Factors Affecting Intent to Persist Among Hispanic/Latino Students Attending a Private Non-Profit Nonresidential University

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FACTORS AFFECTING INTENT TO PERSIST AMONG HISPANIC/LATINO STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIVATE NON-PROFIT NONRESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY

By
Cristy E. Sibila

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

Coral Gables, Florida
May 2015
FACTORS AFFECTING INTENT TO PERSIST AMONG HISPANIC/LATINO STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIVATE NON-PROFIT NONRESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY

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The number and types of institutions of higher education are rapidly increasing, thus providing students with almost boundless options for higher education pursuits. At this time more than 50% of the regionally accredited, non-profit, four-year universities in the United States are private and the for-profit sector continues to grow. Since 1975 enrollments at private, non-profit institutions have risen from 2.3 to 3.9 million students of which over 335,000 are Hispanic/Latino students. And, for Hispanic/Latino students, graduation rates are highest at private, non-profit institutions where 62.4% of students graduate within 6 years. However, little research on Hispanic/Latino students has been done in this higher education setting where graduation rates are higher when compared to public and for-profit institutions.

The current study intended to identify the demographic characteristics of Hispanic/Latino students who are attending regionally accredited, private, non-profit, non-traditional 4-year multi-campus commuter university. It further aimed to examine what factors impact their withdrawal decisions, and what has made private, non-profit institutions more successful in graduating students. In this study, data were collected anonymously through an online survey, which was comprised of a demographic questionnaire, the Family Cohesion scale (Rossman & Way, 1996), and the College
Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008). The survey received 219 total responses, of which 202 were complete responses.

Results showed that Hispanic/Latino students attending the university are older than traditional aged college students, mostly female, half were born outside the United States, live in Spanish speaking homes, are first generation living in the United States, have caregiver responsibilities for a family member(s), and work full or part time. The majority of respondents intended to remain enrolled in the university. Further analysis showed that student’s intent to withdraw differ depending on age, gender, participant country of origin, and father’s education. No significant relations of family support and college stress to student’s intent to withdraw was found.

Information garnered from this study helps the institution to better understand the profile of Hispanic/Latino students attending its campuses. This information can be used to better inform recruitment and retention strategies impacting all operational areas of the university and all phases of the enrollment management cycle. Furthermore this study identified institutional factors that motivated the intent to persist of these Hispanic/Latino students and, by doing so, adds to the limited literature on private, non-profit, non-traditional higher education institutions in the United States. Those institutional factors may be highlighted and strengthened by the university and considered for implementation by others.

Keywords: Hispanic, Latino, college student, retention, intent to persist, withdrawal, stress, family support, private, non-profit, non-traditional, commuter
DEDICATION

To Jose Manuel Sibila.

My father, my rock, my guardian angel. My accomplishments, today and always, will be a testament to your selflessness as a father, your unconditional love, and your sincere belief in me. I only hope that I have made you proud.

I love you with all my heart Daddy.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I entered the Ed.D. program with a great deal of fear. Fear stemming from self-doubt in my own ability to successfully complete and defend a dissertation. Breaking through that fear and self-doubt took a village of extraordinary people who never let me lose sight of my goal and reminded me constantly that through hard work I would achieve this goal.

First I’d like to thank my classmates, professors, and dissertation committee at the University of Miami. Particularly Dr. Carol Ann Phekoo, Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, Dr. Scott Ingold and Dr. Pedro Villarreal III for your guidance through the dissertation process. Dr. Soyeon Ahn, my Dissertation Chairperson, without whom I am certain I would not have reached this goal. Dr. Ahn I am forever grateful to you for taking me under your wing and guiding me with patience and firm determination.

To my Keiser University family, there are too many remarkable people to mention individually (which is a wonderful problem to have). You know who you are and I thank each and every one of you for being an invaluable part of my journey. I would like to especially thank Dr. Gary Markowitz, my boss and mentor, for sharing your knowledge and always supporting my growth personally, professionally, and academically.

To my family and friends, I love you and thank you for loving me and never giving up on me.
Anna O’Sullivan, you are intelligent, caring and my fiercest supporter. Words cannot express my gratitude and love for you.

Shelley Yaniz and Elizabeth Viso, I adore you both and thank you for sticking by me and keeping me sane through these last few tumultuous years.

Irving Nuñez, you met a girl and among other things she had this baggage called a dissertation to complete. You’ve been absolutely amazing throughout this process. I am so lucky to have you in my life and I promise that now it’s our time.

To my grandparents, Antonia (Tati) and Jose Aurelio (Pipo) Sibila, who came to the United States to give our family opportunities not available in Cuba, thank you. I know Pipo is sharing in this moment from heaven.

Jose Manuel Sibila, my first teacher and the most dedicated, loving father any woman could ever ask for. You instilled in me the value of education and never gave up on seeing your little girl become a doctor. This is for you and because of you.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Attainment of a college degree has grown to be a necessity for employment and financial stability. On a macro level, the better educated the populous, the more competitive a country can be in the global economy. Such belief has become of particular importance in the past decade during which global economies have suffered tremendous losses and unemployment rates remain high. The economic crisis has been felt throughout the United States and a great deal of emphasis has been placed by the government on educational institution accountability for preparing students for college, retaining college students, and producing graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to regain and maintain economic stability for the country.

As a result, in 2008 The College Board, in conjunction with the National Conference of State Legislatures, created the “Commission on Access, Admissions, and Success in Higher Education,” developing comprehensive educational objectives from pre-school to college with the goal of college degree attainment for 55% of the United States population by 2025. One of the main emphases of this plan has been a focus on the education of the growing minority and immigrant populations in the United States. The attainment of a college education has been especially difficult for minority and immigrant students who oftentimes lack the financial resources, social/cultural capital, and academic preparation for college level coursework. Researchers point to the Hispanic/Latino community as an integral part of the United States’ ability to remain competitive in the global economy: “The international competitiveness of the United States will largely depend on the academic success of Latino students due to the fact that the Latino community has experienced unprecedented demographic growth in the United States in
the past five decades, yet Latinos have experienced limited educational attainment over
the past 40 years” (Contreras, Flores-Regade, Lee, & McGuire, 2011, p. 3).

For decades, the United States government has made the education of minority
students a fixed objective of educational policy: first focusing on increasing access and
more recently on improving degree completion rates. The education of Hispanic/Latino
students rose to the forefront in 2001 with the establishment of the President’s Advisory
Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans by George W. Bush. The
reports and recommendations of this commission were and still are of national
importance due to the fact that Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority in the country,
accounting for half of the nation’s growth in the past decade (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez,
2011). The country’s commitment to the advancement of Hispanic/Latino college
students is apparent in yearly budgetary appropriations of one hundred million dollars to
Hispanic-serving institutions (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013).

Educational Attainment of Hispanic/Latino Students

Despite the growth of the Hispanic/Latino population, studies show that
Hispanic/Latinos are lagging behind in important outcomes related directly and indirectly
to education. Hispanics/Latinos now represent the largest minority in the United States
making up 16.9% of the population, yet Hispanic/Latino wealth has declined by 66% in
the past four years, and only 15% of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States aged 25-29
have earned a bachelor’s degree (Kochhar, Fry & Taylor, 2011; National Center for
Education Statistics [NCES], 2012; U. S. Census Bureau, 2011). This degree completion
rate is 25% below their White counterparts, 8% behind Black counterparts, and 45%
behind Asian counterparts (Kochhar, Fry, & Taylor, 2011; NCES, 2012; U. S. Census Bureau, 2011) demonstrating a wide gap amongst ethnicities that must be explored. The 2012 Hispanic/Latino high school degree attainment was 75%, which is 20% lower than their White counterparts and ultimately contributes to even lower college completion rates (NCES, 2012).

Hispanics/Latino high school seniors, more than any other ethnic group indicated intent to work full time immediately after college (NCES, 2008). Only 46% of Hispanic/Latino high school seniors indicate intent to enroll in a 4-year college after high school compared to 73% of Asian students, 62% of Black students and 64% of White students (NCES, 2008). Hispanic students also had lower expectations for college/bachelor’s degree attainment and graduate/postsecondary degree attainment than all other ethnic groups except multiracial students (NCES, 2008). Perhaps this is because Hispanic/Latino high school students are more likely than other groups to believe that formal education is not needed to secure employment (Okagaki, 2001). Research by Martinez and Cervera (2012) demonstrated the existence of this belief by showing that Hispanic students access college information less than students from all other racial/ethnic groups.

Poor high school completion rates result in poor college enrollment rates. Hispanics made up only 12.2% of total college enrollments in 2011 despite the fact that 44% of Hispanic/Latinos in the United States are college age (Hussar & Bailey, 2009; Marotta & Garcia, 2003; NCES, 2008; Nevarez-La Torre & Hidalgo, 1997). Recent data, however, indicate a possible shift. Although Hispanic/Latino high school graduation rates still lag behind those of White students, of those Hispanic/Latino students who did
graduate 2014-2015 data indicate that college enrollment rate after high school completion rose to 69%, an increase of 14% over the previous year and Hispanic/Latino students now make up 13.5% of the college student population (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014).

Positive shifts in enrollment are occurring but it must be noted that research has found that of those Hispanics who are enrolled in college, 20% are academically underprepared and require remediation coursework (Hussar & Bailey, 2009; Marotta & Garcia, 2003; NCES, 2008; Nevarez-La Torre & Hidalgo, 1997). This lack of preparation for college coursework, which arguably is in part a result of poor schools and advising, is a contributing factor to the finding that minority students are more likely than majority students to drop out of college prior to graduation (Braxton, Brier, & Hossler, 1988). In fact, only 14.5% of Hispanic/Latino 25 year olds have a bachelor’s degree; this is the lowest college completion rate of any ethnic group (NCES, 2012). The poor college graduation rates of Hispanic/Latino students is an issue of national importance because population projections show that by 2028 Hispanic/Latinos will have a 13.7% increase in the number of college age students (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014). This is the largest increase of any ethnic group.

**Growth in Educational Options**

The bulk of the higher education literature is in the context of traditional institutions such as community colleges and large, public four-year institutions. The number and types of institutions of higher education have rapidly increased, thus providing students with almost boundless options for higher education pursuits (NCES,
At this time more than 50% of the regionally accredited, non-profit, four-year universities in the United States are private and the for-profit sector continues to grow. Research limited to community colleges and large, public four-year institutions will not suffice in an environment with a wide variety of higher education options.

This growing, diverse, and nontraditional student population, together with the growing options in higher education institutions will result in Hispanic/Latino students attending a variety of institutional types. Research shows that although the college-going rate of Hispanic/Latino students is currently higher at two-year institutions, college completion rates increase by 15% when students attend four-year institutions (President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). In fact, for Hispanic/Latino students, graduation rates are highest at private, non-profit institutions where 62.4% of students graduate within 6 years (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014).

Currently there are 1,652 private non-profit institutions in the United States ranging from high level research universities to small, specialized 2-year colleges (NCES, 2013). Private higher education has a long history dating back to colonial times in the United States. Whereas once these institutions were reserved for only the elite, today many private institutions have evolved to possess unique characteristics appealing to a broad base of students such as religiously affiliated institutions or institutions with specialized program offerings. The number of private non-profit institutions has increased nearly 8% since 1975 and in the same time period enrollments in private non-profit institutions have grown substantially from 2.3 million to 3.9 million students of which over 335,000 are Hispanic/Latino students (NCES, 2013).
Regrettably little is known about what makes these institutions more successful at graduating students because research has been mainly focused on public institutions, community colleges or the growing for-profit sector. One dissertation attempted to explore retention factors affecting Hispanic/Latino students attending a private, nonprofit religiously affiliated university in Texas but none of factors were found to be significant in predicting Hispanic/Latino students’ retention at the university (Chowdhury, 2006).

Therefore, research is needed to identify the demographic characteristics of the Hispanic/Latino students choosing to attend private nonprofit institutions, what factors impact their withdrawal decisions, and what has made private, non-profit institutions more successful in graduating students.

**Empirical Research on Retention Among Hispanic/Latino Students**

This section summarizes the existing literature on retention among Hispanic/Latino students mostly in the context of large public institutions and community colleges. The literature, at this time, does not consist of studies specifically pertaining to Hispanic/Latino students attending private nonprofit institutions. Therefore, it should be noted that what is known in the literature for Hispanic/Latino students may not be applicable for students attending private nonprofit institutions as this specific population has not been widely studied.

**Retention.** Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students are categorized as nontraditional students; 81.4% possess high-risk characteristics in relation to retention and graduation rates (NCES, 2000). These characteristics include: delays in enrollment in postsecondary education after high school, part-time attendance, full time work
responsibilities, financial independence for purposes of financial aid, presence of dependents other than a spouse, single parent status, non-traditional high school completion, etc. Hispanic/Latino undergraduates possess an average of 2.4 of these risk factors which typically equate to increased attrition in college (NCES, 2000). It is important to note that these risk factors specific to Hispanic/Latino students are over and above the risk factors for college students’ retention in general found in the literature which include: academic and social integration, socioeconomic status, pre-college expectations, self-efficacy, institutional/organizational characteristics, campus/classroom experiences, and so forth.

**Mental health and stress.** Adding to the already difficult task of retaining and graduating students is the continued increase in mental health problems within the college student population. According to 2004 data released by the American College Health Association, 10% of college students reported attempting suicide, 63% reported feelings of hopelessness, 45% reported feeling depressed, and 94% reported feeling overwhelmed (Kadison, 2006). The root cause of some mental health issues that college students are dealing with can be traced back to their level of stress.

