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Non-Traditional Students Attitudes toward Academic Advising and Its Affects on the Successful Completion of Education Programs

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**NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARD ACADEMIC
ADVISING AND ITS AFFECT ON THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies

Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
The Degree of Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies

By

Parisa Y. Fetherson

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Parisa Y. Fetherson under the direction of Dr. John Ritz. It was submitted to the graduate faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

APPROVED BY: _____ DATE: _____

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Technology continues to advance at a rapid pace and President Obama has a goal to lead the world with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020.

Technological advances and the President's initiative to "get the skills employers need and match them to good jobs that need to be filled right now" (Aoun, 2014, para. 1), working professionals need to initiate actions that will make them competitive in the job market and qualified to obtain full time employment that provides middle class salaries and benefits. This action usually comes in the form of attending a college or university or career and technical education program so one can gain the knowledge, credentials, and skills needed to meet the requirements of today's workplace. Older adult students, considered non-traditional college students, have competing life challenges that can interfere with their pursuit of higher education such as balancing work, school, and life, as well as adjusting to college life and college work. In order to successfully achieve their academic goals, non-traditional college students will need advisement that will help guide them on a path to successfully completing their academic program. This study was designed to conduct exploratory research in an attempt to find empirical data that shows if non-traditional college students pursue academic advising and the impact academic advising has on non-traditional college student's successful completion of a higher education academic program.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine non-traditional student's attitudes toward academic advising and its effect on the completion of their education goal.

Research Objectives

To answer the problem of this research study, the following research objectives were used as a guide:

RO₁: Determine if non-traditional students participate in academic advising when pursuing higher education

RO₂: Determine if non-traditional students experienced challenges normally associated with pursuing higher education.

RO₃: Describe the impact academic advising has on the successful completion of higher education for non-traditional students.

Background and Significance

"In 1999–2000, 40 percent of all enrollees were in their mid-20s or older, with a large proportion of them attending part time and having dependents" (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, p. 912). Non-traditional college students, also called adult students or adult learners, are typically viewed as those students who do not attend college immediately upon graduation from high school and are aged 25 and older (Pelletier, 2010, p. 2). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) identifies non-traditional college students by seven characteristics (Choy, 2002, p. 2):

- (1) Does not enter post secondary education the same year after completion of high school,
- (2) Attends part time for part of the academic year,
- (3) Works full time (more than 35 hours per week),
- (4) Financially independent,
- (5) Has

dependents other than a spouse, (6) Single parent, and (7) Does not have a high school diploma; completed a GED or other high school equivalency.

Many non-traditional college students are high school graduates, so all seven characteristics do not define all non-traditional college students. However many have at least two or three of these characteristics. In order for these students to achieve academic excellence, achieve their academic goals, and balance their lives between work, life, and school, they will need assistance, mostly in the form of academic advice in order to accomplish this. Non-traditional college students "view the structure of education differently than do traditional students" (Pelletier, 2010, p. 3). Since non-traditional students are typically faced with the challenge of balancing work, life, and school, these students tend to be more focused on their studies and try to apply what they learn to real world situations. As much as non-traditional college students strive to complete higher education, there are many factors that influence their likelihood of achieving that goal. According to Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005), "Prolonged enrollment is easily interrupted by periods of absence from school and this can interfere with the continuity of students' learning. Part-time students may thus have a more difficult time progressing from basic to more advanced courses, and this disrupted progression can act as an obstacle to degree completion" (p. 913). Another significant factor that affects the completion of academic goals for non-traditional students is the lack of availability to and interaction with instructors and advisors because of location and/or accessibility. Most instructor's and advisor's office hours are during normal working hours (9am-5pm), therefore causing these students to miss out on the opportunity to take advantage of services normally available to traditional students. This lack of availability to support services "can result

in a more limited support system to help them when problems arise" (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, p. 913).

It is important to explore the relationship between academic advising and student success because "the quality of interaction between a student and a concerned individual on campus, often through academic advising, is a key contributor to college retention" (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013, p. 7). The majority of research conducted on academic advising involves student satisfaction with academic advising. However, this researcher believes that because of the many challenges and influences that can affect non-traditional college student retention and completion, it is also important to explore the attitudes of non-traditional students toward academic advising as it relates to their academic pursuit in order to determine if the academic advising provided by institutions of higher learning is adequate, relevant, and beneficial.

Limitations

This study was limited to a sampling of college students who work or live on or within a 50 mile radius of Marine Corps Base Quantico VA. Additionally, participants in the study may still be in pursuit of their education goal, therefore it could not be determined if advising had an impact on them completing their education requirements.

Assumptions

The results of this study were based on the following assumptions:

1. Non-traditional college students have access to academic advising whether online or on campus.
2. Non-traditional college students are not aware of the impact academic advising has on academic success.

3. Academic advising will increase non-traditional student's chances of efficiently completing the requirements for higher education.

Procedures

Questions and a Likert scale instrument were developed and distributed to non-traditional students who were currently in pursuit of higher education or who had completed it. The students were asked questions that explored the experiences non-traditional students had with academic advising and its affect on the completion of their academic goals. The results of the data collection were analyzed to answer this study's research objectives.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader:

Academic Advising: Insight or direction from a school official to a student on an academic, employment, social, or personal matter.

Barriers: Anything that restrains or obstructs progress or access.

Institution of Higher Learning: A school that awards college degrees and/or certificates and credentials for training programs.

Middle Class: Economic, cultural class, having approximately average status, income, education, tastes, and the like.

Non-traditional student: College students who enter college after age of 25 and typically attend classes through distance learning and during the evening and weekend hours. Also called adult students, adult learners, or postsecondary learners.

Post Secondary Education: Formal education or training beyond high school; it may be a college degree or career and technical education credentials. Also called Higher Education.

Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals.

Traditional College Student: College students who enter college immediately upon graduation from high school or within the first year of graduating high school and attend on campus.

