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A STUDY OF LATE REGISTRATION AT FOUR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Meredith Courtney Nourie-Manuele
B.A. December 2003, Columbia College
M.A.T. May 2009, Winthrop University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Approved by:

Mitchell R. Williams (Director)

Shana L. Pribesh (Member)

Patrick Tompkins (Member)

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF LATE REGISTRATION AT FOUR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Meredith Courtney Nourie-Manuele

Old Dominion University, 2018

Director: Dr. Mitchell R. Williams

At the community college level, a debated policy is whether to keep the option for late registration. Most colleges define late registration as registration that occurs any time after the first day of the semester (O'Banion, 2012). Some community colleges have opted to eliminate late registration, believing, based on previous studies, that late registration is a barrier to students and their success (Bolt, 2013; Hale & Bray, 2011; Jones, 2015; Smith, Street, & Olivarez, 2002; Weiss, 1999). Others assert late registration remain an option maintaining that the open access designation associated with the community college demands that students not be deterred from attending when that decision to attend is made (Fain, 2014; O'Banion, 2012). After years of debate, there is no consensus on what is most beneficial for students and colleges. This study contributes to the knowledge on late registration and more specifically focuses on perceptions of what happens once a late registration policy is eliminated.

This qualitative study, utilizing the phenomenological approach, explored the implications of eliminating late registration at four community colleges located in four states across the United States; each institution eliminated the late registration option within the last five years (2012-2017). The study allowed college leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and registrars) and instructional staff (faculty and advisors) to provide up-to-

date perspectives on the impact of the policy elimination.

After data collection and explication, several themes emerged and were organized by research question. Generally speaking, for the four colleges included in this study, the elimination of the late registration option has not been identified as a major agent for change. College leaders and instructional staff were unable to isolate data that showed student success being positively impacted by the elimination of the late registration option. In fact, three of the four colleges included, according to interview participants, had not looked at the data since the change in policy. Instructional staff were unable to describe any positive, significant changes in their positions as a result of this policy change.

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To my mother, Barbara, and my father, Alan: Thank you for instilling in me from a very early age the desire to be educated and the understanding that one never stops learning.

To my daughter, Della: Becoming your mom has changed my life. My love for you is unlike anything I could have ever imagined. I cannot wait to see who you become.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a report entitled *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2012) called for a redesign of the community college. The report highlighted successes of the community college, including enrolling more than 13 million students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012), preparing millions of students for careers and transfer to four-year institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012), a “retreading of the American workforce” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. viii), providing training for those out of work or in need of a new trade (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012), and aiding in the development of new industries (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). All of this has been accomplished while serving a “remarkably diverse student population” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. viii).

Despite these successes, community colleges have low completion rates. According to data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2012, 13% of community college students graduate in two years; in three years, the graduation rate rises to 22%, and in four years, the graduation rate stands at 28% (Chen, 2017). There are several possible explanations for the low rate, one being student unpreparedness and the subsequent need for remediation or developmental classes. Data provided by Complete College America (2012) indicated that 62% of students at two-year colleges complete remediation; however, only 22% complete remediation and college-level courses in a two-year time span. Remedial courses do not typically count towards graduation requirements. For students to complete the remedial

courses only to not complete the college-level, for-credit courses, is not only unfortunate but also a waste of time and money (Complete College America, 2012).

The open access designation is another factor associated with low completion rates. Open access institutions attract large numbers of traditionally marginalized populations, including first-generation students, minority students, ESL (English as a Second Language) students, and students with learning disabilities; these student populations often find higher education challenging (Hollins & Foley, 2013; Renn & Reason, 2013; Shi & Steen, 2012).

Community colleges provide opportunities for success to marginalized students, and the policies and procedures implemented should, in turn, promote student success (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). A policy affecting students that is frequently assessed and reassessed is whether to keep the option for late registration. Most colleges define late registration as registration that occurs after the first day of the semester (O'Banion, 2012). Some community colleges have opted to eliminate late registration, believing, based on previous studies, that late registration is a barrier to students and their success (Bolt, 2013; Hale & Bray, 2011; Jones, 2015; Smith, Street, & Olivarez, 2002; Weiss, 1999). After years of debate, there is no consensus on what is most beneficial for students and colleges. This study contributes to the knowledge on late registration and more specifically focuses on perceptions of what happens once a late registration policy is eliminated.

This qualitative study, utilizing the phenomenological approach, explored the implications of eliminating late registration, defined as registration occurring after classes have already begun, at four community colleges located in four states across the United States; each institution has eliminated the late registration option within the last five years (2012-2017). The study allowed college leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, and department chairs) and

instructional staff (faculty and advisors) to provide up-to-date perspectives on the impact of the policy elimination.

Background of the Study

Allowing students to register late (after classes have begun) can be beneficial or detrimental to student success depending upon what sources are consulted. There are two major benefits of late registration: adherence to the open access mission of the community college and an increase in the number of FTE (full-time equivalent) students (O'Banion, 2012). Studies have found that students register late for a multitude of reasons, including financial issues, familial obligations, and conflicts related to employment (Belcher & Patterson, 1990; Geltner, 1996; Seppanen, 1995; Windham, 1994). Community colleges that allow late registration are remaining true to the "open-door philosophy" (O'Banion, 2012), a philosophy that values never turning away a student who has made the decision to enroll and attend. Allowing late registration is also a way to increase enrollment numbers in an era of declining enrollments. Late registration also attracts students who have been turned away at other institutions with strict registration deadlines. Permitting late registration allows the community college to remain competitive with other rolling admissions institutions, such as the proprietary (for-profit) institutions.

There are studies that have been conducted that determined a positive relationship between late registration and student success. Angelo (1990), who researched late registration and course completion, discovered that students who registered late were more likely to complete courses than those who registered early or on time. Fobbs (2015), who researched late registration and student success (assessed in GPA), discovered GPAs actually increased by 9.2 % when registering within a longer period.

Other commonly cited studies, however, have concluded that late registration can be a factor in a lack of success for students. Smith, Street, and Olivarez (2002) examined persistence and late registration; a major finding indicated that students who registered late were much less likely to persist to the next semester than those who registered during early or regular registration. Hale and Bray (2011) researched student success and late registration; findings indicated that students registering early or on-time had higher semester grades than those students who registered late.

Other studies have concluded late registration neither positively nor negatively affects students. Zottos (2005) discovered late registration does not predict a lack of success, but low performing students were more likely than high performing students to register late. Tompkins and Williams (2015) conducted a review of the literature on late registration. In reviewing 32 studies on late registration, it was determined that only around 10% of students actually register late. Another key finding indicated that students who registered late were “typically satisfied with their late registration decisions” (Tompkins & Williams, 2015, p. 70).

At this point, there is a need to qualitatively explore the perceived effects of eliminating late registration through the experiences of college leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, and department chairs) and instructional staff (faculty and advisors). These participants were asked to share their experiences that served to compare and contrast what they have observed and experienced both before and after the elimination of late registration at their respective institutions. There was a need to examine how the elimination of late registration has affected student success and engagement, enrollment patterns, instructional strategies, and workload of campus community members, namely advisors.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover the intended and perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration at four community colleges located across the United States; colleges included were those that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years. Participants included faculty, staff, and college leaders.

This study began with the administration of a short, qualitative survey. The survey served two purposes: (1) to determine which faculty and staff to interview, (2) to collect data. College leaders were selected based on two criteria: 1) their leadership positions within the colleges; (2) their knowledge of the late registration policy change. Once selected, instructional staff and college leaders participated in semi-structured interviews. Documents explaining the elimination of the policy were requested and further informed how the policy was initiated, who did the initiating, and how leaders explained the policy elimination to different campus community members: faculty, staff, leaders, and students.

Research Foci

This qualitative study was guided by the following research foci:

1. What led to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 1a. What were the intended outcomes of the policy eliminating late registration at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
2. What are the perceptions of college administrators and instructional staff regarding the outcomes related to the elimination of late registration at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2a. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student success at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2b. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student engagement at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2c. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to enrollment patterns and marginalized populations at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2d. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to instructional strategies, particularly in the first week of classes, at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2e. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to the workload of advisors at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

Professional Significance

This study was a response to the body of mixed literature that has examined the phenomena of late registration mostly through a quantitative lens. Campus community members' perspectives are powerful. This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to understand the depth and meaning of the participants' experiences. The study presents the essence of the participants' lived experiences.

This study differentiated itself from previous studies in several ways. This study was qualitative in nature and explored the effects of eliminating late registration through the

experiences of campus leaders and instructional staff. Previous studies have assessed how late registration affects persistence, student success, and course completion, not how campus leaders and instructional staff perceive elimination of a late registration policy. In fact, only one study consulted, Weiss (1999), was qualitative in nature. The participants for this study were advisors. The current study describes the lived experiences of campus leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and registrars) and instructional staff (faculty and advisors). Previous studies have focused on one institution (Angelo, 1990; Bolt, 2013; Ford, Stahl, Walker, & Ford, 2008; Hill, 2011; Jones, 2015; Maalouf, 2012; Perkins, 2002; Shriner, 2014; Smith, Street, & Olivarez, 2002). The current study includes four community colleges located across the United States. These four community colleges vary in size, location, and demographics.

Results are of value to practitioners and community college leaders who have considered the elimination of the late registration option. The current study provides data that show the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the elimination of the late registration option for the community colleges included in the study with effectiveness being defined individually by each college. The current study also gives practitioners insight into several elements: perceived effect on student success and engagement, enrollment patterns, instructional strategies, and advisor workload, as noted in the research questions. The goal is to provide practitioners and leaders with information and data that can inform good policies.

Overview of the Methodology

The phenomenological approach was taken in exploring the perceived implications of the elimination of the late registration option at four community colleges. The four community colleges vary in size, location, and demographics and are situated in four states located across the United States. Phenomenology was chosen because it is a method in which the researcher

explores human experiences relative to a phenomenon as lived and described by participants (Creswell, 2009).

Data collection began in the fall of 2017. A qualitative survey, interviews, and the review of relevant documents generated the data. Data collection began via e-mail with survey administration. Survey participants (faculty and advisors) responded to short, qualitative questions. These surveys were only sent to faculty and advisors who meet the following qualifications: employed as faculty members/advisors in one of three departments (English, math, technical field) and employed before and after the elimination of late registration. All participants, including leaders, must have had points of comparison for elimination of late registration; they must have been able to speak about their experiences before and after the policy elimination.

Survey responses led to the administration of semi-structured interviews with survey-selected faculty and advisors and campus leaders. Semi-structured interviews were completed via telephone.

Data explication began early in the process and included the following steps: bracketing, engaging in the phenomenological reduction, listening to the interview for a sense of the whole, delineating units of meaning, assessing validity and reliability with fellow researchers, clustering units of relevant meaning, determining themes from clusters of meaning, writing summaries of each individual interview, member checking, modifying of themes and summary, identifying general and unique themes, and writing of a composite summary. The explication of qualitative data uses the constant comparative method in which the researcher moves back and forth between data collection and data explication; preliminary analysis drives further data collection

(Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Bracketing and the use of another researcher established trustworthiness of results.

Delimitations

Qualitative research limits this study in scope from a quantitative study. This study also only examined community colleges as opposed to community colleges and four-year institutions. This study was limited in time in that the four community colleges in this study have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years. Finally, this study did not include student perspectives.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Advisor workload** refers to the amount or quantity of work assigned to advisors. For this particular study, workload included any work associated with the late registration process (including paperwork, phone calls, e-mails, and advising meetings).
- **College leaders** include campus community members serving in leadership roles as registrars, department chairs, deans, vice presidents, and presidents.
- A **community college** is “a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 2).
- **Enrollment** is the total number of students registered for courses at the college, whether full-time (typically a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester) or part-time (less than 12 credit hours per semester).
- **ESL** is an acronym for English as a Second Language. ESL students are one of the largest growing student populations.
- **First generation** refers to students who are the first in their families to attend college.

- **Instructional staff** includes campus community members serving in roles as faculty members and as advisors. For the current study, the faculty members were also the advisors.
- **Instructional strategies** include techniques/methods used by instructors to achieve classroom goals (learning objectives). For the purposes of this study, instructional strategies referred to the techniques/methods used by instructors in the first week of instruction (Richa, 2014).
- **Late registration** has two definitions: (1) registration that occurs after the first day of the semester; (2) registration that occurs after the registration deadlines have passed (O'Banion, 2012). The community colleges included in the current study used both definitions of late registration.
- **Learning disabled** students have a diagnosed learning disability. Students in higher education must self-report a learning disability.
- **Marginalized populations** refers to student groups typically excluded from, or who find difficulty in, higher education, including ESL, first-generation, learning disabled, and non-traditional.
- **Non-traditional students** refers to students who are non-traditional, generally defined in terms of age, in higher education. Over 25 is an accepted age at which the “non-traditional” label is given.
- **Phenomenological research** is a “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a

method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive engagement” (Creswell, 2009, p. 187).

- **Student engagement** refers to the level of attention, curiosity, and interest that students exhibit when learning; engagement affects motivation, progress, and ultimately success (Abbott, 2014).
- **Student success** is “a favorable or desired outcome” (Cuseo, 2009). Desirable outcomes at the community college include student retention (retaining students from semester to semester), educational attainment (certificate, degree, transferability), and academic achievement (grades) (Cuseo, 2009).

Summary

Late registration is a policy under scrutiny at many community colleges. Some community college leaders maintain late registration is a policy that should remain as an option for students who may need the extra time to register for classes. Community college students, often from marginalized populations, may be working, have families, or be financially insecure. When these students find the time to register, they need to be welcomed, not turned away.

Other community college leaders are convinced that late registration is a hindrance to student success. Missing the first week of classes can be a factor that makes success difficult. The first week of classes is a time in which the syllabus is reviewed, major assignments are discussed, and connections between the instructor and the students are made. Because of these reasons and a plethora of studies that point to late registration as a hindrance to student success, some community colleges have eliminated late registration, considered eliminating late registration, or implemented fees to discourage late registration. This qualitative phenomenological study assessed the perceived effectiveness of eliminating the late registration

option, at four community colleges, located across the United States. Perspectives of instructional staff (faculty and advisors) and college leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and registrars) were included.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature, including a brief overview of the history of the community college, the community college's role today, the community college student and enrollment patterns, student success, advising, instructional strategies, and an overview of the literature related to late registration. Chapter Three includes a review of the methodology, organized into the following sections: research foci, research design, setting, participants, instrumentation, data collection, data explication, limitations, researcher bias, and summary. Chapter Four presents the findings, and Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community colleges implement and retract policies in an effort to increase student success, measured in terms of grades, persistence, graduation, and transferability. Allowing students to register late is a policy that some would argue is a barrier to student success (Hale & Bray, 2011; O'Banion, 2012; Smith, Street, & Olivarez, 2002); others argue that late registration is not a significant factor in student success or lack thereof (Zottos, 2005); still others find that late registration positively affects students' success (Angelo, 1990; Fobbs, 2015).

Research suggests that good educational practices matter, and the following are just some of the themes that have emerged: the capacity of an institution to place student learning and student success at the center of its culture, with high expectations and the necessary support; faculty-student engagement in educationally purposeful activities; the creation of clear pathways to success; assurance that gateway courses are not barriers to a discipline; and attention to advising, mentoring, and pedagogy. (Smith, 2011, p. 470)

Smith (2011) asserted sound educational practices matter. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perspectives of college leaders and instructional staff and their experiences relating to the elimination of late registration, an educational practice. This chapter provides a review of the literature related to community colleges, the policy of late registration, and student success. The chapter begins with a brief history of the community college; the events highlighted are of significance to the community college and its unique role in higher education. This is followed by overviews of student success, descriptions of student populations and enrollment patterns prevalent in the community college, and best practices in the first week of classes. The final sections concentrate on late registration: defining, describing,

and addressing advantages and disadvantages. The chapter concludes with summaries of significant studies on late registration and an overview of the current status of the policy at community colleges across the country. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the literature review organization. The current study aimed to address the gap in the literature.

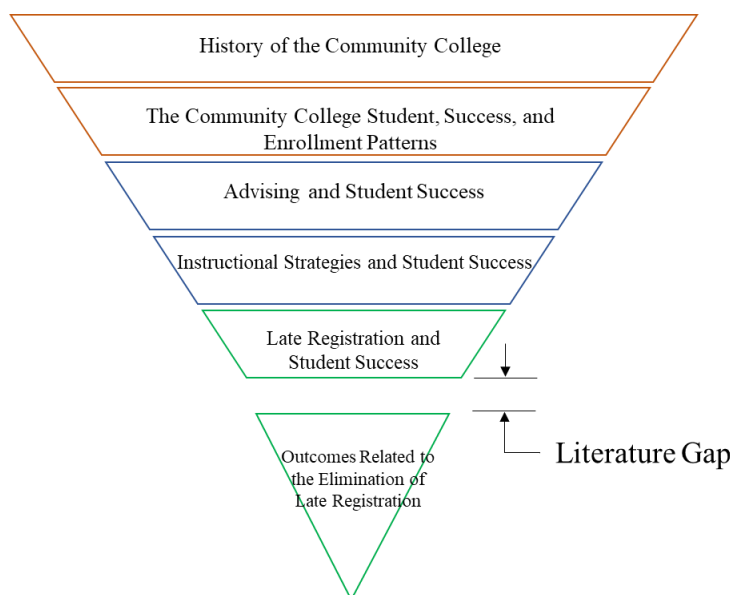


Figure 1. Literature Review Funnel

A Brief History of the Community College

Prior to the establishment of the community college, higher education had focused solely on scholarly endeavors; after its establishment, a venue now existed at which students could learn skills that would lead to the acquisition of jobs in which students could function effectively and contribute to the new economy (Meier, 2013). The first community college, née junior college, was founded in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois and was officially named Joliet Junior College in 1917 (Vaughan, 2006). At their conception, junior colleges served as an extension of the high school curriculum; as the number of junior colleges grew and developed, the curriculum grew and developed as well (Meier, 2013).

Joliet Junior College's establishment was possible because the United States was in the middle of the Second Industrial Revolution, a period of growth and change for the country. This period of growth and change included technological advances that changed the economy and society at large (Meier, 2013). Jobs changed, opportunities changed, and the junior college served to meet these new needs (Meier, 2013).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, was another significant event for community colleges (Vaughan, 2006). The GI Bill provided higher education opportunities for members of the population who had previously never considered it. This legislation provided access to education for 2.2 million service members (Mullin, Baime, & Honeyman, 2015). The G.I. Bill was also the first governmental attempt to provide financial aid, on a large scale, to students previously excluded from higher education due to cost (Vaughan, 2006).

In 1947, the Higher Education for American Democracy Report, commonly known as the Truman Commission Report, asserted that 49% of high school graduates could benefit from two years of education past high school (Vaughan, 2006). The Truman Commission Report emphasized the importance of community colleges building relationships with the public schools, being conveniently located for citizens, charging little to no tuition, serving as cultural centers, and offering continuing, technical, and general education to adults and more traditionally aged students (Vaughan, 2006).

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of major growth for the community college, with 457 public community colleges opening across the country (Vaughan, 2006). This growth was made possible, in part, by the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 which allocated more

federal support for education through grants and loans awarded to students based upon need (Vaughan, 2006).

In 1970, open admissions officially became standard practice for community colleges when the City University of New York (CUNY) schools ended a selective admissions process (Vaughan, 2006). CUNY now guaranteed admission to all high school graduates, not just those deemed “academically gifted” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 44). This led not only to enrollment increases but also to an increase in offerings of developmental programs and the opening of community colleges in geographic areas that were struggling economically (Vaughan, 2006).

