INCREASING RETENTION AMONG FIRST-YEAR MASTER'S IN COUNSELING

STUDENTS: EVALUATION OF A SOCIAL INTEGRATION PROGRAM

by

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The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student James David Jensen, and they evaluated his presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my family and friends, whose prayers and encouragement provided me the strength and endurance to push through to the finish line whenever I felt unable to complete this dissertation. The texts, messages, phone calls, and hugs helped more than you know.

A special thanks goes to my parents, David and Carol. Thank you for your unwavering support, as well as the coffees, snacks, and willing fulfillment of countless other requests that aided me throughout the last few years.

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ABSTRACT

Comprised of three individual articles, this article-based dissertation represents different aspects of a study involving a program designed to increase retention among master's level Counselor Education (CE) students. Chapter One provides an overview of the dissertation's purpose along with a discussion of how the studies comprising the dissertation extend the current literature on student retention in CE programs. Chapter Two discusses a qualitative study that explores students' perceptions of a Social Integration Program designed to increase program satisfaction and sense of belonging among first-year students in a Master of Arts in Counseling program. The article in Chapter Two presents findings from focus groups conducted with first-year CE students regarding their experiences in participating in the Social Integration Program. Findings suggest that the activities within the program promoted a sense of connection and satisfaction, and suggest faculty engagement may help to increase student program satisfaction. Chapter Three explores the impact of the Social Integration Program on sense of belonging among first-year CE students through a comparison of two cohorts using a quasi-experimental design. Findings did not support the hypothesis that the program would increase sense of belonging. Methodological limitations of the study that may have contributed to the lack of differences between the cohorts are discussed at the end of Chapter Three. Chapter Four examines the effectiveness of the Social Integration Program in increasing retention rates among first-year CE students. This research was designed to address a gap in the literature regarding programs designed to increase

retention rates among this population. Retention rates of students participating in the

Social Integration Program were compared to retention rates of students in a control

cohort. Findings indicate that the students who participated in the Social Integration

program had significantly higher rates of retention from program orientation to fall of

their second year of the program compared to the control cohort.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACES   Association for Counselor Education and Supervision

CACREP   Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Other

                        Related Programs

CE   Counselor Education

CSJ   Counselors for Social Justice

MA   Master of Arts

SOBS   Sense of Belonging Scales

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is comprised of three separate manuscripts that represent different aspects of a study involving a program designed to increase retention among master's level Counselor Education (CE) students. Each manuscript stands alone, but is also integrated with the other manuscripts in this dissertation to address the overarching topic of student retention in master's level CE programs. As the chapters progress, they provide additional depth into an analysis of a program designed to increase student satisfaction, sense of belonging, and ultimately, retention. Chapters Two, Three and Four include articles that were written for publication in CE journals. These chapters contain abstracts that detail the premise of each article.

Chapter Two, "Enhancing Program Satisfaction and Retention Among First-Year Counselor Education Students," discusses a qualitative study that explores students' perceptions of a Social Integration Program designed to increase program satisfaction and sense of belonging among first-year students in a Master of Arts in Counseling program. The manuscript describes the Social Integration Program and presents findings from focus groups conducted with first-year CE students during which the students shared their experiences about social integration activities, relationships with faculty, as well as connections with peers. Students indicated that program activities that promoted a sense of connection helped foster students' satisfaction with the program. These findings

suggest it may be helpful for faculty to engage first-year students in social integration activities to increase satisfaction, with the ultimate goal of increasing retention.

Chapter Three contains a study entitled, "Evaluation of the Impact of a Social Integration Program on Sense of Belonging among Master's Counseling Students." In this manuscript, the impact of the Social Integration Program on sense of belonging among first-year master's students enrolled in a CE program is examined. In this study, sense of belonging was compared between first-year students from two cohorts (program cohort and control cohort) using a quasi-experimental design. Findings did not support our hypothesis that students who participated in the Social Integration Program would report a higher sense of belonging compared to the control cohort. Methodological limitations of the study, however, may have contributed to the lack of differences between the cohorts and these are discussed at the end of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four is a manuscript entitled "Evaluation of a Program Designed to Increase Retention in Counselor Education." This manuscript is theoretically grounded in Tinto's (1975) well-established integration model, which examines students' perceptions of fit or sense of belonging to the institution in relation to the likelihood of completing their education. There is a gap in the literature in identifying programs designed to increase retention rates in master's programs in CE. Therefore, the purpose of this manuscript was to examine the effectiveness of the Social Integration Program designed for this dissertation in increasing retention rates among first-year CE students by looking at two separate cohorts (program and control) using a quasi-experimental design. Findings indicate that the program cohort had significantly higher rates of retention from orientation to the fall semester of their second year compared to the

control cohort. This manuscript discusses possible implications describing the importance of peer relationships in CE programs, especially during the first year of a program.

1.2 The Problem of Retention

Student retention is an ongoing concern on college campuses across the United States (Barefoot, 2004; Braxton, 2008; Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2013; Mckendry, Wright, & Stevenson, 2014). While precise percentages vary from year to year, national survey data indicate the retention rate for graduate education is 71-75% (ACT, 2016), suggesting nearly one quarter of graduate students do not complete their program of study. This represents a reduction in future opportunities for personal and educational growth among students (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008), as well as a substantial financial loss to institutions of higher education (Barefoot, 2004; Hamshire, Willgoss & Wibberley, 2012; Nandeshwar et al., 2011). Student attrition is especially concerning for smaller programs that depend on student tuition and fees to remain viable (Raisman, 2013). As higher education experiences a reduction in funding from traditional resources, student attrition in smaller, more specialized areas of study, like those found in graduate programs, may lead to program discontinuation if corrective steps are not implemented. Thus, there is a need to investigate effective retention practices to increase graduate student degree completion rates (Casstevens, Waites, & Outlaw, 2012).

Although attrition can occur at any point, the first year is often recognized as the most critical time to determine if students will persevere and obtain their degree (Hamshire et al., 2012; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014; Tinto, 2006). Researchers have found that the first year is the most significant time for the establishment of important relationships that can decrease attrition (Hamshire et al., 2012; Nandeshwar et al., 2011).

These relationships can be formed inside or outside of the classroom, with other students, faculty, or additional representatives from the educational setting (Tinto, 2006).

1.3 Reasons for Program Discontinuation

The reasons why students do not continue their education are multifaceted and are impacted by overlapping and inter-related interpersonal, social, and environmental (e.g. campus) variables (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009). Family expectations can deter a student from collegiate pursuits or result in a sense of obligation for completing a college degree. Other factors that may prevent students from obtaining a college degree include difficulties obtaining financial aid, working long hours (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004), and perceived usefulness and applicability of one's college degree (Park, Boman, Care, Edwards, & Perry, 2008). Faculty/staff-student interactions outside the classroom, mentoring, and student organization involvement also contribute to a student's integration and degree completion (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004).

The majority of retention studies have been conducted at the undergraduate level (Crombie, Brindley, Harris, Marks-Marin, & Thompson, 2013). A growing body of research, however, has been conducted with graduate students as the importance of retaining this population is becoming more apparent (Braxton, 2008; Casstevens et al., 2012; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Hamblet, 2015; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Students in graduate programs are often older than traditional undergraduate students and may face additional personal challenges with family and financial obligations (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Further, graduate students report a desire for stronger partnerships with faculty in their academic program, as well as having a greater interest in obtaining accurate communication of information from departments (Pontius & Harper, 2006).

These are important factors to consider when attempting to understand reasons for program discontinuation for this population.

1.4 Tinto's Integration Model

Because retention is a significant area of interest across college campuses, many philosophies of why students persevere in their education have been postulated. Of the multiple theories that describe persistence and withdrawal behavior in higher education, one of the most comprehensive and well respected is Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997, 2006). Based on over 40 years of research, Tinto's work has been the foundation for much of what is known about retention in colleges and universities today (Kalsbeek & Zucker, 2013). Tinto's early writings focused on how institutional settings and characteristics interact with the attributes of students to impact attrition (Tinto, 1975, 1993). His later work focused more specifically on differences in retention and completion rates based on educational setting (Tinto, 2012).

Tinto's integration model explores how students' perceptions of fit or sense of belonging to the university contributes to retention. Tinto's model suggests that students enter college with a collection of unique traits that play a role in the decision to stay or leave the educational setting. Some of these characteristics include socioeconomic status, education level of parents, family expectations, race, gender, and personal academic ability. Prior educational experiences may also play a role in college success. Awareness of the personal characteristics that factor into retention provides insight into potential student risk factors, although implementing a plan of action to address individual situations is challenging. Because of the unique nature of each student, a sequential list of steps to increase integration, or engagement, does not exist (Tinto, 2006).

Tinto's model emphasizes the need for social integration, which includes building relationships with peer groups or cohorts, activities inside and outside the classroom, and connections with faculty. The model links academic and social engagement to student success (Tinto, 1975), as well as providing an understanding of the importance of experiences within the classroom (Tinto, 2006). In addition to social engagement, which involves clubs and the social network of college life, academic engagement includes interaction with faculty, classmates, and other campus personnel (Tinto, 1993). Academic engagement has a clear connection with degree completion, while the connection between social engagement or "interpersonal relatedness" and retention is more ambiguous (Flynn, 2014). Research investigating Tinto's model indicates this feeling of "interpersonal relatedness" has an impact on retention, although the pathway to experiencing this sense of connection is not clear (Hoffman et al., 2002).

1.5 Application of Tinto's Model to Retention in Graduate Programs

Research supports the importance of social integration in graduate student retention (Braxton, 2008; Casstevens et al., 2012; Hamblet, 2015; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Students in graduate programs report wanting greater partnerships with academic units, as well as more consistent and accurate communication from program faculty (Pontius & Harper, 2006). Additionally, connecting with other students and program faculty can deter non-traditional graduate students from departing from their programs by buffering them from feeling marginalized (Gardner, 2008).