Overview of Chapters

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between academic advising and college success as it relates to the attitudes of non-traditional college students toward academic advising. Chapter II will provide a review of literature that will provide a basis for which this exploration will be founded. Chapter III will provide a description of the methods, procedures, and instruments used to gather the data for this research. The terms non-traditional student, adult student, and adult learners will be used interchangeably throughout this study. Chapter IV will present the finding of this study, and Chapter V will provide a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While there are many characteristics used to describe non-traditional students, educators and researchers agree that there is a significant increase in non-traditional students pursuing higher education. This chapter will provide an overview of the previous research and published information that addresses the reasons non-traditional students attend higher education, the challenges they face, their academic needs while attending college, and how academic advising supports non-traditional students and its impact on the successful completion of their education goals.

Why Non-Traditional Students Pursue Higher Education

This researcher previously established non-traditional students as students who do not attend college after high school and are usually age 25 or older. "To keep its competitive edge in the global innovation based economy, the United States needs to increase the number of Americans that possess postsecondary levels of academic and applied skills" (Soares, 2013, p. 1). "According to some estimates, nontraditional students—returning adults, part-time students, midcareer professionals, and every other permutation of learner—now make up 85 percent of all undergraduates" (Aoun, 2014, para. 3). There are various reasons non-traditional students feel the need to return to school. Bland (2003) cited the following as reasons adult learners pursue higher education:

Some are displaced workers transitioning from the industrial to the information age. They may be facing career changes at a time in their lives when they thought

they would be planning for retirement. Some adult learners have retired from one career and have embarked on another thus requiring retraining or education.

And, minority students and others who could not afford education in earlier years are seeking to enhance their skills and abilities. (p. 6)

Another perspective on why adult learners participate in higher education is included in Soares' (2013) five commonalities that non-traditional students share: (a) They are needed wage earners for themselves or their families, (b) Combine work and learning at the same time or move between them frequently, (c) Pursure knowledge, skills, and credentials that employers will recognize and compensate, (d) Require developmental education to be successful in college-level courses, and (e) Seek academic/career advising to navigate their complex path to a degree (p. 2). With all these factors facing the non-traditional student, they realize that furthering their education is the best way to remain competitive in today's workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "workers with a bachelor's degree see a 62% jump in median earnings above those who just graduated from high school" (Aoun, 2014, para. 7). Non-traditional students are unique in that they are usually much older than the traditional students they will be sharing the classroom with and they bring life experience to the classroom and other ways of knowing. In that regard, they will face a different set of challenges during their pursuit of higher education than their younger counterparts.

Challenges Non-Traditional Students Face in Higher Education

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) "argue that adult students encounter a number of biological, psychological, and sociological changes as they grow older, all of which can affect learning" (as cited in Ryan, 2003, p. 2). Since non-traditional students have

multiple roles such as parent, employee, student, and caregiver to elderly parents, the challenges they face significantly differ from the challenges traditional students face. Considering the challenges non-traditional students face, one would conclude that stress would be the most significant challenge for non-traditional students attending higher education. However, contrary to popular belief, a study on the stressors of college life for non-traditional students conducted by Michigan State University researchers concluded just the opposite. Forty-seven non-traditional students, ages 24-54, participated in the study and the findings indicate that "non-traditional students experienced less school-related stress" (Dill & Henley, 1998, p. 30). The findings further indicate that success with other roles outside of college increases non-traditional students overall confidence and "that they may have cushioned themselves from stressful academic events by gaining high self-appraisal in other roles" (Dill & Henley, 1998, p. 30). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "nearly a quarter of postsecondary students in the United States (3.9 million) are parents. Half of student parents are married, and half are unmarried" (Soares, 2013, p. 6). Marriage and parenting both have their own challenges, but add to those roles the challenge of attending postsecondary education, the overall challenge of balancing one's life increases exponentially.

Susan C. Aldridge, President of the University of Maryland, University College, describes the challenges of non-traditional students as working, part-time and full-time, which means they go to school on a part-time basis. Many of them have children or others that they are supporting financially (Pelletier, 2010, p. 3). Aldridge also believes that adult students view the structure of education differently than traditional students and have a hard time with the length of semesters, parking on the campus, taking classes

based on a traditional schedule of Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday, because their lives are so unpredictable, and accessing advising/counseling services between the hours of 9 to 5 because they would have to leave work to do so (Pelletier, 2010, p. 3). Soares (2013) agrees that "our traditional system of two and four year colleges and universities with their campus-based, semester-timed, credit-hour driven model of instructional delivery is not well suited to educate post-traditional learners" (p. 2). Non-traditional students tend to agree with this view. A 2007 national survey of 1,500 adult students conducted by Lumina Foundation revealed key factors that support the success of non-traditional learners. These factors include: Convenience to work and home, affordability, good information regarding programs and processes, child care supports, and more convenient course delivery systems" (Soares, 2013, p. 8).

A study by Cross (1981) defined barriers that older students could expect to face in higher education. She defined them as situational barriers and are "those relating to scheduling problems, home responsibilities, child care, finances, and health" (p. 98) (as cited in Colvin, 2013, p. 22). Other challenges non-traditional students face are lack of financial resources to continue their education, balancing work, family, and education obligations, struggles with academics because of the amount of time away from formal education, and receiving credit for prior learning and experience. Non-traditional students also have less time to participate in campus social activities due to family or work commitments.

Perspectives on Academic Advising

It was during the 1870s, when elective courses were introduced to colleges and universities and the need arose for advisors to guide students in the successful pursuit of

their chosen education paths (Gordon, Habley, Grites, & Associates, 2008). In 1877, Daniel Coit Gilman, President at Johns Hopkins University, introduced the word "adviser" to refer to someone who gave direction to a student concerning an academic, social, employment, or personal matter and established the responsibilities of the role of adviser (Gordon, Habley, Grites, & Associates, 2008). O'Bannon (2012) states "the purpose of academic advising is to help students select a program of study to meet life and vocational goals" (p. 43). From the establishment of academic advising in 1877 to the present, scholars and educators believe that academic advising is a necessary part of the process for successful completion of an education pursuit. Lowe and Toney (2000) argue that "with the increasing diversity of students attending colleges and universities, advisors play a key role in addressing the special needs of non-traditional students" (p. 93) (as cited in Marques and Luna, 2005, p. 5).

