STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITION FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A.A.S. PROGRAMS TO UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Jerry Alan Pyka

May 2014

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May, 2014

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father, Claudia Mae and Julius Walter Pyka. Mom and Dad never received a proper education. My mother completed the seventh grade and my father finished the third grade. As children, they each worked long hours on the family farms doing chores and picking cotton to help their families to survive during and after the Great Depression. Later, as parents, they dreamed their children would receive educations they themselves had missed. The completion of this dissertation and my doctorate are dedicated to Mom and Dad. I wish that Dad and my brother, Jimmie, were here today to celebrate with me.

To my long deceased Uncle Ike, Dad's brother, who used to taunt me as a child because in the first grade I did not like to go to school, with "You don't like candy or apples or cake or ice cream – you only like school, school, school." Your words were prophetic, and you were right. Cheers!

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Abstract

The global employment market demands an increasingly well prepared work force. Consequently, this trend is echoed in community college graduates transferring to four- year institutes. From 2009 to 2011, over 28,000 students who graduated with an associate's degree from a community college in the State of Texas transferred to a four-year university also in the State of Texas (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2013). Among those transferring students, very few community college graduates with an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree transferred to four-year institutions. A report by the Transfer Issues Advisory Committee (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2001) identified issues that prevent or create obstacles for those A.A.S. students attempting to transfer from a community college to a four- year university: this includes, for example, policy issues, procedures and advisory support.

Literature indicates that the issues and challenges confronting A.A.S. transfer students included complicated class transcripts, lack of knowledge pertaining to the process and admissions requirements (Ellison, 2004; Phillips, 2011; Sausner, 2004 Townsend & Wilson, 2006a). Along with these potential difficulties, A.A.S. transferring students must determine if the new receiving university will accept their earned credits, and if those accepted fit into a four-year degree plan (Boswell, 2000; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004). A perceived problem by transfer students is that both institutions need to improve the transfer process (Townsend & Wilson, 2006b).

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of A.A.S. degree students' challenges and experiences of the transfer period from community college to a four-year research-intensive university. The study participants were 18 transfer students from a large community college in Texas. Participants varied in age, ethnicity, and gender. To understand the challenges of A.A.S. transfer students, a qualitative approach was selected because it allows important insights to emerge from the student perspective. Symbolic interaction was chosen as the framework as it is based on how we interpret our world (Willis, 2007), and it provides for "local understanding" through in-depth interviews to elicit a rich and thick description of the experiences of the participants and how they construct meaning from social interactions.

The primary means to obtain data for my research was through the use of surveys and interviews with participants to gain a perspective of their experiences as they transitioned from a two-year college to a four-year university. The primary research question for this study was *What are the experiences and perceptions of A.A.S. degreed community college students transferring to an articulated baccalaureate program at a four-year research-intensive institution*? The interviews were taped (with the permission of the participant) and an analysis of the qualitative data were completed through the use of coding, reflexive journal and member checking. Transcribed data were coded into themes, organized and categorized.

While the experiences of students transferring from one institution of higher education to another have been researched and discussed in previous literature, there has not been any research into the experiences of students with an Associate of Applied Science. The significance of this study is the examination of those experiences through

the lens of the student and the presentation of those findings that community college and

university administrators may use to refine transfer processes and procedures at their

respective institution to make the transfer more seamless.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter I

Introduction

A strong economy begins with a strong, well-educated workforce.

<p style="text-align:right">Bill Owens (Representative – NY)</p>

Since the creation of community colleges over a century ago, industries have benefitted from more knowledgeable and well-trained workers (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In fact, part of the mission of the community college is to train students for the expanding, more technical workforce (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Schmitigal, 2009; Townsend, 2001). For the student, upward mobility was and is a driving factor as people attempt to make a better life for themselves, for their families and for their community (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Vocational programs were popular as they served to train the student for work that was immediate and needed by the community. The same is true in 2014. Each year community colleges graduate students with degrees in Applied Science fields that allow them to move directly into workforce jobs. For example, Applied Science fields for the workforce which are available at local community colleges include: accounting, automotive technology, diagnostic medical sonography, engineering and manufacturing technology, health information technology, human services, land surveying and mapping technology, logistics management, nursing, paralegal studies, pharmacy technology, visual communication, welding technology (Lone Star College System, 2014) and many others. Post-secondary education has helped to provide individuals with a competitive advantage and can accelerate a career, enhance futures, increase marketability, and expand earning potential (Davies & Kratky, 2000; Gibbs, 2005; Wang, 2009).

In a 2010 study conducted by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, it was found that in the U.S., by 2018, 30 million new and replacement jobs will demand that employees have some post-secondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010a). The projected shortfall of professional, educated workers comes from various sectors of the U.S. economy. Carnevale, Smith and Strohl (2010b) cite that "56% of all jobs in Texas (7.7 million jobs) will require some postsecondary training beyond high school in 2018" (p. 97). Areas for jobs and the educational requirements projected to be required by 2018 in Texas are shown in Figure 1. Areas that will be most affected are: office and administrative support, education, sales, construction, healthcare, and management. Many of the areas affected are aligned to associate degree programs offered by community colleges.

	Occupations	Some college	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree	TOTAL
Managerial and Professional Office	Management	176	57	249	117	599
	Business operations specialty	87	27	113	45	272
	Financial specialists	40	20	137	44	241
	Legal	13	6	13	53	85
STEM	Computer and mathematical science	67	35	152	67	321
	Architects and technicians	13	10	18	6	47
	Engineers and technicians	29	23	102	47	201
	Life and physical scientists	12	5	26	38	81
	Social scientists	3	1	16	23	43
Community Services and Arts	Community and social services	20	7	44	43	114
	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	44	20	74	20	158
Education	Education	105	39	470	220	834
Healthcare	Healthcare practitioners	114	161	181	161	617
	Healthcare support	108	23	16	6	153
Food and Personal Services	Food preparation and serving	194	43	59	7	303
	Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	48	12	14	3	77
	Personal care	118	32	50	10	210
	Protective services	126	38	55	9	228
Sales and Office Support	Sales	412	102	339	65	918
	Office and administrative support	798	187	274	46	1305
Blue Collar	Farming, fishing and forestry	4	1	2	0	7
	Construction and extraction	103	23	27	4	157
	Installation,maintenance,andequipment repair	134	57	31	5	227
	Production	146	43	37	9	235
	Transportation and material moving	158	33	44	8	243
TOTAL		3072	1005	2543	1056	7676

Notes: Zero does not necessarily mean no jobs. Since jobs are rounded to the nearest thousand, zero means fewer than 500 jobs.
　　　Numbers are in thousands of jobs.
　　　Total jobs are a snapshot of the economy that shows where jobs are located by education type.
Information from Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010b

Figure 1. Where the jobs will be in Texas in 2018, by occupation and educational level

The vocational and technical programs offered by community colleges have, over time, become known as "workforce" degrees. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "The degree options for a workforce education program are the

Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree and the Associate of Applied Arts (A.A.A.) degree" (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010, p. 20). According to data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Data Specialist, D. Eargle (personal communication, April 29, 2013), from the years 2009 to 2012, Texas awarded 71,492 Associate of Applied Science degrees. These workforce degrees accounted for approximately 36% of the total number of associate degrees awarded during that time period. By comparison, the combined traditional Associate of Arts and Associate of Science awarded during that time accounted for approximately 60% of the total number of degrees awarded (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010).

President Barack Obama has committed resources to education and training to fill the demand that is forecast through the year 2020. His plan calls for the education of workers in the high-growth areas of health care, education, transportation and construction (Schoeff, 2009). The President set a goal that by the year 2020 America is to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world (Obama, 2009). Associate of Applied Science degrees and other workforce education programs are expected to play a pivotal role as community colleges and universities work together to provide the education base that will be required for workers in the 21st century. According to Gordon (2007), "Unless the United States maintains its edge in innovation, which is founded on a well-trained creative workforce, the best jobs may soon be found overseas" (p. 31). The demand for educated workers is enormous. By providing help to qualified students, states can help its citizens to acquire the type of education that will provide employment opportunities in areas that are in high demand and are most impacted (Judy & D'Amico, 1997).

As students acquire an education at a community college, the next educational step is to matriculate to a university. Administrators know that community college students will want to transfer to university (Brint & Karabel, 1989). A bridge to connect the "curriculum components of college-to-university programs" (Tenbergen, 2010, p. 41) is the articulation agreement. According to Anderson, Sun and Alfonso (2006), "Articulation agreements are the principal instruments to facilitate the transfer process" (p. 262). If we are to meet the President's goal, articulation agreements may be one method to help reach the target. Vocational programs and non-traditional curriculum have been considered unacceptable for transfer to four-year institutions. However, as technology increases, so will the demand to articulate programs from the community college to the university (Barkley, 1993). To achieve President Obama's educational goals, it will be necessary for two-year and four-year institutions to work together to develop policies and procedures that will allow students to seamlessly move from two-year to four-year institution.

Discussion of Transfer

The discussion to allow students to seamlessly move from one institution to another began over one-hundred years ago. In 1907, the University of California, Berkley initiated a program to "encourage high schools to provide college-level classes" (Kintzer, 1996, p. 4). In 1925, Koos wrote *The Junior college Movement*, which provided a convincing account of the two-year institution that led to improved relations with four-year institutions. His study found that junior college students in occupational training programs were able to "transfer without much loss of time" (p. 128). Thus began improved understanding by administrators of student awareness when matriculating from

two-year to four-year institutions. In their book, *The American Community College*, Cohen and Brawer (2003, p. 343) discuss that "One of the community college's primary purposes has been to accept students from secondary school, provide them with general education and introductory collegiate studies, and send them on to senior institutions for the baccalaureate." In addition, Roksa (2009, p. 2465) stated, "It seems important, however, to measure different aspects of the transfer process because they each provide different insights into its challenges and successes."

Students have been transferring from community colleges to universities for different reasons. Bush (2002) discusses that expanded educational opportunity is one reason for students wishing to transfer. At the same time of expanding educational opportunities, there are economic benefits to attaining higher education. It has been found that attaining a baccalaureate degree can have a positive economic impact on an individual's earnings over a lifetime of work. The focus of an article written by Lannan, Hardy and Katsinas (2006) was to assess the role of community colleges to the contribution of "human capital development." According to their work, Illinois community college graduates would likely see an increase of $3,800 per year upon entering the workforce. According to data presented by Baum, Ma and Payea (2010), a typical associate's degree graduate can expect to earn approximately 24% more than a typical high school graduate over a forty-year career. The same data also showed that a typical baccalaureate degree graduate would likely earn 42% more than an associate's degree graduate over the same time period. It is no secret that better education can lead to better economic status. However, getting to the next level of education may not be without its issues.

Transfer Issues

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2001) study concluded that students encountered transfer problems in the following areas: when attempting to enroll simultaneously in both two-year and four-year institutions, when attempting to "reverse transfer" coursework, when attempting to change major or career goals, when enrolling in community college for summer sessions for convenience, when attempting to transfer applied degrees, and when taking excessive hours at community colleges. In the study it was also determined that improvements to transfer would "contribute to the greater success of Texas' higher education students"(p. 7) since the "distinctions drawn between 'technical' and 'academic' courses … effect … transfer" (p. 8).

Certain fields of study such as business, engineering, engineering technology, health professions and communications, among others can be more problematic than others for potential transfer students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2001). These areas are also in alignment with the areas of education from Figure 1 that are projected to have the highest areas of need by 2018. As discussed by Jacobs (2004, p. 105), the issue of prerequisites for some fields of study that must be completed prior to taking certain upper division courses can reduce "the value of the guarantee that receipt of the associate degree appears to offer" thereby causing a student to retake a class at a university that was already taken at the community college. Goff (2003) also found that general education components varied among associate degrees and programs.

Students enrolled in programs at community colleges are often enticed by offers to transfer their associate's degree to universities. While that may be true with the Associate of Arts or the Associate of Science degree, it may not necessarily be the same

for those with an Associate of Applied Science degree. Thomas (2012) found that in Indiana only selected programs within the state would accept the A.A.S. degree.

The A.A.S. Degree. Vocational and technical education became more of a priority with the passage of the 1984 Perkins Act. The act was established to help the economy by increasing the quality of technical education in the U.S. Today these degrees are similar to those in the 1940's that were "semi-professions." Moreover, the A.A.S. degree has a direct impact on business and industry since it provides for the two-year education of the American worker in professional areas such as legal, health-care, education, management, technical and other areas that may require licensure. Many of the people who are in these professions would not have been able to apply for those jobs if not for the education received in the A.A.S. programs offered at community colleges.

A challenge for the transfer of courses in an A.A.S. degree is that the degree has fewer general education requirements and more discipline-specific courses that can become problematic for transfer (Ignash, 2012; Jones, 2007; Townsend, 2001, Townsend & Wilson, 2006a). Bragg (2001) discusses that articulation agreements and state policies to endorse the transfer of A.A.S. degrees to four-year institutions were on the rise. However, Bragg also notes that the linkage of the A.A.S. to four-year institutions can be very difficult to implement because policies that involve transfer are overlooked due to the complexities of curricula when course matching. Moreover, the lines between *applied* and *academic* courses are often blurred, and the perception and observation of curriculum becomes more critical and are subject to close scrutiny (Ignash, 2012).

Workforce, or A.A.S. degrees, accounted for approximately 36% of the 279,000, two-year degrees awarded by the State of Texas from 2008 to 2011 (Texas Higher

Education Coordinating Board, 2013). During those years, fewer than 5,200 graduates with A.A.S. degrees matriculated to a four-year institution. Why, as Ignash (2012) questions, "…is the transfer of students in occupational and technical programs, and the articulation of the credits in these programs, still an issue?" (p. 14).

Transfer Shock. Coston, Lord and Monell (2013) describe "transfer shock" as "… the distress from initial encounters that transfer students experience while adjusting to changes from community to four-year academic institutions, especially during the first year after transfer" (p. 2). Adjustment to a four-year institution can be demanding for students of any background or culture since the academic structure, the resources available including services, the information pathways and more are likely very different from the community college and can be overwhelming for students who are new to the institution. While there are more support services available to them, they may need help to understand how to navigate the new pathways so that they may adjust to the new academic and social life experience at the four-year institution (Glass & Harrington, 2002; Townsend & Wilson, 2006b).

Some students experience greater shock than others. Gawley and McGowan (2006) examined the effects of transfer on students including differences in student grades, student withdrawal and student perception. They attempted to identify difficulties facing transfer students and to understand the cultural and institutional differences that are experienced by students. Students completed a questionnaire that was designed to provide information concerning their perceptions of transfer. Through surveys and discussions with students they found that the greatest differences between the

community college and the university were in the areas of workload, course work differences, exams, writing, and engagement with the faculty.

Student performance is sometimes an issue, or shock, as students move to a four-year institution. Gawley and McGowan (2006) analyzed the GPA of transfer students at three points – at graduation from the community college, at first year completion of the university, and at second year completion of the university – and ascertained that for the majority of students transferring, there is some level of shock. Work by Ishitani (2008) on transfer shock associated with GPA also illustrated the distress experienced by transfer students. For example, when transfer students experience a dip in GPA during their first semester, not only was that a "shock," it "was also significantly associated with reducing a student's chance to return for the second semester" (p. 412).

Articulation Agreements. The process of articulation among and between institutions can be different based on the unique mission of the two-year institution (Bender, 1990; Jones, 2007). Every community is different, and each community college must serve the needs of its constituency (Brooks, 2002, Falconetti, 2007; O'Meara, Hall, & Carmichael, 2007). In turn, each community college tailors its program offering based on community needs. The American community college system was instituted to meet the need for a trained workforce in the early 20th century and to relieve some of the educational burden that was being placed on all secondary schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As discussed by Cohen and Brawer (2003), articulation of coursework from the community college to the university works best when there is an alignment of programs between institutions. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2001, p. 25),

"When such agreements are in place, students appear to have fewer problems moving between participating institutions, resulting in lower costs to the state and to students as well as more efficient completion of programs. The committee encourages institutions to pursue such agreements with all institutions that are primary sources of their transfers."

To more easily matriculate from one institution to the next, articulation agreements are established between institutions to provide a natural pathway (Reese, 2002). The community college may be seen as a pipeline and the articulation agreement as a process that facilitates the transition for students from one institution to another (Gross & Goldhaber, 2009). Today, a typical articulation agreement will discuss process issues, such as admission requirements, residency requirements, graduation requirements, curriculum articulation, transfer evaluation, as well as other associative criteria that could affect the student as s/he transfers to the next institution. This is not much different from the eight issues Cook (1957) discusses that are pertinent to developing good agreements: admission procedures, entrance examinations, uniform records, scholarships, factors relating to success, bridging the gaps, articulation of curriculum, and evaluation of transition. The challenge with articulation agreements is how to properly articulate what is to be covered in the articulation agreement and how to articulate that information to the other institution (Romine, 1975). Greater institutional cooperation and coordination would help to improve relations with faculty and with students.