In 1972, the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (later named the Pell Grant) was established (Vaughan, 2006). Eligibility for the Pell Grant is based upon the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) need analysis calculations. The “need analysis system” is designed to decrease the amount awarded as family income increases (Goldstein, 2005, p. 51). The actual amount awarded is calculated based on the total costs of attendance (including tuition, books, transportation, and living expenses) minus the Expected Family Contribution (Goldstein, 2005).

The Community-Based Job Training Grant Program was created in 2004 (Vaughan, 2006). Initiated by the Department of Labor, the grant program was created to “enhance the ability of community colleges to deliver high-quality job training programs in high-demand fields” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 48).

In 2015, the Obama Administration proposed a grant program entitled America’s College Promise. The plan was modeled after the Tennessee Promise, a program that covers all public community college tuition and fees not covered by federal grants. Participation requires full-time enrollment, maintenance of a 2.0 GPA, acquisition of a mentor, and community service

hours (Fain, 2015). America's College Promise, similarly, would cover approximately 75% of the "average cost of community college" (Fain, 2015, p. 1) and participation would require maintenance of a 2.5 GPA and "half-time" enrollment (Fain, 2015, p.1).

Community colleges are not considered traditional in enrollment, course offerings, or frequency of change. The history presented demonstrates a willingness on the part of community colleges and their leaders to morph into what the geographical regions, industries, and most importantly, students, need. Levin (1998) noted "...community colleges are non-traditional or untraditional: they do not even adhere to their own traditions. They make and remake themselves" (p.2). The next section discusses the community college today and this non-traditional role in higher education.

The Community College's Role Today

The community college has evolved since its inception, and community colleges are increasingly the focus of state and national attention with programs like the Tennessee Promise and proposed national legislation like America's College Promise (Fain, 2015). A community college fills a unique niche in higher education in that it is poised to be "an institution which undertakes everything not being taken care of elsewhere...a truly comprehensive institution" (Meier, 2013, p. 15).

In *America's Broken Promise*, Marti (2016) advocated for the community college to become more student centered. This text suggested that a transformative change is necessary for the community college to serve its student population effectively. Marti (2016) asserted the importance of "recognizing the singularity of the students [served] and the particular (and particularized) teaching strategies they require to succeed" (p. 81). Suggested transformative changes included redesigning remedial education, "excellent execution of entry-level services"

(Marti, 2016, p. 100) including placement testing and advising, “intrusive intervention” (Marti, 2016, p. 109) focusing on advisement that continuously monitors students and their progression towards their goals, establishment of community through cohort models and learning communities, and the incorporation of high-impact practices including not only community building but also service learning and first-year seminars (Marti, 2016).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) supported these transformative changes. In an article entitled “A Shared Vision for Student Success,” McNair, Couturier, and Christian (2015), all representing the AAC&U, advocated for the use of high-impact practices (HIPs), particularly in community colleges. “Developing a Community College Student Roadmap: From Entrance to Engagement in Educational Achievement and Success” is a project developed by the AAC&U and dedicated to the idea that student engagement begins at the student’s entrance and involves teaching students how to become “active partners in their own quest for educational success” (McNair, Couturier, & Christian, 2015, p. 6). HIPs are ideal for community college students in that they allow students to “reflect on and make connections between such disparate experiences as internships, general education courses, service and community learning projects, and writing intensive courses” (McNair, Couturier, & Christian, 2015, p. 7).

The American Association of Community Colleges’ Report (2012) also noted a disconnect between a growth in enrollment and support for the growth and implementation of services that promote student success for all students. The AACC’s Report (2012) described a new “vision” (p. x) for the community college that consisted of the Three R’s: “Redesign Students’ Educational Experiences, Reinvent Institutional Roles, and Reset the System” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. x). The first R, Redesign Students’

Educational Experiences, is recognized through the reformation of developmental education (with academic pathways and co-requisite courses), implementing tutoring resources, offering assistance through academic resource centers, requiring the completion of student success courses and advisement, among others (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Roueche & Roueche, 1994). The second R, Reinvent Institutional Roles, targets a refocusing of the mission and a redefinition of institutional roles to “meet 21st century education and employment needs” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. x). The third R, Reset the System, specifically mentions the implementation of “policies and practices that promote rigor, transparency, and accountability for results in community colleges” (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. x).

Student Success

The community college helps students to succeed in many measurable ways: transfer to a four-year institution, vocational education, developmental education, and development for the community and its professions (Bolt, 2013; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Kasper, 2003). Success in these areas is determined by individual students and their circumstances. Some students succeed, and some students fail to succeed.

When considering failure to succeed, it is important to note the differences between involuntary and voluntary dropouts. Noel, Levitz, Saluri and Associates (1986) asserted that 15% of students who drop out are involuntary, dismissed due to academic failure or some kind of violation of institutional rules and regulations. Voluntary departures account for the remaining 85% of student dropouts (Noel et al., 1986). Voluntary dropouts leave the college for a multitude of reasons including financial difficulties, a lack of readiness for the college environment, conflicts with work schedules, complications with family, absence of career goals,

academic failures combined with poor study skills, a lack of commitment to the college environment, and a lack of support from college support services (Drew, 1990). Weiss (1999) asserted that another factor for the voluntary dropout is the student's own "cost-benefit analysis" (p. 28). These students leave the community college because "they are not receiving the desired return for their educational investment" (Weiss, 1999, p. 28).

Tinto's Model of Attrition. Tinto (1975) asserted that student success in college, or lack thereof, is in part determined by characteristics that are established prior to admission. These pre-entry characteristics include family background, skill and ability levels, and prior schooling experiences. These experiences affect a student's goals and level of commitment in college (Weiss, 1999). Although academic preparedness, namely, certainly is a factor in success, Tinto (1975) identifies intention and commitment to educational goals as the two most important factors in student retention and eventual success. Weiss (1999) suggested that community college students' levels of commitment, or lack thereof, can be evident in that students "can apply, be admitted, and register the day classes begin 'without any forethought or preparation'" (Weiss, 1999, p.27). Weiss (1999) is suggesting that intention and commitment to educational goals require some planning. Students who apply and register the day classes begin, as is possible in an open admissions community college that allows late registration, are not as committed to their education as those students who register early and plan ahead (Weiss, 1999).

The Community College Student

As an open-admissions institution, the community college attracts all types of students, from those seeking transfer to a four-year institution to those seeking workforce training (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). The community college is also the institution that typically accepts those students who previously were marginalized or not

accepted in four-year institutions (American Association of Community College, 2012). Those student populations fall into groups including first-generation, ESL, learning-disabled, and non-traditional (Hollins & Foley, 2013; Renn & Reason, 2013; Shi & Steen, 2012).

First-Generation Students. Making up approximately 43% of all first-year college students (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Choy, 2001), first-generation students are defined as having parents (or guardians) who do not have bachelor's degrees. The term first-generation can be taken further and be defined as a student having parents (or guardians) who possess only a high school diploma and never attempted a college degree, neither two nor four-year (Renn & Reason, 2013). Regardless of either formal definition, many first-generation students often find it difficult to transition from high school to college; they are also often less inclined to “engage in activities believed to support academic success and persistence” (Renn & Reason, 2013, p.17). The transition to higher education can be more difficult for these students because of a lack of assistance, a lack of feeling supported, and a lack of a sense of belonging to the college attended (Choy, 2011; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008; Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, Serrata, 2016).

First-generation students, as the label implies, are the first from their families to attend a college or university. These students do not have a built-in, family support system to guide them through all that higher education entails. Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, and Serrata (2016) completed three qualitative studies on first-generation students. Student participants reported a difficulty in transitioning to the “culture of academia” (p. 36). These students indicated feeling “lost and at times marginalized” (p. 37) due to their inexperience with the unspoken rules of higher education (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins, & Serrata, 2016). Academic advisors and college administrators are responsible for assisting these students as they navigate their ways

through higher education (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008; Sweeker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013; Vander Schee, 2007; Ward, Seigel, & Davenport, 2012).

English as a Second Language Students. English as a second language students (ESL) are those for whom English is not their native, or first, language. Other terms used to describe this group of students, and used interchangeably, are ELL (English Language Learners) and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). ESL student numbers are increasing rapidly due to a change in demographics in the United States. In fact, ESL students represent the fastest growing population in K-12 schools (Shi & Steen, 2012). Immigrants learning English as a second language attend community colleges in larger numbers than any other institutions of higher education (Teranshi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). According to Jehangir (2010), ESL students, particularly those 30 years of age and older, experience high attrition rates and low transfer rates to four-year institutions, presumably due to a lack of academic preparation for college-level work. Almon (2010) further asserted that older immigrant ESL students, when compared with non-ESL, non-traditional students, have the lowest first-semester GPAs, complete the fewest numbers of semesters, and are four times less likely to graduate.

Learning Disabled Students. Students with learning disabilities are another group with multiple definitions; however, a common learning disability for students includes reading comprehension. This broad strand can also include “difficulty processing language, misunderstanding of visual sensations and use of vision, e.g. reversal of letters... (while other difficulties include) copying accurately, and difficulty understanding spoken language” (Hollins & Foley, 2013, p. 609). Further adding to the complications for students with learning disabilities is the fact that these students must self-identify in order to receive services.

Additionally, accommodations for students with learning disabilities in higher education are assessed and provided based upon supporting documentation (Sparks & Lovett, 2014).

Unfortunately, the documentation that is satisfactory in a student's K-12 education is "not always sufficient" to guarantee access to services in higher education. This is described as the "documentation disconnect" (Gormley, Hughes, Block, & Lendmann, 2005; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2007; Sitlington & Payne, 2004). This disconnect is largely explained by the differing laws that govern K-12 education and higher education (Reilly & Davis, 2005). K-12 students with learning disabilities receive services based upon definitions of learning disabilities as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA defines these disabilities "in terms of deficits in basic psychological processes" (Sparks & Lovett, 2014, p. 54). Utilizing the parameters set by the IDEA, individual states and school districts have the freedom to develop identification criteria using broader guidelines. Once students move into higher education, the IDEA is no longer applicable. Students with learning disabilities in higher education are now only covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which stipulates that a disability include a "substantial limitation in one or more major life activities" (Sparks & Lovett, 2014, p. 54) when compared with others. Therefore, a student could qualify for services under the IDEA in K-12 but not qualify for services under the ADA. Because of this discrepancy, many higher education institutions create their own documentation standards for learning disabled students. These standards often include that the documentation be: recent (within three to five years), based upon recommendations and evaluations by a "qualified professional" (Sparks & Lovett, 2014, p. 55), include a history of the disability, include observations (both formal and informal), and include standardized test results (Sparks & Lovett, 2014).

Non-traditional Students. A significant proportion of community college students are non-traditional (25 years of age and older), have families, and are students on a part-time basis (Bean & Metzner, 1985). According to Bean and Metzner (1985), these students do not fit into Tinto's Model of Attrition (1975) and instead are more affected by environmental factors than by a failure to integrate into the academic environment. Environmental factors include "finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity to transfer" (Weiss, 1999, p. 29). These factors affect non-traditional students' abilities to immerse themselves in their education. As Weiss (1999) posited, these students "do not have the luxury of being immersed intellectually, emotionally, or physically in the academic environment" (p. 26).

Weiss (1999) also asserted that even students characterized as traditional in the community college are in fact non-traditional due to age, "life situation" (p. 26), or a combination of the two. Even students who are traditional by age, attending directly after graduation from high school, are often obligated as single parents or have financial burdens.

Enrollment Patterns of Community College Students

A nationwide decline in community college enrollment began in 2011, especially with older, non-traditional students, and one explanation for this decline is an improving economy (Juszkiewicz, 2016). Enrollment in higher education as a whole was at its peak in the fall of 2010, in the middle of the recession (Juszkiewicz, 2016). Community college students, generally speaking, attend college on a more erratic basis than students at four-year institutions and subsequently vary in the rate at which they accumulate college credits (Crosta, 2014; Horn & Nevill, 2006). This can be explained by their unique circumstances, including responsibilities to family, employment, financial hurdles, and academic unpreparedness (Crosta, 2014).

Crosta (2014) completed a study utilizing data on two cohorts of students at five colleges in one state; findings revealed a “diversity of enrollment patterns in terms of intensity and continuity that are generated by community college students along their educational pathways” (p. 119). ESL and Adult Basic Education and Graduate Equivalency Degree (ABE/GED) students were not included in this study. Crosta (2014) found community college students presented a variety of enrollment patterns due to intermittent enrollment and alternating between full and part-time statuses; 4,585 distinct patterns were discovered for 14,429 students. An additional finding was that 43% of students switch between full and part time enrollment at least once (Crosta, 2014). Only 1.2% of community college students followed the traditional pattern of fall, spring, fall, spring with full-time enrollment in each term, and only 3.5% of students earned an associate’s degree in two years (Crosta, 2014). Crosta (2014) asserted the enrollment decisions community college students make are “the result of choices made at different points in time under different constraints” (p. 136). Additionally, according to Crosta (2014), the switching between full and part time statuses is not random but rational and based on the individual’s unique circumstance, and the “continuity of enrollment and full-time enrollment whenever possible are keys to community college success” (p. 139).

Advising, Student Success, and Registration

Advising processes, and returning student perceptions of advisors and their lack of organization, result in low student satisfaction (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Keup & Stolzenberg, 2004). Generally speaking, community colleges have a limited orientation process (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). Registration typically occurs after placement testing; students are often rushed through the process, part-time advisors are often hired to help with busy registration periods, and academic faculty are recruited to assist (Bailey, Jaggars, &

Jenkins, 2015). Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) stated that advisors working on a part-time basis “tend to be unfamiliar with the college’s larger programs and course offerings, and academic faculty tend to be familiar only with their own” (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p. 55). All of these aspects of the advising process, from a feeling of being rushed through the process to part-time, less-familiar advisors leading students through the process, can lead to low student satisfaction.

According to Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015), the typical advising session lasts only 10-15 minutes during the busiest times in the semester. This time constrained session does not allow for discussions about students’ interests, strengths and weaknesses, transfer options, or the establishment of a plan of action for success (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). For example, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) reported that only 38% of students indicated receiving guidance from an advisor in setting academic goals or creating a plan of action for goal achievement (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015).

Registration provides advisors with little opportunity to learn about students, other than the information that is on a computer screen which typically includes surface level information including placement test scores and high school GPA. Students, in turn, learn little about the college and the opportunities for transfer to a four-year college or university or career options based upon major and course selection. Advisors then assign classes with little explanation of relevance (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015).

One of the reasons late registration may occur is a possible expectation, on the returning student’s part, of a poorly organized advising session. Goomas (2012) researched ways to improve the advising experience for students through the implementation of an in-class academic advising process. This pilot study examined data acquired through informal interviews,

comments, and feedback from the intervention group. Findings indicated the intervention (in-class advising) aided students in identifying future goals with more focus and precision than previously experienced in a traditional advising session. In-class advising was also more efficient in relation to time as students reported shorter wait times (Goomas, 2012).

Community colleges that have attempted to remedy low student satisfaction with advising processes have implemented what is known as intrusive advising (Longwell-Grice, et al., 2016). Intrusive advising is described as advising that is geared towards students labeled as at-risk, including first-generation, ESL, and those with learning disabilities. Goals of intrusive advising include the facilitation of decision making that is informed and responsible; an increase in involvement in campus activities; and an increase in the likelihood of academic success (Longwell-Grice, et al., 2016).

D'Amico, Morgan, and Rutherford (2011) asserted early completion of pre-enrollment activities (including application for admission, submission of FAFSA, completion of placement test(s), and registration) would be beneficial for students and staff. Evenly distributing these activities over a longer period of time would lessen the workload of staff members, including advisors, who are often bogged down with students at the "last minute" (D'Amico, Morgan, & Rutherford, 2011, p. 36). This even distribution of activities would likely improve the quality of the service students receive (D'Amico, Morgan, & Rutherford, 2011).

Instructional Strategies and Student Success

Research on faculty-utilized best practices for the first day of class has indicated the first class should be used for five major goals: "(a) grab the students' attention, (b) introduce the instructor, (c) communicate the course objectives, (d) set a positive tone or atmosphere for the class, and (e) take care of administrative details" (Davis, 1993; Johnson, 1995; Kreizinger, 2006;

McKeachie & Svincki, 2006; Nilson, 1998 as cited in Iannarelli, Bardsley, & Foote, 2010).

Iannarelli, et al. (2010) asserted attention should be grabbed on the first day of class through discussion, icebreakers, and the setting of high expectations (Iannarelli, et al., 2010). O'Banion and Wilson (2013) further explained the importance of the first-class sessions as the "only times" (p. 5) at-risk students are provided with the opportunity to become truly engaged with the class, the content, the instructor, and classmates. These connections "encourage persistence and success" (O'Banion, 2013, p. 5).

The introduction of the instructor is paramount for the first day. The instructor establishes teaching style and expectations. The instructor can accomplish this by engaging students with the material and setting expectations for quality of work from day one (Iannarelli, et al., 2010). Course objectives are important as well. Students should know from the very first day what it is the instructor will be teaching and what the students should have learned by the end of the semester (Iannarelli, et al., 2010). The first day sets the tone for the semester. Setting the tone/atmosphere for the class is also a necessary first day task with building classroom community through ice breakers and the above explained instructor introduction. Instructors can use this first day to express a desire, on the instructor's part, for students to be successful. An explanation of office hours and availability reinforces instructor concern for student success (Iannarelli, et al., 2010).

Going over the syllabus is also important, but that does not mean the instructor should read the syllabus to the class; instead, the instructor can explain the most important parts, ask for questions, and discuss assignments (Iannarelli, et al., 2010). Faculty members who are labeled by their respective institutions as exemplary utilize the syllabus review as a first-day best practice. They explain the major assignments and their due dates, clarify classroom expectations, and

explain the importance of the calendar, the required materials, and the policies on late work (Iannarelli, et al., 2010).

Late Registration

Each community college has its own, unique definition of late registration; however, late registration typically consists of the core ideas of one of the following: (1) registration that occurs after a course or courses have begun; (2) registration that occurs after the registration deadlines have passed (O'Banion, 2007; Shriner, 2014). Late registration is a period, often the first week of a 16-week semester, in which students register for classes or change classes for a variety of reasons (more convenient times, more courses related to majors, and teachers with better reputations) (O'Banion, 2007). Many community colleges that have eliminated late registration have instead moved it back a week. Instead of being allowed to change classes during the first week of the semester, students are allowed to do the same things the week before classes begin. Often accompanying an elimination of late registration is a name change from "late registration" to "on-time registration." Students attempting to register during the first week of classes are instead registered for 12-week courses which begin four weeks into the traditional 16-week semester. O'Banion (2012), an outspoken advocate for the elimination of late registration, argued late registration is a policy that creates "the illusion that they [students] do not have to show up on time or care about their decisions" (p. 28). Eliminating late registration, then, enforces the idea that deadlines are important and adherence to them is mandatory.

Advantages of Late Registration. The biggest advantage of allowing late registration is convenience for students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Gurantz, 2013; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amin, & Person, 2006; Scott-Clayton, 2011). According to Gurantz (2013), students who are unfamiliar with how the college system works are part-time, limited in time due to family obligations/

employment, and hesitant to even make the first step towards registering. These are student groups who would be negatively affected by the elimination of the late registration option. These are all student groups who are prevalent at the community college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Rosenbaum, et al., 2006; Scott-Clayton, 2011).