There are two approaches of advising, prescriptive and developmental.

Prescriptive advising is more directive and usually involves a one-way conversation with the advisor or counselor addressing the issue of course selection and the policies and regulations of the college or university. This type of counseling is one directional, limits student input, usually a single event, and empowers the advisor, not the student.

Developmental advising on the other hand is a shared responsibility, an ongoing process, strengthens the advisor/advisee relationship, and empowers the student (Bland, 2003).

Academic advisors understand the uniqueness and diversity that non-traditional students bring to higher education. They are prepared to support their needs and assist them as they attempt to navigate a world they are not familiar with and prepare them to have a successful experience and successfully achieve their education goals. Academic

advisors and educators generally agree that developmental advising and a peer to peer relationship or partnership with non-traditional students is the best way to achieve academic success, "thus higher education is experiencing a shift from prescriptive (course scheduling) advising to developmental academic advising, taking a holistic approach to student advising" (Strommer, 1995, as cited in Bland 2003, p. 6). Marques and Luna (2005) also support the shift from prescriptive advising to developmental advising and state:

The type of support these returning students need more closely resembles a trustworthy peer relationship than a mentorship, thus an ongoing relationship with a professional full-time advisor instead of a series of brief encounters with a faculty member whose priorities are predominantly geared toward teaching and only secondarily toward advising. (p. 6)

To further illustrate the shift to developmental advising, Marques (2005) published a list of best practices in adult advising, compiled based on the experiences of fellow professional adult advisors (p. 4), and O'Bannon (2012) developed a five step model for advising adult learners that include (a) Explore life goals, (b) Explore vocational goals, (c) Choose a program, (d) Choose a course, and (e) Schedule courses. His position is that "adult learners need to be supported by a team of committed, qualified advisors, who assist students in each of the five steps" (O'Bannon, 2012).

Research repeatedly shows that non-traditional students prefer and require a different approach to pursuing higher education such as accelerated courses, distance learning opportunities, and multiple ways to access faculty and student services. It is also the belief of scholars, educators, and researchers that effective academic advising will

assist non-traditional students in overcoming some of the challenges and barriers they face and allow them to successfully navigate the college life and college work.

Retention of Non-Traditional Students in Higher Education

"It is interesting that non-traditional age students tend to perform at higher academic levels than do traditional-age students despite experiencing a greater number of stressors and managing more commitments" (Carlan, 2001, as cited in Lundberg, McIntire, & Creassman, 2008, p. 58). Lundberg, McIntire, and Creassman (2008) indicate that self-efficacy is the primary reason non-traditional students perform better than traditional students and that the multiple roles they are engaged in (parent, spouse, full-time employee, etc.) "serve as sources of social support that buffers against some of the stressors associated with pursuing an academic degree" (p. 59). However, even with this social support system, prior research shows low completion rates for non-traditional students. Some of the reasons previously cited as challenges that non-traditional students face while pursuing higher education are some of the same reasons they do not complete their education goals. According to Soares (2013), "six years after beginning postsecondary studies, 62 percent of adult learners had not completed a degree or certificate and were no longer enrolled, compared with 39 percent of students who work" (p. 8). According to NCES (2002b), "non-traditional students who enrolled in 1989-1990 with the intention of obtaining a bachelor's degree, only 31 percent had earned one by 1994" (as cited in Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, p. 912). A study conducted by Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) cite three major themes that play a role in completion of education goals for non-traditional students: (a) enrollment status (part-time versus full-time), (b) human capital characteristics (return on investment, cognitive ability), and (c) family-school nexus

(marriage, parenting). These themes can influence the pursuit of an education goal either positively or negatively and therefore can affect the attrition of non-traditional students. A study on the impact on attrition of non-traditional students conducted by Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) investigated how meaningfulness of the learning experience affected retention. Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) theorize that the ability of adults to construct meaningful learning (learning that can help them solve problems and can be applied to real life situations), "may contribute to their positive academic performance despite lower levels of time and energy they invest in the educational environment" (p. 38), thus contributing to successful completion of their education goals. Researchers recognize that non-traditional students sometimes struggle when balancing work, life, and school and that effective academic advising can be the difference between successfully completing their education goals or not.

Summary

There are many reasons non-traditional students begin or return to higher education but most often the pursuit has nothing to do with the mere desire for a higher education. Acquiring new skills or enhancing current skills are the primary reasons adults pursue higher education. The challenges non-traditional students face are varied ranging from finding financial resources to finding time, effort, and child care. However, as stated above effective academic advising can assist the non-traditional student with having a positive learning experience thereby improving the student's chances of completing their education goals.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was prepared using descriptive research to determine non-traditional students attitudes toward academic advising. This chapter includes sections dealing with the population, the survey design, data collection methods, and statistical analysis methods.

Population

The population for this study included full-time and part-time, male and female, non-traditional students who visited the Marine Corps Base Quantico Education Center for academic advising between January - April 2014. These students work or live within 50 miles of Marine Corps Base Quantico and attended various schools either face-to-face, online, or both. The students were enrolled in various programs ranging from certificate programs to graduate degrees. The total population of students who visited Marine Corps Base Quantico for academic advising between January - April 2014 was approximately 155 students.

Instrument Design

The instrument used was a two page survey designed to answer the research objectives of this study. Section 1 consists of thirteen (13) questions. Questions 1-4 were designed to collect limited demographic information, Questions 5-10 were designed to collect information regarding the students educational pursuit, and Questions 11-13 were designed to determine if students participated in academic advising at their institution of higher learning. Section 2 of the instrument consists of fifteen (15) Likert scale statements using a rating of zero (0) to five (5). The ratings were strongly agree (SA)

counting as five (5) points, agree (A) counting as four (4) points, undecided (UD) counting as three (3) points, disagree (D) counting as two (2) points, strongly disagree (SD) counting as one (1) point, and not applicable (NA) counting as zero (0) points. The statements were designed to determine the student's attitude toward academic advising, student services, accessibility of their instructor/professor, the time it took to complete their education goal, and the amount of distance learning/online courses offered at their institution of higher learning. The questions and statements in the survey were designed to provide responses that achieve the objectives of this study. The instrument design did not provide an area for comments or remarks. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

A population of non-traditional students who visited the Marine Corps Base Quantico Education Center from January - April 2014 were emailed a cover letter and a link to the survey seeking their responses and attitude toward academic advising at their institution of higher learning. The students were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous.

