transfer students is different than advising students that matriculate as freshmen? How so?

Could you explain the variables you find are important to consider when advising transfer students?

Could you tell me what you typically observe as differences between transfer and students that enrolled as freshmen?

    Do you have different expectations for these students than ones that come in as freshman?

    Do they seem to have different needs?

    How does transferring to your institution seem to impact students?

    Do they have noticeably different levels of academic preparedness or ability to academic plan?

    In your role as an advisor, how do you respond to those needs?

        What do you do help with a perceived lack of academic preparedness?

        How do grades at previous institutions give you insight as to how that student will succeed?

        How might that factor into academic planning with theses students?

    How accurate have your insights been?

    How did you come to know the accuracy of those insights?

    Do you advise transfer students differently during their first semester at your school?

Do you find a difference in these same factors between students depending on which school they transfer from?

Can I ask you to briefly reflect on your experience advising different transfer populations paying particular attention to the opportunities and challenges you face based on their matriculation status?

4-year publics

4-year privates

2-year UW-System

2-year WTCS

Do you have varying experiences when advising these different sub-populations? Can you explain how they differ?

Do you ever form generalizations about students' chances for success based on which school they are transferring from?

Can you share those generalizations with me?

What characteristics of the student do you weigh when generalizing?

Do the generalization you form influence the way you advise a student?

Does a certain sub-group require more attention than others?

Do you take into account where a student is transferring from in the way you advise them?

Do you find the needs/barriers of a transfer student differ between transfer institutions?

Do you find one transfer population more or less likely to succeed, be retained, earn higher grades, graduate on time, etc. over another transfer population? What do you base that belief upon? How does that influence your approach?

In other words, do you see "transfer shock" occurring within these populations (offer a explanation of transfer shock)? Any more than others?

WTCS Transfer Student Questions:

Can you share your experience working WTCS students?

Are there any general differences you experience working with this population than others?

When answering the following questions, could you be careful to reflect upon your experience working with only non-associate degree earning students that completed all previous coursework at a WTCS school.

Do you find certain factors are important to consider when advising this population? How so?

Do you see a difference between students that have many credits as opposed to those that do not?

When you are advising students from WTCS schools, do you have preconceived ideas of how they will fare?

How do you make a judgment on the academic potential of a WTCS student….what goes into that judgment?

Compared to other populations, what are the challenges and opportunities present when advising WTCS students?

Why do you suppose UW-System Research finds that transfer students from WTCS schools lag behind other populations in terms of retention and timeliness to degree?

    -Do you see a heightened frequency of "transfer shock" within the WTCS-transfer population?

How do you approach advising students belonging to the WTCS transfer population?

    -If the approach is different than other populations, what do you do differently?

    -If so, when did you decide to do things differently?

        -What prompted you to do so?

        -Why do you do things differently?

-How did you decide on the format of this different approach?

-Do you feel this approach is effective? How do you know?

-What could you do better to support these students?

-How do you support those that are struggling academically or socially?

-Does your institution do anything collectively to address their needs?

-What could your institution do better to support these students?

-What could you do?

-If no, is there a reason behind the decision not to do so?

Do you do anything special to promote persistence within this population?

What are some of the academic barriers you see uniquely among the WTCS populations? How do they differ from:

1) Transfers from UW-Colleges? 2) Transfers from Private 4-years? 3) Transfers from Public 4-years? 4) Freshmen matriculated students?

Are there differences between the WTCS populations in relation to the barriers they experience? Why do you think those barriers exist?

How can you, as an advisor, help ease those barriers?

Do you have suggestions as to how advising different populations can be more effective?

Finally, do you have any suggestions as to how WTCS transfers should be advised or what fellow advisors should consider when working with this population?

More likely to be a commuter student.

More likely to have a lower socio-economic status.

More likely to be a first-generation.

More likely to be less academically-prepared during pre-college years.

Do you consider this when planning your advising session?

How do you alter advising approaches to address these issues?

*All questions in this style of text are present only to offer follow-up/clarification suggestions for the interviewer to consider if interviewees open a window to this course of inquiry.

Appendix B: Interview Instrument

Introduction

Student development literature often focuses on "achievement gaps" that exist between different student sub-groups. Sub-groups are most often categorized by race/ethnicity or socio-economic class, but advisors realize that students fit into many other categories that may also impact various academic outcomes such as GPA, retention, and timely persistence towards a degree. For example, in Wisconsin, students differ in these areas depending on the way they matriculate to four-year schools (transfer v. non-transfer). Since you work closely with many student-types, I am hoping to learn more about your interactions with students from the WTCS. This study will inform the field as to how advisors are currently working with this specific student population. As such, it is important for your responses to be candid. Pseudonyms will be used in all cases when reporting findings.

Background Questions

As we get started, I'd like to know a little bit more about your position. Can you tell me how long you have been in this position and also describe the duties required of your role?

Advising Philosophy and Approach Questions

What do you believe the role of an academic advisor should be?

When advising a student, are there institutional variables and/or student characteristics you feel are important to consider?

Probe for student pre-college experiences/individual student experience/institutional context/peer-associated factors if interviewee asks for clarification of the term "variable."

How do your considerations for these variables shape interaction with your advisees?

What do you hold as the most important student outcomes for your advisees?

Is student persistence an outcome you consider to be connected to your job?

How about timeliness to degree?

What role do you think academic advising plays in persistence?

As an advisor, do you think you can influence the outcome of student persistence?

How do you go about doing that?

How is your consideration for student persistence embodied in your advising approach?

Can you share anything in particular you do during advising appointments that you feel promotes student persistence?

Transfer Student Sub-Populations Questions

UW-System Research finds that transfer students from WTCS schools lag behind other populations in terms of retention and timeliness to degree. Can you share reflections on advising students coming from the WTCS, focusing solely on your experience working with only non-associate degree earning students that completed all or nearly all previous coursework at a WTCS school?

Referring back to your previous reflections on the role of academic advising, and your view of the role you play in student persistence, does that approach/philosophy change with regard to WTCS transfers?

Have you found that advising WTCS transfer students is different than advising other student sub-groups?

> *Are there any unique opportunities and challenges you encounter when working with them?*

Do you prepare differently for a WTCS transfer student advising session than others?

Are the variables that you feel are important to take into consideration when advising students more or less the same when working with students from this population?

> *In your role as an advisor, how do you respond to those differences?*

> *How does transferring to your institution seem to impact these students compared to others?*

Do you find differences in the pre- (current institution) experience of WTCS students compared to freshmen or transfers from other college systems? *Could you elaborate on those differences and if/how you respond to them?*

Do you find differences in the way WTCS students adjust to your institutions' academic and social culture? *Could you describe those differences? How do you respond?*

Do you find differences regarding how WTCS students adjust to the student peer environment compared to freshmen or transfers from other college systems? *Could you elaborate on those differences and your response to them?*

Do you find common differences in WTCS transfers' individual student experiences (curricular, classroom, and out-of-class experiences) compared to other subgroups? *How do you respond to this information?*

"Transfer shock" is a term broadly assigned to the historical trend of transfer students experiencing a dip in their 1st and sometimes 2nd semester at a new institution? Do you find WTCS students experience the phenomenon to a different degree than other transfer students? *If so, why? Do you do anything to ease transfer shock?*

In general, how do you approach advising students belonging to the WTCS transfer population?

> -If the approach is different than other populations, what do you do differently? Why?

> *What issues do you address with WTCS transfers?*

> *Why do you think it is important to address these items you mentioned?*

How do you address it?

What do you not choose to address?

Why are those issues unimportant to address?

Do you do anything unique to promote persistence within this population?

Do you have any suggestions as to how WTCS transfers should be advised or what fellow advisors should consider when working with this population?

*All questions in this style of text are present only to offer follow-up/clarification suggestions for the interviewer to consider if interviewees open a window to this course of inquiry.

Follow-up Questions (ask for students in general and then "is this different with WTCS students?" Also, with a lot of "how so?" questions):

How do you help your advisees connect to the university?

Do you discuss students' intentions for a degree?

Do you discuss their commitment to earning that degree from your school? *WTCS?*

Do you discuss external factors that could impact their persistence? *WTCS?*

Do you ask students about their campus involvement peer group situation?

Do you gauge the level of peer interaction a student participates in?

Do you try to encourage the building of peer relationships? How do you do that?

Do you ask if friends help them stay focused academically?

How do you discover the level of social integration going on with these students?

Do you proactively offer suggestions regarding how to get involved?

Do you ever actually facilitate involvement?

Are there methods you use to promote involvement with faculty members?

How do you tell if a student is academically engaged?

How do you encourage forms of academic engagement with a student?

Do you promote student involvement early in their first semester?

Do you ask about students' seeking of institutional support to be successful, welcomed, etc.?

Do you make a point of seeing transfers early and often during their first semester? What do you do after you meet with them for orientation?

Do you discuss with transfers, and try to prepare them for, the phenomenon of transfer shock?

When working with WTCS students in course scheduling, do you assess their academic preparation and risk factors to advise them on their most appropriate first courses?

Can you tell if a student is integrated in both the academic and social communities of college; do you detect or examine with the student any of the following: adjustment, difficulty, incongruence and isolation?

Appendix C: Interview Summaries

Abe

Abe is currently in his fourth year of service as an advisor at a UWS four-year institution. In addition to his 75% appointment devoted to academic advising the general population of undecided students, he holds a 25% appointment as both an academic advisor and accommodations specialist for students receiving disability services.

Abe feels effective academic advising entails becoming familiar with students' background, interests, and goals, but also acknowledges that time constraints often prevent him from fully doing so by requiring him to concentrate on more task-oriented discussions. Thus, he employs open-ended questions in the short time he has with his advisees to understand their current mindset towards their education, concerns, and future educational and career aspirations. Once students' goals and challenges are known, Abe discusses corresponding campus options and resources he feels will enhance their ability to be successful. As such, he describes his advising approach as highly individualized to each student to satisfy their specific needs in a way that goes much further than just picking classes. He hopes students will leave his advising sessions with a strengthened sense of ownership over their educational experience.

Student persistence is an outcome Abe associates to his role as an advisor as well as one he believes he can influence. In describing how he attempts to positively impact advisees' persistence, he points again to his general advising approach of getting to know his students as individuals through open-ended questions, promoting goal reflection, discussing any academic problems, and serving as a resource for making informed referrals. He believes these aspects of his position are instrumental in enhancing students' chances for reaching graduation. Although

he feels academic advising has more substance than explaining academic policies and helping with class selection, Abe attests that there are needed skills which advisors are responsible for teaching. Unfortunately, he says, the advising structure at his institution means he will not see his advisees from beginning to end of their academic career. Still, Abe feels he is instrumental in helping students build the necessary skills to navigate the institution on a path towards graduation.

WTCS Interaction. WTCS attendance is not an indicator Abe that would consciously lead him to adjust his approach to advising beyond considering the number of credits a student transfer in and how those transfer credits satisfy his institution's academic requirements. In his experience advising students, however, he notices recurring differences between students from the WTCS and those from other sub-populations.

Although WTCS transfer students do not represent a large percentage of his advisees, Abe believes that WTCS transfer students bringing in the most WTCS credits seem to have the hardest time adjusting to his UW-Campus. His interactions with these students suggest to him that the more credits earned at the WTCS often equates to a strong socialization into the WTCS academic and social environment that makes the transition to a four-year UWS institution difficult. He hears from WTCS transfers that the large class-sizes and fast-paced curriculum are in stark contrast to the one-on-one attention they grew accustomed to at the WTCS institution. He also perceives that WTCS transfer students tend to struggle in math courses at the UWS four-year institution and often choose to complete the requirement at a WTCS institution. In general, he finds WTCS transfer students to be more career-oriented, but still finds himself having to emphasize the value of earning a four-year degree and drawing linkages between majors and careers with this population more than others.

The challenge Abe faces when advising WTCS students is largely procedural. He often only receives sparse or incomplete information regarding what students' grades or academic plans were at the WTCS institution whereas he has access to all his native freshmen advisees' previous academic records. For WTCS transfers, he may only receive notification that a given class was completed and transferred in as previous credit earned. This limited information complicates ascertaining students' previous academic interests, paths, and even performance prior to meeting with them face-to-face and asking those questions.

Despite not explicitly using WTCS transfer status as a variable to shape his advising approach, Abe shares that these students have more diverse experiences than regular freshmen. He believes the most effective way to advise them is to draw those experiences out in an effort to form a relationship with them. Their variety of experiences are a major reason Abe enjoys working with WTCS students as he feels they not only have a general idea what college attendance entails but also have a better sense of themselves as a person.

Disclosing that he has not reviewed data to support his opinion, he does not notice a greater occurrence of transfer shock in WTCS students over other transfer populations, speculating the phenomenon is tied more to the choice of major than student population-type. As such, he does not proactively address transfer shock or persistence with the WTCS transfer-population but rather relies on getting to know each of them as individuals as he would with any other student. He then taps into their experiences to lead him to discussing resources or options that would help them to be successful in academic pursuits.

Tami

Tami is completing her third year as Director of Academic Advising at a UWS four-year institution. For two years prior to assuming the position of Director, she held an academic advising position. Even as Director, she still provides advising to a population of students.

Tami references student development theory frequently when sharing her perceptions of the impact academic advising can have in bringing about positive student outcomes. She attributes her graduate studies and current position as staff-leader as the reasons she holds the idealistic view of academic advising serving as an all-encompassing student service that effectively transitions students to college life, critical to their retention and academic success. Noting that many students at her institution are first-generation and the highest rate of attrition occurs between their first and second year, she believes academic advisors' part in acclimating students to campus is integral for student persistence as it prepares them for their entire college experience. She characterizes the academic advisors' process of acclimating students to campus as multi-layered, but includes helping students understand unfamiliar educational structure, terminology, and policies while also alerting them to the opportunities, resources, and services the institution provides. As she believes students unhappy in their choice of major are more likely to depart, she also counts academic advisors' role in students' major exploration as an invaluable element in their campus adjustment.

Tami describes the student-academic advisor relationship as a partnership that aids the student in connecting to the campus and community. Students are responsible for following-through on issues addressed in advising sessions, but the advisors serve as the one-on-one connection a student relies on for guidance to all things-college. In order to establish a

relationship with the potential to impact student success, she is of the opinion that advisors must use a developmental advising approach over one that is prescriptive. If not, they are simply reinforcing the common, misguided perception that advisors only purpose is to help students select classes whereas she believes advising is a combination of probing for students' interests and skills, and then helping students match those with academic and career options and resources that can help them become successful.