Articulation may lead to transfer, but articulation itself is not transfer (Anderson, Alfonso, & Sun, 2006). The terms are not the same. A common problem that has occurred over time is that the terms are seen as interchangeable, as noted by Cepeda and Nelson, 1991 and Cohen, 1996. Students can be confused by the use of the terms and it is necessary to draw a clear distinction between the two. As described by Bender (1990),

"Articulation refers to systematic efforts, processes, or services intended to ensure educational continuity and to facilitate orderly, unobstructed progress between levels or segments of institutions on a statewide, regional, or institution-to-institution basis" (p. viii). Whereas transfer is "an *intention* expressed by some students who take community college classes and a *behavior* manifested by those who eventually matriculate at a four-year college or university" (Cohen & Brawer, 1987, p. 89). Clarifying the distinction between the systemic efforts, processes and services and the movement of a student from one institution to another helps us understand the difference. Articulation agreements serve as a benefit to both the students and to the educational institutions involved. First and foremost, by crafting an articulation agreement with community colleges, four-year institutions help students to realize their educational goals. For transfer students, a streamlined pathway to the university may help persistence to the baccalaureate and beyond (Lee, Mackie-Lewis & Marks, 1993). Articulation agreements become the means to a fulfillment of the dream of completion of higher education.

Careful configuration of the articulation agreement is important too, as the agreement serves to represent the four-year institution and a perceived positive relationship between the community college and the four-year institution. Thus the carefully crafted articulation agreement smoothes the way for students to transfer and represents a positive relationship between institutions all working collaboratively to assist the students in reaching their educational goals. Likewise, a poorly crafted articulation agreement may be viewed as a hindrance by students, a list of obstacles to achievement of their goals.

The discussion to allow academic coursework taken at one institution to transfer to another institution has been occurring for over one-hundred years. In 1907, the University of California, Berkley initiated a program to "encourage high schools to provide college-level classes" (Kintzer, 1996, p. 4). In 1925, Koos wrote *The Junior college Movement*, which provided a convincing account of the two-year institution that led to improved relations with four-year institutions. His study found that students from the junior college performed equivalently to four-year institution students. Thus began improved understanding of student awareness when matriculating from two-year to four-year institutions.

Koos's understanding of the junior college was to provide for transfer education, "rounding out general education," and terminal education (p. 19 – 20). The provision for terminal education came in the form of "semi-professions" (p. 20). These areas, such as nursing, stockbrokers, surveyors and florists, were not meant to transfer to universities (Townsend, 2001). In a 1941 study by Eells (1942), 35 percent of students at junior colleges were enrolled in terminal education areas. Throughout the 1950's terminal education was becoming increasingly popular. By the 1960's, terminal education was coupled with vocational stimulus monies making it an important component of junior colleges' role (Cohen and Brawer, 2003).

Dual Enrollment. Dual enrollment policies are agreements by which students may choose to enroll in courses that concurrently earn credit for both high school and college. This is an attractive option for college-bound high school students since high school graduation requirements in many states can be met prior to the end of the students' senior year. This pathway is in alignment with President Obama's 21st century initiative

of having the highest proportion of post-secondary educated population. Funds from this initiative could be used for, "…high school dual enrollment programs and improved articulation with four-year institutions…" (American Association of Community Colleges, n.d.). Dr. Elizabeth Barnett of Columbia University noted in 2010 that, "Students in these programs experience themselves as real college students and gain confidence and skills that can help them to excel academically" (Barnett & Stamm, 2010, p. 19). Traditionally targeting high-achieving students, dual enrollment policies have evolved over the last 25 years to include a wider range of students (Barnett & Stamm, 2010). Taking only one state as an example, Texas saw a 300% increase in the percentage of students taking advantage of dual enrollment programs between 1992 and 2002 (U.S. Department of Education with DTI Associates, Inc., 2003). With the option of getting an early start on earning college credit, higher performing students take advantage of being exposed at an earlier age to the academic rigors of postsecondary education.

Research has determined a number of positive outcomes from dual enrollment programs:

- Providing academic offerings (core or elective classes) that would not otherwise be available to students, particularly those from small local school districts (Adelman, 1999);
- Providing a means of lowering the cost of college education by allowing students to earn free or low cost college credit, thereby shortening time to degree completion (Orr, 2002); and

- Providing a clear sense of the academic and social skills necessary to succeed in college, particularly when incorporated into a campus-based program (Orr, 1998).

Within the realm of dual enrollment programs, there is a wide variation in the ways programs are implemented and administered. While Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs may offer a college-level curriculum, dual enrollment programs are college courses. For the relationship between high school and postsecondary institutions to work, there must be a greater coordination of efforts and understanding of each other's needs. According to Swanson (2008, p. 352), dual enrollment can, "…benefit a broad spectrum of students and provide yet another way to build a better and smoother pathway between secondary and post-secondary education and workforce training."

Purpose of Study

This study is designed to discover the complexities of transfer for students with an A.A.S. education as they transition from a two-year institution to a four-year institution of higher education. The research is important because it will help administrators in higher education to better recognize the complexities associated with the establishment and promotion of policies such as transfer and articulation between institutions. This qualitative study documents student perspectives about their institutional experience as they transitioned from a two-year institution to a four-year institution. While papers have been written about transfers, few cover specifics at the institutional level, especially with students obtaining an A.A.S. degree. For example, Bradburn, Hurst & Peng (2001), McGowan and Gawley (2006) and Roksa and Calcagno (2010) discuss transfer from the

national, state and staff levels, respectively. It could be argued that previous research has largely been conducted at the macro level. Research conducted by Bush (2002) examines the effectiveness of transfers by examining Texas state policy. However, what is missing is a more detailed micro exploration into the facilitation of matriculation from one institution to the next and the effect upon students.

Post-secondary institutions, students and businesses benefit from transfer policies. Community colleges are often a starting point for students in their pursuit of post-secondary education. Students begin at local community colleges hope to transfer their hard earned credits to a four-year institution (Grubb, 1991; Laanan, 2001, 2007; Wang, 2009). Transfer agreements with four-year institutions serve as an incentive for students to complete transferrable courses because they do not have to retake classes at the university. Furthermore, the agreements help increase retention. In the hope of helping more community college students transfer to a university, the National Science Foundation created and sponsored the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. Zinzer and Hansen (2006) found that the policies that were created as part of the ATE program helped students to more easily matriculate to universities and helped to save students up to $20,000 in educational expenses. Additionally, businesses benefit because they are provided with more highly skilled employees in the workforce (Reese, 2002; The State University of New York, 2000), which also provides the company with a competitive advantage (Zinzer & Hansen, 2006).

Another area of importance for transfers is the education of our veterans. Many students who attend college today have served our country in its armed forces. Through the help of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the "GI Bill"), the Montgomery

GI Bill, the Military Tuition Assistance (MiTA), or other veteran educational assistance programs, many veterans will take classes to further their educations, thus improving their chances of gaining employment in the private and public sector. As the nation continues to bring its military back to the U.S. and to discharge the soldiers to civilian life, many of those veterans will have accumulated community college hours by attending or taking online classes while deployed in local deployed areas, as well as by attending the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). The CCAF is "solely for its enlisted members" and offers only A.A.S. programs and a variety of professional certification programs, which are offered through partnerships with institutions of higher education in 36 states and eight foreign locations (USAF Air University: Community College of the Air Force, n.d.). Between April 1977 and August 2011, 379,540 A.A.S. degrees were awarded (USAF Air University: Community College of the Air Force, n.d.). Many members of the now civilian population may want to transfer the A.A.S. achieved at the CCAF to an institution of higher education. As administrators better understand A.A.S. transfer, our returning military personnel may experience a smoother transition into their four-year institution of choice.

There is an urgent need for educated workers since it is known that 30 million new and replacement jobs will be required by 2018 (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010). This need provides opportunities for people to move into available career areas including management, healthcare, sales, community services, technical/technician, food and personal services, maintenance, construction and others (see Figure 1), and community colleges provide the education that is required in each of these career fields. For people

seeking immediate job opportunities, the A.A.S. degree is a pathway designed to lead students to careers ("Position Statement," 1998).

Problem Statement

Because the A.A.S. degree from the community college was originally designed to be a terminal degree and not one articulated with four-year institutions (Creech & Lord, 2007), selected A.A.S. students seeking a baccalaureate degree are faced with institutional policies that recognize and articulate with traditional associate degree pathways rather than with the non-traditional workforce degree. The traditional pathway for students planning to transfer from the community college to a university begins with advising meetings at each institution. Advisors at each institution provide students with information concerning their coursework and the requirements for transfer, based on the articulation agreements in place at that time. In many cases, this may be the initial point of confusion over the pathway to the university. In the case of students completing an A.A.S. degree and wishing to transfer to a four-year institution, there may be confusion about requirements and transferability of coursework (Boswell, 2004). Why? Although credits are widely accepted by receiving Texas institutions (Wellman, 2002), this is not the case for all associate degreed students. With more than one-third of Texas community college graduates obtaining an A.A.S. degree, and with approximately 1,200 matriculating to four-year institutions per year (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2013) it is relevant to gain the perspective of transferring A.A.S. students.

Two-year and four-year institutions work together to develop policies that will assist students as they seek to transfer. Transfer policies and articulation agreements serve as portals (Sauer, Jackson, Hazelgrove, Scott, & Ignash, 2005) for students to enter

the four-year institution with little intervention and provide direction for the requirements

necessary to matriculate. However, little research has been done to understand, from the

student perspective, how they have been affected by the negotiated policies. This is

essential to understand because as institutions take time to confer and to establish policy,

the very people who are to be served may be lost in the process. Since students "do not

know what they do not know" (Handel, 2008, p. 11), the information that is provided to

students at the time of transition is the basis of this research and evaluation. Burns

(2010) discusses that evidence of student success is needed that will help to guide

administrators to write and change policies that support student goals, that includes ease

of transfer for A.A.S. students to a four-year institution. I believe that evidence of

student perspective and an orientation to the student experience would impact the quality

of the articulation agreements produced. Additionally, articulation agreements should be

evaluated over time to ensure that they are still effective for the educational institutions

and responsive to the goals of the students desiring to transfer. Other points to be

evaluated should include whether the agreements are meeting the intended outcomes,

whether there are unintended outcomes that should be addressed, whether student transfer

rates improving or worsening, and whether the agreement continues to be appropriate,

relevant and useful. As Mosholder & Zirkle (2007) point out, "… there are a number of

reasons why the parties and potential parties to articulation agreements don't generate

more and better articulation agreements." A typical reason for non-agreement is that

institutions fail to see each other as collaborators assisting students in reaching their

educational goals. Instead, institutions may see each other as competing for students.

This competitive stance places blinders on each institution, rendering them unable to see

the other's goals. But more importantly, it precludes the inclusion of the student

perspective from the crafting of the articulation agreement. Without understanding and

inclusion of the student perspective, the institutions may eventually move forward with

agreements that satisfy them each institutionally, but which do not further the cause of

the student wishing to pursue transfer. This is akin to a company conducting business

without regard to the needs of their customers. When students enter into a relationship

with a community college, and ultimately, with a university, they bring with them certain

expectations and perceptions. Understanding the expectations and orientation of the

student to the transfer process is critical to developing responsive articulation agreements

that serve all three parties before and after the community college, the university and the

student to a higher level of satisfaction.

A challenge for administrators at both community colleges and universities is to

understand the academic experiences of students and to implement policies and programs

that will help to ease the transition, which in turn will increase student transfer (Roach,

2009). There is also little research into the intricacy of A.A.S. transfer. As institutions

continue to refine policies, the research presented in this paper may help academicians

and administrators to reconsider A.A.S. degrees in the application of transfer and the

effect that the policies have on students.

Research Questions

My research focuses on transfer A.A.S. students and the challenges they face as

they pursue to transfer credit to a baccalaureate degree in a technology-related area at a

four-year institution. Previous literature does not address those students with an A.A.S.

degree as they seek to transfer their already completed credits to a baccalaureate program.

The primary question is: *What are the experiences and perceptions of A.A.S. degreed community college students transferring to an articulated baccalaureate program at a four-year research-intensive institution?* To answer this question, five sub-questions are posed.

  1) What are the challenges confronted by A.A.S. transfer students?

  2) In what ways do community colleges support the transfer process?

  3) In what ways does the receiving university support the transfer process?

  4) What institutional barriers have been encountered by transfer students?

  5) In what ways has articulation guided A.A.S. transfer students?

An articulation agreement may provide students with an incentive to matriculate, thereby enhancing their likelihood of graduation. The agreement, however, does not guarantee student success or completion. The more hours that a transfer student may articulate, the better his/her chances are for successful completion of the baccalaureate (Adelman, 1999). Achieving the Dream, a Lumina Foundation creation that is designed to help community college students to succeed, provides resources that enable students and institutions to maximize student success, which includes transfer to four-year institutions (Achieving the Dream, 2013). According to Barlow (2012) the percentage of courses that transfer to university varies by college. According to Barlow's research (2012), students transferring to a four-year institution are between five and 11 times more likely to remain and 90% of students who earned 19 or more hours the first year of transfer would return the next year.

Significance of the Study

Academics at postsecondary institutions continue to discuss transfer and

articulation. A traditional approach to determine the effectiveness of transfer is to review

the information that is presented in externally available databases such as those available

through the National Center for Education Statistics or through individual state education

websites. An assumption is that if a relationship exists between transfer and articulation,

they are synonymous terms and are interchangeable. For example, Falconetti (2009)

concluded that Florida's articulation policy is a success by reviewing secondary data of

three state universities regarding community college transfers. While the data may prove

that transfer does occur from the community college to the university, in Falconetti's

study she reveals that more transfer students drop out during their enrollment at the

university than do first time in college students. In another example, Roksa and Keith

(2008) use National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) data from a dated

sample in 1994 and 2000 to determine that transfer occurs.

Theoretical Framework. The theoretical framework for this research is the

symbolic interaction model. Symbolic interaction theory can be traced back to George

Mead, John Dewey, Robert Park, Herbert Blumer, and Everett Hughes (Becker &

McCall, 2009) and is described as "an empirical research tradition as much or more than

a theoretical position, and its strength derives in large part from the enormous body of

research that embodies and gives meaning to its abstract propositions" (p. 4). George

Mead understood that interaction provides individuals with symbols, which allow for

thinking, communicating and stimulating of ideas (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003). By

stimulating ideas, people make meaning of their surroundings. As discussed by Willis,

"Local understanding is important" (p. 178), meaning that the understanding of life

stories with in-depth interviews to get a rich and thick description is necessary if we are to understand the experiences of the participants and how they construct meaning from social interactions. This framework is used since it is based on how we interpret our world (Fetterman, 2010; Willis, 2007). The primary means to obtain data for my research is through the use of survey and interviews with participants to gain a perspective of their experiences as they transitioned from a two-year college to a four-year university.

Maxine Greene's (1995) notion of seeing "big" and seeing "small" is also employed in this study. Rather than examining the issue of transfer from a "small or systemic perspective, this study comes close to participants in order to see "big," to see the intentionality of their actions and the meaning they make of their experiences. Through interview data, I was able to "look in some manner through [my participants'] eyes and hear through their ears" (p. 3).

Setting

In 2004, a large urban university (LUU) in Texas developed a transition pathway for community college students into one of its programs in a technology area. An overarching articulation agreement which would allow students to seamlessly transfer up to 66 hours of community college hours to the university was created. This articulation agreement is between the LUU and a local community college system (LCCS) which has 6 satellite campuses and serves in excess of over 70,000 students. The articulation agreement is designed for students from any of the community college campuses to transfer credits from its A.A.S. programs to the LUU technology baccalaureate degree program. The university technology baccalaureate program is somewhat unique in that it

was designed with the transfer student in mind. Students coming from community colleges typically have completed core coursework which, in most cases, will automatically transfer without the need for articulation. What is unique about the technology program is that it was designed to not only accommodate the transfer of common core courses, as well as approved lower division academic courses, but moreover is designed to accommodate the workforce coursework that so many community colleges offer today. This is where this particular university program stands out. This pathway allows those students who have taken transferrable coursework at the community college to matriculate to the university without losing substantial credit hours and it precludes the need to start over. This is a degree which prepares students for jobs in supervisory or management positions. Typical students are those who are working, are completing their A.A.S. degree in a specialized area and would like to move into a managerial position at some point in their career. This particular baccalaureate degree was designed for those students with "technical" degrees to be able to transfer so that he/she may receive an education in the managerial coursework that will be required of them as they are promoted.

Terminology

Based on terms from Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2001), I use the following meanings.

Articulation agreements – agreements that spell out the details of course transfer between individual institutions.

College – a two-year institution of higher education including community colleges, technical colleges, and state colleges.

Technical courses – college workforce education courses for which semester credit hours are awarded.

Transfer student – a student who enrolls in one institution of higher education but transfers the credits earned at that institution to another institution to continue his or her education.

University – a four-year institution of higher education or upper-level institution offering general academic courses.