Researchers have found that when graduate students develop connections with faculty, they gain confidence to seek out opportunities to become involved in their chosen profession at the local and national level (Gardner & Barnes, 2007). Additionally,

embedding socialization activities within coursework during the first year of a graduate program is associated with increased opportunities to build peer networks (Casstevens et al., 2012), as well as increased confidence and self-esteem (Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Further, researchers have found when graduate students engage in meaningful discourse and strategic planning with university professionals, faculty, and staff both inside and outside the classroom, they experience a greater sense of community that is associated with student persistence to graduation (Pontius & Harper, 2006).

1.6 Application of Tinto's Model to Retention in CE Programs

A handful of studies have been conducted with doctoral CE students (Baltrinic, Waugh, & Brown, 2013; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009), with findings consistent with Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997). Specifically, researchers have found it is important for CE faculty to understand personal issues, such as stamina, role transition, financial difficulties, as well as other life obligations to support doctoral students in overcoming barriers to program completion (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Retention is also related to faculty mentoring (Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Protivnak & Foss, 2009), positive student-faculty relationships (Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), a feeling of sense of community (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), and support from peers (Burkholder & Janson, 2013).

Although there are some studies suggesting an association between social integration and sense of belonging for doctoral students in CE programs, there is a gap in the literature investigating the relationship between these two variables for master's level CE students. The CE studies examining retention among master's level students have

focused on the ethical practice of removing underperforming students from CE programs (Brown, 2013; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010) rather than reasons for self-initiated program discontinuation. Increasing retention is important to maintain viability for master's programs in Counselor Education. Because of the dearth of literature in this area, the purpose of this dissertation was to design, implement, and evaluate a program based on Tinto's social integration model to increase satisfaction, sense of belonging, and retention among first-year students in a master's level CE program.

1.7 The Social Integration Program

The program designed for this dissertation is based on Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997). The program activities were designed to connect first year students with one-another, current students from other cohorts, and program faculty. These activities included 1) a spring orientation dinner attended by all students in the program and faculty 2) a formal connection to a mentor in the 2nd year of the program, 3) a summer Counselors for Social Justice student organization community service project, 4) a fall picnic for first-year students, their families, and faculty, and 5) a fall meeting with the faculty advisor.

1.7.1 Orientation Dinner

The orientation dinner occurred after an hour and a half advising meeting. Program cohort students had an opportunity to meet one-another, current students from other cohorts, and program faculty and staff at a dinner provided by the CE program held at the university's student union. The orientation and dinner occurred in May after acceptance into the program, which started the following August.

1.7.2 Summer Community Project

In partnership with the Department of Counselor Education Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) student organization, a community service project was held during the summer prior to students beginning their course work. CSJ officers selected an agency with the mission to address local community needs by providing a sustainable model of food training and educational programs. The community service project took place in July and concluded with a meal for all student participants.

1.7.3 Peer-Mentoring Program

In partnership with the local chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, a student a peer-mentor was assigned to each incoming student. Students currently enrolled in their second year in the program served as peer-mentors. The purpose of the mentoring relationship was for incoming students to have an opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with another student who could provide information about the program, as well as support. Program faculty requested that peer-mentors and mentees plan on follow-up times throughout the semester.

1.7.4 Fall Picnic

The Department of Counselor Education hosted a fall picnic for first year students, their families, and program faculty and staff in a city park adjacent to the university. First year students and their families, faculty, and staff interacted during unstructured time in a setting away from campus. Students were able to meet the spouses, partners, parents, and children of their classmates and faculty, providing opportunity for a more personal connection to take place.

1.7.5 Individual Advising Meeting

Incoming students in the program cohort completed a survey during orientation. The survey included items assessing employment responsibilities outside of school, desire to complete the program, campus involvement, and previous educational experience. The faculty advisor used this information to guide conversations with students during required individual advising meetings conducted during the fall semester.

The studies in this dissertation were designed to evaluate the Social Integration Program using both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Chapter Two contains an article examining the impact of this program using a qualitative design with data collected in a focus group format. Chapter Three builds upon this work by examining the impact of the program on sense of belonging using a quasi-experimental design, comparing the program cohort to a control cohort. Finally, Chapter Four builds upon this work by examining the effectiveness of the program on increasing retention by comparing the program cohort to a control cohort using a quasi-experimental design and institutional data regarding program retention.

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CHAPTER TWO: ENHANCING PROGRAM SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

AMONG FIRST-YEAR MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELING STUDENTS: A

QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Enhancing Program Satisfaction and Retention Among First-Year Master of Arts

in Counseling Students: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Student satisfaction and retention are key issues that have been understudied in graduate education programs. More specifically, it is unclear if the known factors that impact retention and satisfaction at the undergraduate level are similar for counselor education programs. This article presents results from a qualitative study exploring a first-year social integration program designed to impact program satisfaction and retention among students in their first year of a Master of Arts in Counseling Program. Implications for graduate education programs are discussed.

Keywords: retention, student satisfaction, counselor education, social integration, learning communities

Enhancing Program Satisfaction and Retention Among First-Yearmaster of Arts

in Counseling Students: A Qualitative Study

2.1 Introduction

Student satisfaction and retention are key issues for college campuses across the country and have been written about extensively in the literature (Barefoot, 2004; Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2013; Mckendry, Wright, & Stevenson, 2014). National average retention rates fall in the 50% range for undergraduate populations (Nandeshwar, Menzies, & Nelson, 2011), with the first year being identified as the most critical time for students to determine if they are going to continue their education (Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2012). Although higher than undergraduate rates, the national retention rate for public university graduate programs of 69.9% (ACT, 2015) is still concerning. Not only does the loss of students reduce opportunity for personal and academic growth in society, attrition is a significant financial loss to colleges and universities (Barefoot, 2004; Hamshire et al., 2012; Nandeshwar et al., 2011).

While there are some examples of research into retention at the graduate level (Gardner, 2008; Mullen, Goyette, & Soares, 2003; Pontius & Harper, 2006), the majority of retention literature focuses on tools that are effective in increasing retention with traditionally aged undergraduate students. Those enrolled in graduate programs tend to be older and have more responsibilities outside of school, including families and careers. This is especially true in smaller, competitive programs, such as those that specialize in counselor education (Roach & Young, 2007; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Therefore, it is important to examine program satisfaction and retention factors specific to counselor

education programs as they may differ from findings associated with undergraduate programs.

The counselor education admission process is both time-intensive and critical to ensure the most highly qualified candidates are chosen each year to begin the program. The application generally includes a letter of interest, verification of academic aptitude and related experience, letters of reference, and an interview (Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Once students have been accepted into a program with limited enrollment, it is important for students to want to stay enrolled and graduate. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify factors that positively impact program satisfaction and the intention to continue in the program among first year Masters of Arts of Counseling students completing their first semester in the program.

2.2 Retention and Sense of Belonging

While many efforts have been made to find key factors associated with student retention, the consensus among researchers is that it is a problem with multiple causes (Hamshire et al., 2012). Of the multiple theories that describe the persistence and withdrawal behavior in higher education, the most comprehensive and well-known is Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997, 2006). This model examines how student perceived "fit" or "sense of belonging" contributes to retention. Tinto's model posits that students enter college with a constellation of unique characteristics that play a role in the decision to stay or leave the educational setting. The characteristics include family socioeconomic status, education level of parents, family expectations, race, gender, and academic ability. Experiences in prior educational settings may also play a role in college success. Further, the model emphasizes social integration, which includes associations

with peer groups or cohorts, activities outside of the classroom, and connections with faculty. Researchers investigating Tinto's model indicate this feeling of "interpersonal relatedness" has an impact on retention; however, the pathway to experiencing this feeling is not clear (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002).

The decision to leave an institution of higher education can take place at any time, but rates of attrition are highest in the first year (Hamshire et al., 2012). Researchers have found that the first year is also the most significant time for relationships to be established (Hamshire et al., 2012; Nandeshwar et al., 2011). These relationships may be formed outside of the classroom with other students and faculty, but they can also be formed in the classroom, which is an often overlooked domain. Students that take a more passive role in their education tend to be at greater risk for attrition; for students that are involved with multiple obligations outside of school, the classroom may be the only place where they build those relationships with students and faculty (Tinto, 1997).

The reasons why students do not continue their education are multifaceted and are impacted by overlapping and inter-related interpersonal, social, and environmental (e.g. campus) variables (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009). Family expectations can deter a student from collegiate pursuits or can result in a sense of obligation for completing a college degree. Other factors that may prevent students from obtaining a college degree include difficulties obtaining financial aid, working long hours (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004), and perceived usefulness and applicability of one's college degree (Park, Boman, Care, Edwards, & Perry, 2008). Faculty and/or staff-student interactions outside the classroom, mentoring, and student organization involvement also contribute to a student's integration and degree completion (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004).

Studies at the graduate level support the positive influence of social and academic integration. In graduate programs, students want to experience partnerships with other academic units as well as receive consistent and accurate communication (Pontius & Harper, 2006). Social integration is especially critical for those students that do not fit into the traditional graduate student template since they may feel marginalized and may choose to depart from their degree program (Gardner, 2008).