WTCS Interaction. Tami acknowledges that her diminished advising load makes it difficult for her to reflect upon advising WTCS transfers because she does not have as large as sample to reflect upon. Because of her uncertainty and desire not to provide false information, she declined to comment on many of the questions posed to her regarding WTCS transfer students. She felt more comfortable sharing her thoughts that all transfers seem to be a forgotten population and that institutions, and academic advisors, seem to be much more focused on freshmen success over transfers.

Though she only provided limited feedback regarding her personal interaction with WTCS transfers, such as recalling WTCS transfer students struggled to satisfy math requirements at her UWS four-year institution, she gave suggestions as to what she felt could be done to improve student outcomes of this population through advising. Her solutions hinged mostly on student orientation structure. Orientation does not provide sufficient time for advisors to work with WTCS transfers individually or address all of their population's unique issues of course availability for students bringing in a high number of credits, credit transfer problems, class scheduling, major exploration, and extra-curricular interests. Operating under a condensed time-frame minimizes academic advisors' ability to facilitate academic and social acclimation to the institution.

Jamie

Jamie is in her sixth year as an academic advisor in a UWS four-year institution's academic advising center. Although her office advises all students, she mainly advises students looking to major in Letters and Science fields. Before assuming her current position, Jamie spent six years as a counselor at a WTCS institution. She enjoyed her time at the WTCS school and her experience there cultivated an affinity for working with WTCS transfers.

She believes an academic advisor's role must adapt to the needs of each individual advisee but will always center on helping students decide their passion, define their goals, and support them in reaching those goals. Jamie relies heavily on advisees' pre-enrollment data, such as high school GPA, ACT scores, and status as a 1st generation college student, when preparing for advising sessions as it helps her proactively identify advisees that might struggle. Pre-enrollment information also provides her insight into which questions might lead her to a better understanding of a particular student's college readiness. Throughout an actual advising interaction, Jamie pays close attention to verbal and non-verbal queues to further estimate if students comprehend the information being discussed and as a prompt to provide more specialized information.

Jamie feels graduation from her institution is the primary goal for the vast majority of the students she advises and consequently considers her advisees' persistence to be closely connected to her position. Still, she is cognizant that a small number of advisees have different priorities and she tries her best to assist these students in their endeavors even if it means departure from the institution. Therefore, she does not consider her role to be making sure

everyone graduates from her university but rather that students are successful in fulfilling their goals.

Jamie feels strongly that campus engagement enhances students' college experience and improves outcomes. Thus, in addition to addressing immediate issues and discussing academic matters, she devotes considerable advising time to exploring students' interests and how to connect those interests to campus opportunities. She believes this approach helps her impact persistence decisions.

WTCS Interaction. Jamie draws upon her experience working in both the WTCS and UWS four-year systems to attest to the academic, social, and institutional structure being much different from one another.

WTCS transfers have shared with Jamie that the transition to the larger classes and less accessible instructors at the UWS four-year school is difficult. She grants the possibility that the college readiness of students first entering a WTCS institution might trail those first entering the UWS four-year school, but does not attribute WTCS transfer students' struggles at UWS four-year schools to a gap in institutional rigor between the two systems as she believes the curriculum to be nearly identical in general education classes. As such, she assumes the students excelling at the WTCS can be just as successful within the UWS but often struggle solely because they are surprised by the stark differences between the two systems' institutional culture. Because Jamie is aware of the frequency of these students' transition struggles, she will go so far as to recommend enrolling in traditionally difficult courses at the WTCS and transfer it back to the UWS institution.

As an academic advisor, she senses a clear difference in the ways WTCS transfer students adjust to the social culture of her UWS campus compared to other sub-populations. In general, she finds WTCS transfer students largely to be commuter students and disinterested in campus activities. She attaches her perceptions of WTCS transfer student social disconnect to financial issues preventing them from devoting time to other activities outside of class, family, or work. In spite of holding this perception, she still makes a concerted effort to connect WTCS transfers to opportunities she sees as suiting the interests they express in advising sessions.

Jamie elaborates a great deal on her belief transfer shock and student departure inordinately occurs in WTCS transfer students as a result of their non-involvement in campus culture brought on by institutional and personal life factors and not lack of ability. Furthermore, she finds misalignment in the transfer function between the WTCS and UWS four-year school as non-conducive to student success. She advocates for more communication and partnership between the WTCS and UWS as an approach to easing transfer students' transition between systems.

Frank

Frank has been the Director of Academic Advising at a UWS four-year institution for nine years. He was personally responsible for implementing the university's framework for advising first-year and undeclared students. To keep current with student and staff needs, he has always advised a population of students.

Frank likens the role of an academic advisor to that of teacher. He believes there is a wealth of university-related information and policies that every student needs to know in order to navigate their way to graduation. He believes academic advisors are responsible for relaying this

information to them. Additionally, he hopes academic advising offers students an individual they can be comfortable contacting for guidance and reassurance of their academic plans as many students are intimidated by professors.

Frank is adamant that student persistence is unreflective of an academic advisor's effectiveness even though the advising techniques and office goals he champions appear to hold student graduation as a goal. He believes academic advisors cannot influence students' persistence decisions because actual contact time is relatively short, but also because he feels persistence is exclusively a result of individual motivation. On the other hand, he believes students need frameworks for reaching goals and effective advising is characterized by advisors' ability to provide those blueprints. But, after an academic advisor provides an advisee academic information, the responsibility of being successful falls squarely on the student.

When advising, Frank takes note of students' pre-college performance and tries to help them set realistic expectations based on these indicators. He is comfortable telling a student with a low ACT math score that pre-medicine is poor choice of major because they are likely to be unsuccessful. Once students establish a college academic record, he is even more resolute in steering them towards majors he feels suits their academic ability. Although he does not feel it enhances their chances of persisting, he explains to students that earning a bachelor's degree in any major is the primary goal of their college attendance because data says they are likely to have five career changes in their lifetime so the major is largely unimportant.

WTCS Interaction. Frank is outspoken against WTCS rigor and its transfer students' chances for success at his UWS institution. He believes a warranted perception exists that WTCS institutions as a whole are non-rigorous and fail in preparing students for UWS four-year

academic success. Similarly, he supposes high-achieving students are extremely unlikely to enroll at WTCS schools rather than UWS four-year institutions, meaning WTCS transfers tend to be academically inferior to those native to the UWS four-year institution. He cites differences in academic rigor of the WTCS, quality of the student transferring, and institutional setting as the basis of his assumption of the anxiety he observes WTCS transfer population experiencing more prominently than other sub-populations.

Frank blames a misalignment between the WTCS and UWS curriculums for WTCS students' struggles after transfer. Even though he has high regard for the liberal arts program at the WTC supplying his institution the most transfer students, he still feels these students are unprepared to be successful in the most prominent majors at his institution. With other WTCS institutions, he puts even less faith in their preparation of students for UWS transfer.

Frank does not believe he can bridge gaps in WTCS students' preparedness because he cannot control for the rigor or institutional culture at either institution and only inherits the students he is assigned. Therefore, he uses only his advisees' current GPA and course history to shape advising topics and does not account for their institution of transfer. As with all his advisees, he provides practical information about academic requirements and clarifies any questions, but feels they must rely on their own ability and motivation to be successful. Even though he observes that WTCS transfers often experience a difficult transition to the UWS campus, time constraints prevent him from extensively addressing any non-academic issues.

In addition to believing gaps exist in WTCS transfer students' academic ability and pre-UWS preparation, he also contends they will likely struggle with social acclimation because they are unaffiliated with a specific entrance class that came in together as freshmen. To counter this

effect, he encourages his WTCS transfers to join student organizations, stay on campus over the weekend, or attend sporting events as a way to make friends, but does not facilitate social interaction further than offering recommendations.

Frank feels the entire transfer process is hurried with transfer students are admitted hastily and oriented just before classes start. This process often results in their not knowing how their classes will transfer until they already are registered or even in progress of their courses and consequently take a semester of largely irrelevant classes towards graduation. When coupled with an already difficult academic and social integration, Frank believes this hurried process puts a student at a great disadvantage in their adjustment. Therefore, he finds transfer shock to be prevalent in this population.

Frank advocates the creation of a transfer office that is charged with contacting all transfers to monitor their campus adjustment as academic advisors are too time-constrained to alter their advising approach in such a way that positively impacts transfers' campus acclimation.

Larry

Larry is in his 22nd year as an academic advisor at his UWS four-year institution. Over that span, he has held various advising positions as institutional advising structures changed. Currently, he primarily advises English, foreign language, humanities, and secondary education majors as well as theater minors. Of significance, he additionally advises in the area of human services. This non-teaching major is offered in-class or online and maintains articulation agreements with the WTCS.

Larry credits his advising methods to his training and background as a K-12 teacher. When working with students, he listens to goals and concerns, responds with open-ended

questions to clarify and fully understand their meaning, and then presents options that enable them to make sound decisions. Larry reinforces this critique of his practice by disclosing anecdotal evidence and specific examples to demonstrate how this approach helps students become self-aware of their goals and use this newfound awareness in their decision-making process.

Larry recognizes his school enrolls a large first-generation college student population. Because he cannot be sure which advisees are first-generation college students, he does not take for granted that any of his advisees are familiar with the nuances of a college environment such as common jargon or policy. As such, he feels he advises all of his students in the same general manner. He will use pre-enrollment academic performance as a guide to address academic concerns, but generally only as a talking-point in course selection conversations.

Larry states firmly that graduation is the primary goal he holds for all of his students, but he is less committal on the degree academic advisors are accountable for this outcome. For his part, he hopes his advising practice sets students on a path to graduate by teaching them how to read their degree progress report and understand what course and non-course requirements need completion at what points of their academic career. After several meetings of clarifying goals and disseminating basic procedural information, he hopes his advisees no longer need him to direct the course of the advising interaction but begin to initiate questions about opportunities that enrich their educational experience themselves. Providing logistical information is necessary, but he also believes academic advising can influence persistence through positivity and enthusiasm. If he can help students understand their strengths and connect them to a major that suits those strengths, he is confident he can enhance advisees' chances to graduate. Furthermore, if he is able to cultivate a relationship that demonstrates to an advisee there is

someone on campus concerned about their student experience, he feels he can help students reflect on why they chose college study and stay focused on the end goal of graduation during their times of frustration.

WTCS Interaction. Larry has considerable experience working with the WTCS transfer population. He estimates a majority of WTCS transfers are students who established a transfer GPA at the WTCS after being denied admission to his institution as a high school applicant. Anecdotally, he finds WTCS students transferring in after completing an associate's degree to be very successful in earning a bachelor's degree from the UWS four-year institution. He is much less sure of the persistence trends of the non-associate's degree-earning WTCS transfers he predominantly advises as they blend in with the rest of his advisee population. Depending upon their academic ability, he would guess they could be as successful as any other student.

Larry senses WTCS transfers have difficulty adjusting to his institution. He attributes the difference in rigor between WTCS and UWS four-year schools as the main cause of WTCS transfers' seemingly more difficult transition than other transfer populations. In response, he makes an effort to address and provide strategies for the challenges of adjusting to the differences in rigor, study-time required, and larger class-size when advising his WTCS transfers.

In spite of the potential adjustment roadblocks related to rigor and environment changes, he observes WTCS transfers exhibit more excitement than other transfer populations because they are moving upward versus moving horizontally. He does not feel qualified to comment upon their social or peer environment adjustment as he only sees them in the advising setting, but he assumes housing situations, work commitments, and non-academic responsibilities of WTCS

transfers may cause adjustment barriers. Commuter-status is one variable he pays close attention to when advising any student and believes most WTCS transfers fall into this category. He stresses the importance of making campus connections with all commuting students, and, after learning of their interests, suggests ways they can become involved.

Larry perceives WTCS transfers make an easier academic acclimation to campus than freshmen because they bring a measure of college experience with them and may only need to adapt this experience to a new setting. In fact, Larry does not proactively talk to his WTCS transfer students about matters such as financial aid or location of the bookstore as he feels they no longer need to be handheld on these issues as freshmen might. He admits this approach is imperfect because WTCS transfers may not have been exposed to all of the same information as those coming to the UWS as freshmen, however, he feels they should be responsible for experimenting and learning on their end to make a successful transition. But, Larry does not witness a heightened frequency of transfer shock within the WTCS transfer population.

Larry likens students' transition from the WTCS to the UWS four-year school to a high school student moving to the WTCS. Students need to come in to a new institution knowing it will be a challenge. But, in his opinion, better communication and stronger partnerships between WTCS and UWS four-year academic advisors would do much to ease transfers' transition by allowing WTCS advisors a resource to find out the courses and anecdotal feedback that would better prepare their students looking to transfer into a particular UWS four-year major.

Jeff

Jeff is midway through his third year as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution. He estimates that 85-95% of his advisees are freshmen, but has experience working

with a wide variety of student populations such as upperclassmen, transfer students, and older adults.

Jeff graduated from the UWS institution in which he is employed. He still draws upon his own college experience to help his advisees mature into successful college students. When advising a student, he says he provides as much valuable information as possible. His classification of valuable information entails the ability to read their advising report, utilize the institution's student service and registration system, and locate and access needed campus resources. He believes exposure to a wide array of information cultivates academic independence and fosters a smooth transition to the student's major advisor. Jeff also discusses the role personal responsibility plays in succeeding academically while living within the college environment.

Jeff says his initial approach to advising students is relatively uniform, but he draws upon their responses and pre-college academic data to estimate their readiness for college and adjust his approach accordingly. He uses his assessment of their college readiness to inform him of the amount of information to provide each student and the pace to provide it. For example, he slows down his standard delivery if a student appears overwhelmed and addresses one or two main concepts the particular student must know at that time such as setting up a weekly schedule, communicating general education requirements, or providing tutorial center information. By building students' knowledge of their educational responsibility and the resources available to them to be successful, he feels he can cultivate academic independence.

Jeff feels academic advisors build the foundation for students' persistence towards graduation. However, he does not feel academic advisors are accountable when students fail to

graduate as persistence is students' responsibility. By fostering academic independence that equips students to competently ask him and other advisors questions that go beyond basic how-to-do information, he feels he is doing all he can to give them the tools to succeed academically.