Late registration also allows for the increase in full time equivalent (FTE) students. When students are allowed to register the first week of classes, enrollment numbers increase. Enforcing registration deadlines puts the number of FTEs (full-time equivalencies) at risk of decreasing. FTEs are a significant factor in fiscal support for individual institutions (Wang & Pilarzyk, 2007). Simply put, the more students enrolled, the more money the college receives (O'Banion, 2007).

Disadvantages of Late Registration. O'Banion (2007, 2012) and O'Banion and Wilson (2013) stated the biggest problem with late registration is that it negatively affects the most at-risk students. These students, including first-generation, ESL, learning disabled, and non-traditional students, register late "at a time when the system is overloaded and least capable of meeting their needs" (O'Banion, 2012, p. 29). O'Banion (2012) has highlighted a major issue with late registration and the first week of classes; this is a very busy time for advisors, faculty members, and financial aid officers. A student who registers late does not receive the best possible service (O'Banion, 2012). A second concern is related to financial aid. If students register for classes late, they are also more likely to submit financial aid documents late, all of which affects the ability to pay the balances associated with tuition, room and board, and textbooks (Wang & Pilarzyk, 2007). Federal Student Aid provides more than \$120 billion in grants, loans, and work study opportunities each year for more than 13 million students in higher education across the United States (Federal Student Aid, 2017). Data provided by the U.S.

Department of Education (2017) revealed that 79% of community college students were awarded financial aid (Federal Student Aid, 2017). With this many students relying on financial aid dollars, the importance of late submission of these documents cannot be overlooked nor can the connection with registration. Scholars have acknowledged that the elimination of late registration is not an easy decision (Fain, 2014; O'Banion, 2012). The open access designation is the hallmark of the community college. Turning students away does not align with this commitment (Fain, 2014).

Late registration is a policy that seems to be eliminated haphazardly and without in-depth analysis of why elimination might be necessary and how elimination might affect students. Bahr, Gross, Slay, and Christensen (2015) advise that all policies, including late registration, “must be considered and deliberated carefully and driven by the same empirically based ‘culture of inquiry’ that has been advocated for other aspects of institutional policy and practice that influence students’ progress and achievement” (p. 362). Pros and cons need to be weighed, and above all, the students and their success need to be carefully considered (Bahr, Gross, Slay, & Christensen, 2015).

Significant Studies

A number of studies have examined the effects of late registration. Strategies utilized to conduct this review of studies of late registration included: (1) key word searches (e.g. late registration, late registration in higher education, late registration in the community college, late registration and student success) using EBSCOhost databases, including ERIC and Education Research Complete, and Google Scholar, (2) key word searches using the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database, and (3) reference lists in sources identified using the previous two methods. The following sections present the research conducted to date on late registration

and is organized into the following sections: positive effects, neither positive nor negative effects, and negative effects. The largest section, negative effects, is broken down further into studies that looked at late registration and its relation to student characteristics, persistence, and course success. The final section provides information on the current status of late registration at community colleges across the country.

Positive Effects. In a study of approximately 39,000 community colleges students and their registration habits, Angelo (1990) specifically analyzed data to discover whether there was an appreciable difference in persistence and achievement between students who registered on time and students who registered late. Results indicated those students who registered late were more likely to complete courses than those who registered on time. In relation to achievement, results indicated no difference of significance between on-time and late registrants.

In an attempt to determine the effects of two factors related to late registration, Fobbs (2015) analyzed whether there was an impact on the volume of late registrants in an extended registration period (from 60 to 120 days) and whether GPAs were positively affected by a decrease in late registrants. For the first purpose, data indicated no relationship between the number of late registrants and an extended registration period. For the second purpose, data indicated that within the extended registration period, GPAs increased by 9.2% (Fobbs, 2015).

Neither Positive nor Negative Effects. Perkins (2002) researched the relationships between registration time and first-time student success (defined as retention, course success, and semester GPA). For this case study, late registration was defined as registration occurring sometime during the first week of instruction (Perkins, 2002). On-time registration occurred prior to the start of the first week. Chi-squared analyses indicated that students who registered late were more likely to be men and enrolled part-time. Pearson's correlation analyses did not

find significant relationships between late registration and semester GPA, late registration and course success, or late registration and retention (from fall to spring); however, the three academic outcomes (GPA, course success, and retention), together, were positively correlated (Perkins, 2002).

Utilizing a stratified random sample of students from nine campuses of a large community college, Zottos (2005) studied late registration by looking specifically at (1) late registration and student characteristics; (2) late registration and student success (GPA and course completion); and (3) whether late registration behaviors could predict student success (GPA and course completion). He found gender, ethnicity, high school GPA, and English as native language related to late registration; more specifically, white females were less likely to register late, the higher the high school GPA, the less likely a student was to register late, and students who speak English as a second language were more likely to register late. African American males were also more likely to register late. No significant results were found in GPA or course completion between students tending to register late and students tending to register on-time. Finally, student characteristics that predicted college GPA and successful course completion were age, ethnicity, gender, high school GPA, and a sense of belonging. Zottos's major conclusion was that late registration does not predict a lack of success; however, low performing students were more likely than high performing students to register late.

Using a mixed methods research design, Keck (2007) explored, the relationship between late registration policies at a community college, the effects of the policy on student success and persistence, and the student perspectives of the policy. Significant findings included: (1) Students who registered on time were more likely to complete the course successfully. Students reported a belief that late registration leads to missing important first day information and a

feeling of being rushed and ill-prepared to begin the course. (2) The majority of students who registered late were successful in the course, and these students were satisfied with their performance and outcome. Students reported a belief that individual backgrounds, strengths, academic abilities, and determination to complete a course are better predictors of success (than whether or not they register late). (3) Subject area of the course had an impact on whether or not a course was successfully completed if the student registered late; students reported a reluctance to register late for a course they had no experience with.

Negative Effects. Advocates for the abolishment of late registration argue that doing so increases the likelihood of student persistence and success (O'Banion, 2007; O'Banion, 2012; O'Banion & Wilson, 2013; Roueche & Roueche, 1994). Roueche and Roueche (1994) asserted students who enroll late in one or more classes are more likely to withdraw or fail than those students who register on time. O'Banion has repeatedly called for an end to late registration (O'Banion, 2007; O'Banion, 2012; O'Banion & Wilson, 2013). Most recently, O'Banion and Wilson (2013) assessed results from a survey on late registration by the League for Innovation in the Community College. The survey was conducted in 2012 and was sent to community college CEOs who are members of the League's Alliance. Of the respondents, 33% indicated late registration was no longer allowed on their respective campuses; 36% indicated an intent to consider elimination; and 13% indicated no plans to eliminate late registration (O'Banion & Wilson, 2013). O'Banion and Wilson (2013) boldly asserted "late registration is on the decline and may soon be eliminated in a majority of the nation's colleges" (p. 1). Additionally, a study conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2012) presented data revealing late registration correlated with students having lower grades, lower completion rates, and lower persistence to the following term.

Because the volume of studies reporting negative effects is the largest of the three categories (positive, neither positive nor negative, and negative), the following sections focus on the major findings of studies on late registration and its negative effects. The first section focuses on studies that highlighted student characteristics that seem to be predictors of registering late. While these are not necessarily negative effects of late registration, the research presented indicates that late registration negatively affects these students. The second section focuses on studies that found a negative correlation between registering late and persistence. The third and final section focuses on studies that reveal a negative correlation between registering late and course success, defined in terms of overall GPA and grade attainment in individual courses.

Student Characteristics. Research has shown certain student populations are more likely to register late: non-traditional students (Belcher & Patterson, 1990; Cornille, 2009; Freer-Weiss, 2004; Johnston, 2006; Mendiola-Perez, 2004; Summers, 2000), part-time students (Belcher & Patterson, 1990; Cornille, 2009), and first-generation students (Weiss, 1999) are three of those populations. As discussed previously, these are student populations who find higher education to be a challenge; these are also populations that frequently enroll at the community college. Significant studies revealing student populations more likely to register late are summarized below.

Belcher and Patterson (1990) studied late registration at Miami-Dade Community College to assess the volume of students registering late, the demographics of these students, the reasons why they registered late, and to discover whether or not a change in policy (the addition of a fee for registering late and eventual elimination) would change students' behaviors in regards to registration. Late registration was divided into two periods: the week prior to the

beginning of classes and the first day of classes. The latter was eventually decided upon by the college as the time at which late fees would be assessed. Major findings indicated students registering late were largely non-degree seeking, part-time, African American, non-traditional, and male (Belcher & Patterson, 1990). Students who registered late indicated their reasons for registering late included: a last-minute decision to attend (26%), a recent arrival into the Miami area (17%), and procrastination (15%) (Belcher & Patterson, 1990).

Weiss (1999) completed a qualitative study in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 advisors at three community colleges. These advisors frequently advised “last minute” registrants; “last minute” is defined as a few days before the quarter begins (p. 29). Weiss (1999) found some of the late-admitted students were not cognizant of the fact that they were in fact late in the process. Many of the late-admitted students were first-generation students who did not have a support system to provide guidance on the logistics of college life from registration to class attendance to study skills (Weiss, 1999). Weiss (1999) noted students who are registering late are “the neediest of all students, but they are admitted at a time when the system is the most over-loaded and least capable of meeting their needs” (p. 47).

Maalouf (2012) investigated, in part, whether there was a statistical relationship between community college student demographics and registration habits, outcomes (defined as course grade), and retention (defined as returning the subsequent semester). For registration habits, there were two designations: regular (defined as registration prior to the first day of class) and late (defined as registration on or after the first day of class). Findings indicated that the following student groups were more likely to register late: non-traditional, males, students of color, and un-decided majors. Also discussed were possible explanations for late registration, including making a late decision to attend college, a hold up with financial aid document

processing, a lack of understanding regarding the academic calendar, procrastination, and obligations to family, among others (Maalouf, 2012).

Tompkins, Williams, and Pribesh (2018) examined late registering students' success in online and face-to-face classroom environments. Using data from Virginia's Community College System, the researchers predict effects of late registration on student success, namely for students who are attending college for the first time. The findings indicated late registration negatively affected student success, especially those students with other success impeding characteristics. Other findings indicated a positive correlation between course success and attending classes in a face-to-face environment as well as the completion of a course emphasizing skills for success in college.

Persistence. Smith, Street, and Olivarez (2002) analyzed data with two purposes in mind: (1) to determine any differences between students and their registration habits (early, regular, and late); (2) to suggest best policies and practices in relation to late registration to improve student success. Early registration for the fall took place over a five-day period in the spring; regular registration took place over a three-day period immediately prior to the beginning of classes; late registration took place over an eight day period beginning the day after classes began. Students registering late paid a ten dollar fee. Data indicated, for both new and returning students, that students who registered late (35% new; 42% returning) were less likely to persist to the next semester than those students who registered during early (80% returning) or regular (80% new; 64% regular) registration (Smith, Street, & Olivarez, 2002).

D'Amico, Morgan, and Rutherford (2011) researched the timing of pre-enrollment activities (applying for admission, submitting the FAFSA, completing placement test(s), and registering for first courses) and student success. Success for this study was defined as

“persisting to the second or third year of college, completing a program, or transferring to another institution” (D’Amico, Morgan, & Rutherford, 2011, p. 33). Analyzing the data utilizing a Cox Proportional-Hazards Regression, results indicated a positive correlation between early completion of all pre-enrollment activities and a higher likelihood to persist (D’Amico, Morgan, & Rutherford, 2011).

Jones (2015) studied the effects of late registration on student success (defined in terms of GPA, withdrawal rates, and persistence) at a rural Mississippi community college. For the purposes of this study, late registration was defined as enrolling on or after the first day of class; on-time registration was defined as registration for classes prior to the first day. Findings related to persistence indicated that 69% of students who registered on-time persisted to the following semester while 30% of students who registered late persisted to the following semester (Jones, 2015).

Course Success. Ford, Stahl, Walker, and Ford (2008) investigated whether there is a connection between early registration and class performance (as determined by final grade in an undergraduate psychology course). Registration date and time were collected for all students. Results indicated the later a student registered, the lower the student’s grade. Ford, Stahl, Walker, and Ford (2008) also discovered the higher performing the student, the earlier that student registered for classes.

Safer (2009) looked at how registration impacts final grades in mathematics courses (at all academic levels). Registration was broken into two categories: late (defined as registering on or after the first day of class) or on-time (defined as registering prior to the first day of class). Other factors in the study were academic level, large or small lecture sections, and gender (Safer, 2009). Late registrants’ average grades were compared with average grades of students who did

not register late; withdrawal rates were also compared for the two groups. Findings indicated a “very significant positive effect” (Safer, 2009, p. 1382) of on-time registration on class grade. Furthermore, average grades of students registering late were -0.18 grade points lower when compared with students registering on-time (Safer, 2009).

Hale and Bray (2011) researched how registration impacts student success. They divided registration into three categories: early, regular, and late. A limitation of this study was defining these three categories. Hale and Bray (2011) stated that at the beginning of their study, they contacted the participating institutions to ensure three registration times (early, regular, and late) were provided. After data collection, one of the institutions reported only having two registration periods: regular and late. They measured student success in terms of grades and course completion. The researchers analyzed data from three community colleges in Mississippi; all three were in rural communities with similar student demographics. The results indicated there was a correlation between registration time and semester grades; students registering during early and regular registration periods had higher semester grades than those students registering during the late registration period (Hale & Bray, 2011).

Hill (2011) investigated success and completion rates of late registrants. Students were sorted into two groups: late registrants (students registering on or after the first day of classes) and timely registrants (students registering before the first day of classes). When looking at all subjects, timely registrants succeeded (with a grade of A, B, C, or P (pass)) at a rate of 82.8% while late registrants succeeded (with a grade of A, B, C, or P) at a rate of 78.3%; when looking at mathematics specifically, timely registrants succeeded (with a grade of A, B, C, or P) at a rate of 77%, and late registrants succeeded (with a grade of A, B, C, or P) at a rate of 69.9% (Hill, 2011).

Bolt (2013) conducted a case study reviewing the performance of new, first-year students; the researcher compared 75 new freshmen who registered early with 75 new freshmen who registered late for the fall 2008 semester. Early registration was broken into three periods: a two-day period in the previous semester, a four-day period in the early summer, and a three-day period in the late summer. Late registration was broken into one ten-day period. A weakness of this study is that the date of the first day of classes is not revealed; therefore, it is not known where the first day of classes falls in relation to the ten-day, late registration period. Results indicated those who registered early had an average cumulative GPA of 2.37 compared with an average cumulative GPA of 2.08 for those who registered late (Bolt, 2013).

Shriner (2014) analyzed data from the fall semester at a Florida community college to determine the effects of late registration on student success and achievement. Two periods of registration were included: early and late. Early registration was defined as registering any time before the first day of class; late registration was defined as registering during the first week of classes (Shriner, 2014). Student success for this study was evaluated in terms of GPA, hours earned, and retention (Shriner, 2014). Findings indicated “students who registered late had lower average GPAs, earned fewer credits, and were less likely to return the following semester” (Shriner, 2014, p. 590). Also noteworthy is the presence of a late registration fee; students registering late were required to pay a \$25 fee (Shriner, 2014).

Current Status. Currently, many community colleges have eliminated registration past the first meeting of the class. Late registration still exists, but registering late now means registering before classes have begun but after the regular registration period has passed. Sinclair Community College (SCC) in Dayton, Ohio and Valencia College in Orlando, Florida have both enforced this policy. Dunn and Mays (2004) found that, contrary to perceptions of

connections between eliminating late registration and enrollment numbers, enrollment went up, not down once late registration was eliminated at SCC. “During spring, headcount increased 2.6% and FTE increased 3.9%; in fall 2003, 2.9% increase in headcount and 4.7% increase in FTE from the previous fall quarter” (Dunn & Mays, 2004, p.4). Dunn and Mays (2004) also found that persistence increased, especially for new degree/certificate seeking students at a rate of 7.3%. Leaders at Valencia College have named their initiative “Start Right.” This initiative aims for students to start their college careers in positive ways. This includes a two-part orientation; the first part is completed online and features assessments, plans of study, and financial aid documents. Part Two is on-campus and focuses on advising, on-time registration, a campus tour, and a general orientation to life and study at Valencia. On-time registration requires that students register prior to the beginning of classes and during the regular registration period.

Prince George’s Community College in Largo, Maryland eliminated late registration in 2012. The college implemented a new registration procedure requiring students to register and pay for courses by 11:59 PM the evening before classes begin. Students who do not pay are deregistered (Achieving the Dream, 2017). This policy change assured that faculty have accurate rosters the day classes begin; these accurate rosters have given faculty members more time to teach and engage with students from the first day of class. Data provided by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (2014) indicated this policy has resulted in increased student engagement (as measured by items on the CCSSE related to student-faculty interaction and academic rigor) since its implementation in 2012; numbers of withdrawals have decreased from 3000 in 2012 to 2305 in the spring of 2015 (Achieving the Dream, 2017).

Other colleges that have eliminated late registration have implemented courses that begin later in the semester. Northern Essex Community College in Massachusetts calls this initiative the Right Start program and is described as a grouping of classes that begin four weeks into the semester (Kelly, 2008). The Right Start program is for those students who would have registered late for classes beginning the first week of the semester. The Vice President of Academic Affairs described students in this program as not necessarily academically challenged but “life challenged” (Kelly, 2008). The program has been successful; a year into implementation, “there seemed to be a 15 percent advantage gained in terms of student retention and grade success” (Kelly, 2008).

The elimination of late registration policies does not always produce positive results. Klamath Community College (KCC) in Oregon, for example, saw its enrollment decline by 20% after eliminating late registration in 2012 (Fain, 2014). Fain (2014) posited the reason for this decrease in enrollment was due to Performance Based Funding (PBF) which provides funding for community colleges based upon enrollment. As of fall 2017, students at KCC can register for, add, or drop a class anytime within the first week and without special permission (from the instructor or department); the registration period ends the Friday of the first week (Klamath Community College, 2017).

Late Registration Fees. In a study conducted at Miami-Dade Community College, now known simply as Miami-Dade College, Belcher and Patterson (1990) stated that the first step leading to elimination of late registration was to implement a \$25 fee for registering late. Prior to implementing the fee, the college conducted a survey to assess what students would do if faced with a fee. Survey respondents (75-80%) indicated that the fee would influence them to register earlier (Belcher and Patterson, 1990). As of the 2017-2018 school year, seventeen years

after Belcher and Patterson's study, students registering late at Miami-Dade College are now charged a \$50 fee. According to the academic calendar, registration is allowed up until the Friday before classes begin. Students registering after Friday are charged the \$50 fee, and registration is not allowed the first week of classes without instructor or departmental approval (Miami Dade College, 2017).

Shriner (2014) used the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to create a random sample of community colleges with the purpose of evaluating whether or not late registration was permitted at community colleges at the time the study was conducted. Using a time period of before the fall of 2012, thirty community colleges were chosen and assessed in relation to their late registration practices. Results showed that "16 colleges allowed late registration after the first day of class, while 14 colleges ended registration from one week to two days before the first day of class" (Shriner, 2014, p. 588).