2.3 The Current Study

The majority of the literature studying retention in higher education has focused on undergraduate students (Crombie, Brindley, Harris, Marks-Marin, & Thompson, 2013). While multiple studies examined the ethical practice of removing underperforming students from counselor education programs (Brown, 2013; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010), there is comparatively little research on student-initiated program discontinuation in counselor education programs. Tinto's (1975) core concepts of academic and social integration at the undergraduate level are well-established, but have also strongly influenced student commitment to the continuation of education at the graduate level (Ethington & Smart, 1986). Tinto (1993) stated that the social communities established in doctoral programs are more highly related to academic integration than at the undergraduate level and not only relate to intellectual development, but also to program completion. The body of research into retention at the graduate level is still incomplete, however, and in particular, it is unclear if Tinto's social integration model is applicable to graduate students in counselor education programs. Because the first year has been identified as the time when undergraduate students are at most risk for dropping out of school (Hamshire et al.,

2012), creating activities to increase social integration among first-year graduate students may also be important. Thus, the purpose of this study is to extend the literature by examining how first-year program activities designed to increase social integration impact program satisfaction and the intention to continue in the program among students in their first year of a Masters of Arts in Counseling Program.

To achieve this aim, all first-year students were invited to participate in a series of activities designed to increase social integration. These activities included a) a spring orientation dinner attended by all students in the program and faculty b) a formal connection to a mentor in the second year of the program, c) a summer Counselors for Social Justice student organization community service project, d) a fall picnic for first-year students, their families, and faculty, and e) a fall meeting with the faculty advisor. First-year students were then invited to participate in focus groups in which they were asked about their experiences in these activities, as well as other aspects of the program, as they relate to program satisfaction and intention to continue in the program.

2.4 Methods

2.4.1 Participants

A total of 24 students admitted to a Master of Arts in Counseling program at a metropolitan university in the Northwestern United States were recruited through a mandatory first year fall semester course. Of the 24 students, 75% ($n = 18$) were female and 25% ($n = 6$) were male. Participants were comprised of school counseling students (75%) and addiction counseling students (25%). Ages of the participants ranged from 21-50 ($M = 29.7$, $SD = 8.06$). The majority of participants (92%) were Caucasian, with 4%

Hispanic and 4% Asian American. Of the students, 50% identified as first-generation

college students.

<u>2.4.2 Procedures</u>

First-year students were recruited through a required fall semester course. The

lead author, who is also a doctoral student, explained the purpose of the study to the

participants, provided a sign-up sheet, and instructed students to sign up for a group of

their choice based on students' schedule availability. Students were informed that

participation was voluntary. Two 50-minute focus groups ($n = 12$; $n = 6$) were held

across 2 consecutive weeks. The lead author conducted the informed consent process and

explained the purpose of the study, procedures for audio recording and transcription, and

methods to protect confidentiality. In each group, the lead author asked participants four

open-ended questions: 1) Tell me about what you believe has contributed to your desire

to continue in the counselor education program; 2) Describe the activities so far that have

impacted your sense of satisfaction with the counselor education program; 3) What other

activities or experiences outside of the ones offered have contributed to your desire to

stay in the counselor education program?; and 4) What other activities or experiences

outside of the ones offered have contributed to your sense of satisfaction with the

counselor education program?

2.5 Data Analysis

A qualitative approach was used to identify themes in data collected from the

focus groups. Data were analyzed using structural and in vivo coding (Saldana, 2009).

Structural coding was used to analyze the number of references to specific program

activities, including an all-student program orientation dinner, peer mentoring, a summer

community service project, a first-year picnic, and faculty advising. In vivo coding referenced the exact wording used by participants to describe their individual and shared experiences. The recordings were transcribed word for word, distinguishing participants only by gender. Participants' names that were stated in the focus groups were not listed in the transcripts to maintain confidentiality.

The constant comparative approach (Glaser, 1965) was used to analyze the data. This approach includes comparing one statement or theme to other statements or themes to assure that all data produced will be analyzed rather than potentially disregarded on thematic grounds (O'Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008). Data were examined by noting themes and recurrences, which included repeated coding, comparing, and disaggregating and re-aggregating data into themes, resulting in a final set of identified themes when no new themes emerged through this process (Creswell, 2013).

2.6 Results

The focus groups provided opportunity for students to share feelings and experiences about the program from orientation to the end of the first semester of their program. The focus groups were transcribed and analyzed for common themes and comments from students in the groups. Four core themes emerged during analysis of the transcriptions:

- Connection with students in their cohort

- Trusting relationship with faculty

- Social integration activities

- Classroom activities and personal growth

2.6.1 Connection with Students in Cohort

       Overall, the responses regarding the relationships that students have formed with each other permeated most of the discussion in the groups.

- *I have actually grown to really love this group and I just feel privileged to be among them because I'm learning so much from them just human being to human being.*

- *In a weekend class, we had an opportunity to hear everyone speak so we were able to get a feel for each other. That's where the relationships started and connections started to be made for me. We're all here for the same reason and the same goal.*

- *We're a large group with different perspectives, but feeling comfort with people allows you to fully express how you feel and if I thought there was going to be a lot of judgment it would be harder to open up and it wouldn't feel safe.*

- *I feel being part of a cohort like this is a great way to learn counseling skills together. We're nice to each other, we try to take in everybody's values without judgment, and it's a great preparation for us to be counselors.*

- *We are all different and think differently and that's a huge benefit. Differences are actually beneficial in creating unity.*

- *I want everyone to succeed and if someone is struggling, I want to help them. I want us all to make it through and graduate together.*

- *When I talk to other people, I use the words "My Cohort" and I think it's awesome that we have that name and we're going to be friends for the next three years and we'll have a fountain of people to choose from for future professional consultation.*

- *I like the cohort system. I interviewed at another university that doesn't do a strict cohort system and that's one reason why I chose this program.*

2.6.2 Trusting Relationship with Faculty

Students commented about the positive aspects of the different instructors that were teaching their classes their first semester.

- *All of our professors are very genuine and they want to help us succeed and learn and do well.*

- *The faculty provide a classroom experience that is very collaborative and that's been really fun.*

- *The instructors are great and create an environment for us where we really bonded. I was able to let my guard down a little bit and got to know my classmates better.*

- *I feel like the instructors take care of us and they ensure that we're going to be successful with the program.*

2.6.3 Social Integration Activities

The activities put in place for the students to provide greater social integration both before and during the semester provided opportunities to be with each other in a non-academic setting. Students primarily discussed the community service project and picnic.

- *The picnic was a good way to be introduced into the caring, welcoming atmosphere of the program. This program is unlike most others on campus.*

- *I really liked the service activity (community service) because that's where I got to meet so many other classmates. To be able to do the service project (community service) with so many future classmates made coming to class the first time less scary.*

- *I thought that the service activity (community service) was the most beneficial experience I had outside the classroom.*

- *I feel that the service activity (community service) helped to solidify the bond that we have. I feel like the more I get to know my cohort and the peers that I'm around – I'm around them as much as I'm around my husband, and so I appreciate getting to know them differently in a setting other than the classroom.*

- *Something I really liked about the picnic was that I got to meet the families, spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends and kids that are influencing our cohorts' lives.*

- *The picnic was great because my wife got to meet some people and she really clicked with people there and it was really fun for her and the kids.*

- *In class you tend to gravitate toward people who are very similar to you and the picnic was a chance to hang out with people you wouldn't normally hang out with and see a different side.*

2.6.4 Classroom Activities and Personal Growth

Students indicated the content of the courses, as well as the emphasis on personal growth, were also highlights of the program.

- *Being in the program and actually learning about the field and the profession has really increased my desire to want to continue in the program.*

- *I learn something in one class and then something else in another class and it snowballs and I want to learn more and more. We're building a great foundation and I'm looking forward to building on it.*

- *The program is very hands on and relevant to what we'll be doing in future classes and in our careers.*

- *The program really advocates for individual clients, systematic changes, and the counseling profession in general. I think that's really cool.*

- *Everything is like a puzzle. It all just starts to fit together even though at the beginning you have all these pieces and you don't know where anything goes. As the semester continued, the puzzle pieces just kinda started to get in place. That's what I like about how this program is built.*

- *At my work we did an activity where we had to write down our happiest moments from the last week. The ones that came up for me were times in my counseling courses. This is making me happy and is what I want to do. That insight is also motivating me to continue in the program.*

- *We talk a lot about being genuine and being congruent and this program really forces you to figure out how to become congruent and I'm not yet.*

It's putting me in the right direction and it makes me want to finish this

program so I can help other people with that as well.

- *I feel that I'm learning a lot and have more insight about who I am and*
  why I'm doing the things I'm doing. Trusting the process and being okay
  with that is something I've never done before in my life and I can't wait to
  see who I will be at the end of the program.

- *I used to consider myself pretty judgmental and I find that I'm testing*
  myself more on my own belief systems. I'm excited about learning skills
  and techniques.

- *The amount of personal growth is really satisfying and exciting.*

2.7 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore factors related to program satisfaction

and retention among first-year Master of Arts in Counselor Education students. During

the focus group experience, students reflected upon program activities as they related to

satisfaction and intention to continue the program. The primary themes of connection

with other students in their cohort, relationships with faculty, classroom activities, and

the emphasis on personal growth emerged. Student comments reflected the importance of

"social belonging" fostered through activities promoting connections with peers and

faculty both inside and outside of the classroom. Thus, results provide support for the

application of Tinto's social integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997, 2006) to counselor

education students.

Of the activities designed to increase social integration, students identified the

first year cohort-faculty picnic and the Counselors for Social Justice community service

project as the most helpful in fostering connections to faculty and students in their cohort. These results are consistent with the undergraduate literature (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004), identifying a positive relationship between student-faculty interactions outside of the classroom and student organization involvement. Student comments also reflected the importance of classroom experiences, placing less emphasis on the one-to-one advising meetings. Contrary to the literature (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004), results did not indicate a relationship between the formal mentoring program and a sense of social belonging, program satisfaction, or the intention to continue in the program. The all-student program orientation dinner was also underrepresented in comments regarding social integration. Instead, students identified the cohort model as instrumental in feeling connected to other students in the program.