Statistical Analysis

The data in Section 1 was reviewed to determine if the subjects experienced any of the challenges normally associated with pursuing higher education. These data can be used for future research to compare similar demographics and challenges of future non-traditional students to determine if any changes are taking place.

The data from Section 2 of the survey was reviewed to determine if academic advising had an effect on the successful completion of the subject's education goals. The mean, median, and standard deviation was calculated for the responses from the Likert

scale statements to determine the subjects attitudes toward the academic advising they received from their institution of higher learning.

Summary

Chapter III discussed the methods and procedures used to obtain research data for this study. The population of this study was non-traditional students who visited the Marine Corps Base Quantico Education Center for academic advising between January and April 2014. The instrument design for this study was a two part survey that will assist the researcher in determining student attitudes toward academic advising and if academic advising played a role in the completion of the student's education goal. The data will be analyzed to determine percentages of the responses to the questions in Section 1 of the survey and the mean, median, and standard deviation of the responses in Section 2 will be calculated to determine non-traditional students attitudes toward academic advising. The findings of these data will be discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of non-traditional college students toward academic advising and its effect on completing their education goal. The data were used to determine if academic advising made a difference in non-traditional students successfully completing their education goal.

Response Rate

A two part survey was provided to the population via email. Twenty-nine of 155 surveys were returned which resulted in a 19% return rate. All students participated voluntarily and their responses were reported anonymously. The subjects were asked to respond to questions in Section 1 that solicited limited demographic data (age, gender, relationship status, and whether or not they have children), as well as data that determined their reason for pursuing higher education, their education goal, the time it took to complete their education goal, and if they dropped out of their education program. These questions helped to determine if subjects experienced challenges normally associated with non-traditional students who pursue higher education. Subjects were also asked to respond to Likert scale statements in Section 2 that asked about their attitude toward academic advising and other student services their education institution offers. The ratings assigned to the statements was 0-5 with zero (0) assigned to not applicable (NA) responses and five (5) assigned to strongly agree (SA) responses. The survey responses in Section 2 were calculated to determine the mean, median, and standard deviation for each statement. Following is a report on each question and statement relevant to this study.

Section 1 Questions

Questions 1 asked the subject's gender. Response choices were male, to which 55% (16) of the subjects responded, and female to which 45% (13) of the subjects responded. The majority of the respondents were male. See Table 1.

Table 1

Subjects Response to Question 1

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Male	55%	16
Female	45%	13
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 2 asked the subject's age. Response choices were 18-24 to which 21% (6) of the subjects responded, 25-34 to which 34% (10) of the subject responded, 35-44 to which 14% (4) of the subjects responded, 45-54, to which 21% (6) of the subjects responded, 55-64 to which 7% (2) of the subjects responded, 65-74, to which 0 subjects responded, and 75 or older to which 0 subjects responded. The majority of the subjects who responded were in the age category of 25-34. See Table 2.

Table 2

Subjects Response to Question 2

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
18-24	21%	6
25-34	34%	10
35-44	14%	4
45-54	21%	6
55-64	7%	2
65-74	0.00%	0
75 or older	0.00%	0
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 3 asked the subject's current relationship status. Response choices were married to which 69% (20) of the subjects responded and single to which 31% (9) of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects were married. See Table 3.

Table 3

Subjects Response to Question 3

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Married	69%	20
Single	31%	9
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest whole number

Question 4 asked subjects if they had children under the age of 18. Response choices were yes, to which 38% (11) of the subjects responded and no, to which 62% (18) of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects did not have children under the age of 18. See Table 4.

Table 4

Subjects Response to Question 4

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	38%	11
No	62%	18
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 5 asked subjects the year they obtained their high school diploma (or equivalency). Subjects were asked to respond by entering the four digit year. Responses to Question 5 were: 2 subjects entered 1974; 1 subject entered 1977; 2 subjects entered 1979; 1 subject entered 1983; 1 subject entered 1986; 1 subject entered 1987; 1 subject entered 1988; 1 subject entered 1992; 1 subject entered 1994; 1 subject entered 1996; 2 subjects entered 1998; 3 subjects entered 2000; 1 subject entered 2001; 2 subjects entered 2002; 1 subject entered 2003; 1 subject entered 2006; 2 subjects entered 2007; 1

subject entered 2008; 2 subjects entered 2009; 1 subject entered 2010; and 1 subject entered 2013. The subjects obtained their high school diploma (or equivalency) over various years, but the year 2000 was the year that was entered the most. See Table 5.

Table 5

Subjects Response to Question 5

<u>Subject's Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
1974	2
1977	1
1979	2
1983	1
1986	1
1987	1
1988	1
1992	1
1994	1
1996	1
1998	2
2000	3
2001	1
2002	2
2003	1
2006	1
2007	2
2008	1
2009	2
2010	1
2013	1
Total	29

Question 6 asked subjects the primary reason for pursuing higher education.

Response choices were degree/skills required to obtain an occupation, to which 21% (6) of the subjects responded; personal goal, to which 41% (12) of the subjects responded; to earn more money, to which 21% (6) of the subjects responded; career change, to which 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded; enhance skills and abilities, to which 10% (3) of the subjects responded; and other to which 3.5 % (1) of the subjects responded stating "social pressure." The majority of the subjects chose "personal growth" as the reason for pursuing higher education. See Table 6.

Table 6

Subjects Response to Question 6

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Degree/skills required to obtain an occupation	21%	6
Personal growth	41%	12
To earn more money	21%	6
Career Change	3.5%	1
Enhance skills and abilities	10%	3
Other (please specify)	3.5%	1
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 7 asked subjects what education goal they were pursuing. Response choices were career and technical education, to which 0 subjects responded; Associates Degree, to which 13.8% (4) of the subjects responded; Associate level Certificate, to which 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded; Bachelors Degree, to which 34% (10) of the subjects responded; Bachelors Level Certificate, to which 0 subjects responded; Graduate Degree, to which 45% (13) of the subjects responded, and Masters Level Certificate to which 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects were pursuing a Graduate Degree, closely followed by the Bachelors Degree. See Table 7.