Summary

In a 2004 study Bailey, Leinbach, Alfonso, Kienzl, and Kennedy, found that the largest percentage of occupational pathways for community college students is in the areas of business (27%), health (26%), computers and data (17%), trade and industry (10%) and engineering and science technologies (7%). This is in alignment with the data seen in Figure 1, p. 2, provided by Georgetown University highlighting the types of jobs that are on the rise and that will be needed to meet the ambitious goal of having the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. The attainment of a well educated workforce demands that opportunities to pursue a baccalaureate, and beyond, be accessible and obtainable. For those students transferring with an A.A.S. degree to a four-year institution, the task of finding a program willing to take their credit and understanding the meaning of articulation can be overwhelming and confusing. Understanding the experiences of these individuals may help to generate better policies and procedures that will enable students to make a smoother transition from the community college to the university. The information gleaned from this research can benefit researchers by providing insight into the narratives shared by the participants thereby presenting an opportunity to better understand A.A.S. students' perspectives on transfer based on their personal experiences.

Chapter II

Literature Review

I divided this chapter into six major areas that examine historical and current literature pertaining to community college student transfer and that have shaped and guided my research.

Community Colleges and Transfer

The origin of the community college or junior college dates back to the 1850's and was an idea posed as a "university preparatory institution" (Beach, 2011, p. 5). The idea of preparing students for broader education was part of the "social and political forces" (Cohen, 1990, p. 427) that were coming together to aid middle-class workers to build a better life, to drive equality, and to educate people for the expanding industries across the United States. The agrarian society of the nineteenth century was making way to a more industrialized way of life for the population and people were looking for a better life, more prestige, and better jobs along with upward mobility that could not be possible without a formal education. Until 1922, private junior colleges outnumbered public institutions by a wide margin. Private junior colleges were the first to be established and had approximately twice the number of students' enrolled (Brint & Karabel, 1989). A reason for the slow start of public institutions, as discussed by Cohen and Brawer (2003), was that the funding formulas and blueprints for governance had yet to be determined by most states, as there was little uniformity in the legislatures. Another reason posited for the slow start was that many educational leaders were debating whether junior colleges were "expanded secondary schools or truncated colleges" (p. 11).

In 1921, the debate ended when administrators agreed that junior colleges would offer collegiate grade instruction (Brick, 1964). By 1930, even with the stock market crash, state funding issues were being resolved, and as a result more, than 70,000 students were enrolled in 440 community colleges in 43 of the 48 states across the United States (Brick, 1964). Today, according to the American Association of Community Colleges (2014), there are 986 public, 115 independent, and 31 tribal community colleges in the U.S. with total enrollment of approximately 13 million.

Even before the rise of community colleges, the idea of transfer was on educators' minds. University of Chicago president, William Rainey Harper, discussed the division of the university into junior college and senior college, where the first two years were "junior" and the last two years were "senior" (McDowell, 1919). Students were to have completed the junior course of study before attempting the senior courses. Transfer was also discussed in terms of course work taken at a junior institution and articulated with a senior institution. Each institution had its criteria for what would be accepted in transfer. Students taking courses at junior institutions "…were sure, sooner or later, to ask to receive credit for such work in larger colleges and universities" (p. 21).

While the junior colleges were offering liberal arts academic courses, many also offered vocational courses. McDowell (1919) discusses the vocational subjects offered by both public and private institutions in the early 1900s (p. 52). His list includes:

- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Civil engineering
- Commerce
- Education
- Electrical engineering
- Elementary law
- General Engineering

- Home economics
- Journalism
- Machine shop
- Mechanical drawing
- Mechanical engineering
- Plumbing
- Printing
- Surveying

Of interest is that many of the subjects that we take for granted as academic today, such as architecture, civil and electrical and mechanical engineering, education and surveying, were viewed as vocational at the time. Nonetheless, training in the various disciplines was on the rise. Curriculum for transfer was a goal for educators and the function of transfer was seen, among other things, as a major reason for the very existence of junior colleges. Transfer curricula, however, was that of the liberal arts and not necessarily targeted towards vocational training (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

The continued growth of community colleges was seen after the World War II and the passage of the GI Bill. For any veteran honorably discharged from service, the government would provide payment for tuition, books and fees to approved institutions. As discussed by Altschuler and Blumin (2009), the GI Bill helped to transform college and university enrollments. Returning veterans accounted for only five percent of enrollments in 1945. However, by 1947 veteran enrollment rose to a staggering fifty percent and many institutions were challenged on how to accommodate the great influx of students. While many veterans enrolled in traditional four-year institutions, large numbers also entered curricular life through the junior college pathway and then transferred to the four-year university.

Transfer from community colleges continues to be a topic of study in higher education. In a National Center for Educational Statistics report "Special Analysis of Community College Students" by Horn and Neville (2006), they used data from the 2003-2004 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04) which they report the study sample as representing "about 19 million undergraduate and 3 million graduate and professional students (p. iii). Horn and Neville reported that 49% of the nationwide community college students were more committed to transfer to a 4-year track, a general associate's degree program, an applied associate's degree program, or a certificate track (p. 20). Of the sample of community college student data, more than one million students in the applied associate's programs indicated that they were interested in transferring to a four-year institution. While the information that was presented is interesting, it does not go into detail about the number of actual transfers; rather it relied upon the student to self-identify whether he/she was interested in transferring. The information is much too generalized and does not go into any detail at the state level, only the national level and relies on data that were previously gathered by Berkner, He, Lew, Cominole and Siegel (2005). No qualitative data were included in the report.

For those community college students transferring to a large research institution, Townsend and Wilson (2006b) discuss that the four-year institution bears a responsibility for their successful transfer and transition. The receiving institution has the responsibility for many services including orientation, advising, financial aid, and other support services that will help the student to be successful. To understand transfer challenges that students encounter, Townsend and Wilson conducted qualitative interviews with nineteen participants from a university that was classified as a Carnegie Foundation Research-

Extensive institution where "Faculty receive promotion and tenure because of their

research and presentations and grants, not because of their teaching evaluations (p. 451).

Because "seamless transfer" and creation and maintenance of articulation agreements are

factors that can affect transfer, understanding students' perceptions of their new

environment was important. They found that while the students were able to easily

transfer their credits from a community college to a research university, the students

found the classroom environment very different from community college with faculty at

the research institution more focused on research rather than teaching and therefore not as

accommodating as the faculty at community college. Because of the size and/or culture

of the research institution, the transfer students did not feel the "fit" was comfortable.

The "shock" that students encountered was more frequently attributed to the vast

difference in cultures between the community college and the university, rather than to

the initial drop in GPA (Townsend and Wilson, 2006b).

　　　　Studies on Transfer. In addition, there have been several studies conducted on

transfer. These studies have reviewed information that has been previously collected,

such as the information in the NELS database. For example, Kalogrides (2008) discusses

the connection between transferring community college students and degree attainment.

She attempts to make the connection using postsecondary transcript data retrieved from

NELS to compare the hazard of four-year college attrition between transfer community

college students and first-time in college four-year students. The study included 8,900

students and followed students graduating high school in 1988 and for eight and one-half

years after. Her work focused on the services provided by community colleges to help

students transition to the four-year institution. The study focused on attrition and dropout

rates for students from 1988 through 1996. The findings were as expected. For students transferring from community college to a four-year institution, those most likely to persist and to graduate were those community college students who had higher levels of high school achievement, came from more advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, had higher educational aspirations, attended full time, worked fewer hours, enrolled continuously, were male, and were without children. She also discussed that stronger articulation agreements between community colleges and universities "appear" to enhance transfer and rates of graduation and that the lack of a strong articulation agreement created challenges for those who wish to transfer.

Roksa and Keith (2008) use data from NELS and from the Postsecondary Education Transcript Study (PETS) of 9,600 students to determine if credit transfer was improved because of state-legislated articulation policies and if articulation policies made a difference in transfer. They found that state articulation policies did impact the number of credits transferred to an institution as well as the time to completion of the baccalaureate. Roksa and Keith posited that, according to their research, state statutes regarding articulation emphasize the preservation of course credits to ease the transfer process for students who have made the decision to transfer to four-year institutions, thus increasing credit transfer rates and student success in transferring to a university

While Roksa and Keith present compelling information, Kalogrides (2008) presents NELS data taken between 1988 and 1996, making it outdated and possibly no longer valid. Roksa and Keith (2008) also use information that is from a similar time period, 1988 to 2000. This is historically important information as it provides a snapshot of the student population from that time. Data from 2000 to present would be more

representative of students in 2014, but the data does not exist. Students today may face different challenges to credit articulation and transfer than their counterparts of the past century. No studies since 2000 exist. The challenge is finding data collected after 2000 that is representative of students and institutions.

There have been qualitative studies used to study transfer. Townsend (1995) studied the academic adjustment of students transferring from two-year to four-year institutions. Her study showed that students reported finding the four-year institution more academically challenging with higher standards than at the two-year institution. It was also reported that students used friends at the four-year institution more often as a resource of information rather than going to a counselor or professor to get program information. In another study, Nowak (2004) investigates "…students' perceptions of their transfer experience..." (p. 187) through the use of symbolic interaction. The study centers on the social integration of 23 transfer students into their new environment and their interpretation of transfer from two-year to four-year institution. While her student participants tell their stories of obstacles faced during transfer to the four-year institution, they saw themselves as "individuals who have the distinct skills needed to negotiate a new campus culture successfully" (p. 188). The participants dealt with the inconveniences and disappointments of transfer issues such as orientation, class size, and culturally different environment and considered it a part of the university experience. Her findings illustrate the importance of understanding transfer from the student point of view such that it can help those transfer students to successfully integrate into the institution and to complete their baccalaureate.

Flaga (2006) also examines student transfer and the "shock" (Hills, 1965) that many students experience when transferring from a two-year institution to a four-year institution. She explores the student experience as a way of informing future students of the potential difficulties ahead and how they may be able to better overcome perceived obstacles. The obstacles that many transferring students encounter, according to Flaga's research, occur not only in the academic environment, but also in the social and physical environments on campus as well. From the academic standpoint, students experience shock when faced with challenges in the classroom, such as larger class sizes and more required research and study to maintain good grades. From the social and physical environment standpoints, students were shocked at the size of the campus. They didn't know where certain resources were, such as the academic administration, financial aid, and transfer admissions. Socially, they did not know where and sometimes how to begin to integrate into campus society. Flaga sees communication among students and advisors, at both the community colleges and at the four-year institutions is critical as a way to provide institutional information appropriate for transfer students. Additional information pertaining to "shock" is presented later in this chapter.

A successful transfer student must negotiate a number of processes at the specific institution, including academic advising, financial aid, course offerings, articulation, and others that can affect the outcome. Students who are new to the procedures are subjected to an unfamiliar protocol that can lead to confusion if the steps are complex and if resources for the student are difficult to navigate. Tenbergen (2010) examines transferring community college students to select California four-year institutions and the transfer policies that affect those students. Articulation agreements were explored since

they may have a larger impact on student success at the four-year institution. He finds

that important articulation details between transferring students, administrators and

articulation personnel and information pertaining to transfer of credit was inconsistent.

He recommends that administrators examine transfer and articulation policies for

consistency to determine how streamlining could improve institution responsiveness and

student experiences.

When do students begin to think about transfer? What are some of the

assumptions that students make that lead them to the idea of transfer? A study by Lang

(2008) attempts to answer these and other questions by asking, "Why do students want to

transfer?" (p. 356). His research examined the choices that secondary school students

make when applying to a college or university. Lang was interested in analyzing the

connection between articulation and transfer and when and where students begin the

process of choosing an institution. In his study, Lang uses information from two

longitudinal studies and information from the "College Choice Project," gathered from

institutions in the largest province in Canada, Ontario. The first two studies provide

information dating back to the 1980's, and the latter tracks students as they wrestled with

the choice of attending a college or a university, and as they made their final selection of

an educational institution. Lang defines college in this study using Canadian terminology

as "a less than 4-year institution offering sub-baccalaureate credentials" (p. 356). Over

20,000 students from various institutions within the Province of Ontario were surveyed

throughout the years. Lang examined quantitative, as well as qualitative data to

determine transfer and choice and determined that students do not necessarily plan to

transfer. Rather, students review options that are available, such as institutional choice,

articulation and other factors to determine where they would complete their studies.

Lang also found that students sometimes find themselves in a complex situation when

they decide to transfer to a university.

> Some college students who say that they want to earn a university degree are in programs for which there is no articulation or other arrangement for transfer. In other words there is a "barrier" to the fulfillment of their aspirations (p. 369).

What is unclear is whether or not the student was aware that the path s/he had originally

taken was one that did not lead to traditional transfer. Lang finds that students largely

pursued transfer based on a desire to further their education in a program, rather than to

attend a university. Lang also did not explain what steps the student had to take to

successfully transfer to the next institution.

The A.A.S. Degree

What is the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree? According to the

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) [1] it is the following:

> The associate in applied science (A.A.S.) degree program is
> designed to lead the individual directly to employment in a specific
> career. It is strongly suggested that one-third of the work for the
> associate in applied science degree shall be in general education.
> While the titles given these degrees vary considerably among
> community colleges, the most common title is associate in applied
> science. Although the objective of the associate in applied science
> degree is to enhance employment opportunities, some
> baccalaureate degree granting institutions have developed upper
> division programs to recognize this degree for transfer of credits.
> The associate in applied science degree programs must be designed
> to recognize this dual possibility and to encourage students to
> recognize the long-term career possibilities that continued
> academic study will create.

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[1] Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Positions/Pages/ps08011998.aspx.

While the AACC describes the A.A.S. in this manner, students receive differing language

from community college and university sites. Here are three examples of language from

different institutional websites:

> *Wake Tech Community College* [2]: Applied Science programs are
> designed to give students job-ready skills that will allow them to
> enter the workforce upon completion of their program of study.
> We offer Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees, as well as
> Diploma and Certificate programs. Students that complete an
> Associate of Applied Science degree also have options to transfer
> to select Colleges and Universities to pursue a Bachelors degree
> through our Choices programs.

> *University of Montana* [3]: The Associate of Applied Science and
> Certificate of Applied Science programs in the Missoula College
> are designed to lead an individual directly to employment in a
> specific career path. In some instances, particularly in allied health,
> the degree is a prerequisite for taking a licensing examination.
> Students may pursue a baccalaureate degree at the University of
> Montana after completing an A.A.S. degree through a Bachelor of
> Applied Science degree plan.

> *College of the Mainland* [4]: An Associate of Applied Science is not
> a transferable degree, although some courses within the degree
> plan may transfer. The purpose of the A.A.S. is to provide students
> with employable skills so they are ready to enter the workforce
> upon completion of the two-year degree.

This is language that students must read and understand as they begin their pursuit of a

better education. In one case, the A.A.S. is transferrable while in the second case it may

be transferrable, and in the third case the A.A.S. is clearly not transferrable. But a closer

consideration of each paragraph reveals an ambiguity that is palpable and can easily lead

to confusion, uncertainty and perhaps misunderstanding

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[2] Retrieved from http://www.waketech.edu/student-services/advising/applied-science-programs.
[3] Retrieved from http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/admission/aappsci.html.
[4] Retrieved from http://www.com.edu/degrees-programs/associate-applied-science.php.

Where did the A.A.S. originate and what are the benefits of the knowledge from one of its degrees?

Vocational Education. In 1927, prominent American Psychologist, Carl Seashore from the University of Iowa wrote an article, *Education for Democracy and the Junior College,* which was published by the American Association of University Professors. In his article, Seashore argues in favor of making education available for the middle class. His discussion of an education for democracy was a statement to make education available for all people, not just the privileged. With community colleges still in their infancy, Seashore speculated what the needs of the community might look like and what types of education the two-year college might offer. He posited the following divisions for community colleges:

I. Arts and Science
II. Technological or Semi-Vocational Courses

Under Arts and Science would be the academic curricula where students obtain a liberal education – language, history, science. Under Technological or Semi-Vocational Courses, Seashore offers the following sub classifications:

(1) The Normal Training Institute
(2) The Business Institute
(3) The Institute of Applied Science
(4) The Institute of Home Economics
(5) The Musical Institute
(6) The Institute of Art (p. 402 - 403)

His discussion of the Institute of Applied Science provides insight into the various fields that a student may need for further education besides just a basic understanding of rudimentary procedures. For example, Seashore specifically specifies electrical work, automotive work, building contracting, city management and industrial personnel work –

> …in short, all the various occupations in the community in which we desire to have skilled work-men who have enough of the theory of their work with fundamental training for skill and a cultural setting which will make them skilled workmen and self-respecting citizens (p. 402).

The fields of study that Seashore discusses are in alignment with McDowell's (1919) vocational subjects and with the "semiprofessions" that Koos (1925) discusses as well.

Seashore (1927) understood that providing educational opportunities for students in "applied science" fields benefits all of America. His closing sentence about the utility of education illustrates his point, "The advantages are pedagogical, economical, and social" (p. 404). However, Townsend (2001) discusses that by defining tracks in community colleges, elitists were served because there was a mechanism for university selectivity and populists were served because an education was possible for any American. While there was education for all, and that education was seen as a benefit to society in general, there was still a stigma attached to the education received by students in the applied sciences. Seashore (1927) describes education as being of terminal benefit for some and as a pathway to higher education for others. Furthermore, Koos (1925) discusses that "semiprofessional training for those who cannot or should not go on" (p. 101) should be provided to those who were not professional material. Because students in the semiprofessions were seen as in their "final training" (p. 20), the term "terminal" began to be associated with vocation and semiprofessional programs. Applied science and academic pedagogy came together, somewhat, when the vocational programs were to incorporate the principles of science and to demonstrate the theory of science in the applied field of study (Bawden, 1912; Seashore, 1927; Snedden, 1916).