Generally, college stressors are grouped into academic, financial, personal and work categories. The primary source of stress is typically identified to be meeting the academic rigors of college (Deroma, Leach, & Leverett, 2009). College students also face stressors of identity development, ethnic identity development, transitioning from high school to college life and adjusting to new responsibilities or challenges (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Serlachius, Hamer, & Wardle, 2007). For Hispanic/Latino students a well-documented challenge and stressor related to identity
development and ethnic identity development is acculturation (Berry, 2006). Financial stressors can also be very impactful on the mental health of college students. One study focusing on a mostly Hispanic student sample found that college students reported high levels of perceived stress with their current level of financial burden as well as with indicators of economic contraction (Diaz, Guo, Johnson, & Wang, 2011). This study not only indicated that college student stress level is affected by their current financial status but also by expectations of their future financial status as they evaluate the job market.

Likewise, students who experience psychological distress that is caused by stressors while in college contribute to higher attrition rates and result in lower overall grade point averages (Musgrave-Marquart & Bromley, 1997). These findings are documented by a 2011 National Alliance on Mental Illness study where 64% of participants attributed their departure from college to a mental health related issue. Since college stressors may be a contributing factor to these mental health issues, identifying ways by which to moderate its effect on students can also in turn help to retain them.

**Family support.** Family is a cornerstone of Hispanic/Latino culture. Support from family and friends is a dynamic shown to positively impact the retention of minority students (Tobey, 1997). In a study, Lipka (2008) found that a majority of students said they would turn to friends or relatives in times of emotional distress; however, 30% of Hispanic/Latino students said they did not feel understood by and therefore could not turn to family and friends. Other studies have shown that how supportive and cohesive a Hispanic/Latino student perceives their family to be insulates that student from outside stressors (Rivera, 2008; Unger, 2009). As demonstrated by a number of researchers
family support plays a buffering role in the effect of the perceived stress level on minority students’ retention thus this is an important variable to explore (Tobey, 1997).

**Variations among Hispanic/Latino Students.** Understanding the uniqueness of students is an integral part of the higher education field of study. The vast majority of the research available on retention, stress, and familial support for Hispanic/Latino students focuses on one ethnic group of students, the Mexican-American community. Research focusing on only the Mexican American population may not accurately represent the varied cultures and needs of the growing Hispanic/Latino population which represents people from 23 different countries of origin.

The Hispanic/Latino population in the U. S. is becoming increasingly diverse as people immigrate from South and Central America and add to the already substantial populations of Mexican-American, Cuban-American, Puerto-Rican, and other Hispanic/Latino groups residing in the United States. Hispanic/Latino people representing 23 countries of origin will comprise the expected 63% increase in Hispanic/Latino high school graduation by 2020/2021 and 45% growth in Hispanic/Latino college enrollments by 2021 (Hussar & Bailey, 2009; NCES, 2012). It is important to recognize that Hispanic/Latinos from different countries of origin are different culturally and will potentially require different interventions. Unfortunately, at this time the literature is limited in its exploration of Hispanic/Latino groups by country of origin thus future research should aim to explore the potential impact of group differences.

In addition to ensuring that we understand the cultural factors impacting students, there are also demographic factors that play a large role in family support, stress, and
retention. Hispanic/Latino men and women are raised to adhere to traditional gender roles (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). Thus, gender and whether the student chooses to adhere to culturally dictated gender role may affect stress. Socioeconomic status for all racial/ethnic groups impacts educational attainment. For Hispanics/Latinos this is an important indicator because, although they are the ethnic group with the lowest SES, large gaps have been found in SES between Hispanic/Latino countries of origin and this may affect stress, support, and persistence between groups. Lastly, parental education may be found to be another unique factor affecting Hispanic/Latino students. Studies show that the higher the level of parental education the more likely the student is to be successful in college (Ishitani, 2003). Many Hispanic/Latino parents are college educated but this education may not have been earned in the United States. Therefore, this study will attempt to explore whether college education outside the United States has any effect on the parent’s ability to support their college student in the United States system of higher education.

**Purpose of the Study**

Poor high school graduation rates, poor college enrollment rates, poor preparation for college coursework, and poor college completion rates demonstrate the need for research into ways in which colleges and universities can better serve the Hispanic/Latino student population before, during, and after the college enrollment process. Research has identified factors such as stress and family support that affect retention uniquely for Hispanic/Latino students. A number of empirical studies have been conducted mostly based on student bodies attending community college or public 4-year institutions.
However, in spite of Hispanic/Latino students’ success at private, non-profit, degree granting universities little is known about whether what is known in the community college or public 4-year context can be applicable to Hispanic/Latino students attending the private, non-profit degree granting universities.

Therefore, the current research intended to expand the existing knowledge in higher education research on diverse student populations, college persistence, and mental health issues to understand Hispanic/Latino students attending private, non-profit, regionally accredited, commuter, multi-campus universities. More specifically, the current study attempted to first identify a profile of the Hispanic/Latino students attending a private, non-profit, regionally accredited, commuter, multi-campus university. Furthermore the study attempted to examine intent to withdraw in this student population, and its relation to factors impacting the decision to withdraw, and motivations to remain enrolled.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in the current study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics and influential family characteristics of the Hispanic/Latino students attending this private 4-year university?

2. Do the Hispanic/Latino students attending this private 4-year university intend to withdraw? If so, what factors are impacting this decision?

3. What factors motivate the Hispanic/Latino students attending this private 4-year university to remain enrolled?
4. Does the perceived level of stress relate to student intent to persist for Hispanic/Latino students attending a private 4-year university?

5. Does the perceived family support relate to student intent to persist for Hispanic/Latino students attending a private 4-year university?

6. Does student background characteristics, academic variables, family support, perceived stress relate to student intent to persist for Hispanic/Latino students attending a private 4-year university? (Figure 1)

**Significance of the Study**

Understanding the profile of students attending an institution is fundamental in being able to meet their needs. Understanding their withdrawal decisions and motivations to remain enrolled are also essential for administrators, staff and faculty whose goal is to provide the support services necessary to help these students reach the ultimate goal of graduation. Information garnered in this study may not only be beneficial for private, non-profit institutions but may also add to the literature by helping to explain why students who attend private, not-profit institutions are more successful at achieving graduation.

Information garnered from this study could have wide-ranging implications for administrators and faculty throughout the enrollment management cycle in institutions wishing to attract Hispanic/Latino students or where Hispanic/Latinos already are a growing segment of the student body. The information garnered from this study will be particularly valuable to private, nonprofit, nonresidential institutions like the one from which the sample was drawn. Few studies at the moment focus on these institutions and
it is important to identify how students attending these institutions are different such that effective interventions can be developed.

Research has found that Hispanic students oftentimes want the support of their families but some families lack the knowledge to provide that support (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Torres, 2004). By exploring family support and examining variations in such relationships by other important demographic variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, parental education and country of origin, we can better understand the dynamic of retention unique to specific populations. The implications drawn from the current study can assist educators and administrations to better understand these students and to better prepare, inform, and engage Hispanic/Latino families in their children’s educational pursuits. In this way administrators can be more effective in leading change in persistence and potentially college enrollment and completion behaviors for Hispanic/Latino students.

In particular, enrollment managers can engage Hispanic/Latino parents early on in primary or secondary school settings. Schools may develop bi-lingual programming or resources for parents to gain the information needed to better support their children in the United States system of education. Examples include resources where parents can assist their students in getting tutoring in disciplines where they might be struggling or resources that explain to parents the college application and financial aid process so that they can be better educated to guide/assist their children. At the primary and secondary school level faculty may consider including assignments that require parental involvement so that the parent is an active participant in academic tasks.
Colleges and universities could ensure that marketing, admissions, and financial aid materials are accessible to Hispanic/Latino parents and that these parents are given the opportunity to remain involved throughout the enrollment process. Admissions departments may also consider bi-lingual parent orientation sessions. Once students are enrolled, student services departments may develop campus programming that periodically includes a bi-lingual or family component to appeal to these students. Counseling offices may incorporate family or group sessions for these students. Advising may consider establishing mentoring programs for those students who are struggling with stress and who do not have adequate family support. Having access to a successful Hispanic/Latino student mentor or a Hispanic/Latino faculty/staff mentor within the school may help to alleviate the effects of not having a supportive family structure.

By further investigating the educational background of student’s parents as compared to the students intent to withdraw, conclusions and interventions may be gained. For instance, as indicated in various studies, a positive relationship between mother’s level of education and adolescent college attendance in a Hispanic/Latino sample was found (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvin, 2007). The development of intervention that specifically targets Hispanic/Latina may help them to not only persist and achieve their college degree but also help these women to pass the higher education knowledge and values on to the next generation of Hispanic-American students. Thus, the impact of the current study could be long-reaching. Interventions for male students could be equally as impactful by helping males to visualize education as a source of strength and as an avenue by which they can achieve employment/career goals to further help their families. By communicating to Hispanic/Latino males that education can help compliment and
achieve cultural norms/expectations rather than compete with these, persistence and completion at high school and college levels can be positively affected.

Lastly, although further research is likely needed, administrators and educators could begin to recognize the differences among Hispanic/Latino groups from different countries of origin. Results of this study may begin to reveal differences in these groups. By evaluating the origins of prospective students, incoming students, current students, drop outs or graduates, colleges and universities may find the need to develop country of origin specific interventions or programming for students, parents or both based on identified needs.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Expansion of Educational Options

The American system of higher education offers a multitude of options for students. From public community colleges, state schools, large traditional Ivy League institutions, small private technical colleges, to fully online universities. Students as consumers can choose the institution that best fits their needs, financially and academically. According to The Chronicle of Higher Education there are 4,757 colleges and universities in the United States; the largest of which is University of Phoenix online with a student population of 256,402 (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014). This complex multitude of colleges and universities offers students a diversity of program offerings, course delivery methods, student services, and funding options. These institutions are also governed differently based on private or public status, whether the institution is profit or nonprofit, level of accreditation, and state in which they operate.

For Hispanic/Latino students, graduation rates are highest at private nonprofit institutions where 62.4% of students graduate within 6 years compared to 49.6% at public institutions, and 35.2% at private for-profit institutions (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014). Private non-profit institutions have grown 8% since 1975 to 1652 institutions in the United States with over 3.9 million students (NCES, 2013). Of those students, over 335,000 are Hispanic/Latino (NCES, 2013).

Despite the growth in student population at private non-profit institutions and the fact that graduation rates are highest at 2 and 4-year private non-profits than at 2 and 4-year public and private for-profit institutions schools, very little empirical research has
been conducted in this setting. Thus no research that informs how to work with Hispanic/Latino college student retention, stress, family, gender, etc. in the private non-profit setting is available.

Since Hispanic/Latino students will be accessing all types of institutions of higher education, it is important that the literature explore phenomena broadly such that findings can be applied to all settings. It is especially important that settings where Hispanic/Latino students are finding success be explored such that the strategies for success can become shared best practices. It should be noted that due to lack of research on Hispanic/Latino students in the private non-profit setting, the literature review discussed below would not be necessarily applicable to Hispanic/Latino students in the private non-profit setting.

**Hispanic/Latino College Student Retention**

College student retention theories, which were developed in the 1950s-70s, primarily focus on male students of the dominant white culture. Although discourse exists about the applicability of these theories to minority student populations, their inclusion in this study is important, as they are the theoretical underpinnings of today’s retention research on minority students. Vincent Tinto’s theory of student departure, first proposed in 1975, is the most widely known retention theory and proposes that the way in which students enter college and interact in the college environment determines persistence behaviors. Tinto theorized that students enter college with certain characteristics, including motivations, expectations, and academic ability, which must fit and work with the college culture, both academic and social, for the student to choose to
persist. This process of adjustment to college, if achieved, occurs through a series of transitions experienced by the student which according to Tinto include disassociating from their past, associating with the norms/culture of the university and finally adopting the norms/culture of the university. In Tinto’s theory the student is an active participant deciding at each step whether or not to become integrated and thus persist in the university setting. Research has found that Tinto’s theory does apply to minority student populations, yet, other unique factors affect minority student retention (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora 2000).

Of them, family, socioeconomic status, and academic preparation are considered to be three unique factors affecting Hispanic/Latino student persistence in college. Hispanic/Latino students are strongly influenced by their families, who could help or hinder in retaining students (Hernandez, 2000). For example, gender roles imposed by the family, such as independence for the males, may help a male Hispanic/Latino student in college but other gender roles, like commitment to the family for females, may hinder a female Hispanic/Latina in achieving educational goals (De Leon, 1996; Hurtado, 1995). Some research indicates that religiosity within the Hispanic/Latino community may positively impact student retention (Clark, Sang, & Puig, 2007). Financial issues such as lower socioeconomic class resulting in need for financial assistance and work responsibilities could strongly impact Hispanic/Latino student retention when resources are lacking (Hernandez, 2000; Nora, 1990, 2001; Sedlacek, Longerbeam, & Alatorro, 2003). Lastly, Hispanic/Latino students are either academically underprepared for college or they have negative academic self-concepts which make them at risk for discontinuing
their education (Astin, 1999; Hernandez, 2000; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Sedlacek, 1989).

Hispanic/Latino students also encounter heightened difficulties developmentally when compared to their majority counterparts, which in turn affects attrition. College student development literature states that college-aged students are in the process of developing their identities. This process can be more challenging for Hispanic/Latino students who are concurrently developing their ethnic identities and likely experiencing a dissonance between their home and college environments/cultures. This combination of factors, resulting dissonance, and lack of family support could result in attrition behaviors (Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Phinney, 1993). Maintaining ties with external ethnic communities and having those communities support the Hispanic/Latino student’s educational pursuits is positively related to persistence behaviors and could moderate the effects of identity development issues on persistence (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992).