2.8 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study contributes to our understanding of factors that enhance program satisfaction and retention among counselor education students, several limitations deserve note. First, the sample size was small and there was variation in size of the two focus groups. Although similar content was expressed in both sessions and the groups were equally talkative, there was more opportunity for everyone to share in the smaller of the two groups. Additionally, the sample was primarily Caucasian and female. Thus, this study did not examine the role of multicultural factors on program satisfaction and retention. Future research with more diverse samples is warranted. Future research examining other types of activities would also be meaningful. In particular, there may be other ways to engage first-year students with mentors that leads to higher levels of connectedness than we found in this study. Additionally, collecting quantitative data to

measure the unique impact of different activities on satisfaction and actual rates of
retention would add to the literature in this area.

2.9 Counselor Education Implications

This study has important implications for counselor education program. Findings
indicate that program activities created to increase program satisfaction and retention
need to foster a sense of connection with others. Relationships with other students in their
class, relationships with faculty, and the emphasis on personal growth within the
classroom were key factors that influenced student connection to the program. Further,
being part of a cohort emerged as one of the most prominent indicators of feeling
connected to other students. Peer mentorship by second-year students and the all-student
program orientation dinner were seen as less valuable, suggesting intra-cohort student
activities may be more effective in promoting satisfaction and retention than inter-cohort
activities. Additionally, results suggest that it is the relationship and sense of
connectedness, not the specific activities, that increase program satisfaction and intention
to continue in the program. Findings indicate that students establish meaningful
relationships with those involved with their program through learning communities,
community service, and cohort gatherings. Thus, implementing programs that contain
cohort-specific activities that build connections among students and between students and
faculty provides a promising approach to increasing satisfaction and retention among
students in counselor education programs.

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CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF A SOCIAL

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COUNSELING STUDENTS

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Evaluation of the Impact of a Social Integration Program on

Sense of Belonging Among Master's Counseling Students

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Abstract

This study evaluated a Social Integration Program designed to increase student sense of belonging among first-year Masters of Arts (MA) in Counseling students (N = 30). The program consisted of a series of activities developed to increase social integration with both students and faculty. Results of this quasi-experimental study indicated no difference in sense of belonging between the students in the cohort that participated in the program relative to students in a control cohort. Methodological implications of this study and direction for future research are discussed.

Keywords: social integration, sense of belonging, counselor education, first-year students

Evaluation of the Impact of a Social Integration Program on Sense of Belonging

Among Master's Counseling Students

3.1 Introduction

As primary funding sources in public higher education have shifted from state allocations to student fees, student retention has become critical to program viability and an important area of research in higher education (Barefoot, 2004; Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2013; Mckendry, Wright, & Stevenson, 2014). The first year at an institution is often considered to be the most important time in determining if students will persist and obtain their degree (Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2012; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014; Tinto, 2006). For students enrolled in graduate programs, studies show first to second year retention rates are 70.4% for public institutions (ACT, 2016), suggesting institutions of higher education are losing over one-fourth of their student population during the first academic year. This high level of attrition results in significant financial loss to institutions of higher education (Barefoot, 2004; Hamshire et al., 2012; Nandeshwar, Menzies, & Nelson, 2011), as well as the reduction of future opportunities for educational and personal growth for students who leave the university (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

Researchers have examined many theoretical models in an attempt to explain the root cause of student retention (Attewell, Heil, & Reisel, 2011; Braxton, 2008; Gazza & Hunker, 2014; Hamblet, 2015). For example, Tinto's (1997) theory of integration, one of the most noteworthy foundational models of academic persistence, describes a combination of characteristics that explain how student perceptions of sense of belonging to the academic institution is a key factor in retention (Rovai, Wighting, & Liu, 2005;

Tinto, 1975; 1997; 2006). Specifically, when students are actively engaged with the institution of higher education, develop relationships with advisors and faculty, and form study groups with classmates, they are more likely to persist and obtain their degree (Flynn, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, Tinto (1975; 1997; 2012) emphasized the importance of social connections such as becoming involved in campus events, clubs, sporting events, or performance activities outside of the classroom setting to increase students' sense of belonging to the institution.

Although Tinto's model (1975; 1993; 1997; 2012) adds to a large body of research investigating the relationship between social integration and retention among undergraduate students (Attewell, Heil, & Reisel, 2011; Crombie, Brindley, Harris, Marks-Marin, & Thompson, 2013), only a few studies have examined the association between these two variables at the graduate level (Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013; Gardner & Barnes, 2007). One explanation for the relationship between social integration and retention is that students who engage in activities that promote social integration experience a heightened sense of belonging. Researchers have found that when graduate students develop connections with faculty, they gain confidence to seek out opportunities to become involved in their chosen profession at the local and national level (Gardner & Barnes, 2007). Additionally, embedding socialization activities within coursework during the first year of a graduate program is associated with increased opportunities to build peer networks (Casstevens, Waites, & Outlaw, 2012), as well as increased confidence and self-esteem (Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Further, researchers have found when graduate students engage in meaningful discourse and strategic planning with university professionals, faculty, and staff both inside and outside the classroom, they experience a

greater sense of community that is associated with student persistence to graduation (Pontius & Harper, 2006).

Preliminary evidence indicates an association between social integration and sense of belonging at the graduate level (Casstevens, Waites, & Outlaw, 2012; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Pontius & Harper, 2006; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Very little research, however, has examined the relationship between these two variables for students enrolled in Counselor Education graduate programs, and the few studies conducted with Counselor Education students have been at the doctoral level (Baltrinic, Waugh, & Brown, 2013; Burkholder, 2012; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Findings, however, indicate the most important factor in persistence to graduation for Counselor Education doctoral students is developing relationships with program faculty based on understanding and flexibility (Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder & Janson, 2013). Further, researchers have found it is important for Counselor Education faculty to understand personal issues, such as stamina, role transition, financial difficulties, as well as other life obligations to support doctoral students in overcoming barriers to program completion (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Mentoring and program "fit" are also associated with doctoral student retention in Counselor Education (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). Although there are some studies suggesting an association between social integration and sense of belonging for doctoral students in Counselor Education, there is a gap in the literature investigating the relationship between these two variables for master's students enrolled in Counselor Education programs.

3.2 The Current Study

The purpose of this study is to extend the literature by examining the impact of a program designed to increase social integration on sense of belonging among first-year master's level Counselor Education students. To achieve this goal, we used a quasi-experimental design, comparing two cohorts (program and control) on sense of belonging at the end of the first year of their program. Because research findings indicate students' first year is the most crucial for predicting persistence to graduation (Casstevens, Waites, & Goutlaw, 2012; Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2012; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014; Tinto, 2006, 2012), we chose to develop a program specifically for first-year master's students. We hypothesized that students participating in the program would report higher levels of sense of belonging at the end of their first year compared to students in a control cohort. Specifically, we examined overall sense of belonging, perceptions of faculty understanding of student concerns, perceptions of peer support, and perceptions of classroom comfort.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Participants

The sample included 30 students (82.8% female, 17.2% male) who completed their first year of a Master of Arts in Counseling Program at a university in the Northwestern United States. The sample consisted of students in two consecutive years who completed the first year of the program and attended the orientation meeting for students entering the second year of their program (control cohort $n = 10$; program cohort $n = 20$). Ages ranged from 22-51 ($M = 29.90$, $SD = 7.99$). The majority of the sample was White (83.3%), with 13.3% Hispanic, and 3.3% Asian American. The sample included

school counseling students (63.3%) and addiction counseling students (36.7%). There were no significant differences in age, $t(28) = -.33$, $p = .48$, gender, $\chi^2(1) = 2.72$, $p = .10$, or ethnicity, $\chi^2(2) = 2.15$, $p = .34$, between the control and program cohorts.

3.3.2 Procedures

This study is part of a larger study examining a program designed to increase retention among Counselor Education master's students (Jensen, Doumas, & Midgett, 2016). For the control cohort, a member of the research team met with students at second year orientation to explain the purpose of the study, collect student consent forms, and then provide the survey used in the study. For the program cohort, a member of the research team met with the students at first year orientation to explain the purpose of the study and collect student consent forms. The member of the research team then met with the program cohort the next year at second year orientation to provide the survey used in the study. For both cohorts, the consent process was conducted by a doctoral student member of the research team to minimize the possibility of coercion. All students agreed to participate and signed informed consent forms. The University's Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures.

3.3.3 Instruments

Sense of belonging was measured using the Sense of Belonging Scales (SOBS; Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002). Researchers originally developed the SOBS as a 26-item scale comprised of five subscales. The SOBS has good internal consistency ranging from $\alpha = .82$ - .90, and exhibits evidence for construct validity (Hoffman et al., 2002). Tovar and Simon (2010) reduced the SOBS to a 16-items inventory with a Total Scale ($\alpha = .90$) and three subscales: a) Perceived Faculty

Understanding/Comfort (7 items; α = .89), b) Perceived Peer Support (6 items; α = .84), and c) Perceived Classroom Comfort (3 items; α = .93). The authors report convergent validity between the 16-item inventory and the original 26-item assessment (Tovar & Simon, 2010).

We chose the 16-item version of the SOBS because the factor structure of the shortened scale did not statistically differ from the 26-item scale for undergraduate students (Tovar & Simon, 2010). Examples of items from the SOBS include: "I feel comfortable talking about a problem with faculty," "I have developed personal relationships with other students in class," and "I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class" (Hoffman et al., 2002; Tovar & Simon, 2010). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (*completely true*) to 5 (*completely untrue*). Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was α = .88 for Perceived Faculty Understanding/Comfort, α = .80 for Perceived Peer Support, α = .79 for Perceived Classroom Comfort, and α = .88 for the Total Scale.