Question 8 asked subjects if they had completed their education goal. Response choices were yes, to which 21% (6) of the subjects responded, and no to which 79% (23) of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects had not completed their education goal. See Table 8.

Table 7

Subjects Response to Question 7

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Career and Technical Education (license, certificate, training, etc.)	0.00%	0
Associates Degree	13.8%	4
Associates Level Certificate	3.5%	1
Bachelors Degree	34%	10
Bachelors Level Certificate	0.00%	0
Graduate Degree (Masters, Doctorate)	45%	13
Masters Level Certificate	3.5%	1
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Table 8

Subjects Response to Question 8

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	21%	6
No	79%	23
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 9 asked subjects how long it took them to complete their education goal.

The subjects were asked to enter the number of months and years it took them to complete their education program. Only 6 of the 29 subjects responded to Question 9. One subject responded 30 years, 1 subject responded 12 years, 1 subject responded 11 years, one subject responded 9 years and 9 months, 1 subject responded 7 years, and 1 subject responded 4.5 years. See Table 9.

Question 10 asked subjects if they dropped out of their academic program. Only 6 of the 29 subjects responded to Question 10. The response choices were yes to which 50% (3) of the subjects responded, and no to which 50% (3) of the subjects responded. The subjects responded unequally to Question 10. See Table 10.

Table 9

Subjects Response to Question 9

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
30 years	1
12 years	1
11 years	1
9 years, 9 months	1
7 years	1
4.5 years	1
Total	6

Table 10

Subjects Response to Question 10

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	50%	3
No	50%	3
Total		6

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 11 asked subjects if they requested academic advising while pursuing their education/training. Only 27 of the 29 of the subjects responded to Question 11. The response choices were yes to which 85% (23) of the subjects responded, no to which 7% of the subjects responded, and not applicable to which 7% (2) of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects responded yes. See Table 11.

Table 11

Subjects Response to Question 11

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	85%	23
No	7%	2
Not Applicable	7%	2
Total		27

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 12 asked subjects if the academic advising they received was from an instructor/professor. The response choices were yes to which 31% (8) of the subjects responded, no to which 58% (15) of the subjects responded, and not applicable to which 12% (3) of the subjects responded. Only 26 of the 29 subjects responded to Question 12. The majority of the subjects responded no. See Table 12.

Table 12

Subjects Response to Question 12

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	31%	8
No	58%	15
Not Applicable	12%	3
Total		26

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Question 13 asked subjects if the academic advising they received was from an advisor/counselor. The response choices were yes to which 97% (28) of the subjects responded, no to which 3% (1) of the subjects responded, and not applicable to which none of the subjects responded. The majority of the subjects responded yes. See Table 13.

Table 13

Subjects Response to Question 13

<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Yes	97%	28
No	3%	1
Not Applicable	0.00%	0
Total		29

Notes: Percentages are rounded to nearest hundredth

Section 2 Statements

The subjects provided a rating for 15 statements in Section 2. The choices for the ratings were: strongly agree (SA) - a rating of 5 points, agree (A) - a rating of 4 points, undecided (UD) - a rating of 3 points, disagree (D) - a rating of 2 points, strongly disagree (SD) - a rating of 1 point, and not applicable (NA) - a rating of 0 points. Following are the findings of the subject's responses to the statements in Section 2.

Statement 1 asked subjects if academic advising is available at a time that fits their schedule. Forty-eight percent (14) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 38% (11) of the subjects responded agree (A), 10% (3) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), and 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded disagree (D). The mean for Statement 1 is 4.31, the median for Statement 1 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 1 is .80. The average rating for Statement 1 is 4.31, agree. See Table 14.

Statement 2 asked subjects if they attended more than one session of academic advising. Twenty-nine percent (8) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 43% (12) of the subjects responded agree (A), 7% (2) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 11% (3) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 7% (2) of subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 2 is 3.88, the median for Statement 2 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 2 is 1.10. The average rating for Statement 2 is 3.88, agree. See Table 14.

Statement 3 asked subjects if they were satisfied with the academic advising they received. Twenty-four percent (7) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 38% (11) of the subjects responded agree (A), 17% (5) of the subjects responded undecided, 10% (3) of the subjects responded disagree (D), and 10% (3) responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 3 is 3.85, the median for Statement 3 is 4, and the

standard deviation for Statement 3 is .96. See table 14. The average rating for Statement 3 is 3.85, agree. See Table 14.

Statement 4 asked subjects if the academic advising they received contributed to the successful completion of their education/training. Thirty-one percent (9) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 21% (6) of the subjects responded agree (A), 21% (6) of the subjects responded undecided, 14% (4) of the subjects responded disagree (D), and 14% (4) of the subjects responded not applicable. The mean rating for Statement 4 is 3.80, the median rating for Statement 4 is 4 and the standard deviation for Statement 4 is 1.11. The average rating for Statement 4 is 3.8, agree. See table 14.

Statement 5 asked subjects if their instructor/professor have office hours that fit their schedule. Seventeen percent (5) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 41% (12) of the subjects responded agree (A), 14% (4) of the subjects responded undecided, 17% (5) of the subjects responded disagree (D), and 10% (3) of the subjects responded not applicable. The mean for Statement 5 is 3.65, the median for Statement 5 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 5 is .1.01. The average rating for statement 5 is 3.65, agree. See Table 14.

Statement 6 asked subjects if their instructor offers more than one way to access them (email, phone, Skype, etc.). Thirty-four percent (10) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 48% (14) of the subjects responded agree (A), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 7% (2) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 6 is 4.15, the median for

Statement 6 is 4, and the standard deviation for statement 6 is .94. The average rating for Statement 6 is 4.15, agree. See Table 15.