Institutional factors can also affect student attrition when an “institution has failed to create an environment, inside or outside the classroom, that is conducive to their [students] learning and educational needs” (Lau, 2003). Institutional factors specifically affecting Hispanic/Latino college student persistence are prejudiced racial climate and lack of minority communities which affect social integration and thus retention of Hispanic/Latino students (Astin, 1993; Bean, 1982). Presence of and relationships with minority faculty members or minority mentors positively affects Hispanic student retention as does participation in ethnically related or non-ethnically related campus organizations (Mayo, Murgua, & Padilla, 1995; Sedlacek, 1989).
Stress and Attrition Among Hispanic/Latino College Students

According to the U. S. Office of the Surgeon General (2001), Hispanics have higher rates of depression, distress, and youth suicidal tendencies than their White peers. Studies have found that “being a racial or ethnic minority is a solid predictor of negative mental health outcomes” regardless if the student attends an institution where they are part of the majority culture (Smith, Chesin, & Jeglic, 2014, p. 86). Members of ethnic minorities can experience a form of stress known as acculturative stress which occurs when they are exposed to or adapting to the mainstream culture (Berry, 2006). College-aged Hispanic/Latino students report traditional and acculturative stressors such as feeling unwelcomed on campus, racially hostile campus environment, academically challenging coursework, and peer pressure (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). These stressors accelerate feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, common precursors to depression and suicide.

Studies of student mental health have revealed that chronically high levels of stress could influence college persistence due to continued emotional and physical strain (Solberg, Gusvac, Hamann, Felch, Johnson, & Lamborn, 1998). Generally, college stressors are grouped into academic, financial, personal, and work categories.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness calls the challenge of mental illness on college campuses “prolific.” In 2011, students stated that depression and anxiety were their primary barriers to academic success and more than 50% stated that “overwhelming anxiety” prevented them from achieving academic success (American College Health Association, 2012). Results of a 2011 National Alliance on Mental Illness survey found that 64% of participants who had dropped out of school in the past 5 years attributed their
departure from college to a mental health related issue and of these students 50% never accessed mental health support services (2012). These indicators demonstrate a need for more mental health services to support college-aged students.

Financial stressors also play a role in the college attrition rates of Hispanic/Latino students. Data collected in 2009 from the National Survey of Latinos showed that 40% of students who discontinued their education cited financial reasons for doing so (Lopez, 2009). Astonishingly, the same survey showed that 74% of respondents indicated that they discontinued their studies due to a need to economically support their families (Lopez, 2009). In other words, a larger percentage of Hispanic/Latino college drop-outs attribute their departure to lack of funding for school or the need to work more to financially support their families.

Lastly, academic performance affects the decision to continue to pursue higher education for Hispanic/Latino students. Forty-nine percent of respondents to the National Survey of Latinos indicated that they discontinued their college studies due to insufficient proficiency in English skills (Lopez, 2009). Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they discontinued their education because their grades were not high enough (Lopez, 2009). These findings indicate a need for English as a Second Language education programs, remediation programs, and academic support services such as tutoring to reduce academic stress levels and thus help to retain Hispanic/Latino students.

Role of the Hispanic/Latino Family in College-Going and Persistence Behaviors

The foundation of the higher education literature reveals that the college years are a period when students not only experience cognitive growth but also gain autonomy and
achieve some level of independence from the family structure (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This developmental stage could be very difficult to navigate for students from Hispanic/Latino cultures, where the family unit is of utmost importance (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Hispanic/Latino students find themselves attempting to gain autonomy, despite the cultural dissonance this causes, and they must balance this with the pressures of college where they are expected to conform to the mainstream lifestyle and culture (Kenny & Perez, 1996).

Hispanic/Latinos are considered to be a family-oriented cultural group and one that looks to one another for emotional stability and support (Hernandez, 2002). According to Ortiz (2004), Hispanic/Latino families play a large role in the lives of their college students by influencing college choice, motivation, and integration of the student into college life. Unfortunately in many cases, Hispanic/Latino parents have limited or no educational experiences (cultural capital), which in turn lessens their ability to provide support and guidance with respect to their children’s education (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Torres, 2004). This may place Hispanic/Latino college students at a disadvantage since a strong family support system has been identified as crucial to academic success among students who are not of the dominant culture (Kraft, 1991; Schneider & Ward, 2003).

Raleigh and Kao (2010) found that Hispanic/Latino immigrant parents have high educational aspirations for their children and high levels of optimism for the educational success of their children. Despite this educational optimism, Kenny and Perez (1996) found that many Hispanic/Latino college students believed that they could not rely on family for support or guidance during college, because families did not understand the
demands of college life. This points to the existence of a dissonance in the cultural norm of family support for low SES Hispanic/Latino families caused by a lack of cultural capital. This lack of perceived support creates a void for Hispanic/Latino students because the parent-adolescent relationship provides a secure base from which adolescents can explore their environment and adapt to college (Holmbreck & Wandrei, 1993; Papini & Roggman, 1992). This is further supported by Hernandez’ finding that, despite their inability to help their college student, families place pressure on students to succeed in their collegiate pursuits and students feel they owe their parents for the sacrifices made to allow them access to a college education (Hernandez, 2000).

As evidenced above, a lack of parental support can intensify the already difficult college adjustment process and thus potentially have a negative impact on persistence. Solis (1995) found that Hispanic students in particular rely heavily on family support when making decisions about persisting in college. These findings are supported by studies that found that social support from family, friends, mentors, and school staff/faculty positively impacts college adjustment and a study that found higher levels of perceived family conflict resulted in lower levels of career aspirations for Hispanic/Latinos (Constantine & Flores, 2006; Solberg, Valdez, & Villarreal, 1994).

Although, Hispanic/Latino families might not provide their college students with support in the more traditional forms such as knowledge of college life or finances, intangible forms of support have been found. A qualitative study of economically disadvantaged, academically successful Hispanics/Latinos at Ivy League universities found that these students identified parental support and encouragement as critical factors to their academic success although the support was not always provided in traditional
ways such as coursework assistance (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). Another qualitative study of economically disadvantaged, academically successful Hispanics/Latinos at Ivy League universities revealed three common themes regarding parental involvement and student success (Ceballo, 2004). Ceballo found that parents conveyed an unconditional commitment to education, trusted the student to independently navigate academic matters, and showed nonverbal support for their education such as supportive touches when the student studied. Thus, the research suggests that for Hispanic/Latino students, family support profoundly affects both college adjustment and intent to persist and support may come in ways that are different from what is found in the dominant culture research.

**Role of Cultural Capital in Hispanic/Latino Educational Pursuits**

The concept of cultural capital has been used to explain inequities in educational attainment based on socioeconomic or minority status for over a decade. The concept of cultural capital, first introduced by Bourdieu in 1973, refers to information and attitudes passed from one generation to another, allowing the newer generation to better navigate their environment (Bourdieu, 1986). Interestingly, a recent study found that Hispanic students benefit significantly less than White and Black students from “every rise in parental SES,” suggesting that factors other than SES, like culture, may be more influential for Hispanics than other ethnic groups (O’Connor, 2009).

In 2000, the concept of cultural capital was proposed for use in higher education as applied to student college-going and persistence behaviors (Berger, 2000; Longden, 2004). This application of the cultural capital framework supports the higher education
literature, which has demonstrated that parental education has significant positive effects on persistence, that students with high SES are more likely to persist than their lower SES counterparts, and that literacy in areas such as financial aid may be moderated by SES (Astin, 1993; Ishitani, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Paulsen & St. John, 2002). These facts do not bode well for Hispanic/Latino students considering that 33.7% of Hispanic/Latino children live below the poverty level (NCES, 2012).

As noted above, parental education is an important factor in cultural capital and is related to college student persistence (Ishitani, 2003). Hispanic/Latino students have the lowest level of parental education of any ethnic group; 22% of Hispanic/Latino high school seniors have parents with less than a high school level of education (Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008; NCES, 2009). Only 20% of Hispanic/Latino high school students report having a parent with a bachelor’s degree or higher yet 51.6% of Hispanic/Latino students indicated that they chose to attend college because their parents wanted them to (NCES, 2009; Hurtado et al., 2008). Research indicates that although Hispanic/Latino parents have higher education goals for their children, they oftentimes do not have the knowledge of the US educational system to help guide their children towards achieving those goals (Gandara & Contreras, 2009).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that in comparison to other minority groups Hispanic/Latino students are particularly affected by the cultural capital phenomenon. A study of first and second year college students found that Hispanics had less access to cultural capital than any other racial/ethnic group (Wells, 2008-2009). This absence of cultural capital results from a range of factors that includes lack of parental postsecondary education and/or lack of parental postsecondary education within the
United States system of higher education, low SES, lack of Hispanic mentors, and lack of college advising at the high school level (Stern, 2009). Advising at the high school level could help to curb the impact of low or nonexistent cultural capital in the family by providing students with access to mentorship and college information. However, data indicate that in schools with 50% minority enrollment the student-to-counselor ratio is a disadvantageous 628:1 (Gandara & Contreras, 2009).

School resources are scarce and Hispanic parents wanting to assist their children with college information are oftentimes unable to do so because information is difficult to locate and/or available only in English (Vargas, 2004). This combination results in a basic lack of understanding of college applications, college choice, financial aid, and career planning, as well as a lack of perceived familial support due to a lack of information (Stern, 2009). In fact, Hispanic/Latino students are more likely than other groups to report that parents were not sufficiently involved in college-related decision making such as the decision to attend college, which college to attend, which courses to take, and which activities to take part in (Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, & Korn, 2008).

According to McDonough (1997), students with relatively high levels of cultural capital are more likely to see college attendance and degree attainment as the norm, and are likely to feel an “entitlement” to higher education. Furthermore, Tinto’s (1993) social integration retention theories state that congruency between the student’s social system, which includes cultural capital, and the realities faced in their college experiences will improve student integration into college life and improve persistence. This points to the need for colleges and universities to address the absence of cultural capital in the
Hispanic student community if college-going and persistence rates are to be positively and significantly affected.

**Variation by Gender**

Researchers have found that the role of family support in the relationship between stress and intent to persist differs by gender. Below, different factors unique to each gender will be reviewed.

**Factors uniquely affecting Hispanic/Latina females.** As evidenced by national government initiatives focusing on the postsecondary education of Hispanic students, the college attendance of Hispanic/Latino students of both genders is of utmost importance. However, studies focusing on Hispanic/Latina female students’ role in the collectivistic Hispanic/Latino culture reveal unique factors that are of importance for colleges and universities to further explore. Women in the Hispanic/Latino family are expected to give back to their families in the traditional roles of daughters, wives, and mothers; in some cases these roles are more important to the family than the individual woman’s personal or educational goals (Cardoza, 1991; Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). This results in a strenuous role conflict and potential family conflict when college attendance takes time away from family responsibilities or when a woman’s decisions are not supported by the family such as a woman’s leaving the family home to go away to college.

Interestingly, Hurtado-Ortiz and Gauvin (2007) found a positive relationship between mother’s education and adolescent college attendance in a Hispanic/Latino sample. This finding is important because it places the mother in the educator role within the family. From this result one can infer that if colleges can better retain and graduate
Hispanic/Latina women, positive higher education values are more likely to be passed down from generation to generation. The challenge to this is that Hispanic women are more likely to experience distress than Hispanic men resulting from role strain and expectation differences between the Hispanic/Latino culture and U. S. culture (Cardoza, 1991; Cervantes & Padilla, 1990; Chacon, Cohen, & Strover, 1986). In Latino families, young unmarried women are expected to contribute to the family and encouraged to stay close to home, both of which can affect the female student’s decision to attend college and/or what college to attend (Rendon, Garcia, & Person, 2004). Young (1992) found that these dual expectations place Hispanic/Latina women at an increased risk for negative mental health and school outcomes.

Studies of women in general found that women describe themselves as more attached to their parents, have more positive relationships with parents, view parents as providing emotional support, and have higher levels of psychological wellbeing because of this familial relationship (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). This holds true also for Hispanic/Latina women, for whom support from families acts as a buffer for psychological distress (Castillo & Hill, 2004; Shibazaki, 1999; Solberg & Villareal, 1997). Unfortunately, the dual expectations placed on Hispanic/Latina females decreases this perceived level of familial support and thus, these women report higher rates of mental health problems (Cardoza, 1991; Cervantes & Padilla, 1990; Chacon et.al., 1996). Navigating the delicate balance between the dual roles to assist these women in degree completion is an important goal for colleges and universities.

**Factors uniquely affecting Hispanic/ Latino males.** As noted, overall the enrollment and graduation rates of Hispanic/Latino students lag behind that of other
ethnic groups in the United States. Regrettably, high school graduation and college enrollment and graduation rates of male Hispanic/Latino college students lag behind that of female Hispanic/Latina college students. In fact, in 2011 high school dropout rates were higher for Hispanic/Latino men than for any other group (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Identifying the unique needs of male students is imperative to begin to address attrition issues at the high school level and potentially impact change through college graduation.

One unique factor that may be affecting the higher attrition rate of Hispanic/Latino men is that they are exposed to social/cultural norms, which may affect educational pursuits. For example, in the Hispanic/Latino culture, males are the primary breadwinners and providers for the family. In conforming to cultural norms, rather than pursuing educational aspirations, a Hispanic/Latino male may seek immediate entry into the workforce to contribute to the family economically (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Another cultural influence is that of “machismo” which shapes the identity and behavior of Hispanic/Latino males (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). This “machismo” encourages males to be tough and independent and display characteristics that may not align with pursuit of education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Although college attendance rates are lower, Hispanic/Latino males do attend college. Of those Hispanic/Latino males that do attend, it has been found that they experience more difficulties than Hispanic/Latina females in the areas of academic and social integration into college life (Stage, 1989). Researchers have found that this may be associated with overt or covert incidents of discrimination or racism that increases stress levels for Hispanic/Latino males and leads to decreased self-efficacy (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). This process may also be associated with lack of academic
preparation at the high school level because of overcrowded schools, minimal support staff, or disproportionate placement of Hispanic/Latino males into vocational or special education programs rather than traditional high school completion programs (Yosso & Solórzano, 2006).