3.3.4 Social Integration Program

The researchers designed program activities to increase first-year student social integration based on a thorough analysis of the literature focusing on effective practices for increasing student engagement (Ethington & Smart, 1986; Flynn, 2014; Gardner, 2008; Nerad & Miller, 1996; Pontius & Harper, 2006; Tinto, 2006). The primary purpose of the program was to increase sense of belonging to the master's program in Counselor Education through providing activities that enhance opportunities for social integration, which has been identified as an integral part of building relationships that increase retention (Flynn, 2014; Tinto, 2010).

3.3.5 Orientation Dinner

The orientation dinner occurred after an hour and a half advising meeting. Program cohort students had an opportunity to meet one-another, current students from other cohorts, and program faculty and staff at a dinner provided by the Counselor Education Department held at the university's student union at the conclusion of the mandatory orientation.

3.3.6 Summer Community Project

The researchers partnered with the program's Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) student organization to coordinate a community service project held during the summer prior to students beginning their course work. In collaboration with CSJ members, researchers sent an email to all new students inviting them to participate along with a survey to help organize the project (e.g., selecting a time and date for the project). CSJ officers selected an agency with the mission to address local community needs by providing a sustainable model of food training and educational programs. Students worked in the agency's kitchen preparing a meal from sustainable farming practices while staff taught students about food production, hand labeling and packaging, and other issues related to sustainable farming and food training. After students completed their tasks in the kitchen, they worked together on a farm engaging in a variety of activities such as creating farm signage, painting, woodwork, and basic farm needs. The project concluded with a meal for all student participants.

3.3.7 Peer-Mentoring Program

Researchers partnered with the local chapter of Chi Sigma Iota to assign each incoming student a peer-mentor. Students currently enrolled in their second year in the

program served as peer-mentors. The purpose of the mentoring relationship was for incoming students to have an opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with another student who could provide information about the program, as well as support. Program faculty worked with Chi Sigma Iota officers on the peer-mentoring program, and students were paired based on cognate (i.e., school or addiction) areas. First-year students met their peer-mentor during orientation through an icebreaker activity prepared by the honor society officers. Program faculty requested that peer-mentors and mentees plan on follow-up times throughout the semester. Often, these meetings occurred at coffee shops or over lunch.

3.3.8 Fall Picnic

Researchers coordinated a picnic for first-year students, their families, and program faculty and staff in a city park adjacent to the university. First-year students and their families, faculty, and staff interacted during unstructured time in a setting away from campus. Icebreaker questions were available on tables as an option to encourage socialization while eating a catered meal provided by the Counselor Education Department. Students were able to meet the spouses, partners, parents, and children of their classmates and faculty, providing opportunity for a more personal connection to take place.

3.3.9 Individual Advising Meeting

Incoming students in the program cohort completed a survey during orientation. The survey included items assessing employment responsibilities outside of school, desire to complete the program, campus involvement, and previous educational experience. After students completed the assessment, a member of the researcher team

reviewed responses and provided the faculty advisor with information regarding areas individual students endorsed which could be potential risk factors in retention. The purpose of providing this information to the faculty advisor was to guide her conversation with students during individual advising meetings conducted during the fall semester.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

We used SPSS version 24.0 to conduct all analysis. We first examined the data for missing data and outliers. Missing data were imputed using linear interpolation in SPSS and there were no outliers. The distribution for all outcome variables did not substantially deviate from the normal distribution. All outcomes variables were in the normal range for skew and kurtosis. The researchers conducted independent sample *t*-tests on three subscales and total scale of the SOBS to assess for differences between the program cohort and control cohort. Effect size was measured by Cohen's *d*. A *p*-value of $< .05$ was set for statistical significance.

3.5 Results

Table 3.1 presents means and standard deviations, confidence intervals, *t*-values, and *p*-values for the control cohort and program cohort. Results indicated no significant difference in sense of belonging between the program and control groups for Perceived Faculty Understanding and Comfort, $t(27) = -0.46$, $p = .65$, Cohen's $d = -0.19$, Perceived Peer Support, $t(27) = -0.07$, $p = .94$, Cohen's $d = -0.03$, Perceived Classroom Comfort, $t(27) = 1.08$, $p = .29$, Cohen's $d = 0.42$, and the Total Sense of Belonging Scale, $t(27) = -0.03$, $p = .98$, Cohen's $d = -0.01$.

3.6 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to extend the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of a program designed to increase sense of belonging among first-year master's level Counselor Education students. Because the first year of graduate education is the most significant time for preventing student attrition (Gardner & Barnes, 2007), it is important to identify effective strategies that can be implemented for Counselor Education students during this period. Contrary to our hypotheses, results of this study did not provide support for the social integration program evaluated in this study. Specifically, there were no differences in sense of belonging between first-year Counselor Education students who participated in the program and students in a control cohort.

Findings indicated that the cohort that participated in program activities did not feel a greater sense of belonging than the control cohort. These findings are not consistent with our hypotheses or with the literature indicating an association between social integration and sense of belonging among graduate students (Curtin et al., 2013; Gardner & Barnes, 2007). One explanation for the lack of difference between the two cohorts may be related to the study methodology. The researchers only surveyed students who remained in the program at the end of their first year, rather than surveying both retained students and students who dropped out of the program. It is possible that the students who were retained in the program had a higher sense of belonging than the students who left the program. Therefore, if all students had also completed the assessment surveys, it is possible differences may have been found between the two groups.

Alternatively, despite the inclusion of activities that were designed to promote social integration, the program may not have been effective in increasing sense of belonging. However, results from a related qualitative study (Jensen et al., 2016) indicate that program activities were associated with students' reports of feeling social integration within the program. In particular, students reported participating in the first year cohort-faculty picnic and the summer community service project contributed to a sense of belonging.

3.6.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study is the failure to assess students who were no longer enrolled in the program at the end of Year 1. Thus, in future studies it is important for researchers to follow students who are retained and those that drop out of the program. Additionally, a largely White and female student population limit the generalizability of the results. Future research with more diverse samples including more males is needed. Further, when investigating the relationship between social integration and social belonging with a more diverse sample, researchers can also give voice to the experiences of students of color and other underrepresented students in Counselor Education programs and evaluate whether program activities are appropriate for these students.

3.7 Conclusion

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a program designed to connect first-year master's Counselor Education students with one another, with current students in other cohorts, and with program faculty. Findings did not support our hypothesis that students who participated in the program would report increased sense of belonging compared to a

control cohort. However, we did not assess sense of belonging for students who were no longer enrolled in the program at the end of their first year. Therefore, in future studies it is important for researchers to survey students who left the program, as well as those retained, to obtain a more accurate evaluation of the program's potential to increase sense of belonging and ultimately Counselor Education student retention among first-year students.

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Table 3.1   Results of t-tests and Descriptive Statistics Faculty Understanding and Comfort, Peer Support, Classroom Comfort, and Total Sense of Belonging by Group

Outcome	Group					95%	
	Control		Intervention			CI for Mean	
						Difference	
			M				
		D		D			f
Faculty			1			-4.05,	
Comfort	1.11	.59	1.85	.20	0	2.58	.46	7
Peer			9			-3.64,	
Support	.78	.59	.90	.18	0	3.40	.07	7
Class			5			-.71,	
Comfort	.78	.99	.00	.72	0	2.26	.08	7
Total			2			-6.81,	
Belonging	6.67	.65	6.75	.72	0	6.64	.03	7

CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION OF A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO INCREASE

RETENTION IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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Evaluation of a Program Designed to Increase Retention in Counselor Education

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Abstract

Student retention is a key issue in maintaining academic programs' viability. This study evaluated a program designed to increase retention for first-year Masters of Arts (MA) in Counseling students ($N = 44$). The program consisted of a series of activities developed to increase social integration with both students and faculty. Results of this study indicated that students in the cohort who participated in the program reported higher retention rates than students in the control cohort. Findings suggest that implementing a program designed to increase social integration may be a promising approach to retaining first-year students in Counselor Education (CE) programs.

Keywords: retention, social integration, Counselor Education, graduate education, first-year students

Evaluation of a Program Designed to Increase Retention in Counselor Education

4.1 Introduction

Student retention is a longstanding central concern on college campuses across the United States (Barefoot, 2004; Braxton, 2008; Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2013; Mckendry, Wright, & Stevenson, 2014). National survey data indicate the retention rate for graduate education is 69.9% (ACT, 2015), suggesting nearly one third of graduate students do not complete their program of study. Low retention rates are problematic because attrition reduces student opportunities for personal and academic growth (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Additionally, attrition has a negative impact on program funding and is especially concerning to smaller programs that depend on student tuition to remain viable (Raisman, 2013). Thus, there is a need to investigate effective retention practices to increase graduate student degree completion rates (Casstevens, Waites, & Outlaw, 2012).

In addition, the first year of graduate education is a critical time when graduate students decide to remain in or leave their academic program (Gardner & Barnes, 2007). Researchers have found that the first year is the most significant time for the establishment of critical relationships that can decrease attrition (Hamshire et al., 2012; Nandeshwar et al., 2011). These relationships can be formed inside or outside of the classroom, with other students, faculty, or additional representatives from the educational setting (Tinto, 2006). Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997), one of the most comprehensive and established theories in the retention literature, examines students' perceptions of fit or sense of belonging to the institution in relation to completing their education. More specifically, when students perceive they are valued members of the

university community, they are more likely to persist and complete their degrees (Flynn,

2014; Tinto, 2010). According to Tinto (1975), social integration with other students and

connections with faculty are key components that impact undergraduate student retention.