Summary of the Literature on Late Registration

The research that has been completed and accessible is mostly quantitative in nature. Results are mixed, but the majority of the studies consulted featured conclusions that late registration negatively affects students and their success, defined in terms of course success (final grades) and persistence. Other studies revealed student characteristics that make late registration more likely. A trend in the literature that is especially relevant to the current study is the absence of qualitative research.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of the literature related to late registration. A brief history of the community college was presented first to highlight major events that mark the true intent of the community college: a dedication to its community and providing opportunities for success to traditionally overlooked members of society. This chapter described the contemporary community college and its demographics. A section on student success followed with subsequent sections on advising and instructional strategies. The chapter concluded with late registration and its disadvantages, advantages, significant studies and their results, and a concluding section on the current status. Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative methodology that was utilized in exploring the perspectives relating to the elimination of the late registration option at four community colleges located in four different states across the United States. Colleges included have eliminated the late registration option within the last five years (2012-2017). This chapter includes the following sections: (1) research foci, (2) research design, (3) setting, (4) participants, (5) instrumentation, (6) data collection, (7) data explication, (8) limitations, (9) researcher bias, and (10) summary.

Research Foci

According to Moustakas (1994), qualitative research is intended to (1) fully present the “essences and meanings of the human experience” (p. 105); (2) discover qualitative as opposed to quantitative aspects in behavior and experience; (3) engage the research participant in meaningful ways that allow for revealing the participant’s “total self” (p. 105); and (4) shed light on a phenomenon through “careful, comprehensive descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experience, rather than measurements, ratings, or scores” (p. 105). Finally, qualitative research does not intend to “seek, predict, or determine causal relationships” (p. 105).

With these characteristics in mind, the following research foci guided this qualitative phenomenological study:

1. What factors led to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 1a. What were the intended outcomes of the policy eliminating late registration at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2. What are the perceptions of college administrators and instructional staff regarding the outcomes related to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2a. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student success at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2b. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student engagement at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2c. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to enrollment patterns and marginalized populations at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2d. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to instructional strategies, particularly in the first week of classes at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2e. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to the workload of advisors at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

Research Design

For the purposes of this investigation, late registration was studied qualitatively, utilizing the phenomenological method. Late registration was defined as registration occurring after the first week of classes, which was also after registration deadlines have passed. The researcher selected a qualitative research design for several reasons. (1) Most research on late registration

has been quantitative in nature and has analyzed data related to completion, success, and persistence. (2) The populations consulted in this study (college leaders and instructional staff) provided differing perspectives on the elimination of late registration. (3) The current study assessed something very specific: a variety of perspectives regarding the effect of eliminating late registration within the last five years.

A phenomenological approach to qualitative research was utilized for this study. The term “phenomenology” first appeared in 1765 as a philosophical term and on occasion appeared in the writings of Kant (Moustakas, 1994). A substantive definition first appeared with G.W.F. Hegel (1807) in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. For Hegel, phenomenology “referred to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Husserl is credited with “pioneering new realms of philosophy and science” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 25) and is a name that stands at the forefront of phenomenology. Husserl was the first to assert that an individual’s perception “serves as the essential beginning of a science that seeks valid determinations that are open to anyone to verify” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). This idea is key in phenomenology: that perceptions are valid sources of information and all perceptions have meaning.

Also significant in phenomenology is the role of the researcher. Researcher reflexivity is key to the research process, requires active self-reflection, aids in the development of the research, and affects credibility and trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012). Rogers (1961) provided the following core conditions as guidelines for researcher reflexivity: authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Hays & Singh, 2012). Authenticity requires that the researcher acknowledge his or her thoughts and feelings about the research topic and his or her

expectations for data collection and analysis and how these expectations affect interpretations (Hays & Singh, 2012). Unconditional positive regard asks the researcher to analyze his or her reactions about the topic and whether or not those reactions are surprising. Judgments about participants and the topic area are also addressed in unconditional positive regard. Finally, empathy requires that the researcher again, with intention and deliberation, address reactions to the study that may not have surfaced or that the researcher is purposefully ignoring. This step also requires that the researcher verify the data are presented as the participants are intending; the researcher assesses that the data are being presented accurately, not based upon the researcher's own beliefs or wishes.

Setting

Data collection began in the fall of 2017 at four community colleges across the United States. Community colleges were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) elimination of late registration policy; (2) willingness to participate. Originally, the study intended to include four community colleges from one state. The study changed to four different states after commitment could not be gained from four colleges in one state. These four different states were chosen based on proximity to the researcher's home state so as to make any required travel more accessible. Colleges were chosen after inquiries were made of current students and alumni of the Community College Leadership Program. E-mails were sent to current students and alumni to inquire whether their respective colleges had eliminated late registration in the last five years. Once responses were received, contact was made via e-mail. Current students and alumni then provided the researcher with contact persons at their colleges in the IRB. Paperwork was submitted, approved, and then contact was made with potential study participants.

All four community colleges have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years. In the descriptions that follow, the researcher does not name the community colleges; to maintain confidentiality, each community college is assigned a pseudonym. Pseudonyms were assigned randomly and are last names of writers for which the researcher has an affinity.

The data provided for each college were gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). For each college, the overall graduation rate is included and tracks the progress of students who “began their studies as full-time, first-time degree or certificate seeking students” (NCES, 2015). The graduation rate is calculated as degree or certificate completion within 150% of “normal time” (NCES, 2015).

Hemingway Community College (HCC) is located in a small city in a midwestern state. The student population is around 7,000. The student population is 58% part-time and 42% full-time. The demographics of the student population are 57% White, 13% African-American, and 8% Hispanic/Latino. Females constitute 53% of the student population, and males constitute 47%. In terms of age, 71% of the students are 24 years of age and under, and 29% are 25 years of age and older. Financial aid recipients, including grants/scholarships, Pell grants, and federal student loans total 71% of the student population. The overall graduation rate at HCC for students who began their studies in 2013 is 22%; 29% of students who began their studies in 2013 transferred out.

Faulkner Community College (FCC) is a rural college in a middle Atlantic state. The student population is around 700. While 76% of students attend on a part-time basis, 24% attend full-time. The student population is 53% White, 30% African-American, and 12% Hispanic/Latino. Females make up 61% of the population, and males make up 39%. In terms of age, 69% of the students are 24 years of age and under, and 31% are 25 years of age and older.

Financial aid recipients total 86% of the student population. The overall graduation rate at FCC for students who began their studies in 2012 is 16%; 12% transferred out.

Eliot Community College (ECC) is a midsize college in a southeastern state. The student population is around 8,000. Students attending on a part-time basis total 60%, while 40% attend full-time. The student population is 58% White, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 24% African-American, and 2% Asian. Females are 59% of the student population, and males are 41%. Students 24 years of age and under comprise 58% of the population; 42% are 25 years of age and older. Students receiving financial aid are 67% of the population. The overall graduation rate at ECC for students who began their studies in 2013 is 12% while 26% transferred out.

Plath Community College (PCC) is a rural-urban fringe (outside of a major city) college in a northeastern state. The student population is around 24,000. Students attending on a part-time basis total 64%, and 36% attend full-time. The student population is 24% White; 28% are African-American; 24% are Hispanic/Latino; 11% are Asian. Females are 53% of the student population while males are 47%. Students 24 years of age and under total 65% of the population, and 35% are 25 years of age and older. Financial aid recipients are 63% of the student population. The overall graduation rate at PCC for students who began their studies in 2013 is 17%; 24% transferred out.

Participants

Participants included college leaders and instructional staff. College leaders included presidents, vice presidents of academic affairs and/or student affairs, deans, college registrars, and department chairs. Instructional staff included faculty members and advisors from three departments: English, mathematics, and the technical program with the largest student population, based on data accessed through NCES. Health professions was chosen for ECC,

PCC, and HCC. Welding was chosen for FCC. English and mathematics were chosen because of their sizes and because of the likelihood that most students take courses in these two departments. A technical program was chosen to account for those students pursuing a technical degree/certificate that may or may not require the completion of core courses in English and math.

The availability of the president, his or her willingness to participate, and his or her first-hand knowledge of the elimination of the late registration policy determined whether or not this college leader was interviewed. The criterion for selecting faculty members was employment both before and after elimination of late registration. The same criterion was used to select advisors; at the community colleges included in the current study, the advisors also served as faculty members. Deans and department chairs were selected based upon the colleges and departments that they led. Vice Presidents also made recommendations for interview participants. This is an instance where snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling is a sampling strategy that utilizes recommendations for interviews from participants.

Across all four colleges, the survey link was sent to approximately 50 faculty members and advisors; 11 survey responses were collected; 1 interview was completed after survey completion. 12 interviews were completed with college leaders.

Instrumentation

A short qualitative survey was administered to faculty members and advisors with the goal of identifying interview participants. The short qualitative survey is included in Appendix A. Because faculty and advisors represent the largest population on the college campus, a survey is the most efficient first contact for the researcher to make. The survey was formatted using SurveyMonkey. The survey was accessible via computer and mobile device for optimal

response numbers. The survey was sent to all faculty members and all advisors in the included departments. When possible, the department chair and/or dean of the college was first notified with the request to send the survey link to faculty and advisors. One college, Faulkner Community College (FCC), is a small campus which, at the time of this study, did not list department chairs or deans on the college website. Contact was made directly with faculty using e-mail addresses that were listed on the college website.

The short, qualitative survey consisted of four questions. The survey was short in nature based upon anticipated time constraints of participants. The main purpose of the survey was to identify faculty and advisor participants for interview. The questions posed assessed eligibility and possible interest in participation. The following paragraph describes the nature of the questions.

The first question required a written response from the participant that indicated semester and year that employment with the college began. The second question asked if the participant was aware of the change in the late registration policy and required the participant to answer “yes” or “no.” If the response in question two was “no,” the survey was complete and considered invalid. If the response in question two was “yes,” a third question was considered. The third question was qualitative in nature and asked participants to respond to the following: “Why do you think late registration was eliminated at _____ Community College and how has this change in policy affected you and your position?” The fourth question, added to the surveys for three of the community colleges, asked the participant for his/her e-mail address. Survey responses were sent through SurveyMonkey to the researcher’s Old Dominion University e-mail address. The survey remained open for four weeks. Faculty and advisor participants were then selected for interviews based upon survey responses; faculty and advisors were

contacted via e-mail and asked to participate in an interview. Those faculty and advisors who were willing to participate were then scheduled for an interview at a time that was convenient for both the participant and the researcher.

Following survey administration and selection of faculty and advisor participants, interviews were requested with the instructional staff (faculty and advisors) and campus leaders (president, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Affairs, deans, department chairs, and the campus registrar). Interviews were targeted to last no more than 30 minutes. The same interview protocol was used with all interview participants; it is included in Appendix B. The interview was semi-structured. The semi-structured interview “uses an interview protocol that serves as a guide and starting point for the interview experience” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239). The semi-structured interview allowed for the following: every interview question did not have to be asked; the sequence and pace of the interview questions changed; and additional questions were included to “create a unique interview catered to fully describing the interviewee’s experience” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239). This structure was chosen to allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions based upon responses. With this structure, the researcher had the option to make each interview different based upon the participants and their responses.

Prior to administration of either instrument, survey or interview, the primary researcher asked fellow researchers (two) to assess the validity of the survey questions and of the initial interview questions. An additional step included making contact and receiving confirmation to proceed by the Human Subjects Committee of the College of Education at Old Dominion University and each individual community college. The letter of approval from Old Dominion University is included as Appendix C.

Once initial contact was made with potential participants, the informed consent form, included in Appendix D, was sent via e-mail. Participants were asked to read over the informed consent document. Informed consent is a vital part of qualitative research to secure permission from potential participants in a study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Informed consent “is an important ethical and legal concept that clearly identifies and outlines research activity and the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 80).

Documents were requested that are related to the elimination of the policy; these documents were to describe how the policy was initiated, who did the initiating, and how campus personnel explained the policy elimination to different campus community members: faculty, staff, leaders, and students. A memo requesting these documents is included in Appendix E. The matrix found in Appendix F displays the research questions and the data sources for each question.

Data Collection

Data collection began with the administration and collection of the short, qualitative survey. Following survey collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructional staff and college leaders. Examination of institutionally provided records occurred as they were received.

Survey administration and collection. For three of the participating colleges, survey links were sent to department chairs or deans with the request that the links be sent to all faculty and advisors in the department. E-mail addresses of department chairs or deans were found on each college’s website. For one of the participating colleges, contact was made directly with faculty and advisors as the college website did not list department chairs or deans.

Interview administration and collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone. The semi-structured interview and the use of open-ended questions were key so that interview participants did not detect a guiding towards a supposed “right” answer. There is no right answer in phenomenological research; participants are free to express their unique perspectives as only they can. If information saturation had not been reached after collecting data from these initial participants, more interviews would have been scheduled. Information saturation occurs once new information is no longer being collected. If new information continues to appear, the data collection process will continue with additional interviews. For the current study, information saturation was reached after data collection from the initial participants, through surveys and interviews, and document review.

Interviews were audio recorded using the researcher’s cell phone. Interview participant consent to recording was obtained in the informed consent documents and verbally prior to beginning the recording. Interviews were transcribed, and interviewees were only identified by their general position title at the college. As described earlier, colleges have been given pseudonyms, and the states and cities where they are located have not been named. This ensures confidentiality.

Field Notes. Field notes were taken along with the digital recordings. Field notes are described as “written records developed within an observational period and continually expanded and revised after the observation has occurred” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 228). Field notes were used to document information related to the interview and the interview participant. Sensory impressions were noted throughout the interview: before, during, and after. This includes descriptions and impressions of the interviewee (unease, excitement, ambivalence). Because these interviews were conducted via cell phone, facial expressions could not be assessed. Field

notes included noting changes in vocal tone, long pauses, and overall comfort levels, again as noted by vocal tone. Also included in the field notes were the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and reflections before, during, and immediately after the interview (Hays & Singh, 2012). The field notes required active participation and engagement in the interview process, paying particular attention to the interviewee.

Reflexive Journal. A reflexive journal was kept and included memos. The reflexive journal provided the researcher with a means for keeping notes and reflections throughout the research process. Memos, included in the reflexive journal, are an important part of data collection, and they serve as a tool in data analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012). Memos are typically longer than field notes and serve as means of recording "extensive thoughts or reflections...without disrupting the 'flow' of a field note" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 229). The reflexive journal, field notes, and memos are all tools that establish trustworthiness of the researcher; all three also serve as means of data collection and data analysis.

Institutionally Provided Records. Records were requested of each participating community college related to the elimination of late registration. Records included e-mails, memos, flyers, meeting notes, and presentations. Through analysis of these documents, understanding was sought related to how the policy change was explained to the campus community, including campus leaders, faculty, staff, and students and how it was decided that a change in policy was necessary. O'Banion (2012) provided advice on how to terminate a late registration program. Advice included the creation of a "rationale for terminating late registration that reflects the values, needs, and resources of the college" (p. 29). Also included is an assessment of the "impact of the change on students and the institution, including enrollment, student success, revenues, and satisfaction (O'Banion, 2012, p. 29). Analysis of the

institutionally provided records provided the researcher with insight into any rationale for elimination of late registration and any predicted impacts on the college and the college community resulting from the elimination of the policy.

Data Storage. Data were stored electronically on the researcher's personal, password protected computer. Hardcopies of data were scanned and stored electronically, including informed consent forms. Hardcopies of documents were stored in a locked file in the researcher's home office.

Transcription. After completing an interview, transcription occurred as quickly as was feasible. Two computer programs were tested at the beginning of transcription: Dragon Speech Recognition Software and Express Scribe Transcription Software. Express Scribe Transcription Software was chosen after testing. Recordings were played in the software, and a script was created by the researcher, meaning the researcher listened to the recording and typed the transcript. These transcripts were double checked for accuracy. Additionally, because money was saved with a free version of Express Scribe Transcription Software, a transcriber was hired who had been used in the past by the researcher. These transcripts were also double checked for accuracy.

Data Explication

Phenomenology aims to understand the depth and meaning of participants' experiences as opposed to the generation of a theory (Hays & Singh, 2012). Qualitative research avoids the use of the term analysis; Hycner (1985) asserted that the "term [analysis] usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon...[whereas 'explication' implies an]...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole" (p. 161). With this in mind, the researcher does not analyze data, but rather

explicates data. Data explication began early in the process. The constant comparative method drove data explication; in this method, the researcher moved back and forth between data collection and data explication to inform future data collection and test any hypothesized patterns (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

The explication procedures were carefully documented throughout the process. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) note that “a qualitative researcher must document and defend every step along the way” when it comes to explication (p. 301). The following paragraphs provide detailed information on the specific explication processes as described by Hycner (1985).

Bracketing. In this step, the researcher “examines and sets aside preconceived beliefs, values, and assumptions about the research topic and proposed research design” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 417). In other words, when bracketing, “the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). In the current study, bracketing was used to ensure that only the thoughts of the interviewee were being documented. The preconceived notions, values, and assumptions of the researcher were written down, acknowledged, and then promptly set aside.

In this step, the researcher wrote down and acknowledged her relationship with community colleges and late registration. The researcher is a doctoral student in a Community College Leadership program. She acknowledged her knowledge of and connection to the community college and its mission. The researcher has also spent more than a year researching late registration. She acknowledged the volume of research that points to late registration as a possible barrier to student success.

The Phenomenological Reduction. In the Phenomenological Reduction, the researcher considers each experience, as related by the interview participants, individually, without

interference from other experiences. The researcher describes each experience completely, with attention given to “its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). In this step, the qualities that make the experience unique for each participant are highlighted. Moustakas (1994) explained that this task requires that the researcher look and describe, look again and describe, and look again and describe. Language is used to describe what makes the experience unique for the participant (Moustakas, 1994). Using textural language, the researcher focuses on explaining the qualities of the experience. Filling in the nature and meaning of the experience is the challenge (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, the phenomenological reduction was utilized to validate the experiences of each individual interview participant. No one interview was more important than another, and this step forced the researcher to refocus on each individual interview.

Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole. After bracketing, it is important to return to the interview in its entirety, listen to it and read the transcription. This step requires that the researcher listen to non-verbal cues such as intonation, emphasis, and pauses (Hycner, 1985). Non-verbal cues are powerful data for analysis and explication. Changes in tone, emphasizing a certain word, and pausing before speaking can all be very revealing aspects of participants’ opinions and feelings. These observations should be noted in the reflexive journal. This was a valuable step for the current study in that it forced the researcher to return to the interview to listen one more time. Transcription was a complicated, time consuming process, and it can be tempting to feel relief that the transcription is over and move on to the next interview and the next transcription. Returning to the interview to listen again to really focus on those non-verbal cues was an important step.

Delineation of units of meaning. The next step was the delineation of units of meaning. The aim of this step is to “grasp the structural essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). This is a rigorous, time consuming process in which the researcher examines “every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and noted significant non-verbal communication in the transcript in order to elicit the participant’s meanings” (Hycner, 1985, p. 282). For the purposes of this study, this was one of the most important steps. The delineation of units of meaning was a step in the explication process in which the researcher began to hone in on the essence of each interview and began to determine the most valuable words and phrases as they related to the elimination of late registration.

Assessment of trustworthiness and credibility with fellow researcher(s).

Trustworthiness and credibility occurred through the use of another researcher. This researcher, chosen by the primary researcher, read over half of the interview transcriptions and data explication to assess appropriate explication (Hycner, 1985). This step was important to ensure that the primary researcher had not attempted to create meaning where it was not intended.