WTCS Interaction. Jeff observes a general frustration among his WTCS transfer advisees brought on by their failure to fully understand UWS transfer policy, academic programs, and available campus resources prior to transfer. He feels WTCS transfers too often transfer to his institution just prior to earning an associate's degree, realizing too late how completion would have significantly lessened the credits needed to obtain their bachelor's degree. He attributes this gap in knowledge to a combination of non-comprehensive advising they receive at the WTCS, students' failure to research the UWS institution's admission policies, and incomplete information from the admissions office at the UWS institution. Whatever the reason, he observes his WTCS transfer advisees were unclear of the academic requirements and policies of the university or how to have properly prepared for their chosen program of study while at their WTC.

Jeff explains his impact on student outcomes, including persistence, is often minimal because he typically only sees a WTCS transfer once before they are advised by an advisor in their major department. When he meets with an undeclared WTCS transfer, however, he advises them as he would a freshman by adjusting in relation to his perception of each student's knowledge about their program of interest.

Although Jeff sees classroom rigor as a struggle for most of his WTCS transfers, his greatest advising challenge is their inability to adapt to campus culture or access resources. He finds the peer interaction of WTCS transfers is almost always isolated to their classroom

experience which greatly hinders their integration into the campus social culture. The transition difficulties older WTCS transfers experience is particularly prevalent as they seem to predominantly live off-campus, have kids, and work full-time. When advising students facing these circumstances, he tries to work with advisees to dissect what constitutes a reasonable credit-load for their lifestyle. Despite his awareness of common transition barriers, he admits he has trouble forming connections with these students through his standard approach and resorts to just making them aware of the resources available to them that can ease their transition given their circumstances.

He feels transfer shock occurs more frequently among the WTCS population than transfers from four-year institutions because the latter have already experienced the transition of moving from high school to a four-year school. Four-year transfers have general knowledge of the resources that exist on a four-year campus and how to access them if needed. Therefore, to counter transfer shock in WTCS transfers, he finds himself concentrating on getting them up to speed with other students in terms of how to utilize resources and become involved on campus much more than gaps in academic ability.

Jeff feels the best way to enhance WTCS transfers' success would be to better inform them of the requirements needed to be met in their chosen UWS program prior to transfer. Currently, he feels these students automatically transfer in at a disadvantage because this information comes late, often not until their first week of classes, when they must be aware of these requirements long before enrollment. He suggests setting up programming during the initial week of classes to bring together WTCS transfer students to discuss and provide solutions for the issues they faced in their first week. Bringing them together in this manner would allow

them to converse with each other while letting shy students hear answers to questions they may have been afraid to ask themselves.

Jill

Jill has been an academic advisor at her institution for 16 years. She advises freshman and undeclared students. Immediately prior to her interview, she conducted an advising session with a non-traditional aged, undeclared student.

Jill provides an in-depth description of how her advising approach varies in relation to the advisee's initiative. In sum, she will alter the content of the information or the assistance she provides to correspondence to the student's needs. She wishes she could spend more time broadening the student perspective of her advisees by exploring majors, matching their interests with campus opportunities, and providing career consultation. Due to time constraints and lack of student preparedness, Jill admits most of her advising sessions center on discussing general and major degree requirements still needed and determining which classes to take the next semester. She estimates the time she devotes to simply helping students select classes is a waste of valuable advising time and tuition money as they could simply use a catalog and course lists to achieve the same results. She estimates most students' lack of initiative in being informed and prepared limits her ability to touch upon the bigger picture of college. Therefore, success for her as an advisor can be classified as a student taking ownership of their responsibilities as she feels most have an underdeveloped approach to maximizing their college experience through making meaningful connections.

Jill feels a primary role of academic advising is helping students in the major exploration process. As such, she considers persistence to graduation is an indirect outcome of helping

students make informed decisions and confident about their choice of major. Furthermore, she states the institution itself has a responsibility to graduate its students. Since advising is one service the institution uses to promote persistence, she holds herself highly-responsible for being diligent about assessing each advisee's interests and needs to limit preventable attrition. She hopes she address these needs by connecting them with appropriate academic programs, organizations, and resources.

WTCS Interaction. Jill has accumulated considerable experience advising WTCS transfers, particularly those from the local WTCS institution. Even with her extensive background working with these students, it is rare for her to see a WTCS transfer bringing in over 15 transferrable credits or have attended the WTCS more than two semesters. Therefore, she does not feel her WTCS transfer advisees have necessarily been experienced college students.

Jill fears exhibiting an elitist mentality but is confident that WTCS courses are not as rigorous as those offered at her UWS institution. This belief makes her apprehensive about the academic potential of any WTCS transfer coming in with less than a 3.0 GPA. Even though she believes WTCS curriculum is more rigorous than high school, her experience tells her these students are underprepared. She shares that some WTCS transfer students that have done well academically have expressed their surprise at how much more difficult course are at the UWS four-year school.

Jill advises WTCS transfers no differently than other students until she knows their grades from the first semester of attendance. Her years in advising compel her to warn WTCS transfers that a 3.5 GPA at the local WTCS institution rarely translates into a 3.5 GPA at her

school. She feels it is important to be realistic about this misalignment in GPAs between systems, but other than briefly stating the UWS will be harder, she advises all transfers and freshmen the same as to not be condescending. Often, however, she will have students upset when they have to repeat classes they believe was completed at the WTCS because it was not deemed rigorous enough. In these cases, she can only explain administration's reasoning and refer them to the course's academic department for the appeal process.

A lack of background information about students' previous academic performance concerns Jill. She relies heavily on ACT scores and high school transcripts to judge first-year students' academic ability, but this information is unavailable for transfer students even when most are predominantly the same age as freshmen. Therefore, she will ask students to tell her why they chose the WTCS, and she will use their responses to gain insight into their situation. If a student shares they were not eligible for admission out of high school, she will concentrate on emphasizing support services. When responses relate to cost or location, she has to dig deeper about high school performance and fill in the gaps as best she can to shape topics to address in advising, but a 2.5 GPA earned from fifteen credits at the WTCS gives her little to develop a student academic profile.

She communicates that each student is unique in terms of pre-college experience and she finds no pattern that distinguishes WTCS transfers and other populations with regard to this trait. However, she does sense that WTCS transfers appear more likely than other populations to question whether or not attending college is the right decision for their circumstances. She finds connecting commuter students to campus is difficult, and speaking strictly anecdotally, it seems to her that most WTCS transfers are commuters. Therefore, they do not integrate in all that the university has to offer but simply see it as a place they take classes and then leave. In response,

she tries to get commuting WTCS transfers excited about all of the opportunities available at the university that might not have been available at the WTCS as a way to encourage them to be on campus. Still, she feels like it is a losing battle as the majority of WTCS transfers have responsibilities preventing them from taking advantage of extra-curricular activities. She gets the sense that school might not be their main focus so they never really feel like a university student.

Jill acknowledges she is unaware of the attrition rate for her WTCS transfers because she tends to see them for only a semester or two. She would prefer not to comment on the prevalence of transfer shock in this population for the same reason, only that she feels attrition is high in all of her transfers but not sure if it is disproportionately high in WTCS transfers. However, she shares with me that the philosophy towards transfers has been to look at them as students who knew how to navigate college so, if they need assistance, they would seek out assistance themselves. She states her office has realized this is not the case and has begun reaching out to new transfers through offering special orientations, extending invitations via email and mail to attend early advising meetings as they do with freshmen, yet, transfers' response has been disappointing as she estimates only about half participate in these initiatives.

Kim

Kim is in her third year as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution. She advises undeclared students and students transitioning between majors, but also coordinates professional development, outreach and promotion of services, and generates statistics for her office.

Kim views the role of an advisor is to serve as an accessible, informative, and supportive individual on campus students can rely on to assist them succeed towards graduation. Since

students are unique and display different needs, it is hard for her to describe her general approach to advising. She uses what she learns of their background to carry the direction of her advising session. For example, she is sensitive to the fact a student may be a first-generation college student and spend more time going over resources available to them whereas a transfer student she will devote more time to talking about how policies differ from their previous institution. But, her approach varies by individual.

Kim identifies successful student outcomes for her advisees as coming to understand their academic interests their first year, being confident in their choice of major, and ultimately graduating on time. In her opinion, academic advisors are responsible for student persistence because they provide the information and guidance students need to navigate confusing college processes on their way to graduation. She also stresses her belief that students' ability to connect to a caring and informed individual on campus is pivotal in enhancing persistence and that her position allows her to be that person. Therefore, in all her advising interactions, she tries hard to always be available to them, be up-to-date on academic information they might need to know as well as resources they might use, and finally, to always make a good impression. She feels demeanor from any college staff may have some degree of impact on a student's decision to stay or go, so she always tries to be positive, approachable, and knowledgeable even if she only sees a student one time.

WTCS Interaction. Kim worked at a UWS two-year institution for five years before assuming her current role as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution. Her position at the UWS two-year school entailed working with many associate degree-earning WTCS transfers, but is confident she can confine her reflections of working with WTCS solely to her experience at her current UWS four-year institution.

Kim finds WTCS transfers seem to come in less prepared for university work than other student populations. Gaps in many of these students' college readiness she assumes stem from the very reason they started at a WTCS in that they either failed to meet the qualifications for admission to a UWS four-year school or chose not to continue in a specific career prep program at the WTCS and want to pursue a four-year degree. Regardless of holding the belief WTCS transfers bring in different college experience than other transfers, she does not approach advising these students differently than any other population nor detect different patterns in how actual advising sessions with these students transpire. She mentions devoting time discussing the differences they are likely to face between attending a WTCS verse a UWS four-year school to prepare them for the transition, but is unspecific as to how she goes about it.

Kim shares that their first meeting with a transfer student is during orientation but receive no background academic information until they meet with the student so she has little to go on with meeting with any transfer student, including a WTCS transfer. Kim, however, acknowledges stereotyping WTCS transfers as having less academic ability and college preparedness than UW-System transfers. With a WTCS student, she wants to review their high school preparatory performance as well as their WTCS performance to form a picture of their ability. When working with a UWS four-year transfer, she feels the college transcript alone provides enough insight into their academic ability as UWS grades are a reliable indicator.

Kim also feels most WTCS transfer students lived off-campus and worked full-time while attending the WTCS school and will continue to do so at the UWS four-year school. This assumption prompts her to discuss acceptable course-loads while attending a UWS four-year and how it differs from what they could balance at the WTCS. Notwithstanding her bias towards UWS curriculum being more difficult, she feels WTCS transfers of non-traditional age adjust

very well to the campus, but she imagines traditionally-aged students coming from the WTCS sometimes encounter a difficult academic and social adjustment because the atmosphere is so much different than what they were accustomed to. With that said, her evidence is purely anecdotal from her advisees sporadically volunteering this feedback as she has not herself observed peer interaction. For these students, she only mentions that things will be different and refers them to campus resources that offer academic and social support.

Kim opines that students coming from any two-year college experience transfer shock because of the shift to a larger campus, classroom and instructional culture, and the drastic change in resources available to them from what they were familiar with at the WTCS. Yet, she does not think there is anything she can do specifically to ease transfer shock beyond explaining differences between her campus and the WTCS of transfer and helping them understand the new policies and procedures.

Kim says awareness of each student's situation, such as understanding their background, primary entry into the UWS four-year, and their college preparation would be relevant for her to know, but she has previously given little attention to these variables. Likewise, she also acknowledges that she has not reached out to these students at mid-semester to see how their adjustment is going and inquiring about needed resources but rather waits for them to come to her with questions. Time constraints are a factor in her ability to do so, but she believes this would be a good practice for her to begin.

Suzy

Suzy is in her fifth year of academic advising at a UWS four-year institution. The bulk of her advisees are first-year and undeclared upper-class students, but she regularly advises students of any status.

For Suzy, an advisor's role is to inform students of the different resources available to them as well as ease their transition to a new campus. Although she does not provide details on how she assists students make a successful transition to campus, she is outspoken in her belief that not every individual is equipped with the skills required for university study. She goes on to share that students' pre-college variables, including any number of non-academic factors, greatly impact whether students can succeed at her UWS institution. As such, academic advising can only do so much to bridge gaps between students' skills and the institution's educational demands. Furthermore, time constraints limit her effectiveness to provide assistance as she rarely addresses issues beyond course selection and making students aware of tutoring centers.

Suzy contends advising can impact students' ability to persist by offering scheduling help, policy confirmation, and a competent contact for any questions or concerns. But, she feels students are responsible for effectively using academic advising services by coming prepared to sessions, providing their own input and feedback regarding issues and concerns, and following through on issues discussed. If advisees are not putting effort into the advising exchange, she is not able to provide advising beyond a prescriptive-level. In her five years of advising, however, she senses students are becoming less-likely to reach out and ask for help, especially those in need of the most academic guidance. Since she feels academic advisors are responsible for teaching students how to understand their chosen academic plan and its policies even with

disengaged students, she also believes they have an impact on their persistence. In response, she feels she influences persistence by working with students to understand their four-year academic plan by reviewing major planning sheets with her advisees and discussing back-up majors if they are unable to gain entrance into certain programs. She feels going over four-year plans, making them aware of the course sequence ahead and grasp what they need to do in order to graduate.

WTCS Interaction. Suzy has significantly less experience working with WTCS transfer students than her first-year and undeclared population. When reflecting upon her limited experience, however, she has found advising WTCS transfers difficult because they have previous college education to consider. WTCS transfers' previous credits are not personalized to the student's choice of major so it is time-consuming to determine where a student stands in terms of their major requirements. Since she sees students one after another with little time to prepare for an appointment, she often has to work through the obstacles of determining which transfer course satisfies a given requirement during the advising session. Time devoted to figuring out equivalents makes her feel less-prepared and prevents her from building a relationship with them as much as she does with her non-transfer population. But, these issues characterize her work with any transfer student and not limited solely to the WTCS transfer population.

Suzy distinguishes between WTCS transfers and other sub-populations her assumptions of their academic and social adjustment to the UWS four-year school. She thinks they should find the adjustment easier than freshmen since they have college experience, but unlike other transfer populations, she feels it may still be very similar to freshmen because she guesses they lived at home prior to UWS enrollment. She does not feel her advising interactions with WTCS students necessarily demonstrates to her that these students are clearly unique from other

transfers and warrant a different approach to advising. Rather, similar to all transfers, these students learned the processes and policies at one institution and she personally has found it difficult to socialize them to her institution's policies and procedures.