Table 14

Non-traditional Students Attitudes Toward Academic Advising - Statements 1-5

<u>Statement</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>UD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
1. Academic advising is available at a time that fits my schedule	48% (14)	38% (11)	10% (3)	3.5% (1)	0.00%	0.00%	4.31	4	.80
2. I attended more than one session of academic advising	29% (8)	43% (12)	7% (2)	11% (3)	3.5% (1)	7% (2)	3.88	4	1.10
3. I was satisfied with the academic advising I received	24% (7)	38% (11)	17% (5)	10% (3)	0.00%	10.0% (3)	3.85	4	.96
4. The academic advising I received contributed to the successful completion of my education/ training	31% (9)	21% (6)	21% (6)	14% (4)	0.00 (0)	14% (4)	3.80	4	1.11
5. My instructors/ professors offer office hours that fit my schedule	17% (5)	41% (12)	14% (4)	17% (5)	0.00 (0)	10% (3)	3.65	4	1.01

Notes: Percentages and standard deviation were rounded up to the nearest hundredth

Statement 7 asked subjects if they were satisfied with the times/days courses are offered at the academic institution. Twenty-eight percent (8) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 48% (14) of the subjects responded agree (A), 10% (3) of the

subjects responded undecided (UD), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), 7% (2) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 7 is 4, the median for Statement 7 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 7 is .96. The average rating for Statement 7 is 4, agree. See Table 15.

Statement 8 asked subjects if they completed their education/training in the amount of time they anticipated they would. Twenty-eight percent (8) of the subjects responded strongly agree (A), 21% (6) of the subjects responded agree (A), 10% (3) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 21% (6) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 7% (2) of the subject responded strongly disagree (SD), and 14% (4) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 8 is 3.48, the median for Statement 8 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 8 is 1.38. The average rating for Statement 8 is 3.48, uncertain. See Table 15.

Statement 9 asked subjects to rate the statement "I do not anticipate that I will complete my education/training in the time I anticipated I would." Ten percent (3) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 28% (8) of the subjects responded agree (A), 10% (3) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 24% (7) of the subjects responded disagree (D), and 17% (5) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 9 is 3.04, the median for Statement 9 is 3, and the standard deviation for Statement 9 is 1.30. The average rating for Statement 9 is 3.04, uncertain. See Table 15.

Table 15

Non-traditional Students Attitudes Toward Academic Advising - Statements 6-9

<u>Statement</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>UD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
6. My instructor professor offers more than one way to access them	34% (10)	48% (14)	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)	7% (2)	4.15	4	.94
7. I am satisfied with the times and days courses are offered at my academic institution	28% (8)	48% (14)	10% (3)	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)	7% (2)	4	4	.96
8. I completed my education/training in the amount of time I anticipated I would	28% (8)	21% (6)	10% (3)	21% (6)	7% (2)	14% (4)	3.48	4	1.38
9. I do not anticipate that I will complete my education/training in the time I anticipated I would	10% (3)	28% (8)	10% (3)	24% (7)	10% (3)	17% (5)	3.04	3	1.30

Notes: Percentages and standard deviation were rounded up to the nearest hundredth

Statement 10 asked subjects if working part-time affected their ability to complete their education/training. One (3.5%) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 17% (5) of the subjects responded agree (A), 14% (4) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 10% (3) of the subjects responded strongly disagree, and 55% (16) of the subjects

responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 10 is 2.77, the median for Statement 10 is 2, and the standard deviation for Statement 10 is 1.42. The average rating for Statement 10 is 2.77, uncertain. See Table 16.

Statement 11 asked subjects if working full-time affected their ability to complete their education/training. Thirty-four percent (10) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 38% (11) of the subjects responded agree (A), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 7% (2) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 14% (4) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 11 is 4.04, the median for Statement 11 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 11 is 1.17. The average rating for Statement 11 is 4.04, agree. See Table 16.

Statement 12 asked subjects if they participated in student activities offered at their academic institution. One (3.5%) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 28% (8) of the subjects responded agree (A), 28% (8) of the subjects responded disagree (D), 24% (7) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 17% (5) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 12 is 2.37, the median for Statement 12 is 2, and the standard deviation for Statement 12 is 1.35. The average rating for Statement 12 is 2.37, disagree. See Table 17.

Table 16

Non-traditional Students Attitudes Toward Academic Advising - Statements 10-11

<u>Statement</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>UD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
10. The fact that I work part-time affects my ability to complete my education/training	3.5% (1)	17% (5)	0.0% (0)	14% (4)	10% (3)	55% (16)	2.77	2	1.42
11. The fact that I work full time affects my ability to complete my education/training	34% (10)	38% (11)	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)	7% (2)	14% (4)	4.04	4	1.17

Notes: Percentages and standard deviation were rounded up to the nearest hundredth

Statement 13 asked subjects if the library services at their academic institution are available at a time that fits their schedule. Thirty-four percent (10) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 38% (11) of the subjects responded agree (A), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), and 24% (7) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 13 is 4.41, the median for Statement 13 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 13 is .59. The average rating for Statement 13 is 4.41, agree. See Table 17.

Statement 14 asked subjects if the library services offered at their academic institution fulfilled their academic needs. Forty-five percent (13) of the subjects responded strongly agree (SA), 24% (7) of the subjects responded agree (A), 7% (2) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 7% (2) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 17% (5) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for

Statement 14 is 4.20, the median for Statement 14 is 5, and the standard deviation for Statement 14 is 1.17. The average rating for Statement 14 is 4.20, agree. See Table 17.

Statement 15 asked subjects if they were satisfied with the amount of distance learning/online courses offered at their academic institution. Thirty-four percent (10) of the subjects responded strongly agree (A), 38% (11) of the subjects responded agree (A), 14% (4) of the subjects responded undecided (UD), 3.5% of the subjects responded disagree (D), 3.5% (1) of the subjects responded strongly disagree (SD), and 7% (2) of the subjects responded not applicable (NA). The mean for Statement 15 is 4.38, the median for Statement 15 is 4, and the standard deviation for Statement 15 is 1.01. The average rating for Statement 15 is 4.38, agree. See Table 17.