Clustering units of relevant meaning. This step requires that the researcher attempt to determine whether any of the units of relevant meaning come together in a natural way. This step, more than any other, involves “the judgment and skill of the researcher” (Hycner, 1985, p. 288). In this procedure, the researcher must constantly go back and forth among the transcript, the units of meaning, and the clusters of meaning. Due to a possibility for researcher bias to interfere, this is an important step in which to assess trustworthiness and credibility with a fellow researcher.

Determination of themes from clusters of meaning. Clusters of meaning are assessed for central themes. The researcher looks at all clusters of meaning to determine if there is one central theme or multiple themes that are addressed (Hycner, 1985).

Member checking. Following data explication, an e-mail was sent to each individual interview participant. The e-mail shared themes explicated from the interviews. This step was intended to determine if the essence of the interview has been correctly captured. If the participant disagrees with the garnered themes or has more to add, a second interview would have been conducted and re-explicated, assuming a convenient time was agreed upon. This step was important in both trustworthiness and credibility. In the current study, none of the members disagreed with data explication.

Modification of themes and summary. This step occurs only if an interview participant disagrees with the explication and an interview is re-conducted or if a second interview is conducted and more information is added. All of the previous steps would be revisited should a second interview occur or should additional information be added. For the current study, this step was not completed because data explication was not contested.

Identification of general and unique themes for all interviews. After each of the previous steps were completed with all interviews conducted and explicated, the general and unique themes for all interviews were assessed. For this study, identifying general and unique themes was important in tying the interviews together and starting to think about recommendations.

Composite summary. The final step was to write a composite summary of all the interviews. The intention here is to capture the overall essence of the phenomenon (elimination of late registration) as described by each participant. The composite summary was written to

describe the “world” (Hycner, 1985, p. 294) in which the participants live where late registration has been eliminated. The composite summary also served to highlight significant differences amongst interviews. The composite summary provided the researcher with the opportunity to do a cross institutional analysis, looking for similarities and differences amongst the four community colleges and the different participants (leaders and instructional staff).

Balance, fairness, and completeness are the aims of data collection and data interpretation. As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015), this is more easily achieved through the following: triangulation of data; intentional identification of outliers, exceptions, and contradictions; acknowledgement that participants, while encouraged to be completely honest and open, may share what they believe to be true, wish were true, or think is desired to be true; continual collection of data until saturation; independent coding from at least two individuals; and requests for feedback from participants and colleagues regarding findings and interpretations.

Limitations

Participant knowledge and truthfulness were limitations of this study. Although every attempt was made to select knowledgeable participants, this was not a guarantee. Truthfulness was encouraged regarding late registration elimination. This was also, however, not guaranteed, nor was this something that could be controlled or predicted.

Researcher Bias

Although every attempt, including the use of a reflexive journal, was made to avoid bias, personal bias played a role in this study. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) suggested “any qualitative researcher must continually acknowledge, both to self and to others, that personal attitudes and opinions are inevitably creeping into and biasing observations and interpretations” (291).

The researcher is an instructor who has experienced the disruptions that occur from late registration. The researcher is also a student of community college leadership who is actively seeking leadership roles. The participants in this study were instructional staff and college leaders, two groups with which the researcher can empathize.

This bias was acknowledged in the use of the reflexive journal and in bracketing. Writing the bias down and acknowledging it was important in recognizing that it existed; this step was also important in providing an outlet for revisiting and adding to should the bias seem to creep into data explication.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover the perceived effect of the elimination of late registration at four community colleges. This chapter has presented the research foci, the research design, descriptions of the setting and the participants, a description of the instrumentation, the methods for data collection, the methods for data explication, limitations, and researcher bias. Chapter Four presents the findings of this qualitative phenomenological study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the effects of the elimination of the late registration option. College leaders and instructional staff, from four community colleges, varying in size, location, and demographics, were included in this study. The study began with a brief survey which was sent to faculty members and advisors in three departments from each campus. The departments were English, mathematics, and the technical department with the largest enrollment which varied at each of the participating institutions. Following survey administration, interviews were requested with college leaders (presidents, the Vice Presidents of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, deans, department chairs, and registrars) and instructional staff (advisors and faculty members) selected based upon survey responses.

In order to enhance data collection on the effect of the elimination of the late registration option, surveys were sent to all full and part-time faculty members and advisors in each department. With the exception of Faulkner Community College (FCC), surveys were distributed by either the department chair or the dean and remained open for a minimum of four weeks. FCC is the smallest of the four institutions; department chairs and deans were not listed on the college website, thus the researcher reached out to the faculty and advisors via e-mail. After the four-week open period, surveys were closed. The last question posed in the survey, for all colleges except for FCC, requested the participant's e-mail address. Many of the survey respondents skipped this question. Faculty members who included their e-mail addresses were contacted via e-mail with the request for an interview further discussing their perspectives regarding the elimination of late registration. Also contacted via e-mail were campus leaders. Utilizing the websites of each college, the researcher contacted leaders filling certain roles and having knowledge of the late registration policy change at each community college. Those roles

included department chair, dean, Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President of Academic Affairs, campus registrar, and president. Documents describing the elimination of late registration were also requested of institutions or found on the college websites; documents collected included a memo (Faulkner Community College), an announcement from the campus website (Faulkner Community College), a PowerPoint presentation (Plath Community College), a Prezi presentation (Faulkner Community College), a social media posting (Hemingway Community College), an information sheet intended for students (Eliot Community College), and a progress report (Plath Community College). In total, a combination of 32 data sources were collected and analyzed (surveys (12), interviews (13), and documents (7)).

Interviews were the primary data collection method, providing the richest data regarding the elimination of the late registration policy. Interviews were conducted with college leadership and instructional staff. Two of the interviews conducted at Plath Community College (PCC) were the result of snowball sampling. After interviewing the Vice President of Student Affairs, two other interview participants were suggested: the Associate Senior Vice President of Student Affairs and the Dean for Student Access.

Interviews were completed and recorded using a cell phone; an application was downloaded to the cell phone which recorded the phone call. This application, downloaded to an Android phone, was simply entitled "Call Recorder." Permission was requested of each interviewee prior to beginning the recording of the interview. While recording, the researcher took field notes; the field notes were used to describe particularly important observations and any communication patterns (pauses, hesitation, change in tone) noted throughout the telephone conversation. Following recording, interviews were housed in the "Call Recorder" application. In order to access these interviews on a computer for transcription purposes, one of two methods

were used: plug the cell phone into the computer and download the recording or e-mail the recording to an e-mail address. E-mailing was a far more convenient method and was used most often.

After e-mailing, files were downloaded to the desktop of the researcher's home computer. At this point, the files needed to be transcribed. Two software programs were tested at the beginning of the transcription process: Dragon Speech Recognition Software and Express Scribe Transcription Software. A free trial was downloaded of Dragon Anywhere while a free version of Express Scribe Transcription Software was downloaded. After testing each program, Express Scribe Transcription Software was chosen. While Dragon Anywhere has received better reviews, it was not exactly what was needed for the purposes of transcription. This program is designed more for dictation; users dictate into devices and the words appear on the screen. The program was quite accurate; however, uploading a recording was not an option.

After choosing the Express Scribe Transcription Software, recordings were uploaded into the program and played. While listening to the audio, the researcher typed a script. Speakers were identified as Speaker A (the researcher) and Speaker B (the interviewee). Transcription was a time-consuming process, and while typing, perfection was not the goal. The main goal in the first listen through was to produce the transcript without correcting typos. Once a transcript was typed in its entirety, the researcher returned to the interview, listened to it, and made handwritten corrections to the printed-out transcript. This was the researcher's personal preference to work with a printed-out transcript after producing the initial script. This was the process utilized by the researcher for half of the interviews. Because money was saved with the utilization of free trials of both programs, a transcriber who had been utilized for past assignments by the researcher was consulted for assistance with the remaining interviews. The

same process was followed with the transcripts produced by the transcriber: the researcher returned to the interview and made handwritten corrections to the printed-out transcript. The hired transcriber deleted all interviews, both recordings and transcripts, after a two-month window of time.

Throughout data collection, a reflexive journal was kept; the reflexive journal included memos. This was used to supplement the field notes. Although the field notes focused on what the interviewee was saying, the reflexive journal focused more on reflections and observations made by the researcher throughout collection. Observations included thoughts and ideas about how comfortable the interviewee seemed throughout the interview and where comfort levels may have altered. Other observations included initial thoughts on possible themes and overlapping of interviewee responses.

Data explication steps were then followed, as described in chapter three. The steps included: bracketing, the Phenomenological Reduction, re-listening to each individual interview, delineating units of meaning, assessing trustworthiness and credibility, clustering units of meaning, determining themes, member checking, modification of themes and summary, identification of themes across all interviews, and composite summary. All of these steps ensured that first and foremost, each individual interview was treated as equal in importance. Each interviewee had important reflections on the elimination of late registration at his/her respective institution. While each interview differed in length, each interviewee was valuable to this research. Also important in this process was the first step: bracketing. In this step, thoughts and preconceptions of the researcher were noted and set aside so that only the data gathered through the interviews and document review were presented in the data explication process. The

researcher's reflections on the data are noted in chapter five but were not a part of the data explication process.

Member checking was an important step in the data explication process. Each interviewee was e-mailed a copy of the transcription of his/her interview. E-mails were sent to all interviewees at the same time with the exception of one; this one interviewee, having accepted a new position at a new institution, was unreachable via e-mail. The researcher attempted to contact this interviewee via Linked-In with no success. The e-mail, which was the same for each interviewee, requested the interviewee read over the transcription for accuracy. If the interviewee found any problems or had any concerns with the transcription, he/she was to respond to the e-mail. Not all interviewees responded. Five participants responded, and of those five, two had concerns with some typos that were present within the transcript. Those typos were corrected by the interviewee and sent back to the researcher. The researcher ensured that those corrections were made in the master copies of the transcripts. The second step of member checking was to send all interviewees a report describing the themes garnered from data collection. The researcher sent all interview participants the same e-mail with a document attached that described the themes garnered from each research question. Participants were again asked to respond to the e-mail with any questions or concerns. Just as with the transcription, not all participants responded. Those who did simply replied with a thank-you for the follow up.

The following sections present the data collected from surveys, interviews, document and website review. Data are organized first by research question, then by themes identified by research question. Interviewee responses are noted by college affiliation and position held.

There were two main research questions; Research Question 1 had one sub question, and Research Question 2 had five sub questions.

RQ 1: Factors leading to the elimination of late registration option

Common responses from college leadership and staff began with commentary related to looking at data. Leaders referred to studies, many that are cited in this dissertation, that have looked at late registration and its negative effects on student success. Leaders also mentioned other community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option. These colleges were used as models for the colleges included in this study. Document review provided many of the same reasons for elimination of the late registration option. On the other hand, faculty members frequently referenced college leadership and their perceptions as reasons why late registration was eliminated.

A department chair from Plath Community College (PCC) offered that “there’s enough research that shows the few chances of being successful in the class [when one registers late]; your chances of doing well in the course are good if you’re present on the first day of class.” A dean, also from PCC, specifically mentioned the data that were reviewed prior to elimination of late registration: “We investigated other community colleges, and in particular, we looked at Valencia, and I think it was St. Clair Community College. We looked at some of their data. We looked at the way they mapped out their scheduling....So when we first started wrapping our minds around late registration, the team came to determine that this is not necessarily punitive as long as you have subsequent terms for students to register, and as long as you really let them know in advance that you’re changing your policy.” The Registrar from Eliot Community College (ECC) noted the reviewing of data from ECC: “...what we found by pulling at said time, different data, is that the students who did the late registration, after classes started, had a high

percentage of withdrawals within the first four to six weeks of the class.” A Vice President at PCC remembers, “We looked at our efforts to support student success. It [eliminating late registration] was one of several initiatives that we considered and decided to advance to better position students for success. So looking at our research on this topic, there was enough indication [from research and our own students] that there wasn’t as much success [for students who registered late].”

A department chair at ECC said, “I don’t know for sure, but it’s my understanding that we had looked at some figures and they [the figures] said, the students who register after the fact are just not doing well. They’re not persisting in the course, they’re not completing the course, and if they are completing the course, their grades are significantly lower.” The VP for Student Services at ECC noted that late registration “was working against the students as well as the faculty. Data supports that students that registered late for classes are generally the least likely to complete. In general, it’s a last minute decision, and the data just doesn’t support success of those students that register after classes have started.”

The Associate Senior VP of Student Affairs at PCC, who also chaired the committee for the implementation of on-time registration, said, “There were two reasons. One was a group that began working the fall of 2012, looking at students across data when students register for class after it begins. There were a number of things that were considered. One was how much more likely are students to withdraw from class when they register after the class begins? The data said that they were more likely to withdraw. The second point was how do they perform in terms of – We looked at if they were still registered the third week or whether they were not registered. It was a higher number of students, if they registered after the course began, who would have dropped the course. That was one factor. The other was looking at their

performance in terms of if they completed the class and their grade. So, we were looking at eligible students who had grades that were A, B, C, and students who finished but had a D or F.”

The Associate Senior VP of Student Affairs at PCC continued with explaining how community colleges contribute to a mindset that late registration is expected: “We have systems that practically encourage you to do everything at the last minute because we are so welcoming and open, but it also creates unnecessary stress for the student. So, along with implementing on-time registration, which is what we call it, we also started having priority registration, which we hadn’t done before...one of our enrollment consultants said in terms of financial aid, let’s think about getting your students to apply earlier.”

One president was accessible and interviewed for this study; the president of Faulkner Community College (FCC). This president responded to research question one with the following: “We were concerned about student success...some of it was fairly intuitive because I spent many years teaching. I would literally stake my life that within the first two weeks [of classes], those students who were most at risk, you pretty much knew who they were because they were the ones that came in late. They were the ones that, by policy, could come in...where it was two weeks into a 16-week semester that a student could enroll...to me, that first day of class is sacred.” The president elaborated and explained that when the elimination of late registration occurred, “we had a very high enrollment at that time. It was the perfect time to try to implement something.”

Another common response to research question one was the amount of disruption that late registration can impose upon the classroom environment. College leadership, at all four colleges, made references to the disruption that is felt by the faculty members, and many of these leaders were former faculty members. A department chair from PCC remembered, “I actually

started here before the on-time registration policy, and there were things I could never wrap my head around...we would routinely allow students to register one week, two weeks after the beginning of class, and it was actually disruptive at the level of the classroom. Students would go directly to the instructor, sometimes just walking right into a class that was in session. The professor is at the board lecturing, and there's a classroom of people who registered on time, and you've got people seeking signatures." The Dean of Workforce Development at Faulkner Community College (FCC) offered, "As an educator, any time that you have individuals come into a class late, it can be problematic for the instructor, depending on how late you allow folks to register. Our enrollment is down, so we're always looking at numbers; people are coming in trying to enroll, and we want them to enroll as early as we can, so we can plan accordingly and make sure we are offering the right courses. If we have a lot of late registration, that can cause some issues and some extra stress on the institution." The VP of Student Services at ECC stated, "For the faculty member, it's really disruptive to have a student that joins your class any time after that first day. The first day of class is used to set the tone for how the semester will go. It's also an opportunity for engagement in ways that doesn't happen at other points in the semester. So when the student misses that part of the introductory experience of a class, it becomes, sort of, well, it puts them at a disadvantage, but it also puts an additional burden on that faculty member to try to get them up to speed as it relates to all of those things that happened on the first day of the class meeting."

A Prezi Presentation shared by the president of FCC described the process by which the late registration option was eliminated. The presentation began with an assertion that the first week of class is of the utmost importance: expectations are set and students are engaged. The late registration option was eliminated because all students should experience the first week of

class. Research was also consulted. Studies that were summarized in the Prezi included: Keck (2007) and Street, Smith, and Olivarez (2001). Both studies found that students who register late are less likely to be successful (defined by GPA).

A progress report describing the elimination of the late registration option was found on PCC's website. This report was shared six months before the policy change went into effect. According to the report, a taskforce was formed to "investigate the possible elimination of late registration" as a result of recommendations coming from the enrollment management team. Forums, focus groups, and surveys were facilitated to give "members of the community" the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed policy change. "Based on the feedback received and the best available information and data, the taskforce made recommendations to implement late registration changes as well as priority registration." The policy change was part of a "comprehensive Student Success Policy."

A PowerPoint presentation, also found on PCC's website, further pointed to unnamed research that shows "students who register after a class begins have lower semester retention rates and achieve lower semester GPAs than do students who register before a class begins." The late registration option was eliminated to encourage early planning. Early planning assures that students "receive appropriate academic advising, make class choices without rushing, and have time to handle financial considerations (tuition, books)."

A Facebook posting by HCC announced the end of the late registration option. The policy change was announced five months before the change took effect. A message from the president indicated that the policy change "is an effort to set students up to succeed. The new deadlines are intended to improve the chances that students will arrive in class on the first day

focused and ready to engage in the class, rather than distracted by finances, buying textbooks, or arranging other personal issues.”

Faculty members responded differently from the college leadership. A faculty member at Hemingway Community College (HCC) shared in an interview, “The administration felt that when the students register late...they miss some introduction to the class and sometimes, you know, maybe even two or three classes depending on how late they register. They felt that the students were not as likely to succeed because you know they [kind of] missed the foundation of the class, and so they thought by eliminating this that all the students would have to be there right from the beginning and it should help with student success.” Another faculty member at HCC shared in a survey response, “Students registering late for classes were under-prepared, and data showed they were less successful than students who registered on-time. As a professor, anecdotally I can verify that students who aren’t registered before classes have started are not prepared or as successful.” Another faculty member at HCC shared in a survey response, “Late registration was eliminated due to the fact that it is very [difficult] to coordinate efforts on the parts of several departments in a short amount of time. Many times, late registering students are unsuccessful and we want them to be [successful], not a withdrawal statistic.” A faculty member at ECC responded via survey, “I am guessing it might help with retention. It seems as [though] students who decide to register at the last minute might not be fully prepared for the commitments of school.” Another faculty member at ECC responded to the survey with the following: “I believe it was only renamed to ‘last chance registration.’ The idea behind eliminating it was that students who register late typically do not persist, and that taxes the resources of students and faculty.”

Interview participants also discussed fears about declining enrollment as a result of eliminating late registration. The VP of Student Services at ECC said, “We were concerned, of course, when we first implemented what it would do to our enrollment because that’s [kind of] how we in the past had advertised ourselves. It’s like you come here at the last minute, and you know, one stop shop. We can get you through; we can get you enrolled and advised and registered all in the same day. So when we implemented this policy, that kind of meant that we were moving away from that and saying maybe you can’t do that. Maybe that’s not the best thing for you.”

It is important to note that the definition of “late registration” has changed for each of these institutions. Late registration, as defined in chapter one, is either: (1) registration that occurs after the first day of the semester or (2) registration that occurs after the registration deadlines have passed (O’Banion, 2012). The four community colleges included in this study have eliminated the option for students to register after the first day of the semester. For most of the colleges, the evening before the first day of the semester is also the deadline for registration. An exception in the current study is Eliot Community College (ECC). For the spring semester of 2018, the last day students could register for classes was Thursday, January 4. Classes began Monday, January 8. Designated “last chance registration,” students were only allowed to register in person. Online registration was not allowed.

With the elimination of late registration came the need for other times to register. Registration occurs for each of these colleges at different times throughout the semester. These registration periods are labeled accordingly.