She notices WTCS transfers tend to take more classes per semester than a traditional student.

Suzy comments about being much more likely to refer one of her current UWS advisees to the WTCS than have a concern with a WTCS transfer to the UWS. She says it is not that uncommon for her to encounter a student she feels is better-suited to a WTCS trade program based on either their academic interests or inability to be successful in college-level math needed to progress onto degree requirements. She later emphasizes that math is the largest obstacle for WTCS students to be successful at the UWS, and conversely, UWS students that have extreme difficulty in math themselves may be better suited to the WTCS.

Suzy also makes the assumption that students attending the WTCS live at home and deal with a lot of the same variables they dealt with in high school. Therefore, if these students ultimately transfer to a UWS four-year school, she feels their transition would be smoother if they moved out of their house right away and concentrated on adjusting to the academic and social culture of the UWS environment. But, she also imagines moving out could have an adverse effect as they no longer have the home support system.

With that said, Suzy definitely senses transfer shock in WTCS transfer students as a whole in their social and academic adjustment to the UWS four-year school. She guesses WTCS transfers fail to anticipate that courses will be more difficult than their previous educational experience and make lifestyle changes that allow them to adjust. Also, she perceives WTCS

transfers are particularly more averse to campus involvement or participation in activities not linked directly to an educational requirement. She feels this impedes their socialization to campus and peer environments. She estimates these trends may be largely due to flaws in a non-mandatory orientation program that differs greatly from the elaborate experience their freshmen counterparts must attend. Suzy tries to encourage campus involvement by sharing all of the opportunities available to them as students of the UWS four year school to counter information they may have missed in an orientation.

Rosy

Rosy has a wealth of experience academic advising at UWS two-and four-year campuses as well as a Wisconsin Private College. For the past nine years, she has served as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution.

Rosy believes her role as an academic advisor depended upon institutional policy. In her current position, she feels policy holds her responsible for serving as the bridge for first-year students in helping them navigate an unfamiliar university culture. This responsibility entails more than helping students pick classes, but also helping them to make a successful transition from high school to college, identify their strengths and weakness, and define academic and professional goals. To effectively assist students in this process, she identifies relevant student variables by asking open-ended questions. Students' responses provide her a broad scope of students' college readiness and guide her advising approach towards addressing each individual's specific needs and interests.

Rosy is sensitive to external factors affecting her advisees and will often adjust advising formats to accommodate their needs, such as conducting email advising and registration

meetings by email for commuting single-mothers. She will also make judgments on how students' pre-college and current college performance aligns with their academic and career goals. If she senses a need to discuss an issue in-depth, she willingly schedules longer or additional appointments with a student.

Rosy uses students' ability to become confident decision-makers as an indicator of whether she is successful as an academic advisor. By serving as a competent resource, she feels she can cultivate confidence in making choices and diminish her role in prescribing the steps they need to take in order to move forward in their academic career. In her role, Rosy will not advise students to graduation, so she views graduation as more of a goal than a responsibility. But, occasionally former advisees come back to ask her questions, so she does feel she can serve as students' campus connection which she views as an important variable to graduation. Broadly speaking across her entire advisee load, however, she feels matching their goals to majors and needs to resources helps them reach graduation. Still, the responsibility of reaching graduation still falls upon the student.

Rosy's efforts to promote persistence include checking students' schedules after each registration period, forwarding relevant research opportunities to advisees that have expressed interest in a given field, and following up with advisees that have expressed issues or concerns shortly after advising appointments. She feels these practices help reinforce her connection to them.

WTCS Interaction. WTCS transfers present some consistent advising challenges for Rosy. Her advisees frequently experienced surprise and frustration when their WTCS classes did not transfer to the UWS institution and now they must repeat previously completed courses due

to rigor issues. She also finds WTCS transfers often struggle with math requirements at the UWS four-year school. Commonly, her WTCS transfer advisees will carry in a relatively large number of credits but still have to take two remedial math classes before fulfilling the math requirement needed to progress in a major. This situation makes it difficult for these students to have a full course load or feel like they are making progress towards graduation. Finally, WTCS transfer students tend to fail to attend their advising appointments because they may not have had mandatory advising at the WTCS.

Despite these trends, Rosy explains her general advising approach remains consistent except for meticulously checking their transfer credits. Rosy would like to believe she treats all students as unique individuals and not as part of a subgroup, but acknowledges regularly noticing a difference in course rigor between WTCS and UWS as academic high-performance at the WTCS does not necessarily translate to the same at the UWS.

Rosy believes the transition from a WTCS to a UWS to be problematic for more than purely academic reasons. She feels the WTCS accommodates working and adult students much better than her institution because they tend to be closer to home, offer flexible schedules for the working adult, as well as a more expansive set of online courses. Rosy encourages all new advisees to take advantage of campus involvement opportunities and senses no difference in the way WTCS transfers integrate into her campus's peer environment.

Likewise, she is hesitant to assign a higher level of transfer shock to the WTCS transfer population as it is an individual student response, but she does admit that there might be a slight difference in relation to the classes the student enrolled in while at the WTCS. She feels the transition would be more of a shock if the student did not take general education classes with

initial hopes of transferring to a four-year institution such as those associated specifically to a trade.

Her suggestion for improving persistence in this population is to emphatically encourage these students to earn their associate's degrees in some fashion prior to transferring. She does not indicate which entity she feels should drive this initiative, but earning an associate's degrees would diminish the loss of credits through the transfer process and the time needed to enter their program and graduate. She also feels much of the frustration for WTCS transfers is the fact they often receive their transfer credit evaluation during orientation with no time to discuss the evaluation with their academic advisor beforehand.

Lisa

Lisa very recently was named the Director of Academic Advising for her UWS four-year campus after serving in multiple academic advising positions over the previous 13 years.

She believes effective academic advising centers on the academic advisor interacting with students in a manner that promotes relationship building. Trust and comfort between the academic advisor and student enhances the academic advisor's ability to provide guidance in students' process of exploring and adjusting to their changing educational and career goals. She feels many outside of the field simplify guidance with course selection, but that is only a small piece to the goal-setting and educational planning academic advisors provide.

Lisa is introspective of each student's unique traits and how their background dictates what they need from an academic advisor. Therefore, she constantly gauges maturity level and decision making ability during advising interactions with students. She uses her estimations of these qualities to guide her approach to how much information to cover and how many choices

she will ask them to make. She also views academic preparation as a crucial variable to consider when advising a student, paying particular attention to whether a student underperformed for reasons other than raw academic ability. Advisees' answers have ramifications on advising discussion points or resource referrals. Parental educational level is another background trait Lisa uses to shape her approach as she finds first-generation college students often require more explanation of higher education ideologies and resources, such as the philosophy behind a general education curriculum or how financial aid works.

After receiving advising, Lisa hopes her students understand how to navigate the university, are aware of their resources and how to access them, and how to advocate for themselves. She separates her views of successful advising outcomes from student outcomes, citing the development of critical thinking skills, heightened civil engagement, and a respect for diversity as the outcomes that define a successful college education.

Lisa feels her role is pivotal in student persistence but the role she is able to play is dependent upon each student's suitability for the academic and social environment of her institution. Her responsibility is to help them define for themselves what their goal is and if it is to be at her institution. Her role is to offer perspective to students and help them see educational, career, and personal opportunities. Therefore, if a student's qualities and goals align with the institutional environment, she feels responsible for helping them connect to people and opportunities that lead to graduation. If not, she does not hesitate to have difficult conversations about finding other post-secondary opportunities that may be a better match for the student which might include institutional departure.

WTCS Interaction. In general terms, Lisa finds WTCS transfers to routinely have difficulty transitioning to her institution because of the change in learning and class environment. She believes their classroom experience at the WTCS is structured in such a way that connects application of knowledge directly to a trade or career. Consequently, WTCS transfers often bring with them a practical, career-oriented view of education that prevents them from appreciating and adjusting to a university education because it may seem irrelevant to a career. Oftentimes, she assumes these students view their attendance at her institution solely as going through the motions of earning a degree to advance in their career. In addition to these generalizations, Lisa explains that her institution's admission office encourages high school students with questionable pre-college performance or preparation to seek admission as a WTCS transfer. Thus, the majority of the WTCS transfer population consists of students originally underprepared for university study. She feels their poor pre-college preparation coupled with the different focus of WTCS coursework puts them at a disadvantage for being successful at her UWS four-year school.

In spite of these perceptions, Lisa explains that she approaches advising WTCS transfers in the same manner as other student sub-populations but allows the individual student to influence her style. For example, when she senses one of her WTCS transfer advisees possesses a negative mindset towards the usefulness of their UWS education, she concentrates on drawing linkages between classes and their non-academic life. To reinforce the value of the education one receives in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, she shares personal examples about finding life-long relevance in courses seemingly unrelated to her career. If she cannot connect course content to their career goals, she discusses how their education benefits them as a consumer, voter, or parent. Lisa also notes that in her experience the majority of WTCS transfer students tend to be

male and often struggle with extensive reading and writing classes due to their attitude and hands-on learning style preference. With these students she discusses strategies and informs them of resources available to help them be successful in their classes.

Lisa's view of the role she can play in persistence with students does not change with this population. She devotes time asking her WTCS transfers to analyze their reasons for pursuing a bachelor's degree. If a student cannot find a purpose or value in their education after serious reflection, she does not try to convince them to pursue a degree. Rather, she actually helps validate that the UWS might not be the appropriate place for their goals. When WTCS transfers express their intentions to earn a bachelor's degree, she forewarns them of the challenges they will face in adjusting to the new campus. She frames the challenge by comparing it to their transition to the WTCS institution, citing that this adjustment will be different again and provides examples of class size, student-faculty interaction, and course rigor. She feels an honest approach of describing the differences between institutions that historically proved to be challenges for other WTCS transfers is necessary when working with these advisees.

Lisa does not limit her generalizations purely to the academic differences between WTCS transfers and other student population and how these factors play a role in influencing success. She feels WTCS transfer students work more and less likely to live on campus. She finds these traits result in their lack of willingness to adjust to the cultural climate of the UWS four-year school. She also speculates their apparent disinterest in making strong social connections on campus is due to a higher maturity-level that may not foster a need to explore their freedom or passion to get involved in freshmen "type" activities. On the other hand, she feels WTCS transfers are more likely to converse with faculty and attend career-building interventions than other students. Since Lisa feels multiple forms of social integration is important for all students,

she spends time dispelling any negative opinions they may hold of other forms of campus opportunities by exploring where their extra-curricular interests lie and then focuses discussions of campus opportunities only to those they are likely to value.

Lisa believes WTCS transfers are more susceptible to transfer shock at her institution than transfers from other UWS two- and four-year schools. She feels students receive significantly less handholding than they are accustomed to at the WTCS institution yet they are transitioning to a much more complex academic, social, and cultural environment. Even with recognition of heightened potential for transfer shock, Lisa feels the responsibility of making a smooth transition predominantly lies with the student as pre-enrollment orientation is not required and the student must initiate their use of advising services. Student freedom largely prevents academic advisors from being able to proactively address transfer shock. When interacting with WTCS transfers, she tries to address transfer shock by providing logistical information of how process and policies exist at her school. She understands the mass amount of information they receive upfront can be overwhelming, so in the exchange, she continuously reinforces how academic advisors are there for student support whenever questions or uncertainties arise. Therefore, forming a solid relationship with the student early on is important so that they feel comfortable using their advisor as a resource.

Lisa suggests that all academic advisors concentrate on getting to know each student's individual challenges without making assumptions.

Her advice for improving WTCS transfer advisement is for advisors to really dig deep into getting to know each student and their challenges without making assumptions based upon their previous school of attendance. She stresses how essential it is for academic advisors to

build strong relationships in order to explore students' beliefs, values, and challenges to help them understand the relevance in what they are studying.

Mary

Mary is in her fifth year of academic advising at a UWS four-year school. She predominantly advises students of any major yet to accumulate 24 credits, but also undeclared students at any point of their college career.

Mary feels academic advising entails much more than helping students choose classes. In reflecting on her role, she shares that her interactions with students is heavily-devoted to explaining general academic concepts and policies, exploring majors and their curriculums, and alerting them to opportunities at her institution. Furthermore, she is constantly checking for students' understanding of the information she imparts. Mary feels addressing the academic aspect of her institution is an essential duty of her position, but also sees advising as a vehicle for facilitating advisees' transition into a successful college student by helping them examine how their new lifestyle and academic life can coexist.

Mary does not consider herself a personal counselor by any means, but feels her ability to help in this adjustment process is strengthened through building strong relationships. She hopes to foster relationships by being approachable and friendly, asking open-ended questions, learning their personalities, and reinforcing her role as a supportive resource for students. She stresses the importance of building relationships with students because her advising approach reflects how much information students share about themselves and what their personalities tell her about the way they want to be advised. Therefore, even after acknowledging that she holds a general conception of the average student's academic ability at her institution and what it takes to be

successful at her institution, she feels a strong relationship coupled with her knowledge of what it takes to succeed at her institution allows her to individualize her approach in a manner fitting of the students' needs and disposition.

The student outcomes Mary hopes to cultivate in her advisees is maturity and advocacy by instilling confidence that they have an available resource if needed.

Mary also is convinced academic advisors can positively impact persistence. At her institution, academic advising is required so her advisees must meet with her every semester. As a result, she suspects she may be the sole university person students must connect with on campus. Despite students being mandated to meet with her, she finds her attempts to build a working-relationship with her advisees is easy because she consistently provides correct answers to their questions. When students are confident they have a competent resource for nearly any question in their academic advisor, she feels they are more likely to feel connected to her and begin discussing academic and career goals. These discussions provide Mary the chance to introduce them of other resources and opportunities on campus likely to enhance their experience. Therefore, she likens her role in fostering student persistence to a businessperson's goal of retaining customers. Mary, however, is careful to explain that she values college education but keeping students is not her top priority if it becomes clear through conversations an advisee does not or should not continue at her school.