Workforce Education. Whether the term was applied science, vocation, or semiprofession, each was associated with getting people to work, and community

colleges were helping to provide education for people in various occupations. The push

to make vocational education a part of the mission of community colleges came in the

1950s, as state governing leaders, along with community college leaders, saw workforce

education as a means to stimulate economic growth by providing subsidized occupational

education opportunities to its citizens (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; Jacobs

& Dougherty, 2006). Workforce education, while necessary for many people to be able

to practice a trade or to become employed, still had a stigma attached to it that workforce

students were not legitimate and not getting an academic education that could then be

transferred to a four-year institution (Dougherty, 1994).

Some states have oversight of workforce education functions, including transfer;

this helps to provide reassurance to its residents that certain programs, including A.A.S.

programs, from community colleges are transferrable to universities. For example,

educators in technical education programs in Arkansas work with its Department of

Workforce Education to insure that state regulations pertaining to transfer are followed,

and Florida law guarantees that any associate degree holder will be granted admission to

any public university degree program within the state (Wellman, 2002). The State Board

for Community and Technical Colleges in Washington oversees workforce education and

transfer for its residents (*Transfer and articulation*, 2009). The Texas Higher Education

Coordinating Board has its Division of Workforce, Academic Affairs and Research,

which reviews and approves various degree programs across public community colleges

(Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2013). Falconetti (2007) discusses that the

Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education in Florida, which oversees its

community colleges and technical centers across the state for transfer credit from

community college to university must have all policies approved by the State Board of

Education and authorized by the Florida's Legislature. Ostensibly, these State oversights

provide assurances to residents of their transferability; however, students making the

transition from community college to university still experience barriers, obstacles and

difficulties in the journey.

There is movement in the acceptance of the A.A.S. degree as transferrable to

universities. In reference to Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College and its programs

that are available through its Corporate College, Perrin explained, at a 2012 National

Council for Workforce Education conference presentation, that "All or most courses in

the AS and AAS degree programs transfer into four-year programs at Ball State

University, Bethel College, Trine, IU South Bend, Ferris State University and elsewhere"

(p. 9). Rogers and Pleasants (2011) discuss Clover Park Technical College in

Washington state where, "students can earn an Associate of Applied Science transfer

degree, which is a workforce degree with general education requirements included" (p.

7). These movements in acceptance of the A.A.S. degree, while not widespread, do

provide evidence of small evolutionary gains in planning for smoother transitions of

students to university programs.

Government Support

Vocational education over the years has had support from the U.S. government.

While education is the responsibility of each state, policies have helped to forge the

support to help people inclined to receive workforce education. The first legislation, the

Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, to support vocational education, was signed into law nearly a

century ago (Silverberg, Warner, Fong, & Goodwin, 2004). Since then, federal support

of vocational education has continued to help its citizens to receive occupational training. The needs of the community, the needs of each state and the needs of the federal government came together to provide for its citizens policies that have helped educate people in various occupations (Hayward & Benson, 1993). While these programs helped the individuals seeking education, they also provided benefit to communities, states, and the nation as a whole. Building a strong, educated workforce helped to provide for a skilled workforce, which, in turn, provided for national defense, reduced child labor and helped to grow the economy (Hayward & Benson, 1993).

As a result of a growing, better educated workforce, new and *improved* ways to produce goods and services develop, and business and labor both prosper, raising the socioeconomic well-being of all (Gibbs, 2005). Educational improvement and attainment are enhanced when government agrees to participate by enacting legislation to provide for its citizens. The earliest government involvement in higher education was in 1787 with the passage of Northwest Ordinance, which provided for each state to receive two townships dedicated to the support of a university (McMains, 2010). Later, in 1862 and 1890, the Morrill Act provided land to build and support institutions, which supported agricultural, mechanical and traditional education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). At the turn of the twentieth century, legislation to provide for vocational education was abundant; however, not all passed. With the introduction of over thirty bills through 1917, only one was approved – the Smith-Lever Act. This bill provided for the funding of extension outreach in universities (Mcdowell, 2003) and also led to the creation of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education (Smith, 1999). This commission was appointed to study national aid to vocational education and reported that of the more than twenty-

eight million people in the U.S. engaged in agriculture, manufacturing and mechanical areas, less than one-percent had proper education in the defined areas (Smith, 1999). The Smith-Lever Act and the Commission findings were the forerunners of future additional government sponsorship.

Smith-Hughes Act. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 (also known as The Vocational Act of 1917) helped to provide for the education of those interested in vocational and technical education. It took local, state and federal forces working together to get the bill adopted (Barlow, 1976; Hillison, 1995; Smith, 1999). With the U.S. about to enter World War I, the defense of the nation and *the ability to* produce well made goods for its troops and its allies made a basis for the passage of this early legislation. Additionally, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education was interested in organizing labor and social workers to unify industrial education efforts across the nation (Smith, 1999). Hayward and Benson (1993) discuss that the Smith-Hughes Act provided for the initial inclusion of academics into vocational programs that led to the advancement of articulation with other institutions. The Act also established qualifications for instructors in vocational areas and those funds from the Act were to be spent on vocational education, not academic education, thereby separating funds to create funding models, which have been successful in the years since its inception.

Before the introduction of the Smith-Hughes Act, approximately 200,000 students were enrolled in vocational education programs with less than $3 million annual dollars spent. Since the introduction of the Smith-Hughes Act, vocational education has experienced tremendous growth in terms of enrolled students and federal assistance dollars. At the end of its lifecycle in the late 1950's, the Smith-Hughes Act had

generated $176 million and student enrollments had increased to 3.4 million (Hayward & Benson, 1993, p. 17). Besides growth in enrollment and funding, the Smith Hughes Act was credited with increasing the quality of vocational education, for making vocational training responsive to the needs of the local community, and for preparing the workforce at that time to keep pace with growth in trade and industry.

GI Bill. The GI Bill, otherwise known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (defined earlier), was exceptionally popular among veterans returning to civilian life after World War II. Returning veterans were provided a wide range of benefits from low cost mortgages and business loans to unemployment compensation and payments to further their education. More than seven million veterans took advantage of the opportunity to receive an education, either in college or in vocational training or both (Mettler, 2002). Enrollments at both two-year and four-year institutions flourished with the influx of students. As a result, many of the two-year institutions saw returning veterans seek educational opportunities for work skills jobs (Brint & Karabel, 1989). As the number of students seeking jobs skills education increased, the number of two-year institutions increased as well. From 1943 to 1947 the number of community colleges grew from just 58 to 328, with most of the enrollments being returning veterans (Celis, 1994). Because of the GI Bill, access to higher education dramatically increased and more two-year institutions were being opened. People were able to realize a better life through better educational opportunities, and the middle-class began to grow (Bennett, 1996; Frydl, 2000; Herbold, 1994).

Even before the number of enrollments of returning GI's swelled in institutions, there was concern that those coming into institutions of higher education would not be

academically prepared. Frydl (2000) very eloquently describes the "nation's crisis in

higher education" (p. 386) as a result of the returning veterans. While the GI Bill

provided for educational opportunities for veterans, concerned educators were discussing

the overcrowding in institutions and whether or not, "students could handle college level

work" (p. 386). The educational opportunities were not limited to purely academic, but

to vocational education as well. Even these opportunities were under scrutiny by some

educators worried that a vocation would burden a person with only one option for the rest

of his or her life. For example, University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins referred

to vocational education as "education for slavery" (p. 392) that would cause a student to

not be able to think critically as would a student in the liberal arts. President Hutchins

presented his opinion to anyone who would listen including writing an article in 1944 for

Collier's magazine entitled "The Threat to American Education". While his view was

extreme, it was his sense that only certain people need to be educated and in a select way.

James Conant, President of Harvard had a differing opinion and idea. He envisioned a

general education with a balance of liberal education and vocational education courses.

He also had a vision of the division of vocational education at the different levels of

education. Conant foresaw vocational education in high schools as training for low-

skilled jobs, at community college for higher skilled, technical jobs and at the university,

for research or highly skilled professions (p. 395).

The GI Bill provided benefits to society at many levels. It did open the doors of

education for returning veterans who may otherwise not be able to go to or afford a

college education. It changed the socio-economic climate of the nation and helped to

create the knowledge society (Drucker, 1992). Prior to the GI Bill, only the children of

the wealthy could afford to attend college. After the GI Bill, millions of veterans now found the doors to higher education open to them. Those GIs turning to education proved Hutchins wrong as many contributed to the "intellectual climate of the university" (Spaulding, 2000, p. 30), and many would make their way into highly lucrative paying jobs (Celis, 1994). Further, the GI Bill created booms in housing business and consumer spending.

Vocational Education Act of 1963. The Vocational Education Act, as discussed by Barlow (1976), was a result of the introduction of Senate Bill 580 and House Bill 3000 in January, 1963, which sought to improve the quality of education in the United States. Each bill contained a provision specifically aimed at improving vocational education. While some in Congress believed that education, especially vocational education, was not high on President Kennedy's priority list, the President's message of June 19, 1963 that set the priority for moving both bills forward and ultimately President Johnson signed into law on December 18, 1963. By signing this law, he sent a clear message of expansion of vocational education programs to those wanting better opportunities, which led to increased funding and more jobs programs.

The federal funds made available to community colleges through the Vocational Education Act led to an increase in technical programs that were needed by the business sector. Lobbyists worked diligently to get monies earmarked for various occupational programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). For example, programs that allowed students to study at home or to attend classes via remote sites were beginning to grow. Two-year institutions saw an increase in size due to the expansion of the occupational and vocational programs. A demographic shift was beginning to occur. Older students,

women, disabled, disadvantaged, and part-time students were beginning to fill

classrooms. Adult education was becoming the norm and the labor market was seeing

the change (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

With many students filling the vocational programs of two-year institutions, the

idea of transfer to four-year institutions was still in debate. While the Vocational

Education Act of 1963 opened opportunities to many who would not otherwise have

access to higher education, it also helped to rekindle the issue of transferability of

vocational/occupational courses (Bragg & Reger, 2000; Cohen & Brawer, 1987), and the

issue of transferability of certain courses within associate degrees to four-year institutions

is still in debate some fifty-years later. A debate continues about courses that are

considered "vocational" and not academic, and as Townsend (2001) writes, the lines are

blurred for transfer education.

Perkins Act. Access to education and to programs that provided a pathway to

employment was expanded through the adoption of The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act

of 1984, that helped to provide more productive workers by expanding, improving and

modernizing vocational-technical education programs throughout the United States

(Hayward & Benson, 1993). It also helped to better provide underserved people

> …especially individuals who are disadvantaged, who are handicapped, men and
> women who are entering nontraditional occupations, adults who are in need of
> training and retraining, individuals who are single parents or homemakers,
> individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals who are incarcerated
> in correctional institutions [5]…

to be able to receive an education so that they may be able to enter the workforce

(Hayward & Benson, 1993). Where the Vocational Education Act left off, the Perkins

Act moved forward. The Perkins Act called for more emphasis on access to education,

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[5] From PUBLIC LAW 98-524—OCT. 19, 1984, Sec. 2

the quality of education, responsiveness to labor needs, improvement of academic foundations, upgrading of skills in demand, assistance to raise employment, increased guidance counseling and placement, improvement of consumer education and increase in vocational programs. While the Perkins Act of 1984 was a breakthrough for vocational programs through modernization and helped to educate underserved people, it was not integrated into more academic education so that it could share an equal relationship.

The Perkins Act was reissued in 1990, this time as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act, otherwise known as Perkins II (Hayward & Benson, 1993; Stecher, et al., 1995; Threeton, 2007). Hayward and Benson (1993) address the three major changes in the 1990 Perkins II Act. First, it integrated vocational/technical education with academic for students to be provided the opportunity to develop competencies in both vocational and academic areas, thereby restoring the goals of the original Smith-Hughes Act. Second, it outlined the development of "tech prep" education that provided for the education of students into technical careers and prepared them for "…continuation with further education leading to baccalaureate and advanced degrees" (Hayward & Benson, 1993, executive summary). This meant that institutions should begin to investigate potential avenues of articulation with one another so that students could matriculate from a community college to a university. Third, it gave focus to the idea of institutions partnering with businesses for students to gain a broader understanding of the potential job opportunities available to them upon graduation. This provided students with an opportunity to engage with a business and to begin building a career identity. The 1990 Perkins Act was a definite change from the previous version.

The revised Act provided incentives to institutions for the education of "all segments of the population" (p. 17) placing more focus on technical education.

While Perkins II focused on the creation of closer relationships between education and work for workforce education, the new Carl D. Perkins Act of 1998 (Perkins III) stressed the importance of accountability by supporting performance reporting initiatives in both technical and academic development (Threeton, 2007). Each state needs to publicly disclose how well it was doing in regard to providing quality education for its students. Accountability was a major point of the new legislation. Four categories of key indicators were established:

- Student attainment of vocational, technical and academic skill proficiencies.
- Acquisition of secondary or postsecondary degrees or credentials.
- Placement and retention in postsecondary education or employment.
- Completion of vocational and technical programs that lead to nontraditional training and employment (meaning fields in which one gender accounts for less than a quarter of the participants). (American Vocational Association, 1998, p. 12)

Skills development and learning were to be a priority in education, as was the continued integration of academic and vocational education. Tech prep continued to have a prominent role in the legislation as it helped to strengthen the need for articulation between institutions so as to provide for the competencies that would lead a student to be able to matriculate to a university to obtain a baccalaureate in a specific area (American Vocational Association, 1998). With the new accountabilities came the development of performance measures. Each state was to create its own performance measures. However, Perkins III gave states no direction on how to integrate academic performance measures with the vocational measures.

The title of the most recent reauthorization of the Perkins Act is the Carl D. Perkins CTE Improvement Act of 2006. It is also known as Perkins IV. The term CTE, short for Career Technical Education, was added and was meant to replace the term vocational education in general. Career Technical Education meant that educators needed to understand that education in a technical field did not necessarily mean that it led to an "education in slavery" as University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins believed in 1944 (Frydl, 2000, p. 392). Rather it meant that they needed to coordinate the various contents of education so that the student would be more well rounded in his/her competencies, including academic, "to prepare for further education" (Threeton, 2007, p. 2).

Meeder (2008) discusses that with the new version of Perkins came new requirements: new programs of study that included academic courses, a closer connection between institutions and businesses, and career guidance as part of the assistance provided to potential students. Dual enrollment credit for high school students in tech prep courses was also a condition for educators to meet, which meant closer connections with high schools, community colleges and universities. Because the baccalaureate is a goal that Perkins IV seeks for participants, expanding accountability and measuring of competencies in career and technical programs also became more identifiable. States receiving funds from the Perkins Act are charged with providing data on students and programs in the career technical area. Moreover, the measurement and accountability related to those areas are closely tied to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) started by President Bush in 2001. Perkins requires that states must use those indicators for English language arts and math that the state already established in NCLB. Therefore, the mix of

academic and technical coursework could now be tracked and monitored. Additionally, in its latest iteration, The Perkins Act requires that institutions provide career guidance and "access and information regarding career awareness and planning with respect to occupational and academic future" (Threeton, 2007, p. 3). This means that students are provided information not only on career pathways, but on their academic pathways as well. The benefit of this is that the career guidance that is provided may aid students to better understand their options in secondary and post-secondary education as they begin their career search. Armed with CTE and NCLB, educators had the mandate to provide pathways from vocational/occupational education to academic education.

The Higher Education Act. The Higher Education Act of 1965, signed by President Johnson, provided all Americans with an opportunity to seek higher education. President Johnson stated, "… I made up my mind that this nation could never rest while the door to knowledge remained closed to any American" (Johnson, 1965). His signing was a watershed moment in higher education that opened previously closed doors to many who would otherwise not have the opportunity to go to college. Upon signing the legislation, President Johnson remarked about his journey through higher education and that while teaching at a small predominantly Hispanic school, he realized that many of the children that he taught would not be able to go to college due to their economic status (Johnson, 1965). The Higher Education Act provided federal assistance to students and to institutions so that education would be open to more people from diverse backgrounds.

With the establishment of the Higher Education Act of 1965 came the directive for states to develop commissions of higher education to satisfy federal requirements (Cohen, 2000; Knoell, 1990; Mosholder & Zirkle, 2007). These commissions were

responsible, in part, for creating processes and procedures for the transfer of course work from institution to institution. Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Texas, and Washington were among the first to develop and to implement transfer policies. While the policies did not specify how to transfer course work, they did include language such that transfer and articulation were to be defined between institutions for the benefit of the student seeking to advance. In contrast, California's articulation and transfer processes are directly tied to the Higher Education Act (Bush, 2002) and are required to "…implement articulation agreements and transfer program agreements to adequately address the transfer of students between institutions." (p. 48). Today, all states have higher education commissions and the U.S. Department of Education lists them on its website (U.S. Department of Education , 2014).