Summary

The survey was divided into two sections. Section 1 consisted of 13 questions. The questions asked for limited demographic data and other questions which helped the researcher to determine if subjects experienced the challenges that non-traditional students normally experience when pursuing higher education. Section 2 of the survey was 15 Likert scale statements that helped the researcher determine the subjects attitude toward academic advising and other student services offered at their academic institution. The responses to the questions in Section 1 determined the findings of the questions. The mean, median, and standard deviation was calculated for the Likert scale statements to determine the findings of Section 2. Not all subjects responded to all questions. The findings will be discussed further in Chapter V along with a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for future studies.

Table 17

Non-traditional Students Attitudes Toward Academic Advising - Statements 12-15

<u>Statement</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>UD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>NA</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
12. I participate in student activities offered at my academic institution	3.5% (1)	28% (8)	0.0% (0)	28% (8)	24% (7)	17% (5)	2.37	2	1.35
13. Library services at my academic institution are available at a time that fits my schedule	34 (10)	38% (11)	3.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	24% (7)	4.41	4	.59
14. The library services at my academic institution fulfill my academic needs	45% (13)	24% (7)	7% (2)	0.0% (0)	7% (2)	17% (5)	4.20	5	1.17
15. I am satisfied with the amount of distance learning/online courses offered at my academic institution	34% (10)	38% (11)	14% (4)	3.5% (1)	3.5% (1)	7% (2)	4.38	4	1.01

Notes: Percentages and standard deviations were rounded up to the nearest hundredth

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V will summarize this research study, provide a conclusion of the research study based on the data collected, and provide recommendations for future research of non-traditional students attitudes towards academic advising.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of non-traditional college students toward academic advising and its effect on completing their education goal. The data were used to determine if academic advising made a difference in non-traditional students successfully completing their education goal. The goal of this research study was to conduct exploratory research in an attempt to find empirical data about how or if non-traditional students pursue academic advising and the impact academic advising has on non-traditional student's successful completion of a higher education program.

Non-traditional students are defined as those students who did not pursue higher education immediately after completing secondary school and are age 25 and older. With today's economy and the competitive job market, many people are looking to enhance their current skills, change careers, or need a certain level of skill or certification in order to fulfill the requirements of their current employment or be qualified to seek new employment. Because non-traditional students are older than traditional students, they usually have responsibilities, challenges, and barriers that could prevent or interfere with their pursuit of higher education. Many non-traditional students are married and/or have children, work full time or part-time, and have dependents other than a spouse or children. Some of the challenges non-traditional students experience that could deter or

interfere with attending higher education are lack of childcare, work hours not conducive to attending face-to-face classes, lack of finances, and the fear of going back to school after being out for a long period of time. Non-traditional students may view higher education differently than traditional students, so they will need guidance to navigate the challenges of attending higher education and achieving academic excellence, as well as advice on how to balance their lives between work, life, and school. All of these challenges can affect the completion of non-traditional students' academic goals, therefore it is important to explore the relationship between academic advising and student success.

This study was limited to a sampling of non-traditional students who work or live on or within a 50 mile radius of Marine Corps Base Quantico VA. The population for this study was male and female, full-time and part-time, non-traditional students who visited the Marine Corps Base Quantico Education Center for academic advising between January-April 2014. The total population of students who visited Marine Corps Base Quantico Education Center for academic advising was approximately 155 students. The sample size for this study was 29 or approximately 19% . All students participated voluntarily and were enrolled in various educational programs ranging from certificates to graduate degrees, either face-to-face, online, or both.

The instrument used to collect data for this study was a two part survey. Section 1 consisted of 13 questions that asked for limited demographic data as well as the subjects education goal, reason for pursuing higher education, if they completed their education goal, how long it took to complete it, and whether or not subjects participated in academic advising while pursuing their academic goal. Section 2 of the survey was

composed of 15 Likert scale statements. The statements rated from 0-5 with non-applicable rated as 0 points and strongly agree rated at 5 points. Subjects had a choice of responding with strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided UD, disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD), and non-applicable. The subjects were emailed a cover letter and a link to the survey. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous.

The data collected was reviewed and analyzed. The responses to the questions provided data to respond to the research objectives. The Likert scale statements were analyzed and the mean, median, and standard deviation were calculated to determine the subjects attitude toward academic advising.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be made based on the stated research objectives.

RO: Determine if non-traditional students participate in academic advising when pursuing higher education. It is the conclusion of this study that non-traditional students do seek academic advising. Eighty-nine percent of the subjects indicated that they requested academic advising. The same students also indicated with a mean score of 3.88, agree that they attended academic advising more than once. Additionally subjects were satisfied with the schedule of courses, as indicated by a mean score of 4, the distance learning courses offered, as indicated by a mean score of 4.38, and subjects also reported that their instructor/professor offer more than one way to access them, as indicated by a mean score of 3.65. These findings indicate that non-traditional students are satisfied with the academic advising and other services they receive at their academic institution.

RO2: Determine if non-traditional students experience challenges normally associated with pursuing higher education. It is the conclusion of this researcher that non-traditional students are busy adults who experience challenges normally associated with attending higher education. The challenges of attending higher education can affect the successful completion of education programs. Since non-traditional students have multiple roles such as parent, spouse, employee, and caregiver to elderly parents, the challenges they face are different from traditional students. All of these factors can interfere with the successful completion of education programs if the necessary advice and guidance is not provided to non-traditional students. The data collected from this study supports the majority of these characteristics with 34% (10) of the subjects indicating they are between the ages of 25-34, 69% (20) of the subjects reported that that they are married. However, only 38% (11) of the subjects reported that they have children under age 18. The subjects also reported various dates for completing high school ranging from 1974 to 2013. The majority of the subjects completed high school in the year 2000. The high school completion dates and the time frame the subjects reported that it took them to complete their education program, with the longest time frame being 30 years, indicate that these subjects experienced the biological (age), psychological (fear of attending school after being out for a long time), and sociological (finances, caregiver, etc.) challenges normally associated with attending higher education. Additionally, the majority, 72% (21) of the respondents, reported that full-time employment affects their ability to complete their education goal, as indicated by a mean score of 4.04. If these challenges are not addressed and managed, they could have an adverse affect on the completion of non-traditional student's academic program.