To further promote persistence through her advising practice, Mary explains she does not let time constraints stand in the way of students' needs. She makes time to be available, responds promptly to messages and email, and sets up additional appointments as needed. She feels there is a certain aspect of customer service to her role, so she tries to always be approachable,

available, and pleasant because she wants students to persist. Finally, citing her background in student development theory, Mary says she encourages student engagement to promote persistence by connecting students to extra-curricular activities and discussing with them how their involvement may serve as the stepping-stone to their future career aspirations.

WTCS Interaction. In transitioning to a discussion about the WTCS transfer population, Mary opened up immediately about noticing WTCS transfers tend to earn poorer grades their first semester at her UWS four-year school than their record at the WTCS institution. She has never asked her WTCS advisees what they felt accounted for their dip in academic performance but assumes it is related to changes in class rigor. She is careful not to attribute the decline in grade point average entirely to heightened rigor of the UWS four-year school, supposing personal challenges and change in educational environment contributes to performance.

Despite her observations of WTCS transfers' academic transition, Mary does not alter her approach to advising these students to avoid pre-judging students or placing them into categories. Even if she had research data that clearly illustrated a negative trend, Mary feels she would still refuse to deliberately change her advising approach when working with WTCS transfers. On the other hand, she does allow that she might proactively change her meeting process if the student brought in poor grades from their previous institution because she feels GPA is an objective variable she can ethically consider, but that decision would not be exclusive to WTCS transfers. Furthermore, Mary allows that all transfer-types commonly require her to address transfer course frustrations or misinformation about requirements for a specific major. When this situation occurs, she first makes referrals to offices or personnel that can respond to her concerns, but also uses these instances as a learning moment about personal responsibility and diligence in fully researching their educational goals.

Mary worries WTCS transfers may come to her institution with a false sense of security that they are fully prepared to make a smooth transition based on their experience at the WTCS. She cautions students exhibiting this attitude that they are facing an entirely different set of academic, cultural, and social variables that will interact with their changing personal situation. She stresses how this collision of changing internal and external variables may alter their previous performance in unexpected ways that require an appropriate adjustment. Whereas she finds freshmen are generally impressionable and receptive to these conversations, she feels WTCS transfers either completely fail to process her advice because they feel there will be no adjustment or appreciate her advice even more than freshmen as they understand advising is crucial to their success. For the variability in student outlooks of the importance of advising, Mary strongly supports her institution's advising policy of requiring two meetings per semester as the first meeting alerts her to students' opinions of their own preparedness and the second meeting offers an opportunity for following-up to see if their self-assessment was accurate. Also, meeting with students twice per semester allows her to make the appropriate referrals to programs that can help them be successful.

Mary senses WTCS transfers experience difficulty socializing themselves into her campus's community and culture because orientation for transfer students does not mirror the well-designed orientation she feels her institution provides incoming freshmen, they rarely choose to live on-campus, and do not have an admission class which they feel they belong. She shares that her campus simply offers more opportunities for freshmen to socialize themselves to campus and their fellow students. Therefore, she senses WTCS transfers may feel like the odd-person out which is a significant obstacle to becoming involved. In response, Mary devotes advising time to probe for students' interests and then tries to connect them to campus through

referrals to opportunities in and around campus relevant to their interests. However, she is mindful that some WTCS transfers are commuters whose sole purpose of attending her institution is to take classes; not to become involved in non-classroom opportunities.

As mentioned before, Mary detects heightened transfer shock in her WTCS transfer advisee population. Mary references Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a plausible explanation of why transfer shock is prevalent in this group, stating that financial insecurity, unfamiliarity with the environment, and social isolation possibly lead to difficult transition and subsequent decline in their GPA.

When reflecting upon what she feels academic advisors could do to improve WTCS transfer persistence, she feels meeting students prior to enrollment to answer upfront degree requirements would be beneficial. She questions the thoroughness of information an admissions counselor provides or students' ability to understand that information. Whatever the reasons for the disconnect, Mary feels it leads to unneeded student frustration which upfront conversations about degree and major requirements with an academic advisor might alleviate. She also feels she and fellow academic advisors need to be more cognizant about the fact WTCS transfer students are going through a rough transition and therefore be more deliberate about asking if they are having trouble making the adjustment and then address those barriers.

Morna

Morna recently completed her second year of academic advising at her UWS four-year institution 2 years in advising at this institution. She advises first-year students yet to complete 24 credits and undeclared students.

Morna describes the role of an advisor as being a partner with the student in determining their educational path. She attributes her willingness to have difficult conversations about academic performance with students or serve as mother figure at times to her being a little older than most of the other academic advisors in her office. She feels her own experiences as an African-American woman warns her against making assumptions or placing students into categories. Therefore, she does not consider factors such as high school of attendance, socioeconomic class, or affiliation with any sub-group in her approach to academic advising. Rather, she lets students themselves reveal how their experiences uniquely impact their academic performance and adjustment to the university.

For Morna, desirable outcomes of both academic advising and institutional attendance vary by student. Because of this variability, she depends on advisees to self-disclose their personal educational goals and what constitutes an accomplishment. She realizes that for some students making the Dean's List is their goal while other students are pleased just to continue on to the following semester.

Morna feels her presence as a qualified resource on campus students know they can consult regularly about academic and personal matters positively impacts their persistence. She feels the one-on-one nature of advisor-student interaction allows her to influence persistence in ways unique from other campus personnel or faculty. Morna does not consider timeliness to degree particularly significant in persistence as students' goals and ability to reach those goals are theirs alone.

Morna feels her advising appointments differ from her colleagues because she is unafraid to push students to share their goals, make choices, or take responsibility for making the most of their advising sessions.

WTCS Interaction. Morna has a wealth of experience working with students and personnel from the WTCS. She completed a practicum at a WTCS institution, has a number of friends employed as academic advisors on WTCS campuses, and currently provides academic advising for WTCS transfers. Reflecting upon these experiences, she expresses that working with WTCS transfer students differs from other student populations as WTCS transfers often lack the academic skills to be successful at her UWS four-year institution.

Morna speculates these students initially attended a WTCS institution for its open-enrollment policy and the knowledge that transfer admission requirements at the UWS four-year school are lax compared to freshman requirements. However, she finds the academic skills needed to be successful at the WTCS and gain admission to the UWS four-year school may not alone suffice to be successful academically once there. Therefore, even if a student is successful at the WTCS and meets transfer minimum requirements, she shares her feeling that they may simply be eligible now without being academically skilled enough for UWS four-year school rigor. In Morna's estimation, pre-college academic characteristics continue to affect college performance even after initial college attendance.

Morna's opinions regarding WTCS transfers academic readiness for four-year study does not prompt her to proactively utilize a different change her advising approach for the entire population. She may notice on their transcript that they are a WTCS transfer, but she does not this information relevant to effective advising. Rather, she assesses each student's needs

individually and makes referrals or guides her the advising conversation accordingly. For example, when she finds a WTCS transfer to be struggling academically, she makes a referral to the tutorial center. She finds her practice of considering a student's academic data, personal information they disclose, and assessing of needs to guide the advising process does not change between student sub-populations.

Morna does not detect an inordinate-level of social or institutional adjustment patterns, she acknowledges trends in sub-groups. Like all students, members' of this population adjustment to campus varies widely by individual. As such, when advising WTCS transfer students, she chooses not to address academic, social, or institutional adjustment with references or comparisons to their prior institution of attendance. Again, previous WTCS attendance does not influence how she converses about adjustment with WTCS transfer advisees.

Although she does not use WTCS attendance as a trigger to discuss adjustment to her institution, she does observe WTCS transfers frequently have trouble finding relevance in courses not-directly related to their field of study; commonly expressing frustration that courses required at the UWS were not required at the WTCS and fail to connect to their career needs. In response, she simply explains to students the philosophy behind a general education curriculum. She also finds herself addressing transfer course equivalency issues that tend to end in her explaining the difference in rigor and scope of classes between the WTCS and UWS.

Because her institution does not maintain sufficient data regarding characteristics of students that decline in GPA or depart, Morna cannot determine whether transfer shock occurs more often within the WTCS transfer population than others. She acknowledges, however, transfer shock is likely to occur in most transfer populations at her UWS institution. She

recognizes the WTCS transfer population as a valid sub-group with its individuals often facing the same obstacles to success, but is strictly opposed to pre-emptively placing students into categories based on a shared characteristic and therefore will not address transfer shock or persistence in a different with these students than other transfer students. She makes clear this approach does not mean she disregards their needs, but rather waits for students to reveal different advising needs before imparting them.

When reflecting upon how WTCS transfer students may be better served through academic advising, Morna shares her feelings that their success or persistence at the UWS institution begins at the WTCS. Once they indicate they plan to transfer from the WTCS, she feels their WTCS academic advisors must have conversations transfer credit policies at the UWS, help them schedule courses at the WTCS that will prepare them for the rigor at the UWS and limit transfer shock, and also discuss the differences in culture between the institutions. She does not dismiss UWS academic advisors' role in promoting WTCS transfer student success once enrolled at the UWS four-year but needs to be a continuation of the transitioning process that began through academic advising received at the WTCS. She also feels academic advisors, and all college personnel, could better serve WTCS transfers through diversity training that goes beyond just considering race and ethnicity.

Janelle

Janelle is in her fifth year as an academic advisor at a UWS four-year institution. In her role, she advises every major, but primarily works with undeclared students and those looking to major in a program within the College of Letters and Science.

Janelle likens her role as an academic advisor to that of a mentor. She accepts that she is responsible for prescriptive tasks such as explaining academic policy and monitoring degree progress, but feels the larger function of her position is helping students examine their interests, skills, and values and then incorporating those into their college experience. To add meaning to this discussion for her advisees, she finds it necessary to discuss the rationale behind the educational structure and opportunities at the university and stress how class and non-class involvement will help them determine post-college goals as well as the ability to adjust to a changing world.

Janelle hopes independence is an outcome her students obtain through academic advising. If students can identify how the entirety of their college experience aligns with their future aspirations, understand their degree plan and the steps needed to complete it, and confident in making decisions without her guidance, she feels she has been successful as an advisor.

Janelle considers persistence a highly-desirable student outcome and one connected to her position as an academic advisor. She feels her use of strengths-based and appreciative advising theory in her advising interactions heightens students' ability to persist. In advising interactions, she avoids focusing on students' negative performance, choosing to examine areas of strength and discuss how those strengths can be utilized to help them realize degree aspirations. Although she generally only sees her advisees for their first two years of college, she believes their interaction has residual effects that enhance her advisees' chances of persisting to graduation through helping them develop their academic plan, improve problem-solving skills, and build confidence and independence during their first two years. Finally, she thinks academic advisors are in position to help students understand the small steps needed to take along the way toward the end goal of graduation.

Janelle believes her advisees form strong connections with her because she takes the time to learn about their non-academic lives. She makes a point to be available outside of her regular office hours and by email. She feels her availability and quick response times outside of office hours have proven to strengthen her relationships with students.

WTCS Interaction. Janelle shares that her initial advising interactions with students from the WTCS transfer population routinely entails dealing with the disappointment students feel about not earning UWS credit for classes taken at the WTCS institution and frustration with the transfer process. She finds these discussions difficult because students feel the UWS institution is requiring them to start their college career over without valuing their previous work at the WTCS school. She approaches these advising situations by examining course content and syllabus information, discussing the content, and possibly approaching her UWS faculty to re-evaluate these courses for equivalency.

Janelle is also conscious that her WTCS transfer advisees tend to demonstrate difficulty balancing their routinized non-academic commitments with their new academic lives at the UWS four-year school. She assumes this challenging transition stems from a number of factors, including a different classroom atmosphere, changes in living circumstances and support networks, and confusion in ways to make campus connections. As an academic advisor, she hopes to ease the transition of transferring from the WTCS to the UWS by helping them balance priorities, offering alternatives to previous study habits, make referrals to relevant campus resources, and make suggestions as to how they can form campus connections.

Janelle is not surprised that WTCS transfers lag behind other subpopulations in persistence rates and timeliness to degree. She feels the frustration WTCS transfers experience

after learning a majority of their credits failed to transfer is a significant deterrent to their degree

pursuits. In addition to this obstacle, she finds few programs and policies are in place to support

transfer student success compared to those designed for freshmen, citing that transfer advising

orientation sessions are not required, offered at inconvenient times, nor allocated enough time for

academic advisors to effectively disseminate important information or for students to retain what

is communicated. She finds orientation sessions are just one example of how freshmen are

provided opportunities to make connections whereas the university largely leaves transfer

students to themselves to navigate their college experience. Janelle expects WTCS transfers are

at even more of a disadvantage in succeeding at the UWS campus than other transfer students

due to fewer of their credits being accepted and the greater variance in campus culture between

the WTCS and new UWS than transfer students from other university systems experience.

Janelle feels her approach to advising WTCS transfers is not too dissimilar from other

populations but does self-identify a number of differences that often take place in her interactions

with them. She does find herself using empathy about their pre-enrollment choices, often trying

to provide perspective about the positive benefits of their WTCS attendance despite their

dissatisfaction concerning the lack of credits transferred. With WTCS transfers, she must spend

more time explaining the meaning of common UWS jargon that transfers from UWS two- and

four-year schools already understand. She also notices that she discusses organizing priorities

more frequently as a preventative measure against potential imbalances in their work, personal,

and academic lives brought on by their transfer to the UWS four-year school.

Most of all, however, Janelle finds an increased need to address issues related to college

readiness and campus socialization when advising this population. She seems to make more

referrals to study skills classes and suggestions for opportunities for making campus and faculty

connections than with other student populations. In her observations, course structures at the UWS seem foreign to WTCS transfers because they are significantly larger, longer, less hands-on in nature, and graded on very few assignments and exams than what they were accustomed to at the WTCS. Her WTCS advisees have shared that large class sizes and long lecture formats prevent them from connecting with professors which is something they valued at the WTCS. When grades are based on the few, infrequent, major assignments at the UWS institution, Janelle observes her WTCS advisees struggle to properly manage their time or study as they are used to regularly schedule assignments at the WTCS. Through advising, Janelle hopes she can help them redefine their study and time management skills, become comfortable communicating and connecting with professors, and find ways to get involved on campus so it is not just a place they attend classes. Therefore, she often works with them on developing personal schedules that balance academic commitments with their non-academic life, role-playing effective communication strategies to use with professors, and making referrals to campus opportunities that align with their interests. Still, she finds these variables make for a difficult transition.