**Variation by Countries of Origin**

The term Hispanic/Latino is used most often as a singular term to refer to one group of individuals; however, in reality this term encompasses dozens of sub-ethnicities as it refers to people whose countries of origin, cultures, customs, values, dialects, reasons for immigration, and race are all different from one another. For simplicity, the terms Hispanic and Latino are used to categorize this group of mixed sub-ethnicities; however, this can arguably result in stereotyping of individuals or applying theories/concepts inappropriately across the groupings. As noted by Nunez and Crisp “Understanding the variation among Latino/a ethnic groups in their postsecondary educational experiences is critical to promoting the postsecondary educational attainment of the fastest growing demographic group in the United States” (2012, p. 88).

Few studies have approached the study of sub-ethnicities within the Hispanic/Latino grouping in relation to higher education. One study suggested that family cohesion, family cultural conflict, and psychological distress differ by Hispanic/Latino sub-ethnicity (Rivera, Guarnaccia, Mulvaney-Day, Lin, Torres, & Alegría, 2008). A 2012 study comparing Mexican American and Puerto Rican student populations found that Mexican American students were more likely to enroll in 2-year institutions versus Puerto Rican students, who were more likely to enroll directly into 4-year institutions.
(Nunez & Crisp, 2012). A 2011 study comparing Cuban, Puerto Rican and Mexican sub-ethnicities found that being disadvantaged in terms of wealth results in higher levels of psychological distress for all groups but less so for Mexicans (Xu, 2011). The same study found that higher levels of education for Cubans and Puerto Ricans lead to lower levels of distress but education had no impact on the distress of Mexicans (Xu, 2011).

Differences among sub-ethnicities were also found in the occurrence of mental health issues. Puerto Rican students were found to have higher incidences of psychological distress than Cuban and Mexican students (Xu, 2011). This same study found that for Cubans and Puerto Ricans debt caused psychological distress; for Cubans higher levels of education resulted in mental health benefits whereas the same benefits occur for Puerto Ricans but only as educational credentials are attained (Xu, 2011).

A 2011 study of Puerto Rican and Dominican students found that despite all students being predominantly Spanish speaking and from the Caribbean, learning styles differed between the two Hispanic sub-ethnicities (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Though limited, the differences found in these studies point to the need for further investigation into possible differences by sub-ethnicity and support the argument that applying one concept or theory to all Hispanic/Latino sub-ethnicities may not be appropriate.

**Implications of the Study**

The current research was shaped by the retention theory of Vincent Tinto, the cultural capital theory of Bourdieu and was informed by the abovementioned scholarly research of higher education researchers studying Hispanic/Latino college student populations in large public universities and community colleges.
The current study initiates the formation of a profile of the Hispanic/Latino students attending private, non-profit universities. This profile will not only address student demographic factors but also stress, family support and parental factors such as country of origin and parental level of education which impact college attendance and retention. Furthermore, this study attempted to explore what factors influence withdrawal decisions as well as what motivates these students to remain in school.

As a result, the implications drawn from the proposed study could be used by educators and educational administrators in developing more effective enrollment management strategies that target the growing and diverse Hispanic/Latino student population. The study directly addresses objectives nine and ten of the Commission on Access, Admissions, and Success in Higher Education. Furthermore, the current study would inform future studies focusing on specific Hispanic/Latino populations by country of origin and on expanding the limited scholarly research on the private non-profit higher education settings.
Chapter 3: Method

Target Population and Sample

The target population for this study is Hispanic/Latino college students from various countries of origin who are currently attending private, not-for-profit, commuter, four-year universities in the United States. The university from which the sample was drawn is a private, not-for-profit, regionally accredited, commuter, four-year university in the state of Florida, United States and it has a student population of approximately 17,000 of which 68% are female, 63% are 25 years of age or older, and 31% self-identify as Hispanic/Latino (NCES, 2013). The university was established in 1977 and in its mission includes a commitment to student centeredness and diversity. It has 22 campuses, including 2 internationally, and is ranked 17th nationally in associates degrees awarded to Hispanic students (Community College Week, 2013). Most recent data indicates a 74% first to second year student retention rate, a 59% overall graduation rate, and 57% Hispanic/Latino student graduation rate (NCES, 2015).

Admissions requirements to the university include a high school diploma or equivalent (GED) and a university determined score on SAT/ACT or the Wonderlic, a recognized standardized exam. The university offers students financial assistance as follows: federal grants, state grants, federal loans, federal work study programs, institutional aid and scholarships, and private scholarships (Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 2014). Facilities vary by campus, however, at minimum each campus has the following on site and available to all students: admissions office, financial aid office, academics office, registrar office, administration office, student services office, library, writing studio, teaching and learning center, computer lab, student
lounge, faculty office and dedicated class/lab rooms. Degree programs also vary by campus; however, the university offers degrees in 33 associate, 29 baccalaureate, 19 graduate, 2 specialist and 9 doctoral disciplines (Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 2014). Courses are offered in a modular format where students take one class per month, attending 12-25 hours of class per week. Due to the time requirements of the modular format, the university does record and hold students accountable for attendance. Courses are available on ground, hybrid or fully online.

From the level VI regionally accredited, multi-campus, private, not-for-profit, career-focused, non-residential, four-year University in the state of Florida described above, undergraduate students aged 18 and over who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino will be invited to participate in this study.

**Research Design**

The study employed an online survey design in collecting data to answer the primary research questions. In spite of some concerns regarding the potential technical difficulties in administration and the representativeness of the sample, an online survey method was chosen due to a number of advantages including lower costs, less time, real-time access, and convenience for respondents. Before collecting data, institutional review board approval was sought from the University where the researcher is a student and from the institution where the sample will be drawn.

**Procedure.** Students were invited to participate in the study via an email sent to their university email addresses by the institution’s Information Technology (IT) department (invitation email for study participation can be found in Appendix A).
Participants were required to read an informed consent form and provide consent prior to participating. Participants were not asked to provide identifying information and were not compensated for their participation. The survey remained open for one month. A reminder email was sent to potential participants two weeks prior to the survey’s closing date (reminder email for study participation can be found in Appendix B).

Variables

A set of survey questionnaires (as shown in Appendix C) was used to collect data on demographic characteristics, intent to persist, perceived stress, and perceived family support.

**Intent to persist.** The dependent variable, intent to persist, was measured by asking participants one question regarding intended enrollment behaviors for future semesters. The item is “How likely are you to remain enrolled at the University next semester?” Participant’s responses were reverse coded as: 1 = Very Likely, 2 = Likely, 3 = Unlikely and 4 = Very Unlikely.

**Demographic characteristics.** Student demographic characteristics were gathered.

Three participant variables, age (in years), grade point average (in points) and time in country (in years), were measured on the continuous scale and further treated as continuous variables. Participants were asked to identify gender as 1 = female or 2 = male. They were asked to identify their country of origin as well as the country of origin of their mother or mother figure and father or father figure separately. A list of countries was provided for the respondents to select from. Respondents were also asked to provide
information regarding parental education ("What was the highest level of education completed by...") for their mother or mother figure and father or father figure separately. A list of educational levels was provided for respondents to select from. Participants were also asked to identify if they were attending college in the United States on an international student visa and to identify their campus and major from lists provided.

Respondents were asked to identify the primary language spoken in the home ("At home our primary language is") as 1 = English, 2 = Spanish or 3 = English and Spanish Used Equally. They were asked to identify whom they lived with (1 = Alone, 2 = Spouse/partner, 3 = Children, 4 = Parents, 5 = Relatives, 6 = Roommate). Respondents were asked to indicate their relationship status (1 = Single, 2 = Married, 3 = Divorced, 4 = Separated, or 5 = Widowed). Respondents were asked if they were 1 = Parent or guardian to a child or 2 = Caregiver for someone (spouse, parent, etc). Respondents were asked if they work (1 = Full time, 2 = Part time or 3 = Unemployed). Respondents were asked to indicate household income from ranges provided. Lastly, respondents were asked to identify which family members influenced their lives. A list of family members was provided from which participants could select all that applied or add their own response.

To perform the regression analysis, categorical variables were dummy-coded. First, gender was dummy-coded with male being the reference group (0 = male and 1 = female).

Second, participant country of origin was dummy coded with participant born in the United States as the reference group (0 = born in the United States and 1 = Not born in the United States).
Third, country of origin for both mother and father was dummy-coded with mother or father born in the United States as the reference group (0 = born in the United States and 1 = Not born in the United States).

Fourth, education level of mother and father was dummy-coded with mother or father attended college in the United States as the reference group (0 = attended college in the United States and 1 = did not attend college in the United States).

Fifth, language spoken in the home was dummy-coded with speaking English only in the home as the reference group as follows: Spanish (0 = not Spanish-only speaking and 1 = Spanish-only speaking), both speaking English and Spanish (0 = not speaking both English and Spanish, and 1 = speaking both English and Spanish).

Sixth, student employment status was dummy-coded with being unemployed as the reference group as follows: full-time (0 = not full-time employee and 1 = full-time employee) and part time (0 = not part-time employee, and 1 part-time employee).

**Perceived college stress.** The independent variable, the perceived level of college stress, was measured using The College Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008). This 11-items 5-point Likert-scale assessment was developed by Feldt in 2008 and it demonstrates reasonable psychometric properties including Cronbach’s alpha of .87, test-retest reliability of .62 - .86, and Pearson’s correlation of .76 with the widely utilized Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The questionnaires ask participants to report how often each item has occurred to them in the current semester, which measures one’s stress level related to stressors including personal relationships, family, finances, academics and housing. An example of an item from the College Stress Scale asks how often the participant “felt anxious or distressed about academic matters.” Responses
range from 1 indicating “Never” to 5 indicating “Very Often.” The composite score was calculated by taking the average of scores on all 11 items, indicating that the lower the score the lower the corresponding perceived stress felt by the student.

**Perceived family support.** Another variable, *the perceived family support*, was measured using The Family Cohesion scale (Rossmann & Way, 1996). This 5-items 4-point Likert scale assessment was developed by Rossmann and Way in 1986, demonstrating reasonable psychometric properties including Cronbach’s alpha of .78 and test-retest reliability of .76. The questionnaires ask participants to report how characteristic certain behaviors are of their parent(s), guardian(s) or family. An example of an item from the family cohesion scale asks if “family members really help and support one another.” Responses range from 1 indicating “Very untrue of my parent(s), guardian(s) or family” to 4 indicating “Very true” of my parent(s), guardian(s) or family.” Two items on the scale are reverse coded as 4 indicating “Very untrue of my parent(s), guardian(s) or family” to 1 indicating “Very true.” The composite score was calculated by taking the average of scores on five items, indicating that the lower the score the lower the corresponding perceived stress felt by the student.

**Data Preparation**

Survey responses collected via survey monkey were exported to IBM SPSS statistics for data management and data analysis (IBM Corporation, 2013). A number of data management procedures, including creating and recoding variables, were performed as follows prior to data analysis.
**Perceived family support.** Participants responded to five items on a 4-points Likert-scale corresponding to the Family Cohesion scale (Rossmann & Way, 1996). The responses of each participant to these five items were averaged such that each participant had a composite *Family Cohesion scale score* ranging from 1, indicating low family cohesion, to 4, indicating high family cohesion. Reliability using Cronbach alpha for this sample was $\alpha = .864$.

**Stress.** Participants responded to 11 items on a 5-points Likert-scale of The College Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008). The answers of each participant to these 11 items were averaged such that each participant had a composite *College Stress Scale score* ranging from 1, corresponding to low stress, to 4, corresponding to high stress. Reliability using Cronbach alpha for this sample was $\alpha = .905$.

**Country of origin.** Participants were asked to report their country of origin as well as that of their mother (or mother figure) and father (or father figure) given 25 categories (See appendix C for survey items). All three variables were dummy-coded for the independent samples $t$-test with 1 being not born in the United States and 0 being born in the United States.

**Parental level of education.** Participants were asked to report the highest level of education completed by their mother (or mother figure) and father (or father figure) given 12 categories (See appendix C for survey items). Their answers were collapsed into the following five categories: 1 = College experience in the United States, 2 = College experience outside the United States, 3 = High school experience in the United States, 4 = High school experience outside the United States, and 5 = No formal education.
**Home environment.** Participants were asked to report whom they lived with by selecting from 6 categories. Responses were collapsed into the three categories: 1 = With Family, 2 = Alone, and 3 = With Roommate. Participants were asked if they were a caregiver for a family member and their answers were coded as 1 being “yes” and 0 being “no.”

**Withdrawal.** Participants were asked to report if they intended to withdraw from the University for the upcoming semester. The original responses were 1 = I am graduating this semester, 2 = Very Likely, 3 = Likely, 4 = Unlikely, and 5 = Very Unlikely. Participants who responded that they were graduating were excluded from the analysis. The rest of responses were kept as they were: 1 = Very Likely, 2 = Likely, 3 = Unlikely and 4 = Very Unlikely.

**Data Analysis**

All data collected were imported into SPSS (IBM Corporation, 2013) for data analysis. First, the descriptive statistics or frequency table of the variables such as participants’ age, country of origin, parental education, and time in country was obtained to summarize its distribution.

Second, a set of an independent sample t-test were used to examine the relationship between intent to withdraw and the following dummy-coded variables: gender, participant caregiver status, participant country of origin, mother or mother figure country of origin, and father or father figure country or origin. Pearson’s correlation analysis were used to examine the relationship between intent to withdraw and the following continuous variables: age, grade point average, stress scale score and family
cohesion scale score. Lastly, a set of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to examine the relationship between intent to withdraw and the following community college or public 4-year variables with multi-subcategories: participant relationship status, major, campus attended, work status, participant time in country, household income, father or father figure highest level of education, and mother of mother figure highest level of education.