Although the majority of studies examining student retention focus on increasing

retention with undergraduate students (Crombie, Brindley, Harris, Marks-Marin, &

Thompson, 2013), research also supports the importance of social integration in graduate

student retention (Braxton, 2008; Casstevens et al., 2012; Gardner & Barnes, 2007;

Hamblet, 2015; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014). Students in graduate programs report wanting

greater partnerships with academic units, as well as more consistent and accurate

communication from program faculty (Pontius & Harper, 2006). Additionally, connecting

with other students and program faculty can deter non-traditional graduate students from

departing from their programs by buffering them from feeling marginalized (Gardner,

2008).

One reason retention is important in CE programs is related to the amount of

resources dedicated to the application process for MA students. The student admission

process in CE programs is both time-intensive and critical to ensure the most highly

qualified candidates are chosen each year to begin the program (McCaughan & Hill,

2015). The application generally includes a letter of interest, verification of academic

aptitude and related experience, letters of reference, and, in many programs, an interview

(Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014). Additionally, accreditation standards limit the number

of students that can be admitted into CE programs based on the 12:1 ratio of full-time

equivalent (FTE) students to FTE faculty (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling

and Other Related Programs [CACREP], 2016). Therefore, there is a need to retain students enrolled to maintain program viability.

Although there is some literature investigating retention in graduate programs (Casstevens et al, 2012; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Mullen, Goyette & Soares, 2003; Pontius & Harper, 2006; Stagg & Kimmins, 2014), there is comparatively little research conducted on retention among CE students (Jensen, Doumas & Midgett, 2016). Qualitative research examining retention rates among doctoral students suggest retention rates tend to be in the 50% range (Baltrinic, Waugh, & Brown, 2013; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Reasons for program discontinuation include programmatic and relational fit (Burkholder & Janson, 2013), as well as unmet personal and academic expectations (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). These studies also suggest that variables consistent with Tinto's integration model (Tinto, 1975, 1997) are related to retention among doctoral CE students. Specifically, findings indicate CE doctoral student retention is related to faculty mentoring (Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Protivnak & Foss, 2009), positive student-faculty relationships (Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), a feeling of sense of community (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005), and support from peers (Burkholder & Janson, 2013). Additionally, qualitative findings from a study investigating reasons for departure among students who return to their program highlight the importance of faculty-student interactions (Burkholder, 2012).

In contrast, the CE studies examining retention among MA level students have focused on the ethical practice of removing underperforming students from CE programs (Brown, 2013; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010) rather than reasons for self-initiated program discontinuation. As a first step to

understanding factors related to retention among first year CE students, Jensen et al.

(2016) developed a program to enhance social integration. Based on Tinto's integration

model (Tinto, 1975, 1997) and findings from research on CE doctoral student retention

(Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder, 2012; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins &

Goldberg, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009), the researchers designed the program activities

to connect first year students with one-another, current students from other cohorts, and

program faculty. Results of a qualitative study examining student response to this

program indicated activities that promoted connections with peers and faculty fostered a

sense of social belonging that contributed to student satisfaction and intention to continue

the program (Jensen et al., 2016). Although findings from this study are an important first

step in understanding how the students experienced the program, this study did not

examine whether or not the program increased actual retention rates.

4.2 The Current Study

The majority of the literature exploring retention in higher education has focused

on undergraduate students (Crombie et al., 2013). Similarly, although Tinto's social

integration model has been extensively studied in relation to undergraduate education

(Braxton, 2008; Flynn 2014; Hamblet, 2015), only a few researchers have examined this

model at the graduate level (Casstevens et al., 2012; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Mullen et

al., 2003). Further, there is limited research examining self-initiated discontinuation in

CE programs, with the majority of literature focusing on CE students at the doctoral level

(Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder, 2012; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins &

Goldberg, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Taken together, these studies suggest that

social integration, including relationships with faculty and peers, may be important to CE

graduate student retention as well. Recent qualitative research indicates MA level CE students may also respond positively to activities designed to increase social integration (Jensen et al., 2016). However, a gap in the literature remains in evaluating the effectiveness of programs designed to increase retention rates in MA level CE programs. Thus, the purpose of this study was to extend our previous work by examining the effectiveness of the social integration program in increasing retention rates among first year MA level CE students.

To achieve this aim, we compared first year retention rates between a cohort of students who received the program and a control cohort comprised of students who were accepted into the program the year prior to program implementation. We asked the following research questions: 1) Did participating in the social integration program increase retention rates from orientation to Year 2 of the program? and 2) What, if any, effect did the program have on the timing of student-initiated program discontinuation (e.g., retention from orientation to fall enrollment and retention from fall enrollment to enrollment in Year 2 of the program).

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Participants

The sample included 44 students (84.1% female, 15.9% male) admitted to a MA in Counseling Program at a university in the Northwestern United States. The sample consisted of students admitted over a two-year period (control cohort $n = 20$; program cohort $n = 24$). Ages ranged from 21-50 ($M = 29.68$, $SD = 7.89$). The majority of the sample was White (88.6%), with 9.1% Hispanic, and 2.3% Asian American, which accurately reflects the local demographic. The sample included school counseling

students (68.2%) and addiction counseling students (31.3%). The researchers found no significant differences in age, $t(42) = -0.10$, $p = 0.92$, gender, $\chi^2(1) = 3.26$, $p = .07$, ethnicity, $\chi^2(1) = 1.29$, $p = .53$, or cognate, $\chi^2(1) = 0.17$, $p = .68$, between the two groups. To ensure that retention rates in the control cohort were representative of past cohorts, we ran a series of chi square analyses comparing the control cohort to the two prior cohorts. We found no differences in retention rates from orientation to fall Year 2, orientation to fall Year 1, and fall Year 1 to fall Year 2 between the control cohort and either of the two prior cohorts.

4.3.2 Procedures

This study is part of a larger study examining programming to increase retention among CE students. All students admitted to the CE program in the program implementation year were invited to participate in the study. During the mandatory orientation conducted in May, a member of the research team met with the first year cohort to provide a description of the purpose of the new program activities planned for the year. A member of the research team informed students that they could also participate in a study evaluating the new activities, stressing that declining participation would in no way impact students' standing in the program and that program faculty would not be aware of students' decision to decline participation. The consent process was conducted by a doctoral student member of the research team to minimize the possibility of coercion. All students agreed to participation and signed informed consent forms. The researchers accessed archival data collected from the CE program to track retention from both the program cohort and control cohort for the data used in this study. All study procedures were approved by the University Institutional Review Board and

adhered to the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 2011) ethical code guidelines.

4.3.3 Instruments

Researchers accessed archival retention data from the CE program student data tracking files. We operationalized fall retention as students being enrolled for fall courses on the 10th day of semester. We operationalized Year 2 retention as students being enrolled for fall courses on the 10th day of semester during their second year. We used a dichotomous scale of 0 (student did not enroll for fall courses) or 1 (student enrolled for fall courses) to measure retention.

4.3.4 Retention Activities

Researchers designed the program activities based on a thorough analysis of the literature focusing on effective practices for student engagement (Ethington & Smart, 1986; Flynn, 2014; Gardner, 2008; Nerad & Miller, 1996; Pontius & Harper, 2006; Tinto, 2006). The primary purpose of the program was to increase retention through providing activities that enhance opportunities for social integration, which has been identified as an integral part of building relationships that increase retention (Flynn, 2014; Tinto, 2010). The program included five activities designed to increase social integration: a) an orientation dinner in May after admission to the program, b) peer mentoring, which began with the assignment of peers during the May orientation dinner and continued throughout Year 1, c) a community project during the summer prior to Year 1 of the program, d) a fall picnic, which took place in October of Year 1 of the program, and e) individual advising meetings, which occurred during the fall semester of Year 1.

4.3.5 Orientation Dinner

The orientation dinner occurred after an hour and a half advising meeting. Program cohort students had an opportunity to meet one-another, current students from other cohorts, and program faculty and staff at a dinner provided by the CE program held at the university's student union. The orientation dinner was paid for by the CE department and all incoming students were required to attend. The orientation and dinner occurred in May after acceptance into the program, which started the following August.

4.3.6 Peer-Mentoring Program

Researchers partnered with the Chi Sigma Iota student chapter to assign each incoming student a peer-mentor. Students currently enrolled in their second year in the program served as peer-mentors. The purpose of the mentoring relationship was for incoming students to have an opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with another student who could provide information about the program, as well as support. Program faculty worked with Chi Sigma Iota officers on the peer-mentoring program, and students were paired based on cognate (school or addiction) areas. First year students met their peer-mentor during orientation through an icebreaker activity prepared by Chi Sigma Iota officers. Program faculty requested that peer-mentors and mentees plan on follow-up times throughout the semester. Often, these meetings occurred at coffee shops or over lunch. The meetings among mentors and first year students were voluntary with no set amount of meetings required by the program.

4.3.7 Summer Community Project

The researchers partnered with the program's Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) student organization to coordinate a community service project held during the summer

prior to students beginning their course work. In collaboration with CSJ members,

researchers sent an email to all new students inviting them to participate along with a

survey to help organize the project (e.g., selecting a time and date for the project). CSJ

officers selected an agency with the mission to address local community needs by

providing a sustainable model of food training and educational programs. Students

worked together on a farm engaging in a variety of activities such as creating farm

signage, painting, woodwork, and basic farm needs. After students completed their initial

tasks, students worked in the agency's kitchen preparing a meal from sustainable farming

practices while staff taught students about food production, hand labeling and packaging,

and other issues related to sustainable farming and food training. The project concluded

with a meal for all student participants. The community service project took place in July.