However, A.A.S. degree transfer continues to be problematic. Knoell, (1990) discusses that with the 1972 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act was the requirement for states to establish a commission for planning and coordination, or a 1202 Commission. It was then that states began to define and to determine transfer and articulation to satisfy federal funding requirements within the Higher Education Act. Because vocational programs were deemed terminal, transferability was questionable even though students in the programs were "seeking opportunities to complete baccalaureate programs" (p. 8). While administrators can ignore the direction that students take, that does not mean that students will not continue to take that direction. As reported by Townsend (2001, p. 66), "There is clear evidence that many students in vocational education programs intend to transfer to a four-year college or university." Additionally, Townsend and Wilson (2006a) report that states and individual institutions

are "focused on developing articulation agreements for the associate of applied science (A.A.S.) degree because increasing numbers of A.A.S. students wish to transfer" (p. 36) and that Congress is in discussion concerning course and credit transfer prior to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Transfer and articulation are becoming a topic of discussion for Congress as constituents want their advocates in Washington to be aware of the potential barriers associated with obtaining a baccalaureate.

Strategies on Success

If a successful transfer of a student from one education institution to another is defined as the movement of a student into a new educational institution with a minimum of obstacles, surprises and trauma, then that success depends on several factors, including awareness of the process of transfer of credits, assistance in establishing a transfer plan long before the transfer is to take place, and communication with advisors to smooth the road. To successfully transfer from one institution to another, students should be aware of the potential transferability of courses they take in community college; however many students, unfortunately, are not. As discussed by Dougherty (1992) labeling of courses that will transfer, along with better transfer advising would increase transfer rates. The common course numbering system that is used in many states is an attempt to simplify transfer and articulation of courses for students. While labeling of courses is a method to provide students with information about transferability, Handel (2008) points out that students, when seeing an advisor, frequently "do not know what they do not know" (p. 11). The unsophisticated student may be lacking in knowledge or awareness about these matters in general. Some students speak with relatives and friends who have been through the transfer process and know what to ask. Others must rely on the staff member

whom they are in contact with to provide them with useful transfer information. Finally, some students may be ignorant to the full resources that advising can provide. That is not only true of courses that transfer, but of programs that are acceptable for transfer as well. Moreover, potential two-year transfer students should be in contact with advisors from the four-year institution well before they intend to transfer: "Advising by receiving institutions should begin before transfer students leave the sending institution" (Frost, 1991, p. 52). Indeed, advising can be the missing link to selection of courses and programs that transfer, as well as guidance for the processes involved in transfer.

The number of students with A.A.S. degrees continues to increase (Batts & Pagliari, 2013; Townsend, 2001). The percentage of those graduating from a community college and moving to a four-year institution continues to increase as well. The educational success of those transferring depends on institutions to design programs that will stretch the minds of those students with academic and technical coursework (Lipton, 2002). Nolte (1991) states that it is important for two-year institutions to incorporate general education components into A.A.S. programs for the benefit of students. Not only will this help to improve their education, it also increases their chances of success at work. Instead of being bound by education as President Hutchins predicted, the inclusion of general education requirements into curricula provides the opportunity to expand the mind and to open the door to opportunity. Employees need a variety of skills to be successful at work, including reasoning, cultural, interpersonal, communication, mathematical, and others. As noted by Nolte (1991, p. 8),

> General education will help students discover that work can be fulfilling
> and that lifelong learning will contribute to adaptability, cultural richness
> and citizenship. General education will bring integration, breadth and

value to the occupational program major and, if properly designed, will be indistinguishable from the major.

These general education skills, when integrated into the curricula of A.A.S. programs, provide students with academic knowledge and skills other than those workforce skills already learned to help the student/employee to succeed. Indeed, success to the baccalaureate and beyond is possible as more A.A.S. programs are being designed to be transferrable (Ignash, 2012). Portability is also an issue that is to be taken into account as well. Since the workplace is becoming more global, and since, as Pierre duPont (Nolte, 1991, p. 8) discusses, "There will be very few 40-year careers in the same factory for American workers; instead, American workers will have to learn the skill required by new careers several times in their lifetimes," the integration of academic coursework into workforce programs becomes more practical and therefore, more of an issue. This is where articulation becomes more critical.

While adding general education courses to the curriculum is one strategy for success, student advising is another area that has been identified. Jones (2007, p. 34) states that, "Advising is an important function for a seamless flow through higher education." Students make transfer decisions, good or bad, depending on the information that they receive. To be given good information prior to entering programs and registering for courses can be an important component for institutions. According to the Texas Coordinating Higher Education Board (2013), "Universities with higher retention and completion rates for community college students are more likely to require academic advising" (p. 4). For A.A.S. students, understanding what may or may not transfer is important as they look to transfer to a university. As Dougherty (1992) discusses, "Transfer advising in particular would be improved by clearly labeling transfer courses"

(p. 205). If labeling transfer courses were all that was required, providing written documentation would be easy. However, not all students read transfer documents published by the institution. Therefore, a key benefit of meeting with an advisor is to clear up transfer credit issues. By doing so early, students can resolve potential disappointing issues before they arise, and therefore achieve their intended educational goals on time (Flaga, 2006).

A key ingredient in the successful transition from a two-year to a four-year institution is the contact that students make with their advisors (Cohen & Brawer, 1987; Frost, 1991). Because students begin to formulate questions about a major, the general education requirements, as well as general questions about an institution, it is important to make contact with an advisor at the new institution to receive answers to those questions and others that concern a new student at the new institution. While advising plays a major role in the success of students, it is also necessary that students recognize the benefit of becoming more involved at their institution. Once involved in activities such as study groups, clubs, and other social activities, students become attuned to their environment and they become socially invested in the experience (Chapin, 2008; Tinto, 1998). With their investment in the institution and with the guidance of an advisor, students are better able to make decisions concerning their academic career, as well as their professional career (Flaga, 2006; Frost, 1991). Advising is not limited to one institution; rather, it is something that is cooperative between the institutions that serve the student in order to be successful (Frost, 1991; Munkittrick, 2009). While universities have advising for transfer students, it is up to the potential student to seek out those advisors. Therefore, as the student more actively interacts with advisors from both

institutions, the likelihood of successfully completing their education is significantly increased (Frost, 1991).

Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements have existed for decades and have served as a primary mechanism to ease student transfer between institutions. As Anderson, Sun and Alfonso (2006) discuss, "… articulation agreements serve to negotiate the requirements for students' movement from institution to institution and support the transfer intent" (p. 262-263). The agreement provides a record of the transfer process from one institution to another and helps to outline the programs and courses that may be accepted in transfer, which means that there are negotiations that take place prior to the signing of any document (Anderson, et al., 2006; Munkittrick, 2009). Negotiation does not mean a loss for either institution. Rather, it is an opportunity for the institutions to review their respective policies and procedures to determine what may or may not be acceptable in terms of transfer. Handel (2008, p. 5) notes,

> At its core, good articulation ensures that the courses students complete at a community college properly prepare them for upper-division work at the four-year institution. But to assure quality control, faculty at the sending and receiving institutions must come together to monitor and, at times, adjust their respective curricula. This presents two immediate problems: 1) recruiting faculty from two or more institutions to meet in the same room at the same time; and 2) reviewing a staggering number of courses.

Falconetti (2007) states, "The goal of articulation is to develop partnerships between community colleges and four year institutions and to negotiate requirements for student transfer" (p, 27). The document that is created is one that both institutions accept. Therefore, it is essential that both institutions work together toward the mutual interest of both institutions, as well as to the best interest of students. As a result, the articulation

agreement created through the mutual cooperation of both institutions then serves as a policy to establish the transfer of coursework between institutions and also becomes a binding document (Falconetti, 2007; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). O'Meara, Hall and Carmichael (2007) discuss two types of agreements: formal and informal. A formal agreement is a "collaborative agreement between education institutions that enables a student to complete a program of study at one institution and, using accumulated credits, attain a degree at another institution in a shorter period of time" (p. 10). Whereas an informal agreement is "Often developed as a courtesy between regional institutions or as a cooperative endeavor between administrators" (p. 10). O'Meara, Hall and Carmichael (2007) also explain that formal, rather than informal, articulation agreements are necessary to ensure that students receive appropriate information regarding their course transfer, career selection and academic preparation prior to enrolling in the senior institution, thereby helping to ensure successful transfer. Wellman (2002) states, "Students in community colleges should not have to negotiate transfer credit agreements on an individual basis with receiving institutions" (p. 47). Moreover, the use of informal information can worsen transfer rates since students do not receive adequate information to make a well thought out decision. The use of formal agreements, whether institutional or statewide, provide a pathway for students to follow and can provide the means to enhance transfer for the senior institution. However, articulation is but one piece of the transfer puzzle (Handel, 2008). Clearly, "The most important reason for developing articulation agreements is to improve access: giving students more options and smoothed pathways to achieving degree completion" (O'Meara, et al., p. 14).

History. There are a number of early pieces written about articulation from the 1920's which focus on school work in primary and secondary education. There are a few that speak specifically about junior college articulation, but only in regard to the transfer of credit from high school to junior college. Koos (1925) discusses the issue of "overlap" between certain classes such as, English literature, American history, and chemistry in high school and junior college. In his book, he does not directly use the phrase articulation; rather he discusses "efforts to obviate repetition" (p. 296). In a 1925 editorial titled "Articulation," Buckingham discusses the problem of transfer of courses through the divisions of education, that is, kindergarten to elementary, elementary to junior high, and so on. The problem of accepting courses previously taken had been identified and was a somewhat regular topic of discussion. Runnels (1929) further magnified this in his discussion about the formation of the Commission on the Articulation of the Units of American Education by the National Education Association, and the Commission's attempt at regulating without evaluating. Without an evaluation of the coursework in both directions, the articulation of classes may not be in the best interest of the student. His views in relation to work between junior high and high school course work, but they reflect a mainstream thought pattern of the time. While Runnels' work was in New Jersey, similar sentiments came forth from Florida. Roemer (1929) expresses similar concern about articulation of course work between junior high and high school, and also between senior high and the junior college. Standards for junior colleges had been approved in 1926 by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States, but there was a problem with interpretation. By adopting standards, the educational system was establishing a quality baseline, albeit one which administrators

did not necessarily understand. This early work into transfer and articulation is one that is still ongoing, and evolution beyond these early efforts has been slow.

In 1931 a small four-year liberal arts college in Iowa, Cornell College (not to be confused with Cornell University), conducted an articulation experiment by selecting superior high school students who had completed three of the four years of traditional high school courses for entrance into the freshman class. McConnell (1934) writes that the experiment was a success. Only eight students were selected for the program, and those students proved that they could succeed in college courses. By considering their success, the faculty at Cornell College agreed to begin a basic articulation program allowing students to transfer from high schools by meeting set standards for quality and preparation.

With regard to articulation, historically, administrators at cooperating institutions sometimes have a false sense of stability. According to Meder (1956), each institution should establish a committee to meet, discuss problems, arrive at solutions, and visit each campus to observe any difficulties the students might be experiencing in their transfer. The collaborative spirit of cooperation can help administrators to understand the complexity of articulation at institutions.

Cook (1957) illuminates Florida's articulation problems, identifying eight area that were seen as a challenge for institutions: 1) Admissions Procedure of Colleges, 2) The Use of Entrance Examinations, 3) Uniform Records and Transcripts, 4) Scholarships, 5) Significant Factors Relating to Success in College, 6) Bridging the Gap of Instructional and Personal Relationships Between College and High School, 7) The Articulation. of College and Secondary School Curriculums, 8) Evaluation of the

Transition. Evaluation of each, he felt, was necessary to assure that the students and institutions are properly served. Growth trends of the time were expected to continue, and colleges were expected to double their enrollments by the 1970's. Articulation agreements were in the process of becoming more streamlined so that students and institutions would not have duplication of efforts.

Menacker (1974) emphasizes the need for community colleges to be informed about senior institution policies, curriculums, transfer credit, etc. He points out that communication is lacking and that articulation may be improved if academic colleagues meet to deliberate and seek to understand policies and viewpoints of each institution. The challenge, Romine (1975) expresses, is articulation. Greater institutional cooperation and coordination would help to improve relations with faculty and with students.

By examining the transfer and articulation policies of several institutions, Prager (1993) explores the assumption that four-year institutions are operationally and structurally better designed to provide a superior education than are two-year institutions. In a survey of over 400 chief executive officers at public and private institutions, 42% responded to a series of questions including their "perception" of upward articulation within their institution to senior institutions. While the assumption was that four-year institutions are better designed to provide a superior education, the findings suggest that: 1) senior institutions frequently lack articulation policies that would allow students to matriculate; 2) at some institutions, practices exist that prohibit articulation/transfer from two-year to four-year institutions; 3) practices exist at institutions with two and four-year programs to "inhibit" articulation/transfer within said institution; and 4) there is an

"understood" policy to hold back potential transfer students. Prager found that "many baccalaureate degree-granting colleges and universities, but those with branch or regional campuses in particular, often lack program articulation policies and practices that facilitate student progress to the baccalaureate degree at the parent institution, sometimes even from traditional arts and science tracks" (p. 541). By prohibiting transfer, students must, at times start over with enrollment which distort their view of higher education.

In his 1996 article, Kintzer discusses the history of articulation and transfer dating back to 1903. He begins by offering his definition of articulation and of transfer, both of which are very different. His view of articulation is that of the totality of services, and transfer is the formula used to exchange credits. Much of his paper discusses the years 1960 to present. He references the problems of student performance, retention, and the need for greater articulation services, such as counseling. His reference to these problems resonates throughout the decades, and the problems discussed wax and wane depending on the decade. In his closing, Kintzer serves a summation of changes in articulation and transfer; he suggests several trends that have occurred. The most prominent findings were state governments are pushing for greater controls; access for underrepresented groups continues to be a priority; standardized formulas need to be developed for reporting transfer numbers.

State Level. One factor which contributes to the success of students is the articulation of courses which states mandate. State legislatures and their boards of education have the ability to mandate that certain courses from community colleges automatically transfer to four-year institutions. This is the beginning of master planning that occurs within states to help ensure that students have a pathway to the baccalaureate

(Ignash & Townsend, 2000). While there is a pathway, no method exists to determine if students are positively affected, that is, graduate, nor is there a discussion about the number of students who have used articulation as a means to transfer. In a 1990 policy analysis by Bender, he found that by 1989, thirteen states had discussions about or had enacted legislative laws to require articulation and transfer of college credit. According to the research by Ignash and Townsend (2000), thirty-four states have statewide articulation agreements. Of those states, 17 have developed "strong" or "fairly strong" agreements. The agreements were measured on four criteria: Transfer Directions, Sectors, Transfer Components, and Faculty Involvement. Additionally, Smith (2010) found that forty-six states have "cooperative agreements," that is, "an agreement between postsecondary institutions that allow articulation in situations where no state or system policy exists." A gap that exists in their research is with the student population. There is no information concerning the number of students affected in each of the states. Smith makes a generalized statement about the total number of students participating at the community college level in the Unites States, " … more than six million students…" (p. 1). However, this is the only statistic concerning students, and it is a statement about all students, not the individual number of students affected per state.

In 2009, Gross and Goldhaber discuss that states with legislative mandated articulation agreements were no more likely to see student enrolment increase from community colleges to universities than those states without mandated articulation agreements. A question to ask is why? While the Higher Education Act does discuss the necessity for states to create transfer pathways, it does not direct them to the specifics. It may be argued that the pathway created by some states is to "increase the legitimacy"

(Gross & Goldhaber, 2009, p. 23) of earning a baccalaureate by transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution (Anderson, et al., 2006). Researchers should look at the 2002 AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) Survey of State Practices. According to their survey, 50% of states have core course transfer equivalency. With regard to state enforcement of transfer and articulation, 18% reported any type of system in place. Of the states responding to the survey, two-year to four-year articulation was the most widely written agreement between institutions.

State higher education coordinating boards are calling for institutions to introduce articulation agreements in an attempt to ease transfer and to improve transfer credit rates. This implies the state is attempting to help students to continue their education. Whether students are successful and graduate has yet to be determined. Articulation policies help to ease the transfer process for students who have made the decision to transfer to four-year institutions (Bush, 2002, Kintzer, 1996; Sauer, et al., 2005).

In the 2002 survey conducted by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, they found that vertical transfer from the two-year to the four-year institution is the most commonly addressed issue in state mandated articulation or transfer agreements. Furthermore, state policies typically address general education "core" courses, and only 18% of states with articulation mandated policies have any type of reporting mechanism. While the survey indicates that articulation policies are in place and addressing central themes, information concerning the effectiveness of the agreement is missing. The existence of a state policy does not ensure it is effective. Since articulation agreements affect students, a notable statistic would be

how many students have been helped by each state's policy. Once again, the missing

piece is the relation to students.

While statewide articulation agreements typically mandate the transfer of courses

from one institution to the next, they do not get into the specifics about how students will

be served from institution to institution. Falconetti (2009) investigated the viability of

Florida's 2 + 2 statewide articulation agreement. The mandate to create a statewide

articulation agreement was established in 1971 (by the Florida Legislature). Florida

institutions of higher education have a long history of cooperation with each other.