For Plath Community College (PCC), the first registration period is labeled Priority Registration. Continuing students with a certain number of credit hours are allowed to register

first. This registration period begins towards the end of the previous semester; for example, priority registration for the fall takes place in April of the spring semester. The week after priority registration, open registration begins for all remaining students. Also important for PCC is the elimination of the term “late registration.” Implemented in the fall of 2015, “late registration” changed to “on-time” registration.

For Faulkner Community College (FCC), the first registration period for current students is also labeled Priority Registration and begins towards the end of the previous semester. There is no specification, based on website review, that Priority Registration is limited to students with a certain number of credit hours. Open registration for all students begins the following week. The last day to register is the evening before the first day of classes.

For Hemingway Community College (HCC), the first registration period is open to continuing students, and like the other colleges, begins towards the end of the previous semester. Open registration also opens the next week. The last day for registration, according to a social media posting first announcing the change in policy, is also the evening before the first day of classes. According to a faculty member who responded via survey at HCC, “the OTR [on-time registration] policy has been relaxed and the deadline for late registration has been extended until one hour before the class meets.”

The information presented above was found through website review. Website review included looking for any information related to registration processes. Google searches were also utilized in an attempt to find information about these registration processes for each individual college participating in the current study. Key words used in these searches included: registration, late registration, elimination of late registration, on-time registration, returning student registration, new student registration, and priority registration.

Research Question 1A: Intended outcomes

Frequently noted in responses to the sub-question to research question one were the desire for students to be ready to start their classes and for improved success. Success was defined by college leadership and instructional staff as improved grades and lower rates of withdrawal. The Registrar from ECC noted that late registration was eliminated so that students “were more prepared to go into class and were ready for class. That is exactly what we wanted. We were aiming...to be sure that our students didn’t reel rushed or feel they were coming in behind.” The Dean of Workforce Development at FCC mentioned the desire for “the different aspects of college bureaucracy” including financial aid paperwork and advising as things that “we’re trying to encourage people to do, to get here, get here early, and take care of all those things.”

A department chair at PCC offered the following: “You want to see improved student success, of course, which is the fundamental reason we do everything at the college. Have we quantified that in terms of immediate impact? To be honest with you, I don’t know. Can I say I have fewer people registering for class late? Does that necessarily translate to improved success rates in the courses? I’m not sure I can speak such a straightforward correspondence, but I do think it makes it easier to implement some of our initiatives surrounding student success...our goal was to get students to start smart in general: to take their financial aid packet, register for classes, purchase their textbooks, find out where their classes were, etc.”

The Dean for Student Access at PCC said: “I think the committee was hoping to see an increase in persistence; I think they were hoping to see an increase in GPA...Honestly, we don’t really know what the role of it [eliminating late registration] is. The data that I’ve seen that’s been shown to me doesn’t show that there’s much of a difference between students who stay and

persistence rate. You have to understand that they are compiling everybody as a class, all students, into this one big giant trough. There's a lot of factors in there, right, that could be contributing to those DFW rates. Maybe it's the economy, maybe it's the classes, maybe it's the time of day, maybe it's the professor that semester, maybe it's tuition rate...who knows!"

The VP of Student Affairs at PCC said that the intended outcomes related to student success: "The intended outcome was student success, positioning students to be better prepared for starting class...the idea was to have them start on time; they are coming in at the start of class not missing information, not having to play catch up." The Associate Senior Vice President for Student Affairs at PCC added, "The push was, the earlier that you do things, you can have room to make difficult decisions about housing, get your financial aid completed, do all of your planning."

A faculty member at HCC responded via survey that the intended outcome was "to ensure that students show up to class on the first day ready to learn. Unfortunately, it has not worked that way, as the policy keeps changing and an enormous number of exceptions are made." A faculty member at PCC responded via survey: "Late registering students did not do as well academically as those who registered on time. Setting rosters on the first day allowed instructors to begin with full course content from Day1 – knowing that they would not have to 'catch up' students registering in the second or third week of class. What the on-time registration policy did not account for was the number of 'first day' drops that take place. It would help enrollment if we could backfill these drops with a waitlist. I personally would want that to happen before the second class meeting. Beyond that, a student would already be significantly behind."

Research Question 2: Perceptions regarding the outcomes

Responses to this question frequently overlapped with Research Question 1A. Interviewees combined the intended with the actual outcomes. In several cases, actual outcomes were not something interviewees were able to speak to, as noted in responses.

College administrators and instructional staff were occasionally able to reference data that had been gathered related to the outcomes from the elimination of late registration at their respective colleges. More often though was the acknowledgement that they had not seen the data. College administrators at Plath Community College (PCC) frequently referenced the inability to isolate data specifically related to eliminating the late registration option. PCC implemented several initiatives aimed at improving student success at the same time; one of those initiatives was the elimination of late registration. The VP of Student Affairs at PCC said, “We have a number of initiatives that started around that time [fall 2015] and therefore, I can’t say 100% which one of these has led to greater student success. I can say, anecdotally, that we believe this initiative has helped position students for success. We have collected some data around the different parts of it, different components of the initiatives, but it’s one of those situations where you can’t say 100% that this is why students are successful.” A department chair at PCC said, “Have we quantified that in terms of immediate impact, to be honest with you, I don’t know. So can I say I have fewer people registering for class late? Does that necessarily translate to improved success rates in the courses? I’m not sure I can speak such a straightforward correspondence, but I do think it makes it easier to implement some of our other initiatives surrounding student success...I haven’t seen a direct [correlation] – any data showing that on-time registration in and of itself, in a vacuum, without considering other things, has made a difference.”

A dean at PCC explained: “What we’ve been doing since we implemented late registration is really looking at apprehensive scheduling...if a student comes to the college and registers late, you don’t want to turn them away because if you turn them away, you could lose them. So we’ve been working on [making sure] that subsequent semesters have a full complement of classes because if we only have a battery of classes in subsequent semesters, we’re going to lose students.” The VP of Student Services at ECC noted, “It decreases the amount of movement and sort of chaos that’s kind of inherent to semester start-up. It reduces [the students] trying to get to the dean’s office to sign up for a class late and that sort of thing. Everyone just knows the first day of class is the first day of class, so there’s not that movement. We also feel like it gives the faculty member a much better start to know that the students that you started with on that day are the students that will be moving forward for you. It also forces students to kind of plan ahead in a way that maybe they haven’t or they wouldn’t have normally.”

The VP of Student Services at ECC continued with an explanation of exceptions to the no late registration policy: “The exceptions are that those students that come to us in an undocumented immigrant status are required [by state community college policy] to register after everyone else has registered. So, if you have started your process, if you have applied to the college and done all the things and the only thing you have not done is registered, then we will register you on that day...so for those students that haven’t done anything, those are the students that we are saying cannot register after the first day of class.”

The Dean for Student Access at PCC said, “It’s really, really hard to say...it was like a 4% difference in persistence rate and maybe a couple hundredths of a point in GPA. I can’t say that it’s [the elimination of the late registration option] having that much of an impact that we

created a work-around so that even when students register late, there are perceptions now that they can lodge an appeal to register late, and the fact that we're allowing them to do that shows me that we are not really behind this, or we don't really think that registering late is a major problem. Otherwise, the college would probably say no, no exceptions."

The Associate Senior VP of Student Affairs at PCC noted, that "it's really moving the needle in the way we wanted it to. Students are registering earlier, and students are taking advantage of priority registration. Yes, it did that. In terms of the overall plan to get students, more students, doing things earlier, yes, it did that. It was successful with those two things. Looking at student performance, so far from what we've been able to determine, it's not that significant. There is a slight difference in students, in terms of their grades, students who register for the class before it begins and how they perform." Specifically referring to financial aid processes: "The percentage of applications for financial aid that came in early, a huge increase! I think it was over 20%...I think it was something like 27%."

The president at FCC explained what actually happened when the "no late registration" policy was implemented: "When we said we eliminated late registration, there were some caveats. It's not like we shut the door totally because we're a small institution. We kind of moved away from talking about drop/add to talking about schedule adjustment...so basically, when we said no late registration, that's for someone who had not done anything along the pathway of trying to get themselves enrolled at the institution."

Responses to Research Question 2 also included reference to other options for students who are unable to register late for a class. Each of the colleges included in this study has late-start classes. These late-start classes had always existed and were not added singularly as other

options for those students who would have registered late. Late-start classes range from 12-week sessions to 8-week sessions.

The Dean for Student Access at PCC talked about the misconceptions with the late-start classes: “Really, the late starting classes, people [students] thought that they would be taking less [academically speaking]....I think people thought it would be shorter, so thank goodness! The 13 or 10 or 8 or 6 [week options], that meant it’s faster. People didn’t always look at all the details. It’s more compacted, more work in a smaller amount of time...I remember a number of deans were having to hold spots in open classes because they were giving spaces up early on, so when people were looking for late start, there was nothing available.”

A faculty member at HCC shared in an interview, “I don’t feel it’s working the way they had hoped because they open all the classes up for anyone to register at any time...before the semester starts, so a lot of students are just registering for the 13 week classes....they’re not being left [reserved] for students who register late...essentially with a 13-week class, you’re stuffing what’s supposed to take 16 weeks into 13 weeks.” The faculty member at HCC expanded this response by noting the message that is sent to those students who are late registrants who end up in the shortened session: “We’re saying, okay, so you didn’t manage to get here in time to register for a 16-week class, so you now have to take a class, a 13-week class, where everything is compressed. I don’t know – to me, it doesn’t make a lot of sense...you just have to rush through the content, and I don’t feel that serves the students in the best possible way....” Further elaborating on the outcomes, this faculty member stated, “The reasons sound good on paper...that people don’t succeed when they register late...and we want people to succeed, and that’s all good, but I think...sometimes there’s unintended consequences.”

Research Question 2A: Perceived outcomes related to student success

Responses to this question overlapped with research question two, and as noted, actual data that shows a correlation between the elimination of the late registration option and improved student success was in some cases not accessible because the data had not been collected. In other cases, the data were not accessible because that data were not able to be isolated. The VP of Student Services at ECC admitted when asked about numbers of withdrawals and failures since elimination of late registration, “I have not looked at that data. I’m not sure if we’ve pulled that data or not.”

A department chair at PCC noted: “I know of at least one department chair who goes around to every section of every class in her department and tells students about on-time registration; tells them about applying for financial aid on time, getting in all their paperwork on time, FAFSA, all that. That’s her personally going around to all of the classrooms for like 90 sections, giving that message to the students in that class. I can’t say that everyone does that, but you know at least one person I’m aware of who is going to that length to get the message out.” This department chair is describing a unique situation in which this particular department chair is committed to getting the message out there about on-time registration with the goal of aiding students in being successful.

The Registrar at Hemingway Community College (HCC) stated: Students would say, “What do you mean I can’t do this? There’s still places available in the class. So, yeah, some people were rather angry.” The Registrar at HCC continued: “I guess it’s tough to have a one size fits all box for students...if late registration is eliminated, it’s important to be very clear on what policies are and get them out as quick as possible but also to be flexible enough to have a system in place to at least allow student issues to be heard.” The Registrar at HCC is noting that

students were not receptive to the policy change and seemed to not be interpreting the policy change as aiding them in being successful. A department chair at PCC stated: “I think students – I think most have adjusted well. I think we message it well...we had prominent signage announcing that this is the expectation, and I think people get it which doesn’t surprise me.”

The Associate Senior VP for Student Affairs at PCC offered: “What I have heard is when students are registering late, it’s often because they have a number of other things going on as well....a lot of complicated factors go into registering late and those aren’t always things we can do something about...Is it reducing stress and getting more students to do things earlier, including advising? Yes, it is. We can see from the numbers. We can see from the numbers of students who meet with their counselors and faculty. That does help move part of the calendar for all of us.”

A faculty member at HCC responded via survey: “In general, I am in favor of this change because fixing things at the last minute doesn’t always mean a prepared student. The downside, I used to admit people to our program up until the first day of class in case someone did not show up and I cannot do that anymore.”

Research Question 2B: Perceived outcomes related to student engagement

This was a question mostly posed to faculty members who have the most interaction with students in the classroom setting and would be most able to speak to any changes in student engagement. For this study, the faculty members across content areas and across colleges unanimously said that engagement had not been affected. The faculty members who responded to the survey and who participated in interviews all said that their instructional strategies (specifically asked about in Research Question 2d) had not changed and therefore student

engagement had not changed. A faculty member at Hemingway Community College (HCC) said in an interview, “No, I don’t think it’s really made a change...I haven’t seen a big change as far as...well, maybe at the beginning; there might be more people coming at the beginning on a more consistent basis. That could be possible...but I don’t think engagement or anything like that has changed much.”

Research Question 2C: Perceived outcomes related to enrollment patterns and marginalized populations

This was another question that was difficult for many of the interviewees to answer. Instructional staff and college leaders were, in most cases, unable to discuss any experiences that led them to be able to respond to this question. Two interviewees did have some insights into enrollment patterns.

A dean at PCC said: “Our ESL students are traditionally late registrants for a number of reasons. Some of them are Dreamers so there’s a financial circumstance, so they’re just getting their money together. Many of our students travel to their home countries, and they don’t come back until the last possible second because [of] the expense of going home.....and in our program, we’re also accepting placements the first week of classes because language is acquired at a different rate for individuals, so we do a placement that first week where we see students and [accelerate] them based on the results of their test.”

A department chair at ECC asked some excellent questions about late registrants, questions that it seems should have been discussed prior to elimination of the policy at the college. “I’m wondering what is the demographic makeup of the students who tend to register late? If the people who are registering late are the students, in general, who can just not succeed in any case...what are we doing to supplement? Instead of saying, ‘oh, come back in eight

weeks,' or 'oh, come back next semester,' what are we doing to give them the life skills to register and actually show up the next time?"

The VP for Instructional Services at Eliot Community College (ECC) noted in relation to enrollment patterns: "I went back and I've graphed the last couple of years of registration since I've been here. And we're not seeing any changes...and I actually graphed registration back at my previous institution for about ten years. Patterns are the same. I think we can say we're not seeing a significant change....what I would love to be able to do is check withdrawal rates in courses...success rates...but we don't have that data in a way we really can check it."

Research Question 2D: Perceived outcomes related to instructional strategies

As referenced above, faculty interview participants unanimously stated that their instructional strategies have not changed as a result of changes in late registration policies. A department chair at ECC stated that students have a misconception that "on the first day of class, [the expectation is] to go over the syllabus and be released early, then the second day you start in." Research referred to in the literature review reflects the same idea. The faculty members interviewed did not say that their classes were modeled in this way. The department chair at ECC further stated that, "I never delayed anything, so for me, you come in late, you catch up." Further elaboration on the first-day of classes included, "I pull up on the projector: here's where your syllabus is, some of the major things in the syllabus, let's talk about the attendance policy, where you're going to submit your assignments. Let's talk about the approximate amount of time you're going to spend. Do you have your books? I don't go through the whole syllabus, and I tell them you have to read the syllabus just like you have to read the textbook. If there's anything in the syllabus, you're held to it, even if I don't say it the first day of class. I do tell

them who I am and my background, just so they know who's standing in front of them... basically, it's an introduction."

A dean at PCC noted: "I will say that initially, faculty were concerned that we might you know, disenfranchise our students and they just didn't feel comfortable with that... they didn't want to have to literally turn students away. It made them uncomfortable, which I completely understand as a former faculty member, so what we tried to do was be consistent....that said, faculty members have acknowledged that it is easier now because they can teach on the first day because what they were doing was not teaching. They knew they had a lot of people kind of straggling in, so they did a lot of orientation: going over the syllabi."

The Dean for Student Access at PCC added: "Some faculty love the fact they can be like, 'Sure, you can sit in my class without signing in, and that's great.' Others are, 'I don't want to be that person who has to say yes or no to people. There's a deadline. There's a deadline and now I can say no, and that's it.' I'm honestly getting a lot more negative feedback from people saying this is unfair. Think about students. Think about people who don't have the money and this is the only time that they can do this."

A department chair at PCC noted, "Faculty definitely like it from conversations with people [that I've had]. It's reduced the amount of chaos in that first week. It's made it a lot easier to focus on the students in your class. We haven't had any conversations about specific changes that have been made, although now that you mention it, that might be a conversation that's worth having, and I just haven't thought about having it."

Research Question 2E: Perceived outcomes related to the workload of advisors

It was not easy to gather data on the question of workload of advisors. Faculty members who responded to the survey and those who were interviewed typically had dual roles as instructors and advisors. Their responses were geared much more heavily towards the instructional side and how the elimination of late registration affected those duties. Responses indicated that advising really had not been affected. The registrars, however, did have comments on how their positions were affected. The registrar at ECC noted that there was “not a real change in my duties because I still have to do all the same processes as if we had late registration...let me take that back. I don’t have to gear up for late registration because we would have already taken care of that information, and there are, [as] with any rule, exceptions...those exceptions are handled in the individual’s instructional department...our registration is handled as a team effort.”

A department chair at ECC, who has advising duties, described the different times throughout the semester when students can register. After initially saying that advising duties had not changed as a result of the elimination of the late registration policy, there was a reflection that the policy change “has lessened the walk-in registrations.” A faculty member with advising responsibilities at FCC responded via survey writing, “Since there is no late registration, it requires me to be proactive and encourage students/advisees to register early so that they can get into the sequence courses that they need in order to smoothly continue their program of study. It also requires me to remind my students/advisees to make sure their tuition is paid before the due date so that they will not be dropped for nonpayment.”

The Future of Late Registration

Interviewees shared their thoughts on the future of the elimination of the late registration policy. The majority of the faculty members interviewed for this study were not supportive of the policy, but they understood why it was implemented and what the intended outcomes were. College leaders were far more hopeful about the policy and its future use. For example, the VP of Student Affairs at PCC shared, “We are continuing to assess this practice, and while not everyone agrees that it’s necessary, I think there is support and continued support of the initiative, as long as we do it in such a way that it’s not creating additional barriers for students.”

A faculty member at HCC posited in an interview, “I know some colleges that have had no late registration have gotten rid of the policy because they found that it just wasn’t working...it was causing problems, and it was decreasing enrollment....we have several other community colleges in this area that are within driving distance that have late registration, and if you get someone who definitely wants to come to college, and they come, and we say, ‘Well, you can’t come because our classes started yesterday.’ They’ll say “ok, I’ll go over to one of these other community colleges.””

Finally, the Dean for Student Access at PCC talked about the exceptions that are in place in regard to late registration: “We are seeing a high level of people coming in and saying, ‘Oh, it’s an exception. Let them in.’ Everybody wants the policy, still, we want the classes filled. We have this 80 percent full rate, so if your class doesn’t have 80 percent of its students, then it’s likely to be cancelled....administration has said, ‘do whatever you need to fill those classes.’ We are moving to a system...basically open enrollment...for most of the classes up to a point. After a certain point, you can’t register for new classes, but you can change the classes.”

Summary

This chapter presented the experiences of a sample of college leaders and instructional staff at four community colleges located across the United States that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years. In summary, the chapter illustrated the varied perspectives of the elimination of the policy and how that elimination has been viewed by the different participants. Experiences were presented in relation to the research questions by which this study was guided. Participants across institutions and positions indicated that they perceived that the late registration policy was eliminated based on research indicating that students who register early or on-time are more successful; success being defined as fewer withdrawals and passing final grades (A,B,C). Participants perceived that the intended outcomes of the elimination of the policy were, by and large, for students to be successful. Participants added, in addition to the definition stated above, that success included starting the class off on the right foot: essentially, being ready to start class on day one with all materials and all paperwork completed.