Janelle finds that non-traditionally aged WTCS transfer students desire only to discuss academic matters during advising sessions and she will refer them to the adult non-traditional student resource center as she feels they make excellent connections there. In her experience, however, WTCS transfers under the age of 25 that do not make early campus or peer connections demonstrate a high rate of departure. As such, she consciously stresses the importance of campus involvement to her WTCS transfers despite any attempts to keep conversations purely academic. She does her best to avoid superficial reasons for campus involvement, rather framing the importance of campus involvement as taking proactive steps toward building a successful career by referencing resume benefits, leadership skill acquisition, and networking. Still, she feels

strongly that transfers must connect early with peers to be successful, so referrals to clubs, organizations, and advice on forming or joining study groups is an important piece to her advising approach.

Janelle does not specifically mention that transfer shock is more prevalent in the WTCS transfer population than others, but she does allow that she sees most of her WTCS advisees struggle with adjusting to campus the first semester due to the aforementioned issues of time management, class environment, course assignment and grading formats, and forming campus connections. She senses the anxiety of knowing they will be assessed on only a few submissions of work is particularly high in this population because it is very different than their experience at the WTCS institution. Janelle attempts to lessen the impact of transfer shock for her WTCS transfer advisees by forewarning students about differences in class assessment, connecting them early to tutoring services or supplemental instruction before taking their first exams, and helping them schedule appropriate time for study as well as imparting appropriate study methods. Janelle believes her availability and knowledge of campus resources is another way she can help WTCS students combat transfer shock.

Regarding her role in promoting WTCS transfer student persistence, Janelle feels her advising method of helping them realize they are bringing valuable college experience with them from the WTCS and appreciate its positive impact on their academic career. These conversations are important to have with this population because UWS institutions, in her opinion, do not appreciate or consider students' accomplishments while at the WTCS. She feels UWS personnel are biased against a WTCS education and discount it as valuable experience. She is disappointed that there is so much bureaucracy regarding the transfer process and the additional steps required of WTCS transfers to appeal equivalency decisions coupled with keeping up with classes,

connecting to the campus, and outside responsibilities is an unacceptable level of stress to place

upon them as students. She understands the WTCS and UWS are two different systems, but she

wishes academic departments and her institution as a whole developed better transition systems

for classes between systems.

Kate

Kate has been at her UWS institution for ten years, with seven of those years spent

serving as an academic advisor for first-year and undeclared students. Two years ago, she has

assumed the role of associate director for her institution's academic advising office.

In describing the role an academic advisor fulfills, Kate is careful to point out that faculty

advisors and professional advisors play different roles. Professional advisors such as herself

should serve as students' point-person for all questions, possess knowledge of campus resources

available to students and the ability to connect them to the appropriate ones for their needs, and

facilitate socialization to all facets of campus life.

Kate considers several student factors as particularly important in guiding her advising

approach. When advising freshmen students, Kate finds herself using a more prescriptive

approach in her interactions as they all require the same standardized information. She finds

transfer, non-traditional, and commuter students to be more involved in shaping the advising

interaction around their distinctive needs. As such, she is flexible in scheduling appointments

and personalizes advising sessions to meet their unique informational needs.

Kate holds the learning outcomes her office developed and evaluates through student

surveys as the desirable results her academic advising practice should produce. She cites the

ability to read their advising report, understand degree requirements, and indicate who their next

advisor will be as primary on the office's list of learning outcomes. In reflecting upon why she feels these are the most important outcomes she can cultivate as an academic advisor, she shares her views have switched over the years. As a new advisor, she concentrated on psychological issues and personal ethics, but now she finds herself focusing on academic issues and outcomes. For example, when non-academic issues arise in advising sessions, she would likely refer them to the Health and Counseling Center when she may have attempted to help the student through it in the past.

Kate references National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data to support her belief that effective academic advising enhances student persistence, however, she is unsure of the degree advising actually influences this outcome. She assumes it would be difficult for students to graduate without receiving academic advising, but feels academic advisors are generally responsible for academic guidance and advice and cannot control the many personal factors affecting their students' ability to persist. She does feel it is important for students to know a campus professional is concerned about their academic well-being. Still, she concedes only discussing persistence with students who are struggling academically and not address the outcome with students admitted as honor students or those that are performing well. In addressing persistence with struggling students, she uses encouragement through bringing up past academic successes and the personal attributes that made that success possible.

Kate admits that professional academic advising at her institution has focused on ensuring freshmen to sophomore retention much more so than persistence to the point of feeling student graduation is difficult to hold as a responsibility of her position. When working with first-year students she will employ the technique of mapping students' four-year plan to provide them a visual representation of the steps they need to take to graduate. She feels this practice

helps them bring the end goal in sight. That being said, she shares her surprise at the realization of how little she does in her role to encourage persistence.

WTCS Interaction. Kate interned at two WTCS institutions and feels confident that she can separate the targeted population from other sub-populations in her reflections of working with them.

Kate questions the steps taken by WTCS transfers in their decision-making process of transferring to a UWS institution. She detects a recurring pattern of WTCS transfers failing to possess accurate information regarding her institution's available programs, degree requirements, and transfer policies. She assumes there must be a disconnect somewhere in the transfer process as her WTCS transfer advisees typically demonstrate a lack of knowledge regarding the WTCS courses they should have completed prior to transferring, the cost and ease-of-transfer benefits of first earning an associate's degree, and the pre-requirements before beginning certain majors. This misinformation leads to extending their graduation date target as they must delay entrance into a degree plan to complete pre-requirements.

Kate believes the less rigorous courses at the WTCS institutions often militate against their chances for academic success at her institution. In her opinion, it seems as if WTCS institutions award more credits for less work than UWS institutions. She feels this practice has two negative drawbacks as students either have two WTCS courses only satisfy the same requirement as one UWS course and pre-requisite courses taken at the WTCS do not adequately prepare students for the next course in the sequence at UWS schools. Therefore, students either think the UWS school is requiring them to repeat identical work accomplished at the WTCS

institution, or, if not, the incongruence in course equivalents damages their ability to succeed in subsequent courses.

Kate expresses frustration on her part when WTCS students transfer just short of completing their associate's degree. Doing so compels these students to enroll in a number of extra courses unrelated to their major while waiting to enter a program they could have begun immediately if transferring in an associate's degree. WTCS transfer advisees also randomly selected courses while at the WTCS institution, enrolling in classes from disciplines all over the board with no discernible direction toward a course of study. Finally, she recalls that many of her early advising discussions with these students concerns raising their GPAs to become eligible for professional programs. Again, she attributes these unfortunate situations to either misguidance at the WTCS institution or the failure of WTCS students to connect early with appropriate UWS institution staff for course selection counseling.

Upon reflecting on advising the WTCS transfer population and her considerations for promoting persistence within her advising populations, Kate shares with me some realizations. She feels that she advises all students transferring from two-year institutions differently than the new freshmen population or transfers from four-year schools. She supposes she holds students transfers from four-year schools to a higher standard than those coming from a UWS two-year or WTCS institution because she assumes UWS four-year transfers received better advising and programming at their previous campus and consequently know how to navigate the path toward graduation. Since she feels academic advisors fulfill many roles compared to UWS four-year academic advisors, she questions if WTCS or UWS two-year institution transfers receive bachelor's degree counseling through advising at their previous institution. But, she does not feel she treats them differently other than devoting time to explaining how academic advising works

at her institution which is something she does not mention to UWS four-year institution transfers. Alternatively, she holds WTCS transfers to higher standards than new freshmen because she feels they are more socialized to the college experience and more able to grasp important information than new freshman.

Advising WTCS transfers is slightly more unique than UWS two-year students due to their propensity of transferring in miscellaneous credits for courses that have no equivalency at her institution. But she finds these considerations only faintly cause her to change her approach. She mentions a desire to be able to take background information pertaining to their initial WTCS enrollment to guide her advising approach, but time constraints compel her to focus on advisees' present issues and future goals. Therefore, as their academic advisors, she does not revisit their reasons for first attending a WTCS school, discuss any struggles they may have experiences there, or help them examine how reflecting on their WTCS experience can help them be successful at their current institution. She contends that she only has time to move forward.

Kate holds that non-traditionally aged WTCS students tend to ask more questions than most populations because they have an educational goal and timeline they would like to follow. Her experience advising non-traditional WTCS students tells her that they find their new environment to be completely different and therefore expect thorough information, assistance, and advice on all aspects of campus and are unafraid to ask her to provide it. Traditionally-aged WTCS transfers rarely ask for non-academic information as they seem to feel confident they can find whatever it is they need themselves. In fact, she finds the difference between students is reflected more in age than previous school attended. But, regardless of age, she does perceive some peer-environment differences between WTCS transfer students and those of other

populations. They appear to be less involved. She assumes this choice due to not establishing a core group of friends like other students that lived on campus their first few years.

By not taking advantage of the extracurricular activities available to them, she feels they are disconnected, lose out on the camaraderie, and fail to see the benefit of involvement. These thoughts do not consciously lead her to change her advising approach, however, as she does not include probing to find out students' level of involvement in her prescriptive element of her advising interactions with students. She takes on faith that students are adjusting well to campus unless they mention otherwise. When advising any transfer student, she unintentionally inquires less about their adjustment to campus than she would with freshmen. Her transfer student advising interactions tend to focus on academic matters as she addresses non-academic matters only after the students initiate the conversation.

After discussing her approach to advising WTCS transfer students and reflecting upon her methods of promoting persistence within this population, Kate mentions she is surprised to discover she is unconsciously being more concerned with freshmen adjustment than transfers' transition to the new school. If she were to guess without evidence, she estimates their lower persistence rates are owed to academic unpreparedness, lack of making campus connections, or a combination of both.

Kate assumes WTCS students experience transfer shock as a result of their experience moving between systems. She supposes most transfer students are susceptible to the phenomenon with those students moving between different systems such as transferring from a private to public institution, or a technical college to public institution. Kate never warns WTCS transfers about transfer shock directly, but does address the differences in class sizes between the

WTCS and their new UWS institution, bring attention to the change in student service systems, and put them at ease about the accessibility of professors and their willingness to meet with students. If she specifically addresses student issues concerning transfer shock, it is a result of an individual student providing cues that other, non-prescribed issues are appropriate to discuss. Then again, she also shares that students affected by transfer shock tend to pre-empt discussions about the decline in their performance after enrolling at the UWS by rationalizing it as an adjustment period before identifying their missteps themselves and how they will correct those in future semesters.

Kate suggests the best way to improve WTCS transfer student advisement is to provide training opportunities for academic advisors so that they become knowledgeable about the differences between the WTCS transfer student population and others. Since her office holds the same student outcomes as desirable for any population, Kate thinks greater awareness by academic advisors of the adjustment challenges WTCS transfers face, self-disclosed and otherwise, could improve practice.

Aaron

Aaron has been an academic advisor at his UWS institution for 2 ½ years. He advises first-year and undeclared students, serves as a liaison between the academic advising office and the School of Business, and communicates academic standards issues to a number of offices on campus.

Aaron feels his position is responsible for serving as students' resource for interpreting college policy regarding academic requirements and providing referrals to appropriate offices for

assistance to non-academic advising issues. In addition, he believes his role is to not just disseminate this information, but check for students' understanding of their educational plan.

Aaron counts student persistence as an outcome he feels a measure of responsibility for fostering, however, he talks more pointedly about his role in retaining students. As someone who imparts academic policy, makes proper referrals when needed, and discusses academic performance as it relates to educational options and goals with his advisees, he feels he is helping with their retention and ultimately persistence to graduation. Moreover, he trusts his early conversations regarding educational interests and options, major exploration and choice, and guidance on navigating the policies of their chosen major increase the likelihood his students will persist.

Even when conducting initial advising sessions, Aaron does not treat all students uniformly. He says he considers pre-college traits to determine whether he should use a present- or future-oriented approach with a student. If he knows he is conversing with a low socioeconomic status or first-generation college student, he will focus on discussing current-day topics such as their adjustment process, study habits, the value of using tutorial centers and other support services, and less about what to plan for later on in their educational career as it may be overwhelming. In his initial advising session with a student bringing in high test scores and stellar GPA from a well-respected high school, he is more likely to discuss policy-oriented issues about academic requirements for selective programs. He is confident that his approach of letting students share their background gives him a window in to their background as a way to adjust his approach to fit their needs. In addition, he feels this approach allows him to avoid the monotony of a prescribed approach.

Aaron also evaluates each of his advisees' organizational skills during advising appointments. Anecdotally, he holds the ability to organize is the most telling characteristic between his high- and low-performing advisees. Therefore, if he determines a student is unorganized, he again feels the need to use a present-oriented. He addresses the effect this trait will have on their ability to balance their responsibilities and talks with them immediately about utilizing techniques and resources that will help them to become better organized.

Aaron feels one element of his practice must remain standard regardless of students' circumstances or college readiness. In his opinion, every student must comprehend their advising report as it allows the student to see for themselves the requirements they must fulfill to graduate, complete for their major, and their progress toward a degree. As he sees students from every type of major, he feels compelled to be able to explain each major, how it is displayed on their advising report, and outline the first two years of its curriculum. But, other than this standard conversation, Aaron lets each student dictate the flow of the advising interaction. He feels it is empowering to the student to share their goals, their concerns, their questions, and not impose his agenda upon them.

Gauging how equipped an advisee is to handle future-oriented conversations is a method he feels promotes persistence because it tailors the discussion to their needs. He finds some students are able to conceptualize end goals and ready to discuss, map-out, and follow the steps needed to get there. Other advisees simply need to focus on managing their next test. By avoiding a prescribed approach, he feels he adapts his advising sessions so that he does not waste prepared students' time with superfluous information nor overwhelm students who are just trying to find their bearings.

WTCS Interaction. Aaron's does not characterize his background advising WTCS transfers as extensive, but his interactions with his WTCS advisees have made him aware that the adjustment is challenging. He freely discloses that he holds a number of generalizations about students belonging to this population. Demographically, his WTCS advisees have typically been older, working, commuter students. Academically, if they attended a WTCS school immediately after high school graduation, he assumes they are a sub-par student. They seem to particularly struggle with meeting the math requirements at his institution which prevent them from progressing in their major. When meeting a WTCS transfers for the first time, he consistently detects a lack of understanding about transfer policies that leads to significant student frustration about the lack of courses awarded credit and the projected time to graduation. Aaron acknowledges that right or wrong, the generalizations he has formed regarding WTCS transfers and his knowledge of his institution's traits shapes his advising approach when working with this population.