According to the Department of Education administration, "An advantage that Florida

has is that there is a history of collaboration between the sectors from years past…"

(Venezia & Finney, 2006, p. 6). The collaboration that is discussed is the "inter-level

collaboration" of 2 + 2 policies: statewide articulation, common course numbering

system, common prerequisite rule, acceleration mechanisms, 36-hour rule, data

collection, common application and Bright Futures. The question that Falconetti (2009)

raises is whether there is a difference in the academic success of community college

transfer students vs. first time in college (FTIC) students who are seeking baccalaureate

degrees in Florida's four-year institutions. The quantitative research focused on students

from three institutions and reviewed the persistence and dropout rates for each. From a

total sample size of 2,612, Falconetti determined that community college transfer

students drop out of four-year institutions at a higher rate than FTIC students. This was

the first study that specifically examined the 2 + 2 system at institutions where

community college students previously had little access. While the information derived

from the study explains that students who took advantage of an articulation agreement

drop out at higher rates than FTIC students, it does not take into account possible reasons why those transfer students dropped out. A qualitative study may be helpful to determine the causes of the higher dropout rates.

Statewide articulation agreements began to grow during the 1980s and 1990s. Anderson, Alfonso and Sun (2006) posit that states have enacted these agreements as a means to stimulate the economy. Businesses need to have an educated workforce with employees that understand not only the how-to application of skills, but theory and practice as well. Furthermore, institutions of higher education will profit as well since there will be more students coming from the community colleges and there will be the need to expand their offerings given new student demand and increase of the value of a baccalaureate degree. There was also public pressure to ease transition from community college to university as the demand from the public to gain additional education increased. Moreover, state governments wanted to remain in power and to keep control of the bureaucracies that are in charge of collecting and distributing monies. Making things more difficult is the tug of war between public pressure and the states' need to stay in control. By mandating articulation agreements between community colleges and universities, state governments have contributed to the articulation policy and procedural difficulty that can exist at state institutions.

In a 2001 event entitled, "Access to the Baccalaureate Roundtable," the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities worked together to develop and to identify national issues that affect states and their student population matriculating from two-year to four-year institutions. Their work was to identify trends that were emerging and the consequences of states not

moving to address the concerns (*Access to Baccalaureate Degree Instruction in Florida: Options and Opportunities*, 2002). Participants in the roundtable event identified 13 areas that needed further exploration to ensure "seamless educational systems that encourage baccalaureate attainment" (Boswell, 2004, p. 28):

1) Allocate sufficient resources, both fiscal and human, to adequately address the growing population of transfer students.

2) Develop K-16 strategies that focus on college readiness, particularly for at-risk students, and on aligning high school graduation standards with college admissions requirements.

3) Provide incentives to high schools and colleges to collaborate to provide additional postsecondary enrollment options to high school students.

4) Fund the establishment of statewide student record systems that will allow students to be tracked between sectors and institutions and into the workplace, while protecting student privacy.

5) Establish a system-wide, common general education core curriculum and, where feasible, common course numbering systems for general education courses.

6) Set up faculty curriculum committees by academic discipline to negotiate statewide 2 +2 articulation agreements for academic majors.

7) Create an online clearinghouse among state four-year institutions advertising the availability of slots available to transfer students.

8) Expand alternative methods for assessing and awarding academic credit for student learning, however that learning is achieved, and create specialized transfer institutions and/or establish a credit aggregator- an accredited institution at a central place in the state that can take student credits and match them to a degree.

9) Invest in student support, financial aid, and other incentives that will significantly increase the attainment of associate and baccalaureate degrees for adults.

10) Consider new approaches to the baccalaureate to serve the needs of students, especially those with A.A.S. degrees.

11) Increase the number of baccalaureate programs available at community college locations and regional centers and re-engineer systems at the policy level to promote completion of baccalaureate degrees.

12) Encourage accrediting bodies to promote transfer and access to the baccalaureate degree as a standard of excellence.

13) Open transferability discussions that extend beyond state and/or system boundaries.

Institutional Level. States often focus on the "success" or graduation of students as they transfer from the two-year to the four-year institution. What is often overlooked is the success at the institutional level. What is understood about articulation agreements is that good communication between institutions is key for students at community colleges to understand what is available to them in terms of transfer. What is more apparent is that communication at all levels, that is, with students, with parents, with instructors, with counselors, and with others within the articulating institution is necessary (Dougherty, 1992; Menacker, 1974). The articulation agreement does provide a simpler path for students and makes academic advisors' jobs a bit easier. It is the work to communicate terms and policies of the agreement that is essential.

Some students transferring from a community college have difficulty negotiating with the university for course equivalency and course acceptance. If the student has not met with an advisor prior to transfer, there may be the question of what will transfer, or what will articulate. Unfortunately, some students who come to four-year institutions lose credits. What does this cause for the student? Because of the lack of communication and understanding of what is transferrable on both institutions' part and because of the number of institutions students attend, students will continue to lose credits they earned, and communication will likely not improve.

Articulation agreements have customarily encompassed traditional academic programs such as English, history, communications, business, and others. For those going to a community college to receive an education in a non-traditional curriculum such as that offered in vocational programs, many of those courses have been deemed unacceptable at the four-year institution. The need to articulate those becomes

increasingly important as society advances technologically. Institutions need to

recognize that the educational goals of two-year vocational students are similar to those

of two-year academic students: to receive a degree and to be able to transfer to a four-

year institution without loss of credits (Barkley, 1993). According to Barkley, Olivet

Nazarene University, Illinois does just that with its articulation agreement to community

colleges by allowing students with an associate of science degree to transfer in as a junior

without loss of credit hours. By doing this, Olivet is serving the community by providing

a pathway that is not normally open to those with "vocational" training. It also serves the

students by providing not only the pathway to the university, but also reducing the overall

cost to the student. With two years completed, two years are left to finish, which help to

provide the incentive to persist. To require vocational students to take additional courses

or to retake courses serves to reinforce the idea that they have made a mistake and that

they are being punished.

Student success is predicated on student engagement in learning and on the

experiences of the student (Tinto, 1998). If the experiences are negative, then the

learning outcomes could be negative. The same can be said of experiences with regard to

transfer at institutions. Chapin (2008) discusses that there is a need to assess student

engagement at institutions to determine their level of success. By studying student

engagement for success, new theories may be developed and better methodologies

constructed to better serve the student population. In turn, the information that is

gathered may be used to construct procedures that will allow for a smoother transition

from institution to institution, thereby assisting students and adding to their success.

When underrepresented populations are negatively affected by the processes currently in

place, it is the responsibility of institutions to look at those policies and to make changes that will help students to be effectual (Community College League of California, 2003; Hagedorn & Lester, 2007).

Successful institutional articulation agreements share a common theme: communication between institutions. Wright and Middleberg (1998) share their experience of developing over 180 institutional articulation agreements for the New York University (NYU) School of Education and surrounding community colleges. Their work with community colleges to develop articulation agreements was two-fold: to change the perception of NYU from transfer unfriendly to transfer friendly and to learn about the community colleges' programs so that the agreements drafted would be advisory, and contractual, and make it easier for students to transfer. What they found was that each community college had its own culture and organizational structure. Therefore, in order to understand how to best serve the institution, they spent time meeting with the administration, staff, faculty and students at each institution and were able to understand what was necessary for that institution. The most prevalent themes were to mitigate the loss of credits for transferring students and to provide advising support to the community college. To be able to meet these goals, the committee had to gain support from their top administrator, their Dean, and to reach out to the presidents of the various community colleges – a top down approach, gathering agreement at all levels. By involving the presidents of the community colleges, the presidents were able to provide administrators at their respective institution who would serve as a liaison between that institution and NYU School of Education. These administrators were then able to provide input for their respective institution toward the development of the

articulation agreement that would help their students. Wright and Middleberg also kept

their faculty at NYU in the mix of discussions with the community colleges. They found

that by doing so, the faculty became more collegial toward the community colleges and

were able to address certain criticisms of community college education before students

were accepted into their programs. To attract students to NYU, it was necessary to

develop marketing strategies, such as advertising in student newspapers and holding open

house events that would reach out to students to explain their articulation plan. Finally

and most importantly, they found that communication - verbal and written between all

parties - helps to establish trust and reinforce the partnership that exits between the

institutions.

Community College Culture

Townsend and Wilson (2006b) discuss that transfer students can be impacted by

the cultural differences between community colleges and universities. The differences, in

part, include the size and the mission of the institution. Students at community colleges

are used to small classes where instructors are more familiar with their students, whereas

university classes tend to be larger and more formal. Academic and social integration

may also be different between community college and university. Large classes at a

university are less likely to integrate peer interaction, whereas smaller classes in the

community college are more open to social interaction. Townsend and Wilson (2006b)

found that "community college transfers were frustrated by their anonymity in large

lecture classes and by the unwillingness of other students to form study groups" (p. 450).

While students find that academic core classes are usually larger, courses in their major

are normally smaller. Because the cultural differences can impact transfer students,

Townsend and Wilson (2006b) conclude that strategies should be developed to provide assistance to transfer students during their transition from the community college to the university to help ensure students' "academic and social integration or fit within the institution" (p. 454), without which students might either drop out or change institutions (Tinto, 1993) in an effort to find an institution that has a culture that is more suitable and accommodating.

Cultures can vary between two-year and four-year institutions. As Parnell (1985) notes, "the community college is a teaching institution without a research mission" (p. 91). VanWagoner, Bowman and Spraggs (2005) agree with Parnell's statement. According to their research, the culture of community colleges is student centric, and there is an emphasis on learning rather than on research. They note that community colleges are a "choice for students who want a personalized experience, challenging but nurturing, regardless of their long-term academic goals" (p. 1). However, Richardson and Bender (1987) discuss that university administrators see it from a different perspective. From the university administrator's point of view, the culture of community colleges is "overly protective and prone to condition their students to expectations that were inappropriate for university" (p. 36). While it may be true that students attending community college want a personalized experience, it may also be true that expectations for the university are inappropriate. Moreover, for the student who wishes to transfer, he/she may experience "transfer shock" upon attending a university.

Transfer Shock. The phenomenon of "transfer shock," or the effects of transfer, including differences in student grades, student performance, student withdrawal and student perception, has been written about by several authors. Hills (1965) discusses the

idea that community college students experience shock when receiving grades at the university. While at a community college, students could expect a higher grade, whereas when matriculating to a four-year institution the student experiences lower grades. Using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) mixed model to determine if significant differences existed in community college students' GPAs relative to their major, Cejda, Kaylor and Rewey (1998) discuss that only a minimal amount of transfer shock (.048) was experienced by those included in their study.

In 2006, Gawley and McGowan wrote about their findings of social and academic experiences of college student transfer. Their work attempts to identify difficulties facing transfer students and to understand the cultural and institutional differences that are experienced. By analyzing the GPA of forty-one transfer students at three points – at graduation from community college, at first year completion of university, and at second year completion of university - Gawley and McGowan ascertain that for the majority of students transferring, there is some level of shock. Students also completed a questionnaire that was designed to provide information concerning their perceptions of transfer and reveal that the greatest differences between the college and the university were in the areas of workload, course work differences, exams, writing, and less engagement with the faculty. Gawley and McGowan found that students in arts and science, business, and marketing were less affected by transfer shock than those in occupational-specific majors. The intensity of the program and the social and academic engagement were areas that were noted that may have accounted for the differences.

There is evidence that transfer shock affects the GPA performance of transfer students. A study of native and transfer students conducted by Glass and Harrington

(2002) from fifty-eight community colleges in North Carolina found that there is evidence of some decline in GPA for those who transfer. Using registrar information from the University of North Carolina Systems of one-hundred community college students and one-hundred native students from 1996 - 1999, they analyzed the data t-test and ANOVA to compare the academic performance of each group. What they found was that during the first semester in the major, transfer students saw a decline in their GPA, whereas native students showed no significant decline. They also found that while transfer students did see an initial decline, they were able to recover in subsequent semesters.

As Laanan (2001; 2007) discusses, there is an "adjustment" that the transfer student undergoes while transitioning from two-year to four-year institutions. Not only are there new academic challenges, there are different social, psychological, and environmental demands as well. The transition or "shock" that is experienced comes from being in an environment that is vastly different from the previous one. Students experience stress as a result of being in a new environment, and it is reflected in their grades. However, as students spend more time at the larger institution and with their professors, their grades tend to improve. Furthermore, those students who take advantage of meeting with faculty find that they experience less difficulty in class. Laanan (2007) found that transfer students who participate in academic workshops at the university are "seeking ways to facilitate their adjustment to the university" (p. 53) to be academically successful. Students experience not only transfer shock, but they experience culture shock as well. The transition to the four-year institution, however, need not be that traumatic. By meeting with an academic advisor, faculty member or other staff members,

the student can become more familiar with the institution and find the resources that will facilitate their joining university society. This will help to reduce apprehension and anxiety associated with the four-year institution and assist in making the transition much smoother. As pointed out by Laanan (2007), it is the "students' quality of effort in the 2- and 4-year environments [that] is a significant determinant of a successful transition" (p. 54).

Summary

The idea of a "university preparatory institution" (Beach, 2011, p. 5) that would prepare students for broader education to help expand the middle-class and to expand industries was the beginning for community colleges in the late 1800's. The expansion of community colleges into the 20th century continued even during the Great Depression of the late 1920's, growing to over 1,100 today (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014). While academic courses were offered, many junior colleges began offering vocational courses that would allow students to find work in various areas. McDowell (1919) discusses students "…were sure, sooner or later, to ask to receive credit for such work in larger colleges and universities" (p. 21).

Vocational education began as providing students with skills necessary to work in automotive, electrical, building contracting, city management and industrial work. The advantages were pedagogical, economical and social (Seashore, 1927). Community colleges took the lead to teach these skills to men and women. The support of the government was evident with the passing of various legislation throughout the years, such as the GI Bill, the Vocational Education Act, the Perkins Act and the Higher Education Act. With the passing of each, federal monies were pumped into the education

system to stimulate education for all men and women and to provide for a better life and more equalization of opportunities.

Students have been able to transfer credits between community colleges and universities for decades through the use of transfer and articulation agreements. Articulation agreements have been a primary resource to ensure that programs and courses are accepted in transfer from one institution to another and help to facilitate the transfer process (Anderson, Alphonso & Sun, 2006). The history of articulation dates back to the early 1920's where Koos (1925) writes that it was "efforts to obviate repetition" (p. 296). To assure that students receive credit for certain academic courses taken at community colleges, states have created articulation agreements that provide the pathway for students wishing to transfer to university so that their credits may transfer.

Upon transitioning to the university, students may be met with certain challenges such as culture and transfer shock. Students who have previously been accustomed to a smaller campus, smaller class sizes, different teaching style, and more social interaction with instructors may now be faced with an identity crisis upon transfer to a university. Drop in GPA, extra workloads, and less engagement with faculty are often noted (Gawley & McGowan, 2006). Student should be aware that adjustment to university may be necessary and that they may need to seek help to adjust to their new environment (Laanon, 2007).

Chapter III

Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the research methods used to explore and to gain a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of students with an A.A.S. degree from a two-year community college and who have transferred to a four-year research-intensive university to attain their baccalaureate degree. The local community college system (LCCS) in this study has six local locations with a student population in excess of 77,500 and graduates over 3,500 students per year with an associate's degree. Of the 3,500 graduates, over 1,000 graduate with an A.A.S. degree (*Fast Facts*, 2013). While there is a number of four-year institutions in Texas that students may elect to transfer to, the local urban university (LUU) in this study is the campus of choice for approximately 16% of the population from this LCCS (*Fast Facts*, 2013).

To understand the experiences and perceptions of community college students transferring to a four-year research-intensive university, a qualitative approach was used. The description of their experiences in their own words can help administrators in higher education to better understand the situations that have been encountered as community college students have negotiated transfer from institution to institution (McGowan & Gawley, 2006). Through their rich and thick descriptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin, 1989; Ponterotto, 2006) students have provided a tapestry of detail that is often missed while using quantitative means to cognitively assess data. Using a qualitative methodology has allowed students to have a "voice" as details of their experiences emerged and were captured for analysis. For this study, interviews with students were recorded with their permission. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used.

Through transcription and its analysis, data sampling, and interpretation (Merriam, 2002),

student accounts of their experiences were interpreted and retold as I reconstruct their

stories.

Research Design

Using a qualitative approach serves as a mechanism for "exploring and

understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"

(Creswell, 2009, p. 4). With a qualitative approach, participants use their voice to

explain their experiences at the LCC and at the LUU. The qualitative approach is useful

to understand processes, describe phenomena, understand differences and theories, and

discover unspecified contextual variables (Merriam, 2002). Narrative inquiry has the

ability to "reveal truths about human experience" in a manner that can be familiar,

persuasive, entertaining, galvanizing, and engaging (Riessman, 2008, p. 8 - 9).

Creswell (2009) describes the qualitative example as a means for "exploring and

understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"

(2009, p. 4). Since the participants in this paper have shared a common experience, the

qualitative approach serves to provide each with a voice to understand his/her situation.

Merriam (2002) discusses the four areas that researchers find useful when using

qualitative methods: "1) understand a process, 2) describe poorly understood phenomena,

3) understand differences between stated and implemented policies and theories, and 4)

discover thus far unspecified contextual variables" (p. 11). By providing a means of

discussion for those students who have transferred from an LCC with an A.A.S. degree to

an LUU, the narrative ties theory and practice together for administrators and for those

providing advising assistance to those who transfer and it allows me to explore the nuances of their experiences.