Although the project was available to all students, not all first year students participated,

and students in the second and third year cohorts were also involved

4.3.8 Fall Picnic

Researchers coordinated a picnic for first year students, their families, and

program faculty and staff in a city park adjacent to the university. First year students and

their families, faculty, and staff interacted during unstructured time in a setting away

from campus. Icebreaker questions were available on tables as an option to encourage

socialization while eating a catered meal provided by the CE Department. Students were

able to meet the spouses, partners, parents, and children of their classmates and faculty,

providing opportunity for a more personal connection to take place. All faculty attended

the picnic and the majority of first year students also attended, with many bringing family

members. The picnic was catered by the CE department. Candy and icebreaker questions were placed on each table to encourage communication and conversations.

4.3.9 Individual Advising Meeting

Incoming students in the program cohort completed a survey during orientation. The survey included items assessing employment responsibilities outside of school, desire to complete the program, campus involvement, and previous educational experience (see Appendix A for the Counselor Education Advising Questionnaire). After students completed the assessment, a member of the researcher team reviewed responses and provided the faculty advisor with information regarding areas individual students endorsed which could be potential risk factors in retention. The survey included items assessing employment responsibilities outside of school, desire to complete the program, campus involvement, and previous educational experience. The purpose of providing this information to the faculty advisor was to guide her conversation with students during individual advising meetings conducted during the fall semester. Students were required to attend one meeting with their advisor. The meetings took place throughout the fall semester and all students attended their individual meeting.

4.4 Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23.0. The researchers conducted three separate 2 (program cohort; control cohort) x 2 (retained; discontinued) chi square analyses to examine differences in retention from May orientation to fall of Year 2 (enrollment on 10th day of class), May orientation to fall of Year 1 (enrollment on 10th day of class), and fall of Year 1 to fall of Year 2. The authors used an alpha level of $p <$ .05 to determine statistical significance and used Phi (φ) as measures of effect size. Power

calculations indicated the current sample size should yield power of ≥ 0.80 to detect a medium effect size for a 2 x 2 chi square analysis. *Please refer to Table 4.1 for retention rates for the two cohorts.*

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Retention from Orientation to Fall Year 2

Results indicated a significant difference for retention rates from orientation through fall of Year 2, $\chi^2(1) = 4.40, p < .04, \varphi = 0.32$. Examination of the φ coefficient indicates the effect size is medium. As seen in Table 4.1, a significantly higher percentage of students in the program cohort remained enrolled from orientation through fall of Year 2 (87.5%) relative to retention rates for students in the control cohort (60.0%).

4.5.2 Retention from Orientation to Fall Year 1

Results indicate a significant group difference for retention rates from orientation through fall of Year 1, $\chi^2(1) = 8.34, p < .01, \varphi = 0.44$. Examination of the φ coefficient indicates the effect size is medium to large. As seen in Table 4.1, a significantly higher percentage of students in the program cohort remained enrolled from orientation through fall of Year 1 (100.0%) relative to students in the control cohort (70.0%).

4.5.3 Retention from Fall Year 1 to Fall Year 2

Results indicate no significant group difference for retention rates from fall of Year 1 to fall of Year 2, $\chi^2(1) = 0.03, p = 0.88, \varphi = 0.03$. As seen in Table 4.1, findings indicate no differences in retention from fall Year 1 to fall Year 2 between in the program cohort (87.5%) and control cohort (87.5%).

4.6 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to extend the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of a program designed to increase retention among MA level CE students. Because research indicates the first year of graduate education is the most significant time for preventing student attrition (Gardner & Barnes, 2007), it is important to identify effective activities that can be implemented for CE students during this time. Overall, results provided support for the effectiveness of a program developed to increase retention from orientation to enrollment in the first semester of an MA in CE program by providing activities designed to increase social integration among first year students.

Findings indicated that the cohort that participated in activities designed to increase social integration had significantly higher rates of retention from orientation to fall of Year 2 compared to the control cohort. This finding is consistent with undergraduate research demonstrating the positive impact of integrating a first-year experience program on student retention by helping students actively seek connections to other students, faculty, and staff (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Findings are also consistent with qualitative research on the retention of doctoral level CE students, suggesting that retention is associated with positive faculty-student relationships (Baltrinic et al., 2013; Burkholder, 2012; Burkholder & Janson, 2013; Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009), peer support (Burkholder, 2013), and a sense of community (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005). To our knowledge this is the first study to investigate the effectiveness of a program designed to provide activities that increase social integration for MA level CE students. Thus, our findings add to the body of literature supporting implementation

of activities that foster connection to increase retention during the first year for CE students.

The program cohort also had significantly higher retention rates from orientation through enrollment in courses in fall of Year 1. In contrast, we did not find a significant difference in retention rates from enrollment in fall Year 1 to enrollment in fall Year 2. One possible explanation for this difference is that engaging students prior to their first fall semester provided an opportunity for them to make connections to the program during summer, a time in which there is no coursework or other interaction with the program. Consistent with the explanation, historical retention data from our CE program suggests that the largest rates of attrition in the first year occur from orientation to enrollment in fall semester. During the summer, students may question the commitment to graduate school or the financial cost associated with higher education. Non-traditional students may doubt the benefit of additional schooling or their ability to relate to younger students. It is possible that the development of friendships and personal connections in the absence of pressure from full time coursework and academic responsibilities creates an opportunity for stronger bonds to develop than would develop otherwise in the context of other pressure.

4.6.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study extends the literature by investigating how to increase first year MA level CE student retention through activities designed to increase social integration, certain limitations should be considered. First, a largely White and female student population limit the generalizability of the results. These student characteristics, however, are consistent with the national CE MA student makeup, with 60% of students identifying

their ethnicity as White and 82.52% of students reporting gender as female ([CACREP],

2014). Next, cohort effects impact the internal validity of the study. Specifically, students

in the program cohort and control cohorts may have had different experiences they share

as participants in an intensive graduate program. Thus, it is unclear if the differences in

retention between the two cohorts are due to a program effect or are confounded by a

cohort effect. Further, with the exception of the orientation dinner and the advising

meetings, students were not required to participate. Additionally, although faculty

strongly encouraged students to attend all program activities by sending students email

invitations and reminders, we did not track participation in the voluntary activities.

Finally, although the current study represents an important first step in evaluating

the effectiveness of social integration activities in retention of MA level CE first year

students from orientation through the fall of the second year, this study did not examine

other factors that can also impact retention including subgroups of students for whom the

program is more or less effective and processes by which the program impacts retention

rates. Thus, future research examining possible mediators (e.g., student satisfaction or

academic climate), as well as examining possible moderators (e.g., age or employment

status) would be beneficial.

4.6.2 Implications for Counselor Education

This study has practical implications for counselor educators and first year MA

level CE students. First, because CE programs can have restrictions in the number of

students that can be admitted due to accreditation requirements, it is important to

implement strategies to increase student retention to promote program sustainability.

Further, since the first year of graduate education is critical for retaining students, there is

a need to develop activities that can be implemented for CE during their first year in the program. When a cohort of first year CE students participated in activities designed to increase retention through social integration, the cohort had higher rates of retention than a control cohort. CE faculty can build on these findings and engage first year students in activities to encourage retention.

Additionally, since the activities were most effective from orientation to fall of Year 1, for programs that schedule orientation in this way, faculty can focus on engaging students in activities during the summer months prior to students first fall semester. For example, program faculty can coordinate a summer service project to help first year students build a sense of cohesion and integration by developing relationships with one another and the local community. Furthermore, faculty can work with CE student organizations such as a local chapter of CSJ or Chi Sigma Iota to coordinate summer activity such as a picnic to welcome first year students and their families to the program. Although our findings indicate summer activities can increase retention, coordinating these activities can be time consuming and occur while most faculty are not contracted to work. Thus, planning in advance and working with students who are entering their second or third year in the program to implement activities can be helpful. Further, another potential barrier to implementation is that financial resources can be required from the department. Therefore, faculty can plan free or low-cost activities such as volunteering in a community agency or gathering with students at a local park for a potluck.

4.7 Conclusion

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a program developed to increase retention by implementing activities designed to connect first year MA level CE student with one another, current students enrolled in other cohorts, and program faculty. Findings indicated the cohort of students who participated in the program had a higher rate of retention compared to the control cohort. Overall, results suggest that integrating activities designed to increase social integration are a promising approach to retaining first year MA level CE students and maintaining program viability.

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Table 4.1   Program Retention by Timeframe

	Control Cohort	Program Cohort
Orientation to Fall Year 1	70.0%	100.0%
Orientation to Fall Year 2	60.0%	87.5%
Fall Year 1 to Fall Year 2	87.5%	87.5%

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY

5.1 Summary

Student retention is a concern on college campuses across the United States with national survey data indicating that nearly one quarter of graduate students do not complete their program of study. Because the first year is the most significant time to establish relationships that can decrease attrition, it is important to investigate effective practices to increase student retention rates. Additionally, as the majority of retention research for CE programs has taken place at the doctoral level, there is a need to identify effective programs to increase retention for master's level CE students. Thus, the purpose of these studies was to extend the literature through the design, implementation, and evaluation of a program based on Tinto's social integration model to increase satisfaction, sense of belonging, and retention among first-year students in a master's level CE program.

Chapter Two discussed a qualitative study that explored students' perceptions of a Social Integration Program designed to increase program satisfaction and sense of belonging among first-year students in a Master of Arts in Counseling program. Findings were presented from focus groups conducted with first-year CE students regarding their experiences in participating in the Social Integration Program. Findings suggested that the activities within the program promoted a sense of connection and satisfaction and that faculty engagement may help to increase student program satisfaction.