Aaron believes his institution is less-than accommodating to non-traditionally-aged, full-time employed, and commuting students. With older, working, commuter students, Aaron finds them to be more mature, detail-seeking, information-gatherers that try to meticulously balance their academic schedule with non-academic responsibilities, but his institution only offers very limited night, online, or weekend courses. Course offerings coupled with student needs, therefore, creates challenges for him as an academic advisor because he cannot control institutional traits or students' responsibilities. Of lesser consequence, WTCS transfer students' life situations also makes scheduling advising appointments troublesome. They often require a break from the normal 15-minute or 30-minute, in-person, twice per semester meeting format Ryan customarily uses with his advisees. To satisfy advising needs with their limited availability,

Aaron will commonly schedule meetings for an hour or more, additional meetings, and advise by phone or email. He appreciates the maturity and value placed on academic advising most WTCS students demonstrate, but observes a neediness unlike any other student sub-group he advises.

Aaron finds advising UWS transfers much easier than WTCS transfers because of the similarities between all aspects of UWS institutions. He also feels advising freshman presents little difficulty as they do not come to him with previous higher education processes engrained and are more malleable to his institution's unique policies. WTCS transfers, conversely, come to campus with only marginal understanding of the four-year school and its degrees, unsure of their credit status, and less confident making decisions on their academic path. He feels these students should require less advising than freshmen, but they feel they need it more as they commonly attempt to micromanage and receive assurance all of their academic decisions. In some cases, when WTCS transfers lose a majority of credits due to transferring prior to earning an associate's degree, he will make referrals to academic departments to receive feedback on their unique situations and the best course of action for completing their degree. When working with WTCS transfer advisees in their junior and senior years, he also refers his advisees to departments often because he knows their personnel will be more insightful regarding both academic and career opportunities whereas he is more comfortable working with students in their first year. He recalls making department referrals for WTCS advisees more frequently than other populations.

Aaron is uncomfortable commenting on the social adjustment his WTCS transfer advisees have in transitioning to the UWS campus because he does not see them on campus. In addressing their socialization, he encourages involvement and makes referrals to student organizations, but he has not detected noticeable differences between student populations with

regard to social adjustment. If there are differences between student sub-groups, he speculates it is mostly due to age.

In the population as a whole, Aaron does not detect a high degree of transfer shock in his WTCS transfer advisees. In fact, he observes the opposite effect. He believes his traditionally-aged WTCS transfers' excitement of being on a traditional college campus, living away from home, actually helps them to adjust better than his other advisees. If transfer shock occurs at all with these students, he feels it is because they are trying to be too involved in campus activities. But, he observes WTCS students that completed many credits at the WTCS school, or those older than 25, do display a high frequency of transfer shock. He attributes this perception to being accustomed to a less-rigorous curriculum at the WTCS and their commonly-shared struggles with math. He explains that when his advisees have not taken algebra in 15 years and only enrolled in a non-algebra based math class at WTCS, they experience a shock when they have to enroll math in their first semester at the new institution.

When advising WTCS transfers, Aaron does not explicitly discuss transfer shock. He does, however, devote advising time to reviewing course descriptions and providing insight into those course expectations and how demanding it will be on them academically.

Aaron shares that he does pay close attention to which schools his advisees transferred from. If his advisees transferred from the WTCS, he admits to informally assigning and pre-emptively advising these students as they belonged to an "at-risk" population regardless of the grades they earned while at the WTCS institution. As an "at-risk" population, he concentrates on keeping advising topics present-oriented, reviews each class option under consideration, and prepares them for what to expect. By addressing these issues, he says he is hoping they begin to

consider how their personal variables might affect their chance of success in a class and major, such as commuter status, age, and academic ability.

Aaron speculates improving the WTCS transfer success must begin at the improve WTCS-level, but even then it may be logistically impossible because students goals and life situations change so frequently. In an idealistic situation, a WTCS with a counselor would be available to work with them all the way through their WTCS career, constantly assessing with the student their degree and career aspirations, exploring transfer options that fit those goals, up-to-date on transfer policies of the transfer institution, and monitoring the student's progress of working accurately toward these goals.

In addition, Aaron advocates for better communication between WTCS and UWS campus personnel that are involved in the transfer process. As an advisor, he is unsure if WTCS transfers are misinformed, or not informed at all, by WTCS advisors or his UWS school's admissions office about how to be best prepared for transfer, such as explicitly addressing the benefits of earning an associate's degree prior to transfer. Also, after transfer, his institution's transfer process complicates advising because the student report he receives on each student is often incomplete with transfer courses not listed, labeled as "tentative", or ungraded. Therefore, he cannot be sure of students' fulfillment of pre-requirements when they come to him for advising even though they rely on him for accurate academic information.

Olive

Olive is in her fourth year as an academic advisor at a UWS institution. She advises roughly 250 students per semester. Her advisees primarily consist of freshmen and undeclared students. She also teaches a seminar for new students.

Olive holds that academic advisors' are very much like teachers. Their role is to educate advisees on institutional policy, available resources, major exploration techniques, degree expectations, course registration processes, and their responsibilities as college students. Her ability to properly teach these skills she hopes will not only help them adjust to the institution, but also serve them throughout their next four years. For the most part, she feels she does not differentiate how she teaches this information unless she intuitively realizes through "cues" that surface during the advising interaction that a student is in need of "handholding."

In addition to providing information, Olive sees her role as a confidant for advisees to discuss any educational and personal frustrations causing them stress. She feels her willingness to listen and proficiency in making appropriate referrals helps students prepare for the many challenges involved in adjusting to college life.

Olive does not feel that student persistence is necessarily a responsibility of her position, but holds it entirely as a responsibility of each individual student. At her institution, academic advising is mandatory. Students are required to meet with an academic advisor each semester or they are unable to register for classes the following semester. The benefits students gain through their participation in academic advising, however, Olive identifies as their responsibility alone because they determine the effort they put into the advising relationship and in making good academic choices. If they do not attend their appointments, make an attempt to understand the information she imparts, connect with her when questions arise, or lack the drive to pursue a degree, she feels academic advisors can do little to help them persist.

WTCS Interaction. Olive thinks her advising interactions with WTCS transfers students have a different "feel" to them compared to other transfer student-types. She senses that a

number of her WTCS transfer advisees realize the workload and standards are heightened at the UWS institution. At the same time, she feels they are unaware of the increased support services now available to them that the WTCS may not have offered.

Olive often finds WTCS transfers' previous academic record presents a challenge for her when helping them academic plan due to the credits they transfer into the UWS four-year school. Many WTCS transfers Olive recounts working with first attended a WTCS institution to complete UWS general education requirements because they were unsure of an academic field to pursue. But, if they choose to transfer to the UWS institution before deciding on a major course of study, they often complete a majority of the general education curriculum and thus have few class options available to them that fulfill any requirements toward a degree. Even when WTCS transfers have chosen a major plan at the UWS institution, their fulfillment of general education courses and necessity to follow a prescribed course sequence within the major again results in few class options necessary to classify them as a full-time student. Complicating matters, Olive finds WTCS students generally rely on full-time status to receive financial aid, but naturally want to take meaningful courses toward a degree and not courses just to bring them up to full-time. In these instances, Olive explains that she has no recourse in providing options to satisfy their dilemma. Finally, she also cites WTCS students often transfer in with a GPA lower than what is required to begin their chosen degree program. As their academic advisor, she can only assist them by suggesting enrolling in courses that would help them raise their GPA to become eligible in the future. When they have most of their general education curriculum, these students again have few classes available to them that contribute to degree progression.

Despite references to challenging situations that routinely arise as a result of WTCS transfer students' previous academic record, Olive states that her advising process does not

change because all students are guided by the same institutional policies. Olive grants that advising transfer students is different than freshmen in that she feels less need to explain the expectations of college attendance. She assumes transfer students come to her academic advising meetings with a basic knowledge of the college environment and degree programs available to them on campus. Therefore, she chooses to focus on providing them policy and procedural information specific to her institution. She adds that transfer students from any institution chose to pursue a four-year degree, and as they now are all students at the same institution, there is no need to view them as separate.

Olive cannot identify a common effect the WTCS advisee population shares as a result of transferring to the UWS institution. On the other hand, she typically does observe adjustment issues with the smaller WTCS transfer commuting population. She feels they do not have the chance for campus socialization because they do not participate in the campus-living experience. She does not assume commuter status automatically impedes development of social skills, but presents an inability to fully experience the same lifestyle as other students.

Commuting, along with non-academic commitments such as work and family, also create logistical advising challenges for Olive and frustration for WTCS transfer students in terms of class scheduling. Course offerings at her institution are generally scheduled at times that conflict with these outside-of-class responsibilities. Olive can only help them explore the few alternatives her institution offers, but more often than not has to explain flexibility on their behalf is the only way they can accomplish their educational goals. Outside responsibilities' effect on classroom performance is an issue Olive will discuss with all of her students, but only after she sees their first semester grades does she help students analyze how these factors might be negatively impacting their academic responsibilities.

Olive finds the presence of transfer shock is tough to assign to a student population as each student's transition is unique. She does, however, guess that WTCS transfers would be more susceptible to transfer shock because the academic demands at the UWS institution are more rigorous than the WTCS institution. Olive questions whether the WTCS transfers that experience transfer shock may come as a result of believing they can match their success at the WTCS institution with the same effort and find out they cannot.

Olive senses few advisees are willing to admit they are having problems in their first semester, but does not address transfer shock in her first meetings with WTCS transfers because grades are unavailable to reference. For students that struggled in their first semester, transfer shock is an issue she addresses during second semester advising meetings. She works with the student to analyze the reasons the transfer transition was difficult, provide suggestions likely to counter obstacles, and make referrals to services or programs designed to support their needs.

Olive does not view WTCS institutional attendance as a red-flag indicative of poor academic preparedness nor as a variable that would adjust her advising approach. As such, she relies solely on grades earned at the WTCS to assume their readiness for her institution's academic environment just as she would for a transfer from any other institution-type. She does not view institution of transfer as consequential to their chances for success.

Olive does not offer opinions for ways WTCS transfers can benefit more from academic advising, but feels her institution's policy of requiring all transfer students to attend orientation is affective as it exposes them to services and opportunities on campus that may not have been available at their previous campus. She is confident that WTCS transfers advised by her office after orientation continue to receive high-quality support because academic advising is their

primary responsibility, but she is less certain of those that move on to faculty advisors as the commitment to advising varies.

Carrie

Carrie has been an academic advisor at her UWS institution for nearly ten years. Although her office primarily works with freshmen and undeclared students, she and her fellow advisors advise freshmen through seniors. Many upperclassmen use her office after meeting with their faculty advisor to double-check with a professional advisor their fulfillment of general education requirements. Her office also sees most transfer students entering her institution to provide them initial academic advising information.

Carrie describes the role of an academic advisor as an individual responsible for supporting the student in the college environment. She supports students by letting them know there is someone available for them to ask questions, provide information about available resources and accessing them, help them set goals, and guide and monitor their academic planning.

Carrie feels each individual student provides her cues to the level of support they need, which, in turn, shapes the topics of her advising interactions. For example, when a student comes to an academic advising session already well-informed of institutional policies, procedures, available resources, and confident in their academic interests, she will forego reciting baseline information and perhaps discuss career development, independent study options, and future internship opportunities.

Responsibility and self-advocacy are outcomes Carrie hopes to cultivate in her students through the academic advising process. She hopes that academic advising interactions result in

her advisees accepting accountability as a student, knowing how to communicate with professors and faculty advisors, and becoming comfortable navigating her institution's environment.

Student persistence is also an outcome Carrie feels attaches to her position. She feels academic advising can, and should, play a role in helping students graduate. Oftentimes, she finds students that struggle lack encouragement or confidence. She attempts to build or repair students' confidence through goal-setting, helping them set easily-achievable goals that will quickly establish a track-record of academic successes and rejuvenate excitement about their college experience.

Carrie also describes using a holistic approach to aid students in assessing their unique circumstances. She asks students to reflect upon their non-academic priorities before asking them to consider where their educational pursuits rank among them. Depending upon their self-assessment, Carrie helps them construct an academic plan that fits their lifestyle and abilities, such as going part-time, setting weekly appointments with the tutorial center, or enrolling only in night classes. She finds that assisting students accurately assess and carefully plan their educational experience enhance students' ability to realize continual successes and remain motivated.

Carrie cites her willingness to be available when needed as foundational in cultivating relationships with her advisees. She believes her accessibility helps students persist. Since her UWS institution has a large commuter population, she makes a point of being available after-hours and on weekends by using multiple forms of technology so she can respond to students' questions at any time.

WTCS Interaction. Carrie characterizes her institution's student body as one with a high percentage of transfer students from all institution-types. As a result, she considers herself to have a wealth of experience advising transfers.

She does not categorize transfers by previous school attended, but on the number of credits they transfer into the institution. When a WTCS transfer student brings in less than 12 credits or attended the WTCS only part-time, she shares that they typically demonstrate a need to be advised like freshmen whereas those having spent a several semesters of full-time enrollment at a WTCS institution seem to grasp college processes and student expectations. During advising appointments with the former, she discusses part-time to full-time student transition issues, coursework expectations, the importance of communicating with professors, and a prescribed list of topics that orients them to campus. With the latter, she is more likely to discuss career goals and future academic plans.

Carrie feels her background in psychology informs her advising approach to view every student as an individual. Understanding their personal and academic background allows her to determine the role the student needs her to play as an academic advisor. She also says knowledge of their backgrounds provides cues as to how she can best influence their persistence decisions. Sometimes she finds one student needs to be supported while another needs to be challenged. Therefore, Carrie's view of her role as an academic advisor as well as her part in fostering student persistence does not change in relation to a student's previous school of attendance but to the personal attributes and needs they reveal during the advising interaction.

In general, Carrie estimates the majority of her WTCS transfer advisees are conscientious of their student responsibilities, institutional requirements, and educational plan. She views these

students as already persisting independently from advising and she usually need only serve as a support and resource person when needed. Those that do come in unprepared or uninformed about how their courses transferred into the UWS institution are shocked and disappointed and require more attention.