The narrative experiences of those participants transferring to a four-year research institution may provide insight into the common themes which transfer students experience and help to bridge the gap between theory and practice in an effort to further support community college students upon transfer. Social constructivism "maintains that human beings construct their perceptions of the world, that no one perception is 'right' or more 'real' than another, and that these realities must be seen as wholes rather than divided into discrete variables and analyzed separately" (Glesne, 2006, p. 7). The paradigm as suggested by Glesne is one that may help to understand the difficulties that transferring A.A.S. students experience as they are asked to share their experiences through verbalization. Similarly, Bandura (2001) discusses that humans adapt to changing environments through the use of social cognition. Through narrative, students tell their story in their own words, which can be convincing, entertaining, surprising and engaging. As Reissman (2008) discusses, narrative has the ability to "reveal truths about human experience" and that, "telling stories…creates order and contains emotion" (p. 8 - 10), which helps to make connections with others encountering similar circumstances.

Rationale. The use of qualitative methodology is best since the interest is in understanding, from the student perspective, his/her experiences with transfer and articulation. Through the use of account inquiry, we as researchers become story retellers, and we reconstruct the events as told to us by the respondent using research strategies, samples, transcription, and other means as we coauthor the discourse (Merriam, 2002). The method used to capture participant information was through taped

interview, as well as thorough note taking. As described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) taped interviews provide for an "unimpeachable data source", assure completeness, and provide the researcher with "the opportunity to review as often as necessary to assure that full understanding has been achieved" (p. 271).

Sample Site and Participants

The sample site for my research is an LUU that serves over 40,000 students and is recognized as a Carnegie Tier-One research institution. The university consists of thirteen individual colleges. The institution is located in Texas and has been open for nearly one-hundred years. There are more than 120 undergraduate majors for prospective students to choose from, and the institution awards more than 8,000 degrees annually. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees (*About,* 2014).

The participants for this study come from the population of students who transferred to this institution from a local community college system in Texas that serves a major U.S. city in Texas. This community college system is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate of Arts, Associate of Arts in Teaching, Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science Degrees. The system has been accredited since 1976. Student demographics at this local community college indicate that the enrollment is 61% female, 39% male system-wide. Ethnicity within the system is reported as 36% White, 33% Hispanic, 14% Black, 7% Asian, 4% Unknown, and 3% Multiple. There are six

campuses within the community college system which serves over 77,500 students (*Fast Facts*, 2013). Table 1 lists the campuses and their respective percentage of students.

Table 1

LCCS Locations by Approximate Number and Percentage

Name	n	%
L1	20,000	25.2
L2	17,000	22.2
L3	13,000	16.4
L4	12,000	15.4
L5	9,000	11.4
L6	7,000	9.4

(*Enrollment*, 2013)

The specific target participants were those students who have transferred to the LUU into a Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) designated college that has an articulation agreement with this local community college. The articulation agreement has been in place between the LCCS and the LUU STEM college for more than eight years. The STEM college has been part of the university for over seventy years, was the third permanent building on campus, and served as a major training facility for Army and Naval personnel during World War II. According to LUU institutional research data for the most recent years available, a total of 4,145 students transferred to the university during the years 2006 – 2012. Six years is used since that is the most recent data available. A breakdown of the number of transfers from 2006 to 2012 from the LCCS to the LUU is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Number of Transfers per year from LCCS to LUU

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Year
543	544	673	629	885	871	4145 Total

Of those transferring to the LUU, since 2006, approximately 8%, or 331 transferred to the

STEM college. Statistics from the Office of Accreditation located in the STEM college

show that 57 of those had transferred to the program with an articulation agreement.

Data Collection

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I contacted the STEM

college Office of Accreditation to request contact information for those 57 students

identified as transfer from the LCCS to the LUU STEM college program with an

articulation agreement. A cover letter (see Appendix A) was sent to the 57 students to

determine if they were interested in participating in the research and to gather some

preliminary information. Participation was strictly voluntary and there were no rewards

of any type associated with this research. Of the 57 students contacted, 20 responded

positively stating that they were interested in participating in my research. Those

responding positively were asked to take a short demographic survey that was

administered through the Internet via SurveyMonkey. The results from the survey were

available only to me. The demographic data survey is shown in Appendix B. A

breakdown of the demographic data is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Demographic Data of Study Participants (N=20)

Survey Item	n	%
Gender		
female	12	60
male	8	40
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	11	55
Hispanic	3	15
African-American	3	15
Asian	1	5
Other	2	10

Age Range		
18-25	3	15
26-34	13	65
35-43	3	15
44 and older	1	5

A 30% overall response rate was achieved for my study. None of the respondents were eliminated from the study. However, two potential participants did not come to their interview and my subsequent email requests to participate were ignored. Therefore, 26% was the actual participation rate. Those participating were provided with a Consent to Participate letter (see Appendix C) prior to participating in the interview. Data collection consisted of interviews (narrative inquiry) with participants via telephone or face-to-face (their choice) while I took notes and recorded the interview (with the permission of the participant).

Interview Setup. Interviews with surveys were the primary tool used to collect data for this research. According to the Tague (2005, p. 487), "Surveys are commonly used with key stakeholders, especially customers and employees, to discover needs or assess satisfaction." Since the objective of this evaluation is to determine themes in articulation and transfer among transferring students, surveys served as the appropriate primary tool to collect data. The stakeholders in this study are students who have transferred to the LUU into the STEM college program with an articulation agreement.

The participants were initially contacted via email to determine their preferred method of interview, face-to-face or via telephone. All participants were asked to provide their preferred day/time for the interview as well. Upon agreeing to the interview, a follow-up confirmation email was sent to each participant. The Consent to Participate letter was included with the confirmation email. All interviews were

completed within two weeks of contact with the participants. There was no difference in the face-to-face and telephone interviews since both were conducted in the same manner. Telephone interviews were available for the convenience of the participant. The interviews were conducted at the time determined by each participant. Each participant was asked the same series of questions. (See Appendix D for questions)

Once the series of interviews was determined, participants were coded with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Each participant was assigned an alpha letter that corresponded to a phonetic letter from the phonetic alphabet. The phonetic letter was then used to identify each participant. For example, participant 1 was Alpha, participant 2 was Bravo, participant 3 was Charlie, and so on. (See Appendix E)

When the participant arrived or was phoned, I welcomed each and thanked him/her for participating. I again asked for permission to record the interview, and all agreed. I used two methods to record each interview. A hand-held digital recorder, as well as Camtasia software on my computer was used to capture each interview. Additionally, I took 47 pages of notes during the interviews.

Transcription. Data were transcribed at the conclusion of the interviews and organized by question into an Excel spreadsheet, along with demographic information of each participant. The data were then studied for patterns, themes, and categories (Creswell, 1998). Using the digital recordings as well as reading and rereading the narratives along with the field notes, I began the task of understanding how students made sense of their world during transfer (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003).

Sources of Data. This research is from various sources that include: audio from two recorded digital sources, field notes, survey of demographic information , coding,

transcript information and other notes kept while interviewing participants. The use of

notes written by the researcher during the course of interviews also provided a control

check to aid in the interpretation of the information provided. The various data sources

served to triangulate my references to accurately report the respondents' findings.

Checking. Once the transcription was complete, I sent each participant a copy of

his/her interview asking them to check it for accuracy. Creswell (2009) defines member

checks as 'taking back parts of the product back to participants to check for accuracy" (p.

191). After the initial interviews, passages were highlighted in the interview transcripts

to present to the participants. The highlighted passages exemplify themes that were

pulled from the coding process, and the participants were asked if interpretations were

accurate. If they were not, participants were invited to make corrections or additions to

the findings.

I used my interview notes to reflect on each interview. Using the interview notes

as a reflexive journal also served to satisfy internal validity. Merriam (2002) defines

reflexivity as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as

instrument' (p. 26). Prater (2010) discusses the need to use an "intellectual journal" to

record thought, to formulate ideas, and to reflect on experience. Keeping the journal

allows for the documentation and traceability of meetings that occurred, as well as the

documentation of "recording thoughts, feelings, uncertainties, values, beliefs, and

assumptions that surface throughout the research process" (Carlson, 2010, p. 1104).

Data Analysis

The descriptions that the students provided presented an insight into the main

research question, "What are the experiences and perceptions of A.A.S. degreed

community college students transferring to an articulated baccalaureate program at a four-year research-intensive institution?" and its sub-questions.

Coding. Once the information from the interviews was organized, categorized, coded, interpreted, and transcribed, coding began with the narratives being used as a basis for comparisons and analyzed for relevant content and underlying assumptions. The information was coded using labels that provided descriptions of the themes that emerged from the data. The codes symbolized the information presented. The coded information was then organized and categorized. For example, if participants indicated that parking, driving to campus, finding classrooms or negotiating the campus had a significant influence during their first semester on campus, then the category "campus stress" was created. I highlighted passages in my field notes as well as in the transcripts to separate stories. The passages were then reviewed among the participants' stories to determine intersecting information. Mapping of interview information was done as well to illustrate results. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that the data that is obtained during an interview is then explained as reduction, display and conclusions which make up analysis. This process allowed me to draw on the information presented by each participant to better understand his/her position for the question asked. Figure 2 illustrates the cycle of analysis of the data. The data were analyzed to find the themes as they emerged. Reviewing the information to focus on "what" was said by each person was important so that intersecting themes developed from the codes across all interviews could be determined (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003).
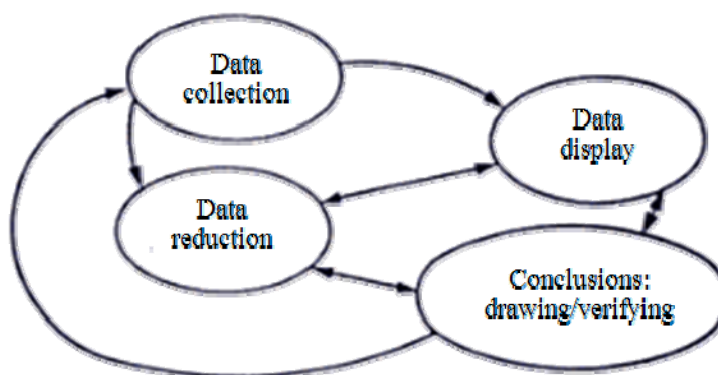
Illustration from Miles and Huberman (1994, p.12)

Figure 2. Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

Trustworthiness and Validity. Methods to ensure a "good" survey may differ between a positivist worldview, where researchers seek to "develop relevant, true statements" that can describe a relationship, versus a constructivism world view, where researchers desire to understand how "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2009, p. 6 - 8). Merriam (2002) states what makes a good qualitative study is one that "has been systematically and ethically carried out and whether the findings are trustworthy" (p. 30 - 31).

Merriam (2002) discusses the use of "rich, thick description" as a means to ensure external validity. These descriptions, as detailed by the participants, provide for "corroboration" (Carlson, 2010) to substantiate findings from others encountering similar circumstances. The "goal" as discussed by Marshall and Rossman (2011), is to be, "more accurate, objective, and neutral…" (p. 42). Creswell and Miller (2000) discuss the challenges of validity in qualitative research and the systematic process that researchers take to demonstrate the credibility of their work. Therefore, all parts of the interview process were documented to assure validity and to provide traceability. This provides for

"audit trails" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) that allow other researchers to follow the process and also provides for transparency.

Ethical Issues. Since qualitative research requires interactive work with subjects, there are ethical responsibilities that researchers must assume. For this type of work, protection of the subjects is fundamental. Anonymity for subjects is essential to protect privacy, confidentiality and identity (Bishop, 2009; Murchison, 2010; Parry & Mauthner, 2004; Prentiss, 2011). In this study, participants were asked to sign a Consent to Participate letter (see Appendix C) to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee, as well as provide authorization for the interview (Fetterman, 2010). Personal information recorded in the letter was kept to a minimum. I alone have access to the personal information of the participants, and no names were published.

While this research centers on transfer students as they have matriculated to a four-year institution and the questioning may at first seem innocuous, some participants may feel uncomfortable participating in a taped interview. The method that was employed to mitigate the potential feeling of discomfort was to provide control of the interview to each participant such that s/he may ask that the recording stop if s/he felt uncomfortable at any point of the interview process. By providing this level of interview control, I expected that participants would provide a more thorough and rich detail of his/her experience (Phillips, 2001).

During the interview process, I asked several questions about advisors at each institution and how the participant viewed those persons and the messages that were delivered. While it is the perception of the participant, the issue then becomes one that is ethical and political as well (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, it is my obligation to keep

an open mind and to take note of the issues presented and to not make a judgment on those individuals nor to present any information that would possibly identify the person in the discussion. It is also essential to present the material of the participant as stated by the participant and not interject any type of prejudice into the discussion. By remaining neutral, I post the participant's view of his/her experience, thereby providing a true representation of their world.

Researcher Bias. Since I am an administrator at the LUU in the STEM college and am the person to pen the articulation agreement with the LCC, a bias already exists. The bias is that I may think that I know how the participants may answer specific questions and expect a certain answer. However, to mitigate the effects of researcher bias, I use member checking to keep the focus of the respondents and to accurately report their findings. Fetterman (2010) suggests that quality controls such as member checking serve to mitigate the negative influence of bias. The use of notes written by the researcher during the course of interviews provided a control check to aid in the interpretation of the information provided. Once the interview was transcribed, each participant was asked to review his/her transcript and to make any changes or corrections desired.

Dependability. It is important to think critically about the questions that were asked and their possible audience. As a researcher using narrative inquiry, my responsibility is to accurately represent each participant. Agee (2009) explains that researchers must concern themselves with asking the right questions as qualitative research is proposed and conducted. I gathered and presented information that by using the reflexive journal and re-reviewing taped interviews together, will provide a reflective

set of data that is intended to assure that each voice has been captured accurately. Researchers have an ethical obligation to assure that participants are treated with respect, that information is accurate and that they do no harm (Bournot-Trites & Belanger, 2005).

Limitations

For this research, only one community college system was used, but there are other community colleges and systems within the surrounding area. However, confining the research to just one institution limits the findings to just those of the selected institution. Using other colleges and other participants may yield different results. While the findings from the selected institution are valuable, obtaining participants and their views from many of the surrounding community colleges could yield more complete results.

Sample Size. The selected institution provided the greatest number of potential participants for this study, 57, and the total number responding favorably to participating was 20, with 18 actually participating in the research. While this number may be relatively small, an appropriate sample size for qualitative research "is one that adequately answers the research question" (Marshall, 1996). Also, according to Josselson and Lieblich (2003), research continues until saturation or redundant results are achieved. Therefore, for this research, 18 participants is an appropriate sample size.

Bias. A bias may exist by some participants since I teach courses within the articulated program in the STEM college. The participants may feel the need to provide answers that they think that I would like to hear rather than give their account of their experiences. However, none of the participants were a student in the classes that I taught during the time of the interview phase of this study; therefore, the perception of

teacher/student bias is minimal and provides the participant with the opportunity to define his/her reality and experience (Fetterman, 2010).

Participant Accuracy. Each participant was provided with the same questions during the interview session and each participant was provided the opportunity to review the their interview transcript. Corrections as necessary were made at that time to ensure accuracy. Each participant was then asked to verify the accuracy of the transcript with the corrections made. For this research, the findings and discussion are products of the descriptions as provided by the participant.

Summary

A qualitative approach was used to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of community college students transferring to a four-year research-intensive university. Using a qualitative methodology allows students to have a "voice" as details of their experiences emerge and are captured for analysis, as this allows for exploring and understanding the meaning of social problems (Creswell, 2009). Narrative inquiry was used to engage participants and to understand transfer from the student perspective. Taped interview (with the consent of the participant) was employed as was the use of taking field notes during the interviews.

The sample site was a large urban university in Texas, which serves over 40,000 students. The participants were among students who transferred from a local community college system in Texas, which serves over 77,000 student. The participants had transferred to the university into one of its colleges that has an articulation agreement with the local community college for students with an Associate of Applied Science degree. I identified 57 students from the community college who had transferred to the

university since 2006. Email addresses for all 57 students were obtained and an invitation to participate was sent to each. Initially, 20 students responded favorably to be part of the interview process. When contacted to set a participation date, two students did not respond despite repeated contact attempts. Therefore, 18 students participated in the study. Participants were provided with a Consent to Participate letter and each interview was recorded (with their consent). Participants chose either to be interviewed face-to-face or via telephone (their choice), and the day and time to be interviewed.

After all of the interviews were conducted and the recordings were transcribed the information was sent back to each participant for member checks to assure that it was accurate. Using the data from the transcription, field notes and recordings, they were analyzed and coded. Using Microsoft Excel and notes highlighted, the themes emerged from the rich and thick descriptions (Merriam, 2002) provided by the participants. All parts of the interview process were documented to provide an audit trail and to provide for transparency and traceability. Anonymity for all participants was provided and only I have access to all materials relating to this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of A.A.S. degree students' challenges and experiences of the transfer period from community college to a four-year research-intensive institution of higher education. In this chapter I will discuss the findings of my research, which includes the major themes that emerged during my interviews with participating students. Statements from the students are included to support and validate the themes. My interviews with the 18 participants were semi-structured, designed to elicit spontaneous reactions from each person. The themes that emerged were developed from participant experiences concerning their transfer to a four-year research-intensive university as described to me during their interview.