The process of presenting the findings was organized around research questions. As noted throughout the chapter, some of the research questions were not easily answered while others were easily answered by all participants. The data presented within this chapter aimed to adhere to the Phenomenological goal of understanding the depth and meaning of participants' experiences as opposed to the generation of a theory (Hays & Singh, 2012).

This chapter has presented the findings of the current study. Findings were organized by research question. Themes were discussed as they related to each research question, and quotes were presented to highlight the themes. Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter of the dissertation briefly summarizes the entire study, including the research problem, the research questions, the methodology, and the major findings. This chapter also discusses the findings of the current study compared to previous studies and presents the implications for the elimination of the late registration policy and recommendations for future research.

Research Problem and Research Questions

Late registration is a policy that has been debated for many years. Defined by most colleges as registration that occurs after the first day of the semester, this policy is viewed from two perspectives: beneficial to students who seek access or detrimental to students' ultimate success. There are two major benefits of late registration: adherence to the open access mission of the community college and an increase in the number of FTE (full-time equivalent) students (O'Banion, 2012). Students register late for several reasons, including finances and obligations to family and employers (Belcher & Patterson, 1990; Geltner, 1996; Seppanen, 1995; Windham, 1994). Allowing late registration at the community college reinforces the "open-door philosophy" (O'Banion, 2012), a philosophy that values working with students who have made the decision to attend. Late registration is also a way to increase enrollments in an era of declining enrollments. Late registration attracts students who have been turned away at other institutions with strict registration deadlines. Permitting late registration allows the community college to remain competitive with other rolling admissions institutions, such as many proprietary (for-profit) institutions.

On the other hand, there is another opinion that allowing late registration is not beneficial to students. Several studies have shown that late registration does not contribute to student success. For example, Smith, Street, and Olivarez (2002) examined persistence and late registration; a major finding indicated that students who registered late were much less likely to persist to the next semester than those who registered during early or regular registration. Hale and Bray (2011) researched student success and late registration; findings indicated that students registering early or on-time had higher semester grades than those students who registered late.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover the intended and perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration at four community colleges located across the United States. The colleges participating in the study had eliminated the late registration option within the last five years (2012-2017). This qualitative study was guided by the following research foci:

1. What led to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 1a. What were the intended outcomes of the policy eliminating late registration at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
2. What are the perceptions of college administrators and instructional staff regarding the outcomes related to the elimination of late registration at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?
 - 2a. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student success at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2b. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student engagement at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2c. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to enrollment patterns and marginalized populations at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2d. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to instructional strategies, particularly in the first week of classes, at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

2e. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to the workload of advisors at the four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?

Methodology

Late registration was studied qualitatively, utilizing the phenomenological method. A qualitative research design was selected for several reasons: (1) Most research on late registration has been quantitative in nature and has analyzed data related to completion, success, and persistence. (2) The populations consulted in the current study (college leaders and instructional staff) provided differing perspectives on the elimination of late registration. (3) The current study is assessing something very specific: a variety of perspectives regarding the effect of eliminating late registration within the last five years. An individual's perception is a valid place to start in phenomenology, a research method seeking data from anyone who has experienced the phenomenon in question (Moustakas, 1994). An important construct in

phenomenological research is the idea that perceptions are valid sources of information and all perceptions have meaning.

Also significant in phenomenology is the role of the researcher. Researcher reflexivity is key to the research process, requires active self-reflection, aids in the development of the research, and affects credibility and trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012). Researcher reflexivity includes the following: authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Data Collection. Data collection began in the fall of 2017 at four community colleges located in four different states across the United States. All four community colleges have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years. To maintain confidentiality, each community college was assigned a pseudonym. These pseudonyms were assigned randomly and are last names of writers for which the researcher has an affinity. The four colleges are: Hemingway Community College (HCC), Faulkner Community College (FCC), Eliot Community College (ECC), and Plath Community College (PCC). The community college with the largest population is PCC with 24,000 students. The smallest community college is FCC with a student population around 700. HCC has a student population around 7,000, and ECC has a student population around 8,000.

Data collection began with survey administration and analysis. Surveys were created and administered using SurveyMonkey; the survey was short in length, consisting of four questions. Surveys were sent to all faculty and advisors in three departments at each college: English, mathematics, and a technical program (chosen based on enrollment numbers at each college). The researcher sent the survey link to the department chair or dean with the request that the link be shared with all faculty and advisors within the department. One college did not list

department chairs or deans; therefore, surveys were sent directly to faculty and advisors at this particular college. Surveys stayed open for four weeks.

Survey administration and analysis was followed by requests for interviews with campus leaders (the president, VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Affairs, deans, department chairs, and the campus registrar) and instructional staff (faculty and advisors). Campus leaders and instructional staff were asked to participate based upon their positions and their knowledge of the phenomenon in question: the elimination of the late registration option. Once contacted and asked to participate, those who agreed to participate were asked to read and sign an informed consent document. Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants were asked if they had any concerns with the informed consent.

Permission to record the interview was asked of each participant. Once permission was granted, recording began using the researcher's cell phone. Field notes were taken along with the digital recordings of the interviews; additionally, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the research process and included notes and reflections. Transcription occurred after interviews were completed; transcription was completed using Express Scribe Transcription Software and a transcriber who had been used in the past by the researcher. Transcripts were checked for accuracy by the researcher, and changes were made on hard copies stored in the researcher's home office. Member checking occurred following transcription. Participants were e-mailed a copy of the transcript and asked to read it over for accuracy; if anything concerned participants about the transcription, they were asked to respond via e-mail with their concerns. Any concerns were addressed by the researcher. Transcription and transcription verification were followed by data explication.

Data Explication. Phenomenology aims to understand the depth and meaning of participants' experiences as opposed to the generation of a theory (Hays & Singh, 2012). With this in mind, the researcher does not analyze data, but rather explicates data. Data explication included the following steps: bracketing, the Phenomenological Reduction, listening to the interview for a sense of the whole, delineation of units of meaning, assessment of trustworthiness and credibility with a fellow researcher, clustering units of relevant meaning, determination of themes from clusters of meaning, member checking, modification of themes and summary, identification of general and unique themes for all interviews, and composite summary.

When bracketing, the researcher “examines and sets aside preconceived beliefs, values, and assumptions about the research topic and proposed research design” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 417). In the current study, bracketing was used to ensure that only the thoughts of the interviewee are being documented. The preconceived notions, values, and assumptions of the researcher were written down, acknowledged, and then promptly set aside. In the Phenomenological Reduction, the researcher considered the individual experience of each interview participant without interference from other experiences. After the first two steps, it was important to return to the interview in its entirety, listen to it and read the transcription. This step required that the researcher listen for non-verbal cues such as intonation, emphasis, and pauses (Hycner, 1985).

The next step is the delineation of units of meaning. This is a rigorous, time consuming process in which the researcher examined “every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and noted significant non-verbal communication in the transcript in order to elicit the participant’s meanings” (Hycner, 1985, p. 282). Trustworthiness and credibility occurred through the use of another researcher. This researcher, chosen by the primary researcher, read over interview

transcriptions and data explication to assess appropriate explication. Clustering units of relevant meaning required that the researcher attempt to determine whether any of the units of relevant meaning came together in a natural way. Clusters of meaning were then assessed for central themes. Themes were organized by research question.

Member checking occurred following determination of themes. Themes were shared, via e-mail, with interview participants. The intention of this step was to determine if the essence of the interview had been correctly captured. Modification of themes and summary was not necessary as interview participants did not disagree with the determined themes. General and unique themes for all interviews were then assessed. At this point, the researcher attempted to capture the overall essence of the phenomenon (the elimination of the late registration policy) as described by each participant.

Summary of the Results

Results were organized by research question. There were two main research questions; Research Question 1 had one sub-question. Research Question 2 had five sub-questions.

Participants were asked in Research Question 1 to discuss their understanding of why late registration was eliminated at their respective colleges. College leaders and staff (registrars) frequently responded to this question with references to previous studies that had been completed showing that students who register late are less successful. The Dean for Student Access at PCC said, “My understanding was that there was research that showed that students who registered late were not as successful as those who registered prior to the semester. There’s some data that was shown...basically it looked at each day and particularly, it showed that there was a decrease in persistence and GPA in those who registered after versus those who registered a week ahead, two weeks ahead, three weeks ahead, four weeks ahead. So, the committee got together and

decided that on-time registration was the way to go and implemented it...at the same time...there were other initiatives which kind of reduce what we call the DFW rate.”

Other responses referred to the intent to make the first week of class less disruptive for faculty members and their classes. A department chair from PCC remembers, “I actually started here before the on-time registration policy, and there were things I could never wrap my head around...we would routinely allow students to register one week, two weeks after the beginning of class, and it was actually disruptive at the level of the classroom. Students would go directly to the instructor, sometimes just walking right into a class that was in session. The professor is at the board lecturing, and there’s a classroom of people who registered on time, and you’ve got people seeking signatures.”

Faculty members responded to Research Question 1 by citing college leadership and those leaders’ perceptions as to why late registration can be a reason why students are less successful. A faculty member at Hemingway Community College (HCC) shared, “The administration felt that when the students register late...they miss some introduction to the class and sometimes, you know, maybe even two or three classes depending on how late they register. They felt that the students were not as likely to succeed because you know they [kind of] missed the foundation of the class, and so they thought by eliminating this that all the students would have to be there right from the beginning and it should help with student success.” Another faculty member at HCC shared, “Students registering late for classes were under-prepared, and data showed they were less successful than students who registered on-time. As a professor, anecdotally, I can verify that students who aren’t registered before classes have started are not prepared or as successful.”

Interviewees were asked about the intended outcomes of the elimination of the policy in Research Question 1A. Responses to this question, by leaders, faculty, and staff, referenced a desire for students to be successful. Success was described as students being ready to start classes on the first day, improved grades (A,B,C), and fewer student withdrawals. The Registrar from ECC noted that late registration was eliminated so that students “were more prepared to go into class and were ready for class. That is exactly what we wanted. We were aiming...to be sure that our students didn’t reel rushed or feel they were coming in behind.” The Dean of Workforce Development at FCC mentioned the desire for “the different aspects of college bureaucracy” including financial aid paperwork and advising as things that “we’re trying to encourage people to do, to get here, get here early, and take care of all those things.” The VP of Student Affairs at PCC said that the intended outcomes related to student success: “The intended outcome was student success, positioning students to be better prepared for starting class...the idea was to have them start on time; they are coming in at the start of class not missing information, not having to play catch up.”

College leaders, faculty, and staff were asked in Research Question 2 to discuss their perceptions regarding the outcomes. This was often a repeated answer as participants discussed this in their responses to Research Question 1A. Intended outcomes were combined with actual outcomes. Participants were occasionally able to reference data that had been gathered related to the outcomes. More often than not, participants spoke anecdotally about the outcomes, and several participants were unable to answer whether or not the policy had made a difference in student success. The VP of Student Affairs at PCC said, “We have a number of initiatives that started around that time [fall 2015] and therefore, I can’t say 100% which one or which of these have led to greater student success.” A department chair at PCC said, “I’m not sure I can speak

such a straightforward correspondence, but I do think it makes it easier to implement some of our other initiatives surrounding student success...I haven't seen a direct [correlation] – any data showing that on-time registration in and of itself, in a vacuum, without considering other things, has made a difference.”

Participants were asked in Research Question 2A to think more about their perceptions related to the outcomes of the policy elimination as it related to student success. As referenced above, when participants were asked for a definition of student success, references were made to letter grades and numbers of withdrawals. In many cases, this was not data that the participant had access to; in a couple of cases, college leaders were unsure as to whether or not that data were even accessible, meaning that the data had not been looked at since the policy change had been implemented. The Associate Senior VP for Student Affairs at PCC offered: “Is it [the change in policy] reducing stress and getting more students to do things earlier, including advising? Yes, it is. We can see from the numbers. We can see from the numbers of students who meet with their counselors and faculty. That does help move part of the calendar for all of us.”

It was difficult to address Research Question 2B which concerned student engagement. Faculty members, who interact the most frequently with students on a college campus, did not indicate any noticeable changes in student engagement. A faculty member at Hemingway Community College (HCC) said, “No, I don't think it's really made a change...I haven't seen a big change as far as...well, maybe at the beginning; there might be more people coming at the beginning on a more consistent basis. That could be possible...but I don't think engagement or anything like that has changed much.”

It was also difficult to address Research Question 2C, which asked participants to think about the policy change and enrollment patterns, especially related to marginalized populations. One college leader was able to discuss ESL students and exceptions that are made for them in relation to registration deadlines.

Another college leader asked, based on the research completed for this study, what the demographic makeup is for students who tend to register late, along with other excellent questions. “I’m wondering what is the demographic makeup of the students who tend to register late? If the people who are registering late are the students, in general, who can just not succeed in any case...what are we doing to supplement? Instead of saying, ‘oh, come back in eight weeks,’ or ‘oh, come back next semester,’ what are we doing to give them the life skills to register and actually show up the next time?” This leader exhibited an interest in understanding more about enrollment patterns of late registering students, but this was not information that had been shared.

Research Question 2D was posited to garner perceptions related to instructional strategies, especially in the first week of classes, and how or if those have changed since the policy changed. Faculty participants unanimously, in both survey and interview form, stated that their instructional strategies had not changed. College leaders believed that the policy change did make a difference, either very positively or very negatively. Leaders referenced some faculty who were appreciative of the change and not having to admit students late to their classes although there were others who were uncomfortable with the burden of turning students away. A department chair at ECC stated that, “I never delayed anything, so for me, you come in late, you catch up.” Further elaboration on the first-day of classes included a description of the syllabus review and the introduction to the class.

The final Research Question, 2E, asked participants to discuss perceptions related to the workload of advisors after the policy changed. This was most often answered by faculty members, who served as both instructional staff and as advisors. Faculty participants reflected more on the instructional side of their positions than on their advising responsibilities. When they were asked specifically about advising in this question, the indication was that advising had not really been affected. One of the registrars who was interviewed did indicate a slight change in duties in that there used to be an anticipation in the first week of classes for late registrants and the extra duties that come along with those students and their needs. That was something that had changed.

Although exceptions are made at each college for special circumstances requiring a student register late, the numbers of late registrants are much lower. The registrar at ECC noted that there was “not a real change in my duties because I still have to do all the same processes as if we had late registration...let me take that back. I don’t have to gear up for late registration because we would have already taken care of that information, and there are, [as] with any rule, exceptions...those exceptions are handled in the individual’s instructional department...our registration is handled as a team effort.”

Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the results of the current study. The topics addressed in this section are: the relationship of the findings of the current study to prior research, unanticipated findings from the current study, recommendations for educators based on the findings, and recommendations for future research.

Relationship to Prior Research

One of the most striking results of this study was the lack of truly isolated data that could prove eliminating late registration contributed to improved student success (measured in grades and numbers of withdrawals). The college leaders from Plath Community College were able to reference specific data that related to student success and the policy eliminating the late registration option. For example, the Dean for Student Access noted there was approximately a “4% difference in persistence rate and maybe a couple hundredths of a point in GPA. I can’t say that it’s (the elimination of late registration) having that much of an impact.” This appears to support Tinto’s Model of Attrition. In this model, Tinto (1975) asserted that student success in college, or lack thereof, is in part determined by characteristics established prior to admission; characteristics such as family background, skill and ability levels, and prior schooling experiences (Weiss, 1999). Tinto (1975) identified intention and commitment to educational goals as the two most important factors in student retention and eventual success. Nowhere in Tinto’s Model of Attrition is there mention of college policies. Success, according to Tinto, is determined by the student and his/her unique experiences, not by the college.

Bean and Metzner (1985) argued non-traditional students (25 years of age and older) do not fit into Tinto’s Model of Attrition (1975). Instead, these students, who make up a significant proportion of the community college student population, are more affected by environmental factors than by a failure to integrate into the academic environment. These environmental factors include “finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity to transfer” (Weiss, 1999, p.29). Success, according to Bean and Metzner, is determined by the student and his/her personal circumstances, not by college policies.

D'Amico, Morgan, and Rutherford (2011) asserted early completion of pre-enrollment activities (including application for admission, submission of financial aid documents, completion of placement test(s) and registration) would be beneficial for students and staff. Interviewees for the current study indicated the same. Several interviewees indicated that part of the idea behind eliminating late registration was to get students to campus early to take care of all of these pre-enrollment activities. Financial aid paperwork, specifically, was mentioned multiple times. Plath Community College refers to this early completion of pre-enrollment activities as “start smart.”

One of the research questions for the current study deals with the first week of class and how instructional strategies may have changed due to the elimination of late registration. Iannarelli, Bardsley, and Foote (2010) discussed faculty-utilized best practices for the first day of class. Their research indicated five major goals for the first day of class: “(a) grab the students’ attention, (b) introduce the instructor, (c) communicate the course objectives, (d) set a positive tone or atmosphere for the class, and (e) take care of administrative details” (Iannarelli, Bardsley, & Foote, 2010). Faculty members interviewed for the current study indicated their first class procedures had not changed due to the elimination of late registration; furthermore, interviewees indicated their first class procedures included many of the goals listed above. Iannarelli et al. (2010) specifically discussed the importance of going over the syllabus the first day; however, reading the syllabus in its entirety is not necessary. One of the interviewees mentioned precisely this situation: the syllabus is discussed on the first day but is not read in its entirety; instead, students are directed to read the remaining parts of the syllabus on their own as they would assignments from the textbook.

Wang and Pilarzyk (2007) indicated that a concern with allowing late registration is that those students registering late are more likely to submit financial aid documents late which affects the students' ability to pay for tuition, room and board, and textbooks. As stated above, the interview participants included in the current study indicated their colleges eliminated late registration, in part, to encourage early completion of pre-enrollment activities, including financial aid documents.

Bahr, Gross, Slay, and Christensen (2015) advised that all policies, including late registration, "must be considered and deliberated carefully and driven by the same empirically based 'culture of inquiry' that has been advocated for other aspects of institutional policy and practice that influence students' progress and achievement" (p. 362). As indicated in the results section of the current study, most of the interviewees, including the college leaders, were unable to speak to specific results as related to student success since the elimination of the late registration policy.

Unanticipated Findings

Although there was not a specific research question that asked about the future of late registration, this was something that frequently came up in participants' responses. Generally speaking, faculty members were not supportive of the elimination of the late registration option; they did indicate an understanding as to why late registration was eliminated, but having not seen any appreciable differences in their students or classrooms, they did not support continuing to deny students the late registration option. This faculty resistance was a unique feature of the current study as previous studies have shown that faculty members have been quite supportive of the elimination of the late registration option.

College administrators and senior leaders were much more positive about the policy and its future. Many of these leader participants indicated that the policy was being assessed and changed to meet the needs of students. These leaders saw more benefits than disadvantages to students and their success with this policy change.

Leaders and faculty members at each college discussed the exceptions that are made regarding the policy change. “No late registration” is not a hard and fast rule. Several participants also discussed how this policy might be affecting enrollment. For example, a faculty member at HCC pointed out that if a student is turned away at one college, there is most likely another college within driving distance that will accept him/her. This was a concern, especially with faculty as their employment depends upon student numbers. Classes must have students to run, and if enrollment is low, or if students are not allowed to register, those classes will be cancelled. Adjunct faculty, in particular, have reason to be concerned about enrollment as they are part-time and not guaranteed classes. If the “no late registration” policy is strictly enforced, and students are turned away, a section may not have sufficient enrollment. The adjunct faculty member assigned to that class has now lost anticipated work. Typically, classes are closed with very little warning; therefore, it is unlikely that the adjunct faculty member will be able to find a replacement class at another institution. Suddenly, this faculty member does not have a class to teach and has subsequently lost income and experience. This situation exacerbates the problems facing many adjunct faculty (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018). As a result, these important faculty members may not be available the following semester when the college needs her/him.