Chapter Three explored the impact of the Social Integration Program on sense of belonging among first-year CE students through comparison of two cohorts using a quasi-experimental design. Findings did not support the hypothesis that students who participated in the Social Integration Program would report a higher sense of belonging compared to the control cohort. Methodological limitations of the study, such as the importance for researchers to survey students who left the program, as well as those retained, may have contributed to the lack of difference between the cohorts.

Chapter Four built upon the studies in Chapter Two and Three by examining the effectiveness of the Social Integration Program in increasing retention rates among first-year master's level CE students. Based on Tinto's integration model, the purpose of this study was to address a gap in the literature regarding programs designed to increase retention rates in this population. Retention rates of students participating in the Social Integration Program were compared to retention rates of students in a control cohort using a quasi-experimental design. Findings indicated that the students who participated in the Social Integration Program had significantly higher rates of retention from program orientation to fall of their second year of the program compared to the control cohort. Implications suggest the importance of relationships with faculty and peers in CE programs, especially during the first year of a program.

In conclusion, this body of work presents a unique Social Integration Program designed to increase retention among first-year master's level CE students. The findings from each article work together to evaluate a Social Integration Program through use of both qualitative and quantitative research designs. While not without limitations, results suggest that integrating activities designed to increase social integration are a promising

approach to retaining first year master's level CE students and maintaining program viability.

APPENDIX A

Counselor Education Focus Group Questions

1) Tell me about what you believe has contributed to your desire to continue in the Counselor Education program.

2) Describe the activities so far that have impacted your sense of satisfaction with the Counselor Education program.

3) What other activities or experiences outside of the ones offered have contributed to your desire to stay in the Counselor Education program?

4) What other activities or experiences outside of the ones offered have contributed to your sense of satisfaction with the Counselor Education program?

APPENDIX B

Sense of Belonging Scale

For this survey, read each item carefully and rate your agreement with each statement based on your experience at Boise State University during the current school year by filling in a circle to the right of each statement.

	Completely True	ostly True	Equally True and Untrue	ostly Untrue	Completely Untrue
1. I could call another student from class if I had a question about an assignment.	○	○	○	○	○
2. Other students are helpful in reminding me when assignments are due or when tests are approaching.	○	○	○	○	○
3. If I miss class, I know students who could provide me the notes.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I discuss events which happen outside of class with my classmates.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I invite people I know from class to do things socially.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I have developed personal relationships with other students in class.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I have discussed personal matters with students who I met in class.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I feel comfortable seeking help from a teacher before or after class.	○	○	○	○	○
10. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help if I do not	○	○	○	○	○

understand course-
related
material.

11. If I had a reason, I would feel comfortable seeking faculty member outside of class time (i.e., during office hours, etc.).	○	○	○	○	○
help from a					
12. I feel comfortable talking about a problem with faculty.	○	○	○	○	○
13. I feel comfortable socializing with a faculty member outside of class.	○	○	○	○	○
14. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help with a personal problem.	○	○	○	○	○
15. Speaking in class is easy because I feel comfortable.	○	○	○	○	○
16. I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class.	○	○	○	○	○
17. I feel comfortable contributing to class discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
18. I feel comfortable asking a question in class.	○	○	○	○	○
19. It is difficult to meet other students in class.	○	○	○	○	○
20. No one in my classes knows anything personal about me.	○	○	○	○	○
21. I rarely talk to other students in my classes.	○	○	○	○	○
22. I know very few people in my classes.	○	○	○	○	○
23. I feel that a faculty member would take the time to talk to me	○	○	○	○	○

if I needed help.					
24. I feel that a faculty member	○	○	○	○	○
would be sympathetic if I was					
upset.					
25. I feel that a faculty member	○	○	○	○	○
would be sensitive to my difficulties if I shared them.					
26. I feel that a faculty member	○	○	○	○	○
really tried to understand my					
problem when I talked about it.					

APPENDIX C

Counselor Education Advising Questionnaire

I understand that participation in this survey is voluntary. Please answer honestly and thoroughly. Information from the survey will be shared with your advisor in the Counselor Education Department to help to improve your experience in the program.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Program Area of Focus: _____

Where did you obtain your undergraduate degree? _____ GPA: _

1. Are you _____Male _____Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. Please indicate your highest degree received.
   _____Bachelors
   _____Masters
   _____Doctorate

4. Please indicate your highest <u>expected</u> academic degree.
   _____Bachelors
   _____Masters
   _____Doctorate
   _____Other, please specify _____

5. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?
   _____Native American
   _____White/Caucasian
   _____African-American
   _____Hispanic
   _____Asian
   _____Other, please specify _____

6. What is/was your father's highest formal education level?
   _____Less than high school diploma
   _____GED
   _____High school diploma
   _____Associates
   _____Bachelors
   _____Masters
   _____Doctorate
   _____Other

7. What is/was your mother's highest formal education level?
   _____Less than high school diploma
   _____GED
   _____High school diploma
   _____Associates
   _____Bachelors
   _____Masters
   _____Doctorate
   _____Other

8. How important is it for you to obtain your Master's degree?
   _____Very Important
   _____Important
   _____Somewhat important
   _____Not important
   _____Unsure

9. Where does Boise State rank as your college of choice?
   _____Boise State was my first choice
   _____Boise State was my second choice
   _____Boise State was my third choice
   _____Boise State was my fourth choice
   _____Given my circumstances, I felt Boise State was my only choice

10. How confident are you that choosing Boise State was the right choice?
    _____Very confident
    _____Confident
    _____Somewhat confident
    _____Not confident
    _____Not sure

11. What is your involvement in extracurricular activities (e.g., student government,

    community service, student committees)?
    _____Four or more hours a week
    _____Two or three hours a week
    _____Less than two hours per week
    _____No involvement

12. Below is a list of typical out-of-class contacts with faculty. Please mark your

    estimations of the average number of times per month you engage in this type of

    contact for at least 10 minutes with faculty.

Type of contacts	Average Times per month of Contact with faculty (please circle)

A. Getting basic information about my academic program	0	1	2	3	4+	
B. Discussing intellectual or course-related matters	0	1	2	3	4+	
C. Discussing matters related to my future career	0	1	2	3	4+	
D. Talking informally	0	1	2	3	4+	
E. Discussing a campus issue or problem	0	1	2	3	4+	
F. Helping resolve a personal problem	0	1	2	3	4+	

13.   Are you currently employed?
        _____Yes
        _____No

14.   If you are employed please complete the following: I'm employed for
        _____1-10 hours per week
        _____11-20 hours per week
        _____21-30 hours per week
        _____31-40 hours per week
        _____Over 40 hours per week

15.   Below is a list of statements about your previous academic experience. Please
        read each statement and indicate how accurate you feel it is on a scale from 1 to 7,
        where 1 is very true and 7 is very untrue.

Very true   Very Untrue

a. I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. My academic experience has had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Few of the faculty members I have had	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

contact with are genuinely interested in
students

d. The student friendships I have   1   2   3   4   5   6
7

    developed have been personally
satisfying

e. My non-classroom interactions with   1   2   3   4   5   6
7

    faculty have had a positive influence
on my personal growth, values, and
attitudes

f. My non-classroom interactions with   1   2   3   4   5   6
7

    faculty have had a positive influence on
my career goals and aspirations

16.   How sure are you about your career goals to become a counselor?
       _____Very sure
       _____Sure
       _____Somewhat sure
       _____Unsure
       _____Very unsure

17.   How confident are you in your ability to perform the duties of a
counselor?

       _____Highly confident
       _____Confident
       _____Uncertain
       _____Not confident

18.   Please rate your overall desire to become a counselor.
       _____Very strong desire
       _____Strong desire
       _____Some desire
       _____No desire
       _____Unsure

19.   How sure are you that you want to be a counselor?
       _____Very sure
       _____Sure
       _____Somewhat sure

_____Unsure
_____Very unsure

20.   How frequently have you observed the following in your previous classes?
        (Please check or circle the 'o' for one selection for each question)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
a. The instructor's presentation of materials is well-organized	o	o	o	o
b. The instructor is well prepared for class	o	o	o	o
c. The instructor uses class time effectively	o	o	o	o
d. The instructor clearly explains course requirements	o	o	o	o
e. The instructor has a good command of what he/she is teaching	o	o	o	o

21.   How frequently have you observed the following in your previous classes?
        (Please check or circle the 'o' for one selection for each question)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
a. The instructor gives clear examples	o	o	o	o
b. The instructor makes good use of	o	o	o	o
c. The instructor effectively reviews and summarizes the material	o	o	o	o
d. The instructor interprets abstract ideas and theories clearly	o	o	o	o
e. The instructor answers students' questions in a way that helps students understand the materials	o	o	o	o

22.   Please indicate how well you agree with the following statements:
        (Please check or circle the 'o' for one selection for each question)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. It is <u>not</u> important to graduate from Boise State	o	o	o	o

b. I am confident I made the right   o   o   o

o

    decision to attend Boise State

c. I am sure that Boise State is the   o   o   o

o

    right place for me.

23.   How likely is it that you will attend Boise State in the fall of 2015?
      _____Extremely unlikely
      _____Unlikely
      _____Unsure
      _____Likely
      _____Extremely likely

24.   How likely is it that you will be enrolled at Boise State one year from today?

      _____Extremely unlikely
      _____Unlikely
      _____Unsure
      _____Likely
      _____Extremely likely

25.   How fairly have you been treated by Boise State University?
      _____Very fairly
      _____Fairly
      _____Unsure
      _____Unfairly
      _____Very unfairly

26.   How fairly have you been treated by the Counselor Education Department at

    Boise State University?
      _____Very fairly
      _____Fairly
      _____Unsure
      _____Unfairly
      _____Very unfairly