**Power Analysis**

To determine the sample size needed for the proposed study, a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). A power analysis yielded that a total of 82 participants is required to find the significant effect of a focal variable on the dependent variable, after controlling for other variables in the regression model. This sample size estimation was based on the significance level ($\alpha$) preset at .05, a desirable statistical power of .80 that is considered as being acceptable in social sciences (Cohen, 1992), a small effect of a predictor on the dependent variable (i.e., $R^2$ of .10).
Chapter 4: Results

Student Demographics Characteristics

A total of 219 students attending the target university participated in the online survey. This is approximately 4.4% of the estimated total Hispanic/Latino students enrolled at the time of survey administration. Of those respondents, 76% were female (n = 164) with an average age of 28. Other characteristics including country of origin, length of time in country, home environment, family influence, and others are summarized below.

Country of origin. As shown in Figure 2, half of the respondents (n =106) reported being born in Hispanic/Latino countries outside of the United States. The largest group of respondents originated from Cuba (11.37%; n = 106) and Puerto Rico (15.17%; n = 106). Three respondents, although identifying to the University upon enrollment as Hispanic/Latino, selected the category “other” and reported countries of origin as Germany, Greece and Jamaica. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, participants reported that 85% (n = 178) of their mothers and 90% (n = 187) of their fathers were born outside of the United States. In the category of “other”, one respondent who self-identified as Hispanic reported being genetically born of White biological parents and adopted by Hispanic parents. Two respondents indicated parents whose countries of origin were India and Jamaica, respectively.

Length of time in country. Of a total 209 respondents, approximately 5% (n = 11) reported living in the US less than 5 years, 9% (n = 19) reported living in the US 6 - 10 years, 20% (n = 43) reported living in the US 11 - 20 years, and 14% (n = 29) reported living in the US more than 20 years (see figure 5). As depicted in Figure 6, the majority
of respondents \((n = 87, 41\%)\) reported speaking mainly Spanish in the home followed by 38\% \((n = 77)\) reporting that English and Spanish are spoken equally in the home, and 20\% \((n = 43)\) reported that English as the primary language spoken in the home. One respondent indicated that Portuguese was spoken in the home.

**Home environment.** In relation to the home environment, most of respondents were single, with 27\% \((n = 57)\) of respondents being married, 10\% \((n = 22)\) being divorced, and 4\% \((n = 9)\) being separated (see figures 6 and 7). Average household income for respondents was $40,001 - $47,308 and 50\% \((n = 101)\) of respondents indicated being responsible for the care of one or more family members including child, parent or spouse (see Figure 9).

**Family influence.** When asked to describe which family members influenced their life 78.5\% \((n = 172)\) of participants said parents, 41.5\% \((n = 91)\) said siblings, 36.9\% \((n = 81)\) said grandparents, 28.3\% \((n = 62)\) said their children, 26.9\% \((n = 59)\) said aunts/uncles and 19.1\% \((n =42)\) said cousins (see Figure 10). Some respondents also identified friends and god-parents as influential family members.

**Parental education.** When asked about parental education, only 16.4\% \((n = 33)\) of participants reported that their fathers had attended or graduated from college in the United States, 26.4\% \((n = 53)\) reported that their fathers attended or graduated from college outside the United States, 25.4\% \((n = 51)\) reported their fathers attended or graduated high school in the United States, 23.4\% \((n = 47)\) reported that their father’s attended or graduated from high school outside the United States and 8.5\% \((n = 17)\) of respondents reported that their father’s had no formal education (see Figure 11). A larger percentage of participants, 24.6\% \((n = 49)\) reported that their mothers had attended or
graduated from college in the United States, 27.1% \( (n = 54) \) reported that their mothers attended or graduated from college outside the United States, 22.6% \( (n = 45) \) reported their mothers attended or graduated high school in the United States, 17.1% \( (n = 34) \) reported that their mothers attended or graduated from high school outside the United States and again 8.5% \( (n = 17) \) of respondents reported that their mothers had no formal education (see Figure 12).

**Academic characteristics.** Respondents report an average 3.3 out of 4.0 grade point average, they attended the Miami (29.6%; \( n = 63 \)), Ft. Lauderdale (14.1%; \( n = 30 \)), Orlando (10.8%; \( n = 23 \)) and Online (13.1%; \( n = 28 \)) campuses and sought Associate degrees in the allied health majors of Nursing (11%; \( n = 23 \)), Occupational Therapy (11.4%, \( n = 24 \)), Radiologic Technology (8.6%, \( n = 18 \)), and Medical Assisting (6.7%, \( n = 14 \)) (see Figures 13 and 14). In addition to university attendance, 43.8% \( (n = 92) \) of respondents report working full time and an additional 21.4% \( (n = 45) \) of respondents report working part time (see Figure 15).

**College stress.** Average self-reported scores on The College Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008) for a total of 200 participants were 2.82 on a scale of 5 (see Figure 16). When asked how often they felt anxious or distressed about academic matters 41.18% \( (n = 84) \) of respondents indicated often or very often, 55.54% \( (n = 114) \) indicated feeling anxious or distressed regarding financial matters often or very often, 21.36% \( (n = 44) \) indicated feeling anxious or distressed regarding family matters often or very often, and 20% \( (n = 41) \) indicated feeling anxious or distressed regarding personal relationships often or very often.
Family cohesion. Average family cohesion score on The Family Cohesion scale (Rossmann & Way, 1996) for a total of 203 participants was 3.42 on a scale of 5 with 88.35% \( (n = 182) \) of participants reporting that their family members help and support one another (see Figure 16).

Profile of Students Who Intend to Withdraw

Nine percent \( (9\%; n = 20) \) of survey respondents reported that they intend to withdraw for the upcoming semester. Half of these students were male with a mean age of 33 (see figure 17). Sixty-five percent \( (n = 13) \) of these students were born outside the United States and 90% \( (n = 18) \) of their parents were born outside of the United States (see figures 18, 19 and 20). Of those respondents born outside the United States, 10% \( (n = 2) \) had been in the country less than 5 years, 25% \( (n = 5) \) had been in the country 6 -10 years and 20% \( (n = 4) \) had been in the country 11-20 years (see figure 21). In the home, 55% \( (n = 11) \) of these students speak primarily Spanish, 45% \( (n = 9) \) of these respondents report being married, 52.6% \( (n = 10) \) reported being a caregiver for a family member (child, parent, spouse, etc.), and household income is $40,001 - $47,308 (see figures 22, 23 and 24).

Withdrawing students reported both the highest and lowest level of paternal education, with 26.3% \( (n = 5) \) reporting paternal college experience within the United States and 15.8% \( (n = 3) \) reporting no formal education for fathers (see figure 26). No substantial difference seems to exist in terms of the level of maternal education reported by withdrawing students (see figure 25). All levels of maternal education were equally represented by students indicating an intent to withdraw.
As shown in Figure 27, withdrawing respondents report an average grade point average of 3.2, they attend the Miami (15%, n = 3), Ft. Lauderdale (15%, n = 3), Pembroke Pines (15%, n = 3) and Port St. Lucie (15%, n = 3) campuses and sought Associate degrees in the allied health majors of Nursing (20%, n = 4), Occupational Therapy (10%, n = 2), Radiologic Technology (10%, n = 2) and Medical Assisting (10%, n = 2). Of these students who intended to withdraw, 40% (n = 8) reported working full time and 20% (n = 4) reported working part time (see figure 28). Average college stress scores for students who intend to withdraw were 3.03 (SD = .75, n = 19) and family cohesion scores (Rossmann & Way, 1996) were 3.3 (SD = .81, n = 20) (see figure 16).

All respondents were asked to provide a reason for withdrawal if they were considering withdrawal at the moment or had previously considered withdrawal (see figure 29). Response categories varied from financial difficulties indicated by 10.8% (n = 19) of respondents to academic difficulties indicated by 5.4% (n = 9), work commitments indicated by 5.4% (n = 9) of respondents, needing a break from school and returning in 4 months indicated by 5.4% (n = 9) of respondents, conflicting family commitments indicated by 1.8% (n = 9), and transferring to another university indicated by 2.4% (n = 4) of respondents (see Figure 30). Respondents indicated “other” withdrawal reasons as being temporarily out of school waiting to enter a program, academic dismissal from a program, dissatisfaction with their campus, or withdrawal due to military benefits ending or due to military duty.
Qualitative Analysis of Motivations to Persist

Respondents were also asked what their motivations were to remain enrolled in school. This open-ended question yielded 66 responses that were categorized using a process of analytical coding. First all responses were open coded, then re-reviewed to identify regularities and group based on commonalities between responses. These individual responses and groups were then revised and refined based on reflecting on the meaning of the comments. Five motivational categories emerged from the analytical coding process: internal motivation, family motivation, motivation for a better life, institutional motivators, and pressure as motivation.

**Internal Motivation.** For internal motivation, 15 respondents shared that goal setting and personal determination to achieve academic goals encouraged them to remain enrolled. For students who reported this internal motivation involves setting goals, overcoming obstacles, facing challenges, and remaining motivated towards achieving that academic goal. One student wrote: “I did plan on leaving at some point because it was a bit stressful to maintain a household and go to school both full time but I got used to it little by little and plan on completing and probably exceeding my career goals here at [university].” Another student simply states: “I set a goal for myself and I need to keep up the motivation to achieve it.”

**Family Motivation.** Family served as a motivating factor for 13 respondents; the children of participants often served as their inspiration to complete their studies. This is an important difference with this group of students. Rather than seeking college education to honor or please their parents, these students are often seeking a college education to serve as an example for their own children or to provide a better life for their
children. One student shared her/his motivation: “My children and the need to better myself for them. So that they can have the best future for them.” Another student echoed a similar family motivator: “My mom, she is my main motivator.”

**Motivation for a better life.** Twenty-two (22) students are motivated to remain in school because, for them, earning a degree would result in a better life by way of better job opportunities, financial stability/independence and reduced life struggles. From health struggles to financial struggles, respondents perceive that earning a degree will be a means to a better future for them. Respondents recognize the “Value of a college degree” and see this as a motivation towards completion. One student shared her/his motivation: “Family illness and my personal health has been a big factor in the last 2-3 years and a big reason why I often have to withdraw [because] of absences, but what keeps me motivated is my future and [because] I know I can make a better future for myself.” The motivation simply stated by one respondent: “The end result, I look forward to a better future! It’s all I think about.”

**Institutional Motivators.** Fourteen (14) students acknowledge the University for helping them to remain motivated by way of providing supportive staff, good teachers, flexible scheduling, and a comfortable environment. Institutionally two factors appear to be most impactful in keeping the students motivated. First, the course structure: “I like the system of the university. I only have to focus in one class at a time. With all the rest of responsibilities in my life, this is the best way I can get through the college.” Second, the people: “It's a school where I feel comfortable. Everyone who works at the University is nice and give[s] me motivation to keep going.” Simply stated by one student s/he is motivated because s/he is: “Enjoying school!”
Pressure as Motivation. One student reported pressure in the home environment as their reason to remain enrolled: “Withdrawal is not an option in my house.” No further information was available on this student thus it is not known if this pressure to succeed is self-imposed or external from parents, spouse or other.

Many students indicated that their motivations to remain enrolled in school encompassed a mix of the above categories. With a non-traditional student population, having a combination of factors affecting attrition is not uncommon. One student shared her/his motivation: “Because I love OT and my dream is to graduate and became a successful O.T.A. I want to give a better life to my daughters; also, better future to my family members who still are living in Cuba.” Another shared: “It is extremely hard to work over 50 hours a week, attend to my children, my home, and go to school. It doesn't matter [what] I have to go through or what stress level I am currently under. MY GOAL IN LIFE IS TO FINISH SCHOOL AT ALL COST!”

In summary, the motivations for persistence were assessed for 66 resondents. The motivational categories of internal motivation, family motivation, motivation for a better life, institutional motivators, and pressure as motivation were extrapolated from these responses. Some responses were a combination of the aforementioned categories.

Relationship between Background Characteristics and Intent to Withdraw

The relationship between each of respondent’s characteristics and intent to withdraw was examined using three different analyses: an independent samples t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson’s correlational analysis.
**Gender and intent to withdraw.** An independent samples $t$-test was performed to examine if the likelihood of the withdrawal differs by gender ($1 =$ Female, $0 =$ Male). Levene’s test showed that the underlying assumption of the equal variance was violated ($F = 25.77$, $p < .01$) and thus a degree of freedom was corrected in testing the significance of mean difference in the subsequent independent samples $t$-test. Finding from the independent samples $t$-test shows that the likelihood of withdrawal was found to be significantly different by gender ($t(45.24) = 2.93$, $p = .005$). The mean difference between female and male was 0.60 with a standard error of 0.20 (95% CI: 0.19 and 1.01), showing that females ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.69$, $n = 134$) have a higher mean on withdrawal when compared to females ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.22$, $n = 39$).

**Age and intent to withdraw.** A Pearson’s correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between age and intent to withdraw. The Pearson’s correlation analysis shows that there is a significant and negative relationship at a small degree ($r = -.17$, $p = .02$, $n = 173$) between age and intent to withdraw. This indicates that the older student is less likely to withdraw from the university.

**Participant country of origin and intent to withdraw.** An independent samples $t$-test was performed to determine if the likelihood of withdrawal differs depending on the country of origin ($1 =$ Born in US, $0 =$ Born outside US). Levene’s test showed that the underlying assumption of the equal variance was violated ($F = 4.98$, $p = .03$) and thus a degree of freedom was corrected in testing the significance of mean difference. Finding from an independent samples $t$-test shows that there was significant differences on the intent to withdrawal by country of origin ($t(164.55) = 1.88$, $p = 0.05$). The mean
difference on the likelihood of intent to withdrawal between students born in the United States and those born outside the United States was 0.25 with a standard error of 0.13 (95% CI: -0.01 and 0.51). This shows that students born in the United States ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.79$, $n = 88$) are more likely to report an intent to withdraw from the university when compared to students born outside the United States ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.94$, $n = 85$).