Recommendations for Educators

The results of this study provide several recommendations for educators as related to the elimination of the late registration policy. Having gathered and analyzed the perceptions of both

college leaders and instructional staff, as related to the elimination of the late registration policy, these recommendations are relatable to major stakeholders within the community college.

The first recommendation involves website design. In order to gather information, the websites of each college were scrutinized. Information was double checked against interview data to verify important aspects of the elimination of the late registration policy. This includes information such as important dates for registration, any fees associated with registering late, and contact information (e-mail and phone number) for individuals at the college to contact with regarding questions about registering late. This information was not easily accessible on any of the four college websites consulted for this study. It took an average of 15-20 minutes on each website to find the pertinent information. Community colleges are student-centered institutions of higher education, and it is in the student's interest to understand the policies. If eliminating late registration is a priority for a college, the website must be easily navigable, and this information must be more easily found by current students (who must know which classes they need to complete a degree or program), newly-admitted students registering for the first time, and adult learners returning to the college after several years in the workforce (who may have attended the college when the late registration policy was different). There should be an easily found page on each website that lists the important aspects of the policy change, including dates and fees, and a person(s) to contact with questions.

A second recommendation for educators involves communication, prior to policy change, with important stakeholders within the community college. The elimination of a policy like the late registration option is a major change. Community colleges, as discussed throughout this dissertation, are open-access institutions that have historically allowed students to begin classes when they are ready, even if that means beginning a class a week late. Students enrolling at the

community college are more likely to face barriers that make attending college difficult. They may be first-generation or minority or learning-disabled or non-traditional. For some students, there are multiple factors that must align in order for enrollment to take place: finances, job requirements, transportation, child care, and personal motivation. If things do not “come together” for a student until the week that classes begin, should the college turn him/her away, even if the mission is to give traditionally under-served people an opportunity to learn and advance their lives? Generally speaking, faculty and staff at the community college know these circumstances; they know that some people have a very “small window” of opportunity when things align for them to start at the college. Many of the faculty and staff have chosen to work at the community college because they want to help people for whom, due to circumstances beyond their control, life has simply been somewhat unfair. Eliminating this policy conflicts with that historical reputation. A surprising finding in this study was the lack of communication with instructional staff, mainly faculty members, prior to elimination. Faculty members have the most interaction with students. Garnering the perspectives of faculty members as related to the elimination of a policy like late registration is an important step that was neglected by most of the community colleges included in this study.

A third recommendation, which relates to the second recommendation, is communication with the campus community following elimination. In the future, colleges that choose to eliminate late registration should follow up with the campus community after a full year of elimination. Prior to communicating with the campus community members, data should be gathered showing withdrawal rates and grade distribution before and after elimination. Armed with these data, campus leaders should be prepared to talk with faculty, advisors, registrars, and financial aid officers. Data should be shared and discussed in these meetings, and faculty and

staff should be invited to share their perspectives as well. This was an important process, according to some of the interviewees included in the current study, that was neglected. As interviewees discussed the perceived effects of the elimination of the late registration policy, there were remarks from participants who noted there probably should have been a conversation post-elimination. Although one year is not enough time to really assess effectiveness, it is important to begin the data-gathering process and involve faculty and staff in this assessment and in the sharing of their perspectives related to effectiveness. It is important to remember that these campus community members interact with students on a daily basis. They are seeing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness in their classrooms and offices. Faculty members and advisors, in particular, are valuable resources in the evaluation of policy effectiveness. There are simply no other groups on a college campus that interact more with students. Faculty and advisors form the closest relationships with students. They gain their trust. To not involve these campus community members in important decision making that affects not only their vocations but their students is to lose the opportunity to tap into a resource with first-hand experience with the policy and its effect on student success.

A fourth recommendation for educators relates to consistency in policy implementation. It was clear through the interviews that campus leaders and instructional staff were and are committed to student success. This was the number one reason why the traditional late registration option, registration after the first class has met, was eliminated. Leaders wanted to see students be more successful, and they strongly believed that this policy change would aid in this goal. This fourth recommendation urges leaders to evaluate this policy and its overall effectiveness. If after evaluation, the elimination of the late registration option remains a priority, leaders are urged to commit to this policy change and avoid unnecessary amendments to the

policy or fluctuations in enforcement as a reaction to changes in enrollment. Unnecessary changes and inconsistencies are confusing for students, faculty, and staff. Consistency is key to policy buy-in for these important members of the college community.

A fifth recommendation is to set up a plan for evaluation and assessment prior to policy change. It is imperative that indicators of success be defined prior to implementation of a major policy change like the elimination of a late registration policy. Participants in this study were largely unable to confirm whether or not the elimination of the late registration policy was effective and what effective would even mean. If student success is the ultimate goal of the policy change, setting up how success will be measured and when is a necessary step prior to making the policy change. Many of the participants pointed to wanting to see a reduction in the number of DFWs. Other participants mentioned a desire to see more students present on the first day of class, engaging with the professor and the students and gaining valuable information about the course. Both of these markers of success need to be measured after implementation. Suggestions include measuring a year before implementation and a year after implementation so there are points of comparison.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several promising options for future research that emerge from this study. The current study did not include the perspectives of students. This would be a valuable direction to take in expanding the understanding about late registration and the effect of policies that allow or eliminate it. While many of the interviewees for the current study had spoken with students, and one of the colleges (Plath Community College) had included students in the planning and rolling out of the policy elimination, students were not personally interviewed. Their perspectives are important ones, especially those who are directly affected by the elimination of the late

registration option. Students may also be able to share why they registered late in the first place. Perhaps the student did not know that registering late was not an option; perhaps the student was having difficulty with the financial aid paperwork. There are many reasons why each individual student may register late; understanding these reasons may give colleges opportunities to assist these students as opposed to simply turning them away.

A second recommendation for future research is a replication of the current study. It would be especially interesting for this study to be replicated at a time when enrollment has declined due to economic prosperity or other reasons. When the current study was conducted, enrollment was not especially high but not especially low. According to Fain (2017), in the fall of 2017, when data collection for this study began, community colleges experienced a decline in enrollment of 1.7% (97,000 students). This decline was not as drastic as the decline in previous years, especially the 4.4% drop that occurred three years ago (2014). Additionally, inclusion of more than four community colleges would serve as a useful addition in a replication of this study. The current study included four community colleges, from four different states across the United States. A future study could double the number of colleges, perhaps adding a second college from each state, or expanding and having representation from several different states.

A third recommendation for future research is for a study of late registration that includes the perspectives of more community college staff members, particularly those working in financial aid. Financial aid officers may be able to speak more about how the financial aid paperwork process contributes to students registering late and how eliminating that policy affects these staff members and their interactions with students. Several of the interview participants in the current study made reference to financial aid paperwork and its relationship to late registration.

A fourth recommendation is to conduct a time-interrupted series study. In this study, students would be followed both before and after the policy change. It is suggested that at least three years before the policy elimination and three years after the policy elimination are analyzed. This study would look at how effective the elimination of the late registration policy is in regards to student success. Success could be defined in several ways: grade distribution, successful transfer rate, graduation rates, or retention.

A fifth recommendation is to design and test a conceptual model that looks at how late registration works in relationship to outcomes. For example, a conceptual model could look at whether or not late registration disrupts student attachment and engagement. Using students' SES (socioeconomic status), students would be in one of two groups: registered on-time or registered late. From those two groups, researchers could assess student belonging along with GPA and graduation rate. This would be useful in assessing how late registration affects students and their sense of belonging, which is directly related to the research by Tinto (1975) and Bean and Metzner (1985).

Conclusion

This study has been enlightening on several levels. The phenomenological approach forced the researcher to set aside personal beliefs during the data collection process. This neutrality was important and beneficial. Additionally, each interviewee needed to be treated as equally important. Each interviewee had a voice and a perspective that deserved the individualized attention that it received. There is clearly a hierarchy on any college campus, and title typically designates perceived importance. It is empowering that in a phenomenological study such as this one, the president is on equal footing with the instructor; the vice president is on equal footing with the dean. Each perspective mattered and revealed something new as

related to the elimination of a college-altering policy such as late registration. This study has been valuable in presenting the varying points of view on the policy eliminating late registration.

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APPENDIX A: QUALITATIVE SURVEY

This appendix features the qualitative survey.

Please respond to the following questions. If you need assistance with the survey, please contact Meredith Nourie-Manuele: mnour002@odu.edu or 803-981-2536

1. When did your employment with _____ Community College begin? Please respond with both the semester and the year (e.g. Spring 2014).
2. Are you aware of the recent change in the late registration policy at _____ Community College?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Why do you think late registration was eliminated at _____ Community College and how has this change in policy affected you and your position?
4. What is your e-mail address? _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Opening Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The questions today will revolve around your perceptions of the elimination of the late registration policy, as a _____ (faculty member, advisor, leader) at _____ (insert name of community college).

I have prepared eleven questions; my goal is to not take more than 30 minutes of your time.

With your permission, I will be audio recording this interview using my cell phone as well as taking occasional notes. Participation in this interview is optional, and you may opt out at any time. The purpose of the interview is for you to share your perspectives on the elimination of late registration. There are no right or wrong answers, and your answers will remain anonymous.

Do you have any questions before we begin? (Verify signed copy of informed consent; review; send copy to interviewee.)

1. What is your understanding of why late registration, defined as registration after classes have begun, was eliminated at _____ Community College?
2. What is your understanding of the intended outcomes from eliminating late registration at _____ Community College?
3. Now that late registration has officially been eliminated for _____ years at _____ Community College, what is your understanding of the actual outcomes? What has changed, if anything?
4. If a shorter term has been added as a replacement to registering late, how is the enrollment in those course offerings? What is the registration process for those courses?
5. How has student success been affected by the elimination of late registration?
6. How has student engagement been affected by the elimination of late registration?
7. What have the data shown in terms of numbers of withdrawals? Failures?

8. How have enrollment patterns, particularly related to first gen, ESL, learning disabled, and non-traditional students, changed as a result of the elimination of late registration?
9. How have instructional strategies, particularly in the first week of classes, been affected since the elimination of late registration?
10. What does a typical first class period look like now compared with before late registration was eliminated?
11. How has the workload of advisors been affected since the elimination of late registration? Is there a noticeable difference in paperwork and student appointments?

Thank you for your participation! I will be in touch with you via e-mail to verify accuracy of transcription and explication.

APPENDIX C: IRB LETTER FROM OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH



Physical Address

4111 Monarch Way, Suite 203
Norfolk, Virginia 23508

Mailing Address

Office of Research
1 Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
Phone(757) 683-3460
Fax(757) 683-5902

DATE: October 10, 2017

TO: Mitchell Williams

FROM: Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee

PROJECT TITLE: [1133889-1] :A Study of Late Registration at Four Community Colleges

REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: October 10, 2017

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 6.2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Jill Stefaniak at (757) 683-6696 or jstefani@odu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee's records.

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: A Study of Registration at Four Community Colleges

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The project entitled A Study of Registration at Four Community Colleges will take place via telephone, Skype, or if possible, face-to-face in a conference room at the community college being studied.

RESEARCHERS

Principal Investigator: Dr. Mitchell Williams, PhD, College of Education, Department of Education Foundations and Leadership

Investigator: Meredith Nourie-Manuele, MAT, College of Education, Department of Education Foundations and Leadership

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of late registration. Most studies have been quantitative in nature and have frequently examined the effect of late registration on academic success, persistence, and student characteristics (e.g. race, gender, first-generation). To date, none of them have explained the effect of the elimination of late registration from the perspectives of college leaders and instructional staff. This study will present the perspectives of a variety of campus community members on the perceived effects of eliminating late registration.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of perspectives regarding the effect of eliminating late registration. Participants are expected to take part in one brief (maximum of 20 minutes) primary interview. Once interviews are transcribed and data analysis has taken place, participants will be asked to review analysis for validity purposes; this review should take no more than 10 minutes. If you say YES, then your participation will last for no more than 30 total minutes which includes one interview and an e-mail exchange. The interview will take place either via telephone, Skype, or in a conference room at the participant's college. Approximately 32 campus community members (at four community colleges) will be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERION

You should have completed a survey, sent via e-mail, if you are a faculty member or an advisor. To the best of your knowledge, you should have been employed with the college before late registration was eliminated. Failure to comply with this criterion would keep you from participating in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: If you decide to participate in this study, there are no known risks associated with this research. However, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers want your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary.

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The researchers will take reasonable steps to keep private information, such as survey results and interview transcriptions, confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from the information, names of participants and college names, store information in a locked filing cabinet prior to its processing, and store all electronic data on a password protected computer. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of any harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Mitchell Williams at 757-683-4344 or Mrs. Meredith Nourie-Manuele at 803-981-2536, Dr. Jill Stefaniak, the current chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee in the College of Education at Old Dominion University, at 757-683-6696, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Mitchell Williams, mrwillia@odu.edu, 757-683-4344

Mrs. Meredith Nourie-Manuele, mnour002@odu.edu, 803-981-2536

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Jill Stefaniak, the current chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee in the College of Education, at 757-683-3802, jstefani@odu.edu, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name, Signature, & Date _____

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and

have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name, Signature, & Date _____

APPENDIX E: MEMO REQUESTING DOCUMENTS

To: _____

From: Meredith Nourie-Manuele, ODU Ph.D. Student

Date: _____

Re: Request for documents

_____:

I am a Ph.D. student in the Community College Leadership program at ODU. My dissertation will be examining the elimination of the late registration option, and _____ Community College is one of the colleges at which I am researching. I have acquired permission from _____ to conduct interviews beginning _____. In addition to the interviews, I am requesting any documentation that describes the policy change. This could include e-mails, memos, presentations, notes from any meetings where the policy was discussed. These documents would greatly supplement my interview data in ascertaining why late registration was eliminated and how the policy change was communicated with leaders, faculty, staff, and students.

If you have any questions, please contact me at mnour002@odu.edu or 803-981-2536.

Thank you for your assistance,

Meredith Nourie-Manuele

APPENDIX F: DATA SOURCES

Research Foci	Data Sources
1. What led to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges that have eliminated the late registration option in the last five years?	Institution provided records; interview question 1; survey question 3
1a. What were the intended outcomes of the policy eliminating late registration at the four community colleges?	Institution provided records; interview question 2; survey question 3
2. What are the perceptions of college administrators and instructional staff regarding the outcomes related to the elimination of late registration at four community colleges?	Interview question 3; interview question 4; survey question 3
2a. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student success at four community colleges?	Interview question 5; interview question 6; survey question 3
2b. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to student engagement at four community colleges?	Interview question 5; interview question 6; survey question 3
2c. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to enrollment patterns and marginalized populations at four community colleges?	Interview question 4; interview question 7; survey question 3
2d. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to instructional strategies, particularly in the first week of classes at four community colleges?	Interview question 8; interview question 9
2e. What are the perceived outcomes of the elimination of late registration related to the workload of advisors?	Interview question 10; interview question 11; survey question 3

MEREDITH C. NOURIE-MANUELE

Department of Educational Foundations & Leadership
 Graduate Student
 Old Dominion University
 Norfolk, VA 23529

Home: (803)-324-1073
 Cell: (803)-981-2536
mnour002@odu.edu
meredithcnourie@gmail.com

EDUCATION

- 2018 Ph.D. in Community College Leadership, Division of
 Educational Foundations & Leadership, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
 Major Field: Community College Leadership.
 Research interests: Developmental education, dual enrollment, late registration, summer
 bridge programs, learning communities, first generation students.
 Dissertation title: A Study of Late Registration at Four Community Colleges
- 2009 Master of Arts in Teaching, English Education, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC.
- 2003 Bachelor of Arts, French, Columbia College, Columbia, SC.

Other Education/Training

- 2014 Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie,
 WI.
- 2004 Intensive Language/Culture Immersion, The University of Laval, Quebec City, Quebec,
 Canada.

Software Programs/Learning Management Systems

SPSS, Microsoft Office Suite, Articulate Storyline, Blackboard, Moodle, CampusVue, E-
 Companion, D2L

TEACHING EXPERIENCEHigher Education

The Art Institute of Charlotte, Charlotte, NC Instructor (Winter 2011-Fall 2016)
 Fundamentals of English (ENG 098)
 Reading Comprehension (ENG 083)
 Composition (ENG 104)

Composition and Research (ENG 105)
 Modern American Poetry (ENG 303)
 Creative Writing (ENG 305)

College of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City, NC Distance Learning Instructor (Fall 2015)
 Writing and Inquiry (ENG 111)

York Technical College, Rock Hill, SC Instructor (2013-2014)
 Intro to Composition (ENG 100)
 English Composition I (ENG 101)

Other Experience

Rock Hill High School Rock Hill, SC Grades 9-12 ESL Teacher (2017-2018)

Duties include teaching of ESL content courses, focusing on grammar and communication and assisting students with content related to all other courses with the assistance of regular, classroom teachers.

Internship, Old Dominion University, Department of Community College Leadership (2016)

Duties included working on alumni networking and research related to community college mission statements across the country

Chester Senior High School Chester, SC Grades 9 & 11 English Teacher (2009-2010)

Duties included teaching of English courses, coaching of junior varsity volleyball

Rock Hill Center for Adult Education Rock Hill, SC Tutor and GED Instructor (2008-2010)

Duties included supervision of student volunteers from Winthrop University, tutoring of students in reading and math, teaching of GED preparatory classes in reading and writing

Professional Affiliations

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

PUBLICATIONS

Nourie, M. (2011). A first-year teacher's top ten mistakes. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 84(6), 231-232. (Peer Reviewed)

Williams, M.R., & Nourie-Manuele, M. The role of the community college in alleviating poverty: An examination of mission statements. Approved for publication as a chapter in *New Directions for Community Colleges* (Peer Reviewed). Publication in December of 2018.

Book Review

Nourie-Manuele, M. (2016). [Review of the book *Fostering Habits of Mind in Today's Students: A New Approach to Developmental Education*]. Under review at *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*.

Work in Progress

Nourie-Manuele, M. *Dual enrollment: A literature review*. In preparation for submission to *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*

Nourie, A. & Nourie-Manuele, M. *Up one river, down another: Teaching Heart of Darkness and Huckleberry Finn*. In preparation for submission to *Comparative Literature Studies*

PRESENTATIONS

Nourie-Manuele, M. (2017, January). Opinion Editorial Writing and *Requiem for the American Dream*. Presented at the South Carolina Council for Teachers of English Annual Conference, Kiawah Island, SC.

SERVICE

Faculty Advisor for Graphic Design Club, 2015-2016

C-Scholar, South University, 2015-2016

QEP Campus Representative, The Art Institute of Charlotte, 2014-2015

Curriculum Committee Chair, The Art Institute of Charlotte, 2014-2015

Technology Committee Member, The Art Institute of Charlotte, 2014-2016

Faculty Mentor to Adjunct English Instructors, The Art Institute of Charlotte, 2012-2016

Library Committee Member, The Art Institute of Charlotte, 2011-2014