RO3: Describe the impact academic advising has on the successful completion of higher education for non-traditional students. It cannot be concluded that academic advising had an impact on the successful completion of higher education. Of the subjects that participated in the study, only 21% (6) of them had completed their education goal and only 21% (6) of the subjects responded to whether or not they dropped out of their academic program with 50% (3) of them stating they had dropped out.

It cannot be concluded that academic advising had an impact on the successful completion of higher education for non-traditional students because subjects of this study may still be in pursuit of their education goal. Although 52% (15) of the subjects responded that the academic advising they received contributed to the successful completion of their education/training, only 3 subjects responded that they had completed their education goal. The responses were unbalanced in this area and it could not be determined if academic advising had an impact on the completion of their education program. However, it is worthy to note that the subject's overall attitude toward academic advising is favorable. Sixty-two percent (18) of the subjects responded that they were satisfied with their academic advising with a mean score of 3.88, and 97% (28) of the subjects reported that they received academic advising from an advisor or counselor, with 71% (20) reporting with a mean score of 3.88 that they attended more than one session of academic advising. This indicates that students understand the value of participating in academic advising and the impact that it can have on the pursuit and completion of their education goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Institutions of higher learning should have robust academic advising programs that seek out non-traditional students in an effort to ensure they have the tools and information they need to successfully navigate the higher learning environment, balance work, life, and school, and to achieve academic excellence.
2. Institutions of higher learning should conduct an assessment of non-traditional student's needs and challenges at the beginning of each semester to ensure they are on track for completing their education goals successfully and on time.
3. Institutions of higher learning should introduce academic advising to non-traditional students by requiring that they attend at least one session during the first term of their academic program.

The following is offered as recommendations for further research:

1. This study was conducted with subjects who may or may not have completed their education program. It is recommended that future studies target non-traditional students who have completed their education program to determine if academic advising had an impact on their completion.
2. Since non-traditional students are sometimes apprehensive about participating in higher education, it is recommended that a study be conducted to determine how academic advising is administered to non-traditional students at institutions of higher learning.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

Non-traditional Students Attitudes Toward Academic Advising and its Affect on Program Completion

Purpose: The researcher seeks your opinion to collect data that will assist in improving the quality and availability of academic advising and other services necessary for non-traditional students to successfully complete their academic goals. This survey is voluntary and your answers will remain anonymous.

Section 1 - Directions: Please fill in the blanks. This information is requested as non-personal identifying information in order to categorize the information collected from the survey.

1. Sex: Male ____ Female ____
2. Age: ____
3. Relationship Status: Married ____ Single ____
4. Do you have children under the age of 18? Yes ____ No ____
5. Year obtained High School Diploma (or equivalency): ____
6. Primary reason for pursuing higher education:
 - ____ Degree/skills required to obtain an occupation
 - ____ Personal goal
 - ____ To earn more money
 - ____ Career Change
 - ____ Enhance skills and abilities
 - ____ Other _____
7. Education Goal:
 - ____ Career and Technical Education (license, certificate, training, etc.)
 - ____ Associates Degree
 - ____ Associates Level Certificate
 - ____ Bachelors Degree
 - ____ Bachelors Level Certificate
 - ____ Graduate Degree (Master, Doctorate)
 - ____ Masters Level Certificate
 - Other: _____
8. Education Goal Complete: Yes ____ No ____
9. How long to completion (beginning to end): ____ Yrs ____ Months
10. Did you drop out of your academic program? Yes ____ No ____

11. I requested academic advising while pursuing my education/training: Yes _No _NA_

12. The academic advising I received was from an instructor/professor: Yes _No _NA_

13. The academic advising I received was from a advisor/counselor: Yes _No _NA_

Section 2 - Directions: Place an "X" in the box that reflects your opinion toward academic advising and other services at your academic institution or student counseling center. SA means strongly agree, A means Agree, U means undecided, D means disagree, SD means Strongly Disagree, and NA means not applicable because you did not participate in the activity or service.

	SA (6)	A (5)	U (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	NA (1)
1. Academic advising is available at a time that fits my schedule						
2. I attended more than one session of academic advising						
3. I was satisfied with the academic advising I received						
4. The academic advising I received contributed to the successful completion of my education/training						
5. My instructors/professors offer office hours that fit my schedule						
6. My instructor/professor offers more than one way to access them (email, phone, Skype, etc.)						
7. I am satisfied with the times and days courses are offered at my academic institution						
8. I completed my education /training) in the amount of time I anticipated I would						
9. I do not anticipate that I will complete my education/training in the time I anticipated I would						
10. The fact that I work part-time affects my ability to complete my education/training						
11. The fact that I work full-time affects my ability to complete my education/training						
12. I participate in student activities at my academic institution						
13. Library services at my academic institution are available at a time that fits my schedule						
14. The library services at my academic institution fulfill my academic needs						
15. I am satisfied with the amount of distance learning/online courses offered by my academic institution						

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter

Dear Interested Participants,

I am a graduate student at Old Dominion University and I am conducting a study on non-traditional students and their attitude toward academic advising (education counseling) to determine if academic advising is effective in assisting non-traditional students with completing their education goals. Non-traditional students are defined as those students who do not pursue education or career and technical training immediately after completion of high school.

The objective of the study is to collect data that would assist academic advisors and education counselors with providing relevant information to non-traditional students that address their education, employment, and personal needs.

You are invited to participate in this study by completing an electronic survey that asks your opinion about academic advising as it relates to your education goals.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Responses to the survey are anonymous. There are no other persons associated with this research or the collection of data for this study. The researcher (myself) is the only one who has access to the computer where the data will be collected. The survey will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.

If you choose to participate, access this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YBKL2MH> to submit your anonymous responses by July 31, 2014.

If you have questions regarding the study or your participation, feel free to contact Parisa Fetherson at pfeth001@odu.edu.

Sincerely,

Parisa Y. Fetherson