**Maternal country of origin and intent to withdraw.** An independent samples $t$-test was performed to determine if the likelihood of intent to withdraw differs depending on the maternal country of origin ($1 =$ Born in US, $0 =$ Born outside US). Levene’s test showed that the underlying assumption of equal variance was not violated ($F = .39$, $p = .53$). Findings from an independent samples $t$-test show no significant mean differences on intent to withdraw by the maternal country of origin ($t(39.47) = .30$, $p = .76$). The mean difference on the likelihood of intent to withdraw between students whose mother was born in the United States and those whose mother was born outside the United States was 0.05 with a standard error of 0.17 (95% CI: -0.3 and 0.40).

**Length of time in US and intent to withdraw.** A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of student time in country on their intent to withdraw. Time in country was categorized as follows: $1 =$ less than 1 year, $2 =$ 1-5 years, $3 =$ 6-10 years, $4 =$ 11-20 years, $5 =$ more than 20 years, and $6 =$ Born in the US. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly different depending on students’ time in country as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(5,165)=1.96$, $p = .09$).

**Paternal country of origin and intent to withdraw.** An independent samples $t$-test was performed to determine if the likelihood of intent to withdraw differs depending
on the paternal country of origin (1 = Born in US, 0 = Born outside US). Levene’s test showed that the underlying assumption of equal variance was not violated ($F = .06$, $p = .82$). Finding from an independent samples $t$-test did not show significant paternal country of origin differences on intent to withdraw ($t(28.82) = .19$, $p = .85$). The mean difference on the likelihood of intent to withdraw between students whose father was born in the United States and those whose father was born outside the United States was 0.04 with a standard error of 0.20 (95% CI: -0.37 and 0.45).

**Household factors and intent to withdraw.** First, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of student relationship status (1 = Single, 2 = Married, 3 = Divorced/Separated/Widowed) on their intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly varied depending on students’ relationship status as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(2,164) = 1.31$, $p = .27$). Second, an independent samples $t$-test was performed to determine if the likelihood of intent to withdraw differs depending on whether the participant is a caregiver. Levene’s test showed that the underlying assumption of the equal variance was not violated ($F = 1.87$, $p = .17$). Finding from an independent samples $t$-test did not show significant paternal country of origin differences on intent to withdraw ($t(167) = 1.66$, $p = .10$). The mean difference on the likelihood of withdrawal between students who are and are not caregivers is 0.22 with a standard error of 0.13 (95% CI: -0.04 and 0.48).

**Employment status and intent to withdraw.** A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of employment status on their intent to withdraw. The likelihood of withdrawal intention was not significantly varied depending on students’ work status as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(3,168) = 0.65$, $p =
A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of household income on student intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly varied depending on students’ household income as determined by the one-way ANOVA \( F(12,156) = 0.65, p = .80 \).

**Relationship between Academic Characteristics and Intent to Withdraw**

**Participants’ grades and intent to withdraw.** A Pearson’s correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between GPA and intent to withdraw. The Pearson’s correlation analysis shows that there was not a significant relationship \( r = -.05, p = .54, n = 173 \) between GPA and intent to withdraw.

**Participants’ major and intent to withdraw.** A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of student major on their intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly varied depending on students major as determined by the one-way ANOVA \( F(4,168) = 1.01, p = .41 \).

**Participants’ campus and intent to withdraw.** A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect campus attended on student intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly varied depending on campus attended as determined by the one-way ANOVA \( F(4,168) = 0.83, p = .51 \).

**Parental level of education and an intent to withdraw.** A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of father level of education on participants’ intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was significantly varied depending on highest level of paternal education as determined by the one-way ANOVA \( F(4,160) = 2.54, p = .04 \). A \( t \)-test post-hoc test revealed that withdrawal
intention was statistically different between those whose fathers had college experience in the US ($\mu = 3.72$, $SD = .45$, $n = 29$) and those who had no formal education ($\mu = 3.07$, $SD = .8$, $n = 14$), $M_{diff} = 0.65; SE = .26; p = .01$).

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of mother level of education on participants’ intent to withdraw. The likelihood of intent to withdraw was not significantly varied depending on students’ maternal education as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(4, 158) = 0.39$, $p = .81$).

**Relations of Background Characteristics, Academic Variables, Stress, and Family Support to Intent to Withdraw**

The current study intended to examine whether students’ intent to withdraw is related to a number of respondents’ background variables, academic variables, and the perceived level of stress and family support using multiple regression. However, the distribution of responses on the likelihood of withdrawal indicated that only 20 of 219 students intend to withdraw, showing no variation in the dependent variable among the students. Second, the Pearson’s correlation analysis shows no significant relations of two key independent variables – college stress and family cohesion – to a dependent variable ($r = -.06$, $p = .45$, $n = 173$ for a relationship between stress and an intent to withdraw, $r = .04$, $p = .58$, $n = 170$ for a relationship between family cohesion score and intent to withdraw). Therefore, no further regression analysis was performed to examine the relation of respondents’ background variables, academic variables, and the perceived level of stress and family support to student’s intent to withdraw.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Today’s higher education landscape offers students what seem like innumerable educational options. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* there are 4,757 colleges and universities in the United States with over 20 million enrolled students (2014). Nearly 4 million students are attending private non-profit institutions which regrettably receive little attention in the higher education literature despite data demonstrating that these institutions have overall higher graduation rates than public and for-profit institutions. Approximately 40% of Hispanic/Latino students are enrolled at private, non-profit institutions where the graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino students is shown to be highest when compared to public institutions and private for-profit institutions (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2014). No literature was found describing the individual or institutional factors affecting Hispanic/Latino retention and graduation rates at these institutions.

Therefore, the current study intended to explore the intent to withdrawal of Hispanic/Latino students within the context of, and with a focus on, a nontraditional, private, non-profit 4-year multi-campus commuter university system. Three objectives of this study were (1) to describe the profile of Hispanic/Latino student body attending a nontraditional, private, non-profit 4-year multi-campus commuter university system in terms of individual backgrounds, family backgrounds, and academic characteristics, (2) to classify the profile of students who intend to withdraw from a nontraditional, private, non-profit 4-year multi-campus commuter university system, and (3) to identify the significant factors affecting students’ intention to withdraw from a nontraditional, private, non-profit 4-year multi-campus commuter university system, with a general purpose to
gather information as to whether this unique institution is appropriately retaining this student population.

Another purpose of this study was to examine the hypothesis related to whether family support and college stress have an impact on students’ intent to withdraw and further explore the moderating role of familial support in the relationship between perceived stress and intent to persist in Hispanic/Latino students attending this type of institution. Furthermore, potential variations in this moderating relationship were sought out. However, due to a negligible variation observed in the outcome variable, no regression analysis was performed to answer the hypotheses originally posited in this study.

This study was based on the responses of participants who were recruited from one private, multi-campus commuter university in Florida. The university was chosen for this study due to distinct characteristics that make it unlike universities included in prior research as it combines the services offered by traditional and nontraditional institutions. This institution is a private, non-profit commuter university with 14 full-service campuses throughout the state offering classes in a unique modular format allowing students to attend full time while focusing on one class at a time.

Summary of Findings

Profile of student. Hispanic/Latino students attending this university are mainly single females with an average age of 28. About half were born in the United States and of those that were not, a quarter reported living the United States more than 20 years. The majority of students’ parents were born outside of the United States and a third attended
college outside the United States. The majority of students live with family in Spanish-speaking homes and have an average household income of $40,001 to 47,308. In addition to school responsibilities, half of students have caregiver responsibilities for family members and over half work outside the home at least part time. In school, these students mostly seek degrees in allied health fields and attend the Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando and Online campuses.

The majority of Hispanic/Latino students intended to remain enrolled in the university. Only 20 of 173 respondents reported that they intended to withdraw from the institution. Reasons for withdrawal included financial difficulties, academic difficulties, work commitments, needing a break from school and returning in 4 months, conflicting family commitments, and transferring to another university.

**Profile of students who intend to withdraw.** Withdrawing respondents are half male and half female with an average age of 33. A slight majority of withdrawing participants were born outside of the United States and nearly all of students’ parents were born outside of the United States. For fathers level of education withdrawing students reported high levels in both college experience in the United States and no formal education. The majority of students are single, live with family in Spanish-speaking homes and have an average household income of $40,001 to 47,308. In addition to school responsibilities, half of students have caregiver responsibilities for family members and over half work outside the home at least part time. In school, these students mostly seek degrees in allied health fields and attend the Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Pembroke Pines and Port St. Lucie campuses.
Factors related to student’s intent to withdraw. Some significant differences were found to exist between students indicating an intent to withdraw and those intending to remain enrolled. First, older students are less likely to report an intent to withdraw. Second, students born outside the United States are less likely to report an intent to withdraw. Third, males are more likely to report that they intend to withdraw than females. Lastly, withdrawal is statistically different between those students whose fathers had college experience in the US and those who had no formal education.

Motivation to Remain Enrolled. Students attending this university largely intend to remain enrolled. Despite this, 32% (n = 66) of students reported that at some point they had considered withdrawal and had chosen to remain enrolled. These students shared what motivated them to remain enrolled. Due to commonalities, these motivations were categorized as follows: internal motivation, family motivation, motivation for a better life, institutional motivators, and pressure as motivation. Internal motivation referred to students whose personal goals and strong commitment to degree completion kept them from withdrawing. Family motivation referred to students who are seeking to further their education for the betterment of their families and, in most cases, specifically for their own children. Motivation for a better life refers to students who perceive earning a college degree as a necessity for stability in the future. Institutional motivators refer to institutional factors such as people, services or structures within the institution that motivate the student to remain enrolled. Pressure as motivation refers to students who feel that the decision to remain in school is not their own but rather imposed through pressure by others in their environment. Lastly, motivation for many respondents was not one factor but rather a combination of the above-mentioned motivational categories.
Inferences of the Current Study

The demographic landscape of Hispanic/Latino students attending this university is quite different from the traditional 18-24 year old college student profile. Students attending this university are older and students born outside the United States are less likely to report an intent to withdraw. Approximately half of participants were born outside of the United States and majority of their parents were born outside of the United States. 76% (n = 219) of participants were female, a finding which is in line with National Center for Education Statistics showing higher enrollment rates for female Hispanic/Latina students (2013). Most respondents live with family in mainly Spanish-speaking homes (n = 209; 41%). These students also balance attending university full-time with responsibilities such as being married (27.1%; n = 210), working at least part time (65%; n = 210) and caring for a family member such as a parent, spouse or child (50%; n = 219).

Due to the differences that exist between this student population and traditional college students, theories and prior studies focusing on traditional college students may not be fully applicable to this student population in the following attributes. First, prior research has shown that parental education level affects college attendance and persistence behaviors. Hurtado-Ortiz and Gauvin (2007) found a positive relationship between mother’s education and adolescent college attendance in a Hispanic/Latino sample. The current study did not support those findings, however, it did find that those students whose fathers had college experience in the United States were statistically less likely to withdraw than students whose fathers had no formal education. Pointing to an increase in the role of the father in the educational pursuits of Hispanic/Latino students.
Second, the cultural capital literature stipulates that students with relatively high levels of cultural capital are more likely to view college attendance and degree attainment as the norm and that congruency between the student’s social system, which includes cultural capital, and the realities faced in their college experiences will improve student integration into college life and improve persistence (McDonough, 1997; Tinto, 1993). When applied to this student population, one would expect to find a larger number of respondents whose parents had college experience in the United States (higher level of cultural capital) and would expect to find lower numbers of withdrawing respondents whose parents had college experience in the United States (higher level of cultural capital).

However, the data did not support this expectation. Respondents to this survey report parental education that runs the gamut from no formal education, equating to the lowest level of cultural capital, to college experience in the United States, equating to the highest level of cultural capital. This may be explained by the findings of Hernandez (2000) who noted that despite their inability to help their college student, Hispanic/Latino families place pressure on students to succeed in their collegiate pursuits and students feel they owe their parents for the sacrifices made to allow them access to a college education. Furthermore, the value placed by Hispanic/Latino parents on school was found to be a “protective environmental resource” for Hispanic/Latino students in achieving academic success (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009). This student population is motivated not only by the sacrifices of their family but also by the need to contribute to their families’ future and to complete their education for the benefit of their own children.
Research has shown that institutional factors affect student retention (Astin, 1993; Bean, 1982; Mayo, Murgua, & Padilla, 1995; Sedlacek, 1989). This study aids in understanding what these institutional factors are in a non-traditional setting. Numerous study respondents credit supportive staff, good teachers, flexible scheduling, and a comfortable environment for their intent to remain enrolled. This demonstrates that the institution’s staff and faculty are accessible and well prepared to meet the needs of Hispanic/Latino students. The modular scheduling, although intense, allows for students to focus on one course at a time and complete their degrees within a reasonable timeframe while balancing school with life responsibilities. Lastly, the school provides an environment where Hispanic/Latino students feel comfortable thus it can be assumed that the environment is safe (free of racially hostile behaviors) and accepting of diversity.

For minority students, family support has been found to be a fundamental feature of academic success (Kraft, 1991; Schneider & Ward, 2003). Some research on Hispanic/Latino students has found that many students feel they cannot rely on their families for academic support or guidance due to a perceived lack of understanding of the United States higher education system (Kenny and Perez, 1996). Other research has found that, despite a lack of academic understanding, Hispanic/Latino families provide valuable intangible forms of support to their college students (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Ceballo, 2004). In the current study, 88.35% \((n = 206)\) of respondents reported that their family help and supported one another and 87.31% \((n = 205)\) report that there is a feeling of togetherness in their family. Although no statistically significant results were found, this presence of family support could play a role in students’ decisions to attend college and remain enrolled, despite the fact that these families may not all have the full
appreciation of the United States system of higher education, support may be provided in intangible ways.