Anecdotally, Carrie observes that her WTCS transfer advisees adjust well to her campus both academically and socially[9]. She assumes the coursework her WTCS transfers completed prior to transferring is similar to transfers from other higher education systems and does not put students at a disadvantage to succeed at the UWS four-year institution. She makes no mention of observing a difference in the rigor of coursework between higher education systems or the academic ability of WTCS transfers verse other sub-populations. She notes that many of her WTCS advisees enrolled in remedial math courses while at the WTCS, but feels it is of no consequence as their enrollment in those courses imparted the skills to be successful in subsequent courses.

Carrie believes WTCS transfers connect to campus resources easily and adapt to the social climate extremely well, but views that her institution experiences difficulty in generating student involvement from the student-body as a whole so her generalizations refer mainly to their social adjustment into the peer environment.

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[9] It is important to note that Carrie identifies the transfer population from one WTCS institution as an outlier to her generalizations regarding academic adjustment. Over her ten years of experience, students from this particular institution have continually demonstrated to her that they are rarely equipped with the skills necessary to be academically successful at the UWS institution. Since this WTCS institution is local and serves as an entry point for many students initially ineligible for admission to the UWS institution, she has taken notice of their recurring struggles and makes attempt to proactively set them up for a successful transition. In particular, she ensures that she provides extra guidance and support to the students transferring in just a small number of credits as they seem especially underprepared for the transition. With these students, she concentrates on addressing student expectations, policies, processes, and resources as she would a freshman. With the rest of the transfer population, she addresses the "big picture" of college and lets them determine for themselves what they need in terms of academic advising information and support. She feels she can prevent an inordinate intensity of transfer shock among these transfers by spending significant time helping them identify their limitations and matching them with appropriate courses and resources.

Carrie does not detect a higher frequency of transfer shock among WTCS transfer students than those from other higher education systems. In fact, she finds their WTCS GPA, whether it was high or low, generally stays the same after transfer. She believes that her advising interactions with WTCS students help them effectively and proactively prevent transfer shock. By extensively discussing students' educational background and comfort-level with various course instructional formats, she thinks she is able to help students choose courses that align with their learning styles and diminish the effects of transfer shock.

Carrie feels she enhances persistence outcomes through follow-up communications after formal advising sessions. She emails her previous day's appointments to recap their discussion topics and inquire if they had any more questions. She has received feedback from her advisees that her follow-through is appreciated and provides them a connection to campus they had not experienced previously. Because of this approach, she observes students are more likely to ask her more questions which offer her even more opportunities to facilitate their connections to other campus offices. She feels her ability to gain students' trust as a reliable resource where they can receive timely answers to any questions helps them continue on.

Carrie suggests WTCS transfers' barriers to persistence are lessened when accurate and timely communication occurs between UWS campus personnel involved in the transfer process. When an academic advisor is able to quickly contact an individual responsible for evaluating transfer credits with questions on behalf of the student and provide detailed answers, she feels it strengthens the student-advisor relationship and also sends a powerful message to the advisee that there are individuals concerned about their well-being. Academic advisors that are able to get answers quickly from the registrar or academic departments, Carrie says, results in students

leaving their advising meetings feeling confident their individual issues are being examined. She believes this confidence helps enhance persistence.

Gina

Gina has a long history of working in higher education, but is in just her third year as an academic advisor at her current UWS institution. She possesses a strong background in career counseling and occasionally lends that expertise to advisees. Her institution's advising model calls for her to most often advise freshmen, but she frequently meets with sophomores and upperclassmen as well. Within her advising load, she works with what she considers to be a high percentage of both new students transferring in and current students looking to transfer from the institution. In addition, Gina is also charged with advising probationary students and a small number of students with disabilities.

Gina is outspoken in stating that academic advising serves a greater purpose than informing students about which class to enroll in each semester. Gina uses a self-described holistic approach when advising students because she feels proper academic advising does not isolate individuals' academic life from non-academic variables. She understands each student brings with them to college an infinite set of unique circumstances, values, and aspirations that will affect their academic careers. Attributing the influence her extensive background in psychology has on her practice, she feels these variables must be considered and discussed during the academic advising process. Gina does not, however, disregard the role students' academic background potentially plays in their college success. Hence, she also evaluates students' pre-enrollment academic performance to gauge their ability to succeed in a given major. Holding all of this information as vital to the advising process, she says her advising

sessions begin with exploring and discussing how students' non-academic factors might align with both their academic track-record and educational goals. Once these connections are discussed, she advises with a major and career focus as she feels it is imperative students work towards degrees leading to careers that will hold their interest.

Gina uses the combination of her knowledge of each student's personal and academic factors and understanding of their values and goals to help students choose appropriate courses. Aiming to establish a track-record of success early in each student's academic career, she uses metrics such as previous academic performance and standardized test scores to purposely steer students away from enrolling in traditionally difficult courses during their first year. She also considers students' life circumstances during the advising exchange, intuitively piecing together each student's outside responsibilities and aligning it with their previous academic performance to inform her of what course schedule a student can manage. And, she always has her advisees thinking of an alternative academic route if interested in entering a competitive-admission program such as nursing or engineering. She has even advised students to consider transferring to a different school if it better fits their academic needs.

Gina identifies self-advocacy, personal responsibility, and confident decision-making as student outcomes she hopes her advisees achieve through advising, but acknowledges devoting considerable time teaching advisees how to navigate the student service system and explaining available resources. When advisees have needs or questions that require contacting personnel other than herself, however, she will not inquire on the students' behalf. She feels compelling students to seek assistance themselves contributes to their maturation process. Similarly, she refuses to repeatedly provide the same information to a student as she expects each of her advisees to take notes and retain important details discussed in meetings. Finally, Gina feels her

responsibility entails discussing information and presenting alternatives when students must make choices, but places the responsibility of decision-making fully back on the student as she feels they must be accountable for their choices.

Gina believes both retention and persistence are responsibilities tied to her role as an academic advisor because these represent student outcomes desired by both her office and institution. She also holds the goal for students to graduate within four to five years. For persistence rates to improve at her campus, she feels students need to form positive relationships with a number of campus individuals. She believes the student-advisor relationship is foremost in importance as they can best assist the student navigate the university while keeping the larger goal of graduation in perspective.

For her part in the relationship-building process, she draws upon her considerable counseling background to employ techniques that cultivate trust and mutual respect. Through a conscious effort of listening, restating, and clarifying issues, she attempts to understand each student's point of view. She feels this method allows her to empathize with unique situations and show students she cares about their well-being. She also uses appreciative inquiry to draw out their proudest accomplishments before using those reflections to help them explore opportunities to build on their strengths instead of just concentrate on improving weaknesses. She feels this approach is another aspect of her advising that helps strengthen students' trust in her. Finally, she takes notes regarding interests and topics discussed after each student encounter, reads them prior to their next meeting, and then revisits them. She feels this practice again helps strengthen her relationships with students as they appreciate her taking an interest in their personal lives.

Gina feels academic advisors can significantly enhance students' persistence because of the variety of assistance they can provide. She assumes that many of the resources available to students, whether by her office or others, remain largely unknown until they meet with her. But, again, she chooses only to encourage students to utilize her as a resource for helping them connect to services that meet their needs, the responsibility of actually contacting her lies solely with them.

Gina does not provide suggestions for how fellow academic advisors can enhance student persistence. In her own practice, however, she uses frequent and constant contact with all students, adjusting the message and information to students' unique circumstances. She wants them to know up front that they have an ally at the institution equipped to help them navigate any situation, believing this knowledge eases their anxieties and thus maximizes their chances of academic success and persistence.

WTCS Interaction. Gina's experience advising transfer students from WTCS schools impresses upon her that they are more highly-motivated, dedicated, and focused on a particular major than freshmen. How she perceives her role as an advisor or in enhancing persistence does not change when interacting with WTCS transfers.

Gina finds working with WTCS transfers to be different than other populations in that they tend to be older and have more outside responsibilities than her typical advisee. These variables do not present her advising challenges. Rather, their age, responsibilities, and past educational experiences seem to motivate them in their renewed educational pursuit. With younger students, she sometimes finds herself assuming a parenting role in motivating them to succeed while older WTCS transfers seem to be more grounded and self-driven.

Gina primarily considers advisees' WTCS grades in forming perceptions regarding their chances for success at her institution. She rarely examines their ACT scores or high school grades to guide her approach, believing WTCS academic performance provides an accurate representation of their academic abilities. Gina's explanation of using WTCS grades as a variable to advise students in the course selection process brings about some discrepancies in her responses regarding the role she assumes when students make decisions. She acknowledges taking an aggressive approach regarding course selection if WTCS grades suggest a student is likely to struggle academically, even if her course suggestions would delay the student's graduation date target. She will only allow them to take certain classes she knows to be less rigorous if a student had poor grades at the WTCS institution, explaining that she wants them to become acclimated before taking traditionally difficult courses. Therefore, when advising WTCS transfer students, previous grades significantly dictate the expansiveness of course options she will allow. She contends this approach is pivotal in easing less-prepared students' transition to the UWS institution.

Gina's experience advising WTCS transfer students leads her to believe they earn better grades and graduate at a higher rate than the students enrolling at her UWS institution directly after graduating high school.

Although she questions students about their campus involvement, inquires about their peer relationships, and encourages socialization, she feels unqualified to comment on these interactions as she does not observe them first-hand.

Gina does not sense that WTCS transfers experience transfer shock in their first semester. In fact, her own experience suggests to her just the opposite as she believes they perform well

academically. She thinks their academic achievement is partly due to her advising approach of allowing them only to enroll in traditionally less-rigorous classes during their initial semesters as a way of easing them into their academic career at her institution. She dissuades students from enrolling in classes she believes will give them anxiety that first semester, even if doing so makes logistical sense in terms of course sequencing. When a student pushes back from this approach, she explains the impact careful class-planning can have on student performance. Therefore, she is also meticulous in helping students balance credit loads per semester based on the rigor of courses and their outside responsibilities, repetitively discussing and analyzing the balance between their academic and non-academic responsibilities to enhance GPA.

Gina does not believe she has a unique approach to advising WTCS transfers against transfer shock or attrition, but through careful estimation and discussion of academic history, ability, and anxiety coupled with in-class and out-of-class work-loads she believes she can help them limit each outcome. By helping students reflect on what is a manageable balance, she suggests that academic advisors can understand each student's entire situation to offer the best academic advising possible.

Table 1

New Undergraduate Transfers Enrolling at UWS Baccalaureate Institutions by Sending Institution in 2008-9

Sending Institution Type	Total Number of Students Transferring to UW 4-Year Institution	Percentage of Students Comprising 2008-9 Transfer Cohort to UW 4-Year Institutions
UW 4-Year	2,769	22.0%
UW 2-Year	2,370	18.8%
WTCS	2,697	21.5%
Wisconsin Private	823	6.5%
Out-of-State	3,605	28.7%
International	312	2.5%
Total	12,576	100%

Note. 14,896 transfers to UWS Baccalaureate Institutions enrolled in 2008-9. Of these students, 2,320 were "transfer re-entries." As transfer re-entry students previously attended the receiving institution and subsequently re-enrolled, they were not included in this table. Adapted from "Informational Memorandum," by University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research, 2009.

Table 2

Transfer Cohort Comparisons: Students New to the UWS by Type of Sending Institution for Fall 2008

Sending Institution Type						
		UW 4-Year	UW 2-Year	WTCS	Wisconsin Private	Out-of-State	International
Student Transfer Attribute	Entering as Freshmen	22%	12%	41%	24%	22%	18%
	Enroll as Full-time	89%	88%	70%	83%	85%	95%
	25 Years of Age or Older	11%	16%	35%	19%	21%	14%
	Student of Color	7%	6%	13%	13%	12%	10%

Note. Percentages represent students transferring into the entire UWS, therefore, 1,441 of the total 14,017 students compiling these percentages enrolled at UW-Colleges. Adapted from "Informational Memorandum," by University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research, 2009.

Table 3

Wisconsin Technical College Enrollment: Total Disadvantaged, Disabled and/or Grant Recipient Students from 1999-00 through 2007-08

Fiscal Years System-wide	Total Disadv.	Acad. Disadv.	Econ. Disadv.	Limited Eng. Proficiency	Disabled	Displaced Homemaker	Single Parent	Non-traditional	Incar-cerated
1999-00	94,510	70,430	40,961	12,527	12,257	2,975	20,101	6,538	5,004
2000-01	96,082	74,422	43,312	15,086	12,675	3,011	22,491	6,802	5,428
2001-02	103,075	79,707	45,855	16,651	13,782	3,357	24,108	7,614	9,487
2002-03	103,133	79,863	48,088	15,480	12,789	3,689	25,935	7,595	9,239
2003-04	105,886	80,041	52,820	15,461	13,029	3,699	27,943	8,818	7,146
2004-05	105,251	76,573	55,814	15,868	13,833	4,031	28,699	7,245	7,065
2005-06	106,472	76,213	59,579	15,378	14,407	4,724	28,631	7,762	7,001
2006-07	105,072	73,815	59,755	15,015	14,902	4,662	26,572	7,479	7,765
2007-08	104,321	72,156	58,922	14,086	14,973	4,565	25,866	7,603	7,553

Adapted from WTCS Client Reporting System, Report VE215406 on 4/12/10.

Table 4

Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates: New WTCS Transfer Students at UWS
Baccalaureate Institutions during the 2008-9 Academic Year

University of Wisconsin Institution	New WTCS Transfer Students	Second-Year Retention Rate	Six-Year Graduation Rate of Fall 2002 Cohort
University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire	157	58%	45%
University of Wisconsin, Green Bay	284	71%	46%
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse	82	72%	36%
University of Wisconsin, Madison	290	90%	71%
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	566	73%	38%
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	290	74%	35%
University of Wisconsin, Parkside	145	63%	33%
University of Wisconsin, Platteville	79	62%	52%
University of Wisconsin, River Falls	54	70%	52%
University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point	171	69%	58%
University of Wisconsin, Stout	333	75%	59%
University of Wisconsin, Superior	55	54%	22%
University of Wisconsin, Whitewater	191	72%	59%

Adapted from Adapted from "Informational Memorandum," by University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research, 2009.