Although prior research demonstrates stress and acculturative stress as highly influential factors in the persistence behaviors of Hispanic/Latino students, this study did not find a statistically significant relationship between student score on The College Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008) and intent to withdraw. Furthermore, no respondents explicitly reported stress, or other mental health related item, as a reason for withdrawal. An alternate explanation is that past studies have found that support from families acts as a buffer for psychological distress (Castillo & Hill, 2004; Shibazaki, 1999; Solberg & Villareal, 1997). The lack of significant stress findings in this study may be related to that prior finding.

The findings of this study support that of the National Survey of Latinos which found that three of the main reasons reported by Hispanic/Latinos for withdrawal are financial hardship, need to economically support their families, and academic difficulties (Lopez, 2009). Additionally, this study found that 5.4% of withdrawing respondents did not intend to remain out of school permanently but rather they were withdrawing temporarily and intended to re-enroll after one semester.

**Implications**

**Understanding and responding to the population.** The population of Hispanic/Latino students attending this university is mostly female, late twenties, average median income, with life responsibilities outside of the university which may include a full or part time job and/or caregiver responsibilities for a child, spouse or parent. Family
cohesion scores indicate that she has a supportive family yet she reports being internally motivated to complete her studies in order to achieve a better life, financial stability, etc.

Understanding the student will assist the university staff, faculty and administration in better serving these students. Staff must continue to be accessible to students, should reach out to students to check on their progress, and to encourage them to focus on their end goal. Faculty must remember that students are balancing school and life responsibilities so they too must be accessible, classes must be engaging and well structured, assignments and assessments must be fair and tied to course objectives, and feedback must be timely. Administration must keep in mind the goals of the students and ensure that programming and services are tailored appropriately. Program offerings must lead to sought after degrees in the job market and support services must be tailored to adult students. Rather than exploring literature and best practices for traditional college students this institution must focus on adult learners.

Recruitment and retention. Overall most students reported that they did not intend to withdraw from the university (88.4%; \( n = 173 \)). This is positive news for the institution, however, in student retention there are always improvements to be made when working towards 100% student retention.

Only 23.3% \(( n = 214 \) of survey respondents were males and 20% \(( n = 20 \) of these students indicated an intent to withdraw. These are concerning figures for Hispanic/Latino males attending this institution. The institution may consider additional research into the enrollment and withdrawal patterns of male students to help to better identify the causes. The institution may also consider peer or faculty mentoring programs for Hispanic/Latino male students such that these students establish a relationship with an
academically successful Hispanic/Latino male who can guide them through the transition to college process and the challenges faced beyond that.

Information garnered from this study can also be used by this institution to better inform overall retention strategies. The most common reason given for withdrawal by these students was financial difficulties (10.8%; \( n = 90 \)). The institutions financial aid and student services offices may consider joint programming and interventions to assist students in better understanding their financial aid options including scholarships and grants to offset financial burdens that cause delays in graduation or withdrawal. Students also indicated work commitments and the need for a semester off from school as reasons for withdrawal (5.4% each; \( n = 90 \)) as well as conflicting family commitments (1.8%, \( n = 90 \)). The academic and student services departments can work jointly to better educate students regarding options other than withdrawal to assist with accommodating school with the need for more time for life responsibilities. By having better communication with students regarding their financial, academic and service options, the institution may be able to decrease attrition. The first step in the process is to ensure that students who stop attending class are identified quickly and contacted by the faculty members such that potential withdrawals can be directed to the correct department for advisement.

The motivations that respondents identified for completing their education can also serve as helpful to the institution in creating programming to keep those students motivated and engaged. Academic and student services departments might consider awards and receptions to recognize academic and other achievements of students. These recognitions keep students motivated towards achieving their graduation goal. Student services may consider having a family appreciation event once a semester or twice a year
rather than only student appreciation events. This way students are able to share their family and academic lives for a special event.

Lastly, a key motivating factor identified by the study is the institution itself. This study identified supportive staff, good faculty, and suitable scheduling as three factors that motivate students to remain enrolled. These are three factors that the institution must foster and grow. Furthermore the institution should explore if there are other ways in which these three motivating factors can be employed to better assist the students.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of the current study was the homogeneity of the sample in terms of intent to withdraw. The vast majority of respondents intended to remain enrolled in the university. Although a positive result for the university, homogeneity in intent to withdraw affected the researcher’s ability to draw conclusions regarding differences or relationships between withdrawing and not withdrawing students. Homogeneity affected the researcher’s ability to answer one of six research questions in the current study.

Sample size was also lower than expected with only 4.4% of students participating in the online survey. Low sample size made it challenging for the researcher to explore certain variables such as participant country of origin, mother country of origin and father country of origin. These and other variables had to be collapsed as discussed in the results section for analysis to be conducted. Lower sample size may also have impacted the homogeneity of the sample. As can be seen in table 2, although 9% of the study respondents reported an intent to withdraw the actual withdrawal rate for
Hispanic/Latino students November 2014 to January 2015 was 14%. Thus withdrawing students may have elected not to participate in the study.

Generalizability of results may also be affected because the sample is drawn from one university. The university from which the sample is being drawn is a state-wide private non-profit, nonresidential university in Florida thus applicability of results to other institutions will rest on similarity of those institutions or respondents. Results will not apply outside of Hispanic/Latino students and may not apply to traditional age students since the average age of students attending this university is 28.

Self-reported measures, such as surveys, carry inherent shortcomings. For this particular survey measure, participants completed a web based survey outside of a structured environment thus participation was low. Participants received a survey invitation via email thus there was a risk that unintended recipients might receive and participate. Survey items did not allow for follow-up questioning and provided limited answers for respondents to select from. Thus, answers provided may be approximations rather than truths. Participant frame of mind at the time of survey completion may impact their answers on the individual survey items. Participants may also have a propensity to answer questions in a way that is socially desirable/acceptable rather than providing the response most applicable to them.

Lastly, this study employs survey research methods to study demographics, family support, perceived stress and intent to persist at one point and time. A one-time assessment may not allow for a full appreciation of variables that begin well before the college years and does not assess the ultimate question of whether students achieve graduation.
Future Research

Due to the high retention rates of this institution, future research should take a qualitative approach to further investigate the factors that motivate students to remain enrolled. Particular focus should be placed on the institutional factors that motivate students to remain enrolled such that those factors can be further identified, highlighted and strengthened by the institution and considered for implementation by others like it. Qualitative research also affords the institution the opportunity to focus on targeted, campus-specific needs and strategies. This research can also be used to help identify why these students chose to defer college enrollment until later in life and what role, if any, family factors or cultural capital may have played in this decision-making process.

Researchers may consider targeting the graduates of private non-profit institutions for future research. These graduates can provide information about the entire enrollment management cycle - why they chose the institution, what factors made them stay and what factors made them successful in achieving graduation.

For researchers intending to target similar populations to the current study, increasing sample size will be an important goal. Suggestions for increasing sample size would be to have an active participant recruitment process whereby, in addition to a formal email invitation, faculty and staff are involved in the participant recruitment process. Researchers may also consider adding an incentive for those students who chose to participate.

For those students who have withdrawn, a follow-up analysis should be conducted. This analysis can explore two areas of value to the retention literature. First, it can identify those students who have discontinued their studies altogether and conduct a
more in-depth investigation into the factors that led to the decision to permanently withdraw. By better understanding those decision factors, institutions can potentially establish intervention strategies. Second, future research can identify students who exhibit withdrawal and reenroll patterns, known as stop-outs, which lead to extended time to graduation or may lead to permanent withdrawal. Examining the factors affecting withdrawal and stop-out behaviors can help educational institutions to better retain students and narrow the time-to-graduation gap.

Future studies should also concentrate on an in-depth examination of Hispanic/Latino male attendance and persistence behaviors in all levels of education leading up to and including higher education. Better understanding motivations for and against enrollment and motivations for and against persistence will allow enrollment managers to develop strategies to help address the consistently low enrollment, retention and graduation rates of Hispanic/Latino males.

The attendance behaviors of the non-traditional Hispanic/Latino students, such as those attending the institution described in this study, also requires further exploration. Non-traditional students often possess features that traditionally make them more susceptible to attrition such as first generation status and working outside the home. By studying this student population and identifying these potential attrition factors as well as student motivators, institutions can better attract and retain these students through the provision of appropriate academic, financial and student services programming and support services.

Future studies should continue to strive to gather information from a wide variety of institutions, including non-traditional universities and Hispanic/Latino serving...
institutions, and should strive to increase participation from Hispanic/Latino sub-ethnicities such as to add to the literature which at this time principally focuses on public institutions and consolidates all Hispanics/Latinos into one broad category. These studies should also compare Hispanic/Latino students to their White counterparts.

Future studies should also explore the moderator variable of family support in more detail. Specifically studies should focus on what role cultural capital and/or communities of cultural wealth play in family support and thus what influence these may have on the persistence behaviors of Hispanic/Latino college students. Although these concepts have been applied to the study of college students, it is not known what cultural capital or communities of cultural wealth is transmitted from family to student. It is also not known how cultural capital or communities of cultural wealth influence the success of Hispanic/Latinos seeking higher education. Specific to adult students, the impact of children as a motivating factor should also be considered for further study.

Lastly, future studies may find success by taking a longitudinal approach to tracking family support and stress from as early as primary school through to completion of college. This particular study focuses on Hispanic/Latino students, however, this topic is applicable and of utmost importance to students of all races/ethnicities and should be pursued to ensure that families and schools are working in partnership towards the academic success of students.

Conclusion

The retention and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students is an important and complex challenge facing higher education. There are a broad array of colleges and
universities serving Hispanic/Latino students and a diverse landscape of Hispanic/Latino students accessing these providers. Understanding both the uniqueness of these institutions and the diversity of the students who access them is an integral step for faculty, student service professionals, administrators and enrollment managers in developing effective and lasting strategies to retain and graduate these students. This study begins to achieve these goals by having established a profile and the intent to persist of Hispanic/Latino students attending a private, nonprofit regionally accredited multi-campus commuter university. Moreover, this study identified institutional factors influencing Hispanic/Latino student intent to persist at the private, nonprofit regionally accredited multi-campus commuter university. Further research is recommended to expand these results beyond the university from which the sample was drawn.
References


Maldonado-Torres, S. E. (2011). Differences in learning styles of Dominican and Puerto Rican students: We are Latinos from the Caribbean; our first language is Spanish, however; our learning preferences are different. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, July 2011* (10), 226-236. doi:10.1177/1538192711403484


Figures

*Figure 1.* Proposed model for regression analysis.
Figure 2. Participant Country of Origin

- United States: 50.2%
- Born Outside United States: 49.8%

Figure 3. Participant maternal country of origin.

Figure 3. Mother Country of Origin

- United States: 84.4%
- Born Outside United States: 15.6%
Figure 4. Participant paternal country.

Figure 5. Participant time living in the United States.
Figure 6. Language Spoken in the Home.

- English: 36.8%
- Spanish: 20.6%
- Both Equally: 41.6%

Figure 6. Participants reported language spoken in the home.

Figure 7. Participant Home Environment

- Living with family: 89.90%
- Living with roommate: 4.80%
- Living alone: 5.30%

Figure 7. Participants home environment.
Figure 8. Participant Relationship Status

* Single: 55.2%
* Married: 27.1%
* Divorced: 10.5%
* Separated: 4.3%
* Widowed: 0.05%

* Single = Married = Divorced = Separated = Widowed

Figure 8. Participant relationship status.

Figure 9. Caregiver for a Family Member

* Yes: 48.3%
* No: 51.7%

* Yes = No
Figure 9. Participants’ reported caregiver responsibilities.

Figure 10. Influential Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sibling(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gandparent(s)</td>
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<td>Child(ren)</td>
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<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step-Parent(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Laws</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great-Grandparent(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Grandparent(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Sibling(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great-Aunt(s)/Great-Uncle(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step-Child(ren)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step-Cousin(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 10. Respondents identify which family members influence their lives.
Figure 11. Father Highest Level of Education

- No formal education: 8.5%
- High school experience outside US: 23.4%
- High school experience in US: 25.4%
- College experience outside of US: 26.4%
- College experience in US: 16.4%

Figure 11. Highest level of education completed by participants’ fathers.

Figure 12. Mother Highest Level of Education

- No formal education: 8.5%
- High school experience outside US: 17.1%
- High school experience in US: 22.6%
- College experience outside of US: 27.1%
- College experience in US: 24.6%

Figure 12. Highest level of education completed by participants’ mothers.
Figure 13: Distribution of respondents by campus.

Figure 14: Participant Majors

Figure 14. Distribution of participants by major.
Figure 15. Participants’ reported employment status.

Figure 16. Family Cohesion Scale and Stress Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Withdrawing</th>
<th>Not Withdrawing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Cohesion Score</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Score</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.83</td>
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</table>

Figure 16. Participants results on The Family Cohesion scale (Rossman & Way, 1996) and The College Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008).
Figure 17. Gender distribution by withdrawal status.

Figure 18. Participant country of origin by intent to withdraw.
Figure 19. Mother country of origin by participant intent to withdraw.

Figure 20. Father country of origin by participant intent to withdraw.
Figure 21. Participant time in country by intent to withdraw.

Figure 22. Language spoken in the home by intent to withdraw.
Figure 23. Participant relationship status by intent to withdraw.

Figure 24. Caregiver status by intent to withdraw.

Figure 24. Caregiver for Family Member by Intent to Withdraw

Figure 24. Caregiver status by intent to withdraw.
Figure 25. Mother highest level of education by participant intent to withdraw.

Figure 26. Father highest level of education by participant intent to withdraw.
Figure 27. Campus Attended by Intent to Withdraw

Figure 28. Participant Employment Status by Intent to Withdraw

Figure 27. Campus attended by intent to withdraw.

Figure 28. Participant employment status by intent to withdraw.
Figure 29. Reasons for Withdrawal

- I have not considered withdrawal: 77.2%
- I am finishing pre-requisite courses and waiting to enter a program at this school: 10.8%
- I need a break from school but will return within 4 months: 5.4%
- I have academic difficulties: 5.4%
- I have conflicting family commitments: 2.4%
- I have financial difficulties: 2.4%
- I am transferring to another university: 1.8%
- I have work commitments: 4.2%
- Other: 5.4%

Figure 29. Participants’ reasons for withdrawal.
### Tables

**Table 1**

*T-Tests for Demographic Variables and Intent to Withdraw*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>Levene’s Test</th>
<th>Independent t- Test</th>
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<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.63 (.69)</td>
<td>3.03 (1.22)</td>
<td>25.76 (.01)</td>
<td>2.93 (45.24) .60</td>
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<td></td>
<td>45.24 (.60)</td>
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<td><strong>Outside US</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.61 (.79)</td>
<td>3.36 (.94)</td>
<td>4.98 (.03)</td>
<td>1.88 (164.55) .25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>164.55 (.25)</td>
<td>13 (-.01)</td>
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<td><strong>Outside US</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.54 (.84)</td>
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<td>.3947 (.05)</td>
<td>17 (.17)</td>
<td>-.30 (.30)</td>
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<td><strong>Outside US</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.52 (.90)</td>
<td>3.48 (.87)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.61 (.82)</td>
<td>3.99 (.88)</td>
<td>1.87 (.17)</td>
<td>1.66 (167) .22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>167 (.22)</td>
<td>13 (.13)</td>
<td>-.04 (.04)</td>
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*Note:* All values are mean ± standard deviation unless otherwise specified.
Table 2

ANOVA for Demographic Variables and Intent to Withdraw

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<th>df2</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>$F_{between}$</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>Participant Work Status</td>
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<td>.65</td>
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<td>168</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Time in Country</td>
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<td>165</td>
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<td>1.96</td>
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<td>165</td>
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<td>.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Household Income</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.3</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<td>Father’s Highest Level of Education</td>
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<td>.41</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.02</td>
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### Table 3

*Actual University Hispanic Student Population and Withdrawal*

<table>
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<th>Campus</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>Withdrawals 11/24/14-01/30/15</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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<td>Daytona</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ft. Lauderdale</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ft. Myers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
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<td>710</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5028</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Email

Date

Dear Student,

My name is Cristy Sibila. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Higher Education Leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am conducting a study focusing on Hispanic/Latino college students. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about yourself which will take approximately 15-30 minutes.

Participation in the study is confidential. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. Participation, non-participation, or withdrawal will not affect your grades in any way.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 305-596-2226 if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Human Subjects Research Office at the University of Miami, at (305) 243-3195.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please click on the following link to begin CLICK HERE.

With kind regards,

Cristy Sibila
Doctoral Student, University of Miami
305-596-2226
csibila@kesieruniversity.edu
Appendix B

Follow-up Email to Potential Pool of Participants

Date

Dear Student,

There are only two weeks remaining to participate in my doctoral survey.

As a reminder, I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Higher Education Leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate.

If you would like to participate, please click on the following link to begin CLICK HERE.

With kind regards,

Cristy Sibila
Doctoral Student, University of Miami
305-596-2226
csibila@kesieruniversity.edu
Appendix C

Informed Consent & Survey Instrument

Test Link for Survey Instrument:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/survey/preview?sm=dvC65_2Be1SW_2B7PU65O1SifkaRyVGRTxUfirhnf8sbc4NA0G8kT0dKOdAxovm8_2BdAut2U0h7eH_2BIAsm8j6JIpv2w_3D_3D

Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Welcome and thank you for your participation.

Participant Consent

University of Miami

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to agree if you agree to participate.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:
You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to better understand Hispanic/Latino college students by exploring if family support moderates students’ perceived level of stressor on their intent to persist in college. You have been invited to participate because you are a Hispanic/Latino student attending courses at the University.

PROCEDURES:
All volunteers will complete an online survey. The length of time you are expected to participate in the study is estimated to be 15 to 30 minutes.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS:
It is not anticipated that you will experience any personal risk or discomfort from taking part in this study. In the event that you do, please inform the researcher. During the survey, you may skip certain questions if you do not wish to answer.

BENEFITS:
No direct benefit is expected to you for your participation in this study. The study is expected to benefit Hispanic/Latino students and their families by giving higher education institutions information about how Hispanic/Latino students find success in higher education. This information can in turn be used by these institutions to help incoming Hispanic/Latino students find success through information provision, programming and other support services.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Participant confidentiality is of the utmost importance. The researcher will only have access to the information that the participant provides in the questionnaires. Only the researcher will have access to this information which will be stored securely in a password protected file on a password protected workstation. There will be no identifying information such as names or student numbers to protect the participants’ identity throughout the process, including the reporting of final research findings.

The researcher and staff will consider your records confidential to the extent permitted by law. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) may request to review and obtain copies of your records. Your records may also be reviewed for audit purposes by authorized University or other agents who will be bound by the same provisions of confidentiality.
COMPENSATION:
There is no compensation associated with your participation in the study; however, a copy of the study findings can be made available to you at the conclusion of the study.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Cindy Sibilo (305-998-2229), under the direction of Professor Sooyeon Ahn, will gladly answer any questions you may have concerning the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Human Subjects Research Office at the University of Miami, at (305) 243-3195.

* 1. PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT:
I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. Please print a copy for your personal records of this consent form.

☐ Yes
☐ No
**Demographics**

* 2. I am ____ years old:

   [ ] 3
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Demographics

4. I attend the following campus:

[ ]

[ ]

Prev  Next
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Demographics

5. My major is:

[Dropdown]

[Other 1%]

Prev  Next
6. My cumulative university GPA is:

[ ] 3.0  

[ ] 3.5  

[ ] 4.0  

[ ] 15%
Demographics

7. I am:
   □ Single
   □ Married
   □ Divorced
   □ Separated
   □ Widowed
   □ Prefer not to disclose.

[Input field] 18%
8. I am:

- [ ] Parent or guardian to a child.
- [ ] Caregiver for someone (parent, spouse, etc.)
- [ ] None of the above.
- [ ] Prefer not to disclose.

[ ] 20%
9. I work:
   - [ ] Full Time
   - [ ] Part Time
   - [ ] I am unemployed
   - [ ] Prefer not to disclose.

23%
10. I live: (Select all that apply)

☐ Alone.
☐ With spouse/partner.
☐ With child(ren).
☐ With parent(s).
☐ With relative(s).
☐ With roommate(s).
☐ Prefer not to disclose.
11. My household income is:

[ ]

[ ]

[ ]

[ ]

[ ]
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Demographics

12. I was born in:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Puerto Rico
- Spain
- Suriname
- United States
- Uruguay
- Venezuela
- Other (please specify)
118

Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Demographics

13. I am attending college in the United States using an international student visa:

☐ Yes

☐ No
### Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

**Demographics**

14. I have been living in the United States:

- [ ] less than 1 year
- [ ] 1-5 years
- [ ] 6-10 years
- [ ] 11-20 years
- [ ] more than 20 years
- [ ] I was born in the United States.
15. My mother (or mother figure) was born in:

- [ ] Argentina
- [ ] Bolivia
- [ ] Brazil
- [ ] Chile
- [ ] Colombia
- [ ] Costa Rica
- [ ] Cuba
- [ ] Dominican Republic
- [ ] Ecuador
- [ ] El Salvador
- [ ] Guatemala
- [ ] Guinea
- [ ] Honduras
- [ ] Mexico
- [ ] Nicaragua
- [ ] Panama
- [ ] Paraguay
- [ ] Peru
- [ ] Puerto Rico
- [ ] Spain
- [ ] Suriname
- [ ] United States
- [ ] Uruguay
- [ ] Venezuela
- [ ] Do not know.
- [ ] Other (please specify): 
  
  [ ]
## Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

### Demographics

16. My father (or father figure) was born in:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Puerto Rico
- Spain
- Suriname
- United States
- Uruguay
- Venezuela
- Do not know.
- Other (please specify)
17. The highest level of education completed by my mother (or mother figure) was: (Check all that apply.)

- [ ] College degree completed in the United States.
- [ ] College degree completed outside the United States.
- [ ] Some college but no completed degree in the United States.
- [ ] Some college but no completed degree outside the United States.
- [ ] High school completed in the United States.
- [ ] High School completed outside the United States.
- [ ] Some high school but no earned diploma in the United States.
- [ ] Some high school but no earned diploma outside the United States.
- [ ] No formal education in the United States.
- [ ] No formal education outside the United States.
- [ ] Do not know.
- [ ] Other (please specify)
17. The highest level of education completed by my mother (or mother figure) was: (Check all that apply.)

- [ ] College degree completed in the United States.
- [ ] College degree completed outside the United States.
- [ ] Some college but no completed degree in the United States.
- [ ] Some college but no completed degree outside the United States.
- [ ] High school completed in the United States.
- [ ] High school completed outside the United States.
- [ ] Some high school but no earned diploma in the United States.
- [ ] Some high school but no earned diploma outside the United States.
- [ ] No formal education in the United States.
- [ ] No formal education outside the United States.
- [ ] Do not know.
- [ ] Other (please specify):

______________________________

[ ] 47%
19. At home our primary language is:
   - English
   - Spanish
   - English and Spanish are used equally
   - Other (please specify)
## Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

### Family

20. Please define which family members influenced your life. (Select all that apply.)

- [ ] Parent(s)
- [ ] Step-Parent(s)
- [ ] Sibling(s)
- [ ] Step-Sibling(s)
- [ ] Grandparent(s)
- [ ] Great Grandparent(s)
- [ ] Step-Grandparent(s)
- [ ] Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- [ ] Great Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- [ ] Step-Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- [ ] Cousin(s)
- [ ] Step-Cousin(s)
- [ ] Spouse
- [ ] Children
- [ ] Step-Children
- [ ] In-Laws
- [ ] Other (please specify) [ ]

---

[Prev] [Next]
Directions: When answering questions 21-25 please use the definition(s) you provided in question 20 for "family members who influenced your life."

21. There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.
   - Very untrue
   - Fairly untrue
   - Fairly true
   - Very true

50%
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Family

Directions: When answering questions 21-25 please use the definition(s) you provided in question 20 for "family members who influenced your life."

22. We really get along well with each other.
- Very untrue
- Fairly untrue
- Fairly true
- Very true

58%
Family

Directions: When answering questions 21-25 please use the definition(s) you provided in question 20 for "family members who influenced your life."

23. Our family doesn't do things together.

☐ Very untrue
☐ Fairly untrue
☐ Fairly true
☐ Very true

57%
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Family

Directions: When answering questions 21-25 please use the definition(s) you provided in question 20 for "family members who influenced your life."

24. Family members really help and support one another.

- Very untrue
- Fairly untrue
- Fairly true
- Very true

60%
Family

Directions: When answering questions 21-25 please use the definition(s) you provided in question 20 for "family members who influenced your life."

25. Family members seem to avoid contact with each other when at home.

- Very untrue
- Fairly untrue
- Fairly true
- Very true

(60%)

Prev  Next
26. felt anxious or distressed about your personal relationships

   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Stress

For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

27. felt anxious or distressed about family matters (examples: disagreement with family member, custody issue, family member illness, etc.)

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often
For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

28. felt anxious or distressed about financial matters
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

79%
For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

29. felt anxious or distressed about academic matters
   □ Never
   □ Rarely
   □ Sometimes
   □ Often
   □ Very Often

70%
For items 26-36, report how often each has occured to you this semester using the scale provided:

30. felt anxious or distressed about housing matters
   ○ Never
   ○ Rarely
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Often
   ○ Very Often

79%
For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

31. felt anxious or distressed about being away from home
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

[Sliders and scale]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support &amp; Persistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

- Questioned your ability to handle difficulties in your life
  - Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Very Often

![Scale Image]
For items 36-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

33. Questioned your ability to attain your personal goals
   - never
   - rarely
   - sometimes
   - often
   - very often
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. felt anxious or distressed because events were not going as planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Very Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

Stress

For items 26-38, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

35. felt as though you were no longer in control of your life

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often

[Scale from 1 to 6]

[Prev] [Next]
Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistance

Stress

For items 26-36, report how often each has occurred to you this semester using the scale provided:

36. felt overwhelmed by difficulties in your life
   ○ Never
   ○ Rarely
   ○ Sometimes
   ○ Often
   ○ Very Often

[Scale with 90% selected]
### Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support & Persistence

**College Goals**

37. How likely are you to remain enrolled at Keiser University next semester?
- [ ] I am graduating this semester.
- [ ] I will remain enrolled.
- [ ] I will not remain enrolled.
- [ ] I do not know if I will remain enrolled.

[375]
38. How likely are you to withdraw from Keiser University next semester?

- I am graduating this semester.
- Very Likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

[Percentage]
39. If you have considered or are currently considering withdrawal, what is the reason? (Check all that apply.)

- [ ] I have not considered withdrawal.
- [ ] I am finishing pre-requisite courses and waiting to enter a program at Keiser.
- [ ] I need a break from school but will return within 4 months.
- [ ] I have academic difficulties. (Examples: Classes too difficult, Problems with writing skills.)
- [ ] I have conflicting family commitments. (Example: Need to care for family member.)
- [ ] I have financial difficulties. (Example: Cannot afford tuition.)
- [ ] I am transferring to another university.
- [ ] I have work commitments. (Example: Must work, Work conflicts with school schedule.)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

[ ]

[ ] 100%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic/Latino College Students: Stressors, Support &amp; Persistence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40. If you have considered withdrawal but decided against leaving, what factors motivated you to remain enrolled at Keiser University?

*Thank you for your participation! Please select **SUBMIT SURVEY** below before closing your browser.*

[Prev] [Submit Survey]