My research centers on a central question: What are the experiences and perceptions of A.A.S. degreed community college students transferring to an articulated baccalaureate program at a four-year research-intensive institution? The five secondary research questions posed to help answer the question were the following: 1)What challenges confronted you as an A.A.S. transfer student?; 2) in what ways did the LCC support the transfer process?; 3) in what ways did the LUU support the transfer process; 4) what institutional barriers have you encountered?, and 5) has articulation helped you to complete your baccalaureate? Each interview provided a story and an experience to help answer the research questions. Data presented is constructed from the rich and thick descriptions provided by the participants. The excerpts from the interviews that serve as evidence are in the participant's own words.

This chapter is organized into three major sections: participant characteristics, emerging themes and summary.

Participant Characteristics

The 18 participants came from the same community college system, but from different campuses. The raw data received from the STEM college office of accreditation lacked information about which specific college each participant attended and from which associate degree program each participant had graduated. Therefore, it was necessary to obtain that information from each participant during the research process. Upon further investigation, I found that the LUU does not capture information about the specific institution that a student attended. Rather, it only captures that the student attended the LCC system. Furthermore, I found that when a student applied for admission to the LUU, the institution did not capture specific academic information about the degree a transfer student has completed. Therefore, it was not possible to determine from the institutional research data which type of associate degree (associate of science, associate of arts, associate of applied science) a transfer student obtained. Instead, the only information descriptor available was the name of the last non-LUU institution enrolled.

All participants have either graduated from the university, or are seniors, and all transferred from the LCCS. I describe each participant by gender, ethnicity, location of LCC attended (e.g., L1, L2 and so on), year entered the LUU, year graduated – if applicable – courses taken at LCC, number of transferrable hours from LCC, and number of hours transferred into the baccalaureate program at the LUU. Of the 18 participants,

three could not remember what degree plan they were on while in the community college, whether it was an associate of applied science, associate of arts or associate of science.

Alpha is a male Caucasian , 26-34 years old. He transferred from L1 of the LCCS in 2005 and graduated from the LUU in 2010 and currently works full time. He could not remember which degree he earned at the community college or whether he graduated. He took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC and had 89 hours total when he transferred to the LUU. Upon transfer into the LUU, 63 hours transferred into a baccalaureate degree plan.

Bravo is a female Caucasian, 26-34 years old. She is married with a small child at home. She transferred from L6 of the LCCS in 2012. She could not remember which degree she received from the community college. She took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate at the LUU. She had 55 hours total from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 54 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Charlie is a male Caucasian, 35-43 years old. He is married and works full time. He transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2011. He took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC, but did not graduate. He is in the process of completing his baccalaureate at the LUU and expects to graduate in May 2014. He had a total of 77 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Delta is a female Caucasian, 35-43 years old. She is a single mother and works full time. She transferred from L1 of the LCCS in 2012. She graduated with an AA degree from the LCC and also took A.A.S. classes as well. She is in the process of

completing her baccalaureate from the LUU. She had a total of 86 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Echo is a female Hispanic, 26-34 years old. She is married with children and works full time. She transferred from L2 of the LCCS in 2013. She took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC, but did not graduate. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate from the LUU. She had a total of 64 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, all 64 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Foxtrot is a male Hispanic, 26-34 years old. He is single and works full time. He transferred from L1 of the LCCS in 2008 and graduated from the LUU in 2011. He graduated with an A.A.S. degree from the LCC and took many core curriculum courses as well. He had a total of 94 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Golf is a male African-American, 35-43 years old. He is a single father, works full time and is in graduate school. He served in the military before beginning his education. He transferred from L5, but attended L2 as well. He transferred to the LUU in 2010 and graduated in 2012. He took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC. He could not remember if he completed his A.A.S. degree. He had a total of 69 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Hotel is a male Caucasian, 26-34 years old. He is married and works full time. He is considering returning to school to pursue a master's degree. He transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2010 and graduated from the LUU in 2013. He graduated with an AA

degree from the LCC and took A.A.S. courses as well. He had a total of 67 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 63 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

India is a female Asian, 18-25 years old. She is single. She transferred from L1 of the LCCS in 2009. She took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC, but did not graduate. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate from the LUU. She had a total of 81 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 64 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Juliett is a female Caucasian, 18-25 years old. She is single, works part-time and is pursuing a master's degree. She transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2009 and graduated from the LUU in 2013. She took many A.A.S. courses as well as numerous core curriculum courses from the LCC, but did not graduate. She had a total of 92 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Kilo is a male Other, 26-34 years old. He works full time. He transferred from L4 of the LCCS in 2009. He graduated with an A.A.S. degree from the LCC and took additional core curriculum courses as well. He is in the process of completing his baccalaureate from the LUU. He had a total of 71 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Lima is a female Caucasian, 26-34 years old. She is single and works full time. She transferred from L6 of the LCCS in 2011. She was working on her A.A.S. degree, but did not graduate. Instead, she transferred to the LUU. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate at the LUU and expects to graduate in May 2014. She had a total of 60 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, all 60 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Mike is a male Caucasian, 26-34 years old. He is married, has one child and works full time. He served in the military before beginning his education. He transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2011. He took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC , but did not graduate. He is in the process of completing his baccalaureate at the LUU. He had a total of 61 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 60 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

November is a female Caucasian, 26-34 years old. She is single. She transferred from L6 of the LCCS in 2011. She graduated with an A.A.S. degree from the LCC and completed other core curriculum courses as well. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate at the LUU. She had a total of 73 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred to the baccalaureate program.

Oscar is a female African-American, 18-25 years old. She is single. She transferred from L6 of the LCCS in 2012. She took A.A.S. courses as well as core curriculum courses from the LCC, but did not graduate. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate at the LUU. She had a total of 67 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 54 hours transferred to the baccalaureate.

Papa is a female African-American, 44 or older. She is married with children and works full time. She transferred from L1 of the LCCS in 2012. She graduated with an A.A.S. degree from the LCC and took additional core curriculum courses as well. She is in the process of completing her baccalaureate at the LUU. She had a total of 76 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred.

Quebec is a female Hispanic, 26-34 years old. She is married and works full time. She transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2012 and graduated in 2013. She graduated with

an AA degree and took A.A.S. classes as well. She had in excess of 100 hours from community colleges, 26 of which were from classes taken at the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred.

Romeo is a female Other, 26-34 years old. She is single and works full time. She transferred from L5 of the LCCS in 2011 and graduated in 2013. She graduated with an A.A.S. degree from the LCC and completed other core curriculum courses as well. She had a total of 98 hours from the LCC. Upon transfer to the LUU, 66 hours transferred.

Emerging Themes

In this section I discuss the themes that emerged from the various interviews with my participants. There are four discussion areas into which the themes separate: challenges, support of the transfer process, barriers encountered and transfer. Each area has themes that resulted from transcript coding. The final area, student advice resulted when participants were asked, "What could we do better to make transfer more seamless?" Their advice centers on one theme: communication.

Challenges. When I met with the participants I first wanted to know about the challenges that they experienced, if any, during their transition from community college to university. There are three themes of challenges that emerged during the interviews: initial shock, stress, and participation. For this discussion, challenges are different from barriers. Challenges were obstacles that most of the participants experienced, and while they were perceived as significant, they did not hinder the student from attending classes. Barriers, on the other hand, were those that impacted a student and precluded him/her from getting into classes.

Initial Shock.   The literature about students experiencing transfer shock is clear, explaining that many transfer students experience shock upon entrance to a university. For example, Flaga (2006) Laanan (2007) and Townsend and Wilson (2006a) explain that whether cultural, social, environmental or academic, many students have experienced shock. During the interviews the interviewees explained that many students experience shock with regard to their perception of a new environment. Here is what they had to say:

> I think because at [the LCC] it was like a part-time job. You wouldn't put in as much work. It shocked me how large [the LUU] was. I spent more time on the road to get there. It was very different from [the LCC]. All my classes at the community college were 20-30 people. At the university, it was 400- 500 students! (Alpha)

> I used to be so scared of [the LUU]. It's huge and you have to look for parking. It also takes me over an hour to get there, so I need to leave early to make sure that I get to classes on time. (Bravo).

> I would say it was the classroom environment. It was bigger than what I was used to at [the LCC]. A few of the classes, you have to work in groups on projects and it was a shock to be in a group when you didn't know if the people you were on the team with would pull their weight. (Hotel)

> When I first came here, with 500 students in a class, I didn't know who to talk to. I never really got used to it." (India)

The classes are different. It's like at the community college, we were doing work, but most of it seemed like it was busywork. Here the classes are more focused. You have projects that you have to complete and you have research to do. It wasn't like that at the community college. (Juliett)

I had to use a map to find out where things were located. It's a really big campus and I wasn't used to all of the walking that I had to do. I wound up getting a bike to ride across campus. (Kilo)

The first time that I went to campus, it was so big. I felt like a small fish in a big sea, especially coming from community college. It was an hour and a half drive for me. Also, some of the classes I had people in class who were older than me and I wasn't really used to that. Most of the people in my other [the LCC] classes were more my age. (November)

The huge classes were initially scary. I didn't have any classes like that before when I was at [L6]. (Oscar)

Flaga (2006) discusses that transfer students experience learning, connecting and familiarity with their environment when they begin the transition to university, much in the same way as freshmen experience the transition. While it seemed to the students that it was initially shocking to come to an institution of this size and with class sizes different from what they were used to from community college setting, they were able to adjust and to move on after being on campus for a time, understanding their new environment. Here are some comments on their perspective about adjustment:

Once you get past the stress, it didn't take that long to adjust. It wasn't too difficult. You just need to make sure that you studied what the professor told you to study. It took about a semester to adjust. (Alpha)

It took a while to learn the traffic and to know when I had to leave home to get to campus on time. I would say that after about a month I got used to the drive, then finding a place to park and where my classes were on campus. (Bravo)

I took me probably two or three semesters. I had no plans to become social. It just seemed that after two or three semesters that I began to recognize people and to make some friends. (Hotel)

Sometimes I feel like I haven't adjusted. It's a big campus! Even though my sister came here and I would sometimes come with her, I knew that it was really big place and I would ask her, "How do you know where to go around here?" I guess that if I didn't have to go, I would avoid it. (India)

It took that whole first semester because I was taking so many hours and because of the nature of the classes. It was different in that it was different types of assignment than I was used to. It was more project focused instead of busywork focused. Plus I was working 30 hours a week. Plus we moved. (Juliett)

It wasn't too bad. I had to get to know the campus and where the classes were located. But then, once I had the bike, I could get around pretty good. (Kilo)

I wouldn't say that it took very long. Adjusting for me was about getting to know where I had to go. And once I got to know the people in my classes I really started to feel like I was part of the campus. (November)

I was really glad that the advisors that I spoke with helped me to adjust to the campus. They helped me to get to understand the classes. Now I'm taking six classes and I'm planning to graduate this semester. (Oscar)

I was stressed out about getting to class. It was at 2:00 and I freaked out. I needed to get there on time. I'm a non-traditional student and I take things seriously. I don't know where to park, I don't know the buildings, I don't know where things are. It took me a while to adjust. (Papa)

Stress. During their first semester at the LUU, many of the participants experienced stress that was different from shock, but accompanied it. Laanan (2001) discusses the types of stresses – psychological, environmental, and climate – that transfer students experience with regard to adjusting to new campus. For many of the study participants, the stress that they experienced was a combination of the three.

Examples of stress for many arose from coming to and negotiating the campus. There were new experiences for them. The large physical size of the campus created many new experiences for the transfer student, one of which was parking. Since the campus is so large, student parking is around the periphery of the institution with bus shuttle service moving students from parking lots to classes. While at the community college students enjoyed free parking and large parking lots with plenty of space available. However, when coming to the university, parking is neither free nor plentiful.

Students who are looking for parking often follow someone walking to their car, or check online parking spot applications to find a parking spot. Here is what they had to say concerning the stress of parking:

> It was interesting, getting used to parking. You have to follow people around in the parking lot to see if they were leaving. People become vultures because they are following you to your car. I had to research where to park. (Alpha)

> The only stress was the drive and parking. I lived over twenty miles away when I was in school. Finding a place to park was kind of crazy, too. If you were in the cheap parking, you would stake out a place and wait for someone to show up and hope that they would leave. Then, you'd get really pissed off if somebody else jumped in front of you and got the space. (Foxtrot)

> When I got to campus, I didn't know where to park. I was on the other side of campus and didn't know anything about the campus. I didn't know where the buildings were. Luckily, a guy that I was walking with was in the same situation. We found a student coming out of the parking lot and we asked if this was the right parking lot to park in for our class. She told us that it was and we were able to ask her for directions around campus. We pretty much followed her around campus. (Delta)

> Having classes across campus and the parking situation. That was all a learning experience. I needed to find out where I would have class so that I could park on that side or take the bus so that I was closer. (Hotel)

I've driven around looking for a place to park and have been late for class. Sometimes I would drive around for 15 minutes and longer to find a space. I never had to pay for parking before and now it costs a lot of money. I never really got used to it. Being late to class because of parking. I've gotten a couple of tickets for parking and I've been towed because I didn't know that I couldn't park here because I had an economy badge. I didn't like that. That was a shock. (India)

Parking at [the LCC] was free and usually not a problem. I got there early so I could pretty much park where I wanted. Even on days when I got there after lunch, you could find parking. It might be a little walk, but you could find a parking spot. Here it's so different. First, you have to pay for parking and it's not cheap. Then, when you get in, you're lucky if there is a parking spot that is within reasonable parking distance. Sometimes I wind up having to park in that lot on the other side of campus and even with the bus, it doesn't take you to your car. It drops you off and you have to walk another quarter mile. It's not good when I have classes at night because I don't feel safe over there and there's not much lighting. (Romeo)

Another example of stress for some was negotiating the higher levels of bureaucracy found at the LUU. The bureaucratic red tape that they experienced did not prevent them from being able to take classes, but rather impeded their initial progress to get into classes for the semester. For others, the bureaucracy associated with getting financing to assist with paying for school was a stressor. Here is what many had to say:

I did need financial aid but it was already set up. I did have to go through an audit. I do remember going through that and it was a pain. I couldn't get the necessary documents in time. The way through that is to set up a deferment. That gives you time to get your paperwork in; your classes are paid for and as long as you pay it on-time, then you're OK. It was a hoop to jump through, but when you asked about it, someone had the answer. My financial aid finally went through about 3 weeks into the semester. There was a problem with my Pell grant. They overpaid me by $300. When they realized their mistake, they credited my account. When I went to register for classes, I couldn't because they said that I owed $300. I called to ask if they could take it out of my next award. They said no, it doesn't work that way. Luckily I was able to get things straightened out and pay the money and get my grades. It was nerve-wracking. (Bravo)

At [the LCC], on the financial aid side, the GI Bill side they point you to talk to someone. You had to do that on your own. I pretty much knew how to do it when I got to [the LUU]. (Charlie)

At [the LCC], yes – financial aid. It took over a year to get it. Why it took so long is a mystery to me. It shouldn't have taken that long. Maybe they lost my papers and found them again later. And when I would call in to find out what was taking so long, no one was ever able to give me a clear answer. (Delta)

Financial challenges, yes. At [the LUU], going in I applied for financial aid. The classes here cost more than at the community college. The guy that I spoke with in financial aid told me that I made too much money so there's no need to get a

loan. While it may seem that I make a lot of money, I have 3 kids and bills to pay

and the classes at [the LUU] are more expensive. What I had to do was to take

money out of my 401K plan to pay for classes. My company has educational

benefits, but I max out each semester. I need to set money aside each month so

that I can pay for classes. (Echo)

The financial aspect and having to come up with money to pay for classes. Even

though I went to the veterans affairs office at [L2] and spoke with them about my

GI Bill benefits, no one was able to help me to get the documents through. So, I

wound up having to pay my own way initially and I was having to take out loans

to pay for classes. (Golf)

The financial aid. You apply for it and you go through all of the federal stuff.

But then, [the LUU] would take a while to pay it out and I never understood why

sometimes it would go out the first day and at other times it would take three

weeks. The master promissory note, within the [the LUU] system it would never

tell you about the status. One time they held my disbursement for three weeks.

And there is nothing in the system to tell you where you are in the process. If

there was something to tell you about where you were in the process, maybe I

wouldn't have been so stressed out. (Hotel)

When I went to financial aid they asked about my parents' information and they

needed it to complete my application. I had to drive down there to talk with them

and I live here. Then they needed my citizenship document and I took it down to

them and they scanned it. Then here I am, four months later and they tell me that

when it was scanned it came out blurry and I needed to bring it back in for them

to rescan it. (India)

I was looking around to find out who could help me with my GI Bill stuff. I had a

hard time finding someone that knew what was going on at [the LCC]. I finally

got connected and was able to get my benefits to kick in, but is took a while. For

a while, I thought that I might have to take out a loan or something. At the

university, I just had to find the veterans affairs office. They were good about

helping me out. (Mike)

A final example of stress for the participants was waiting to find out if the classes

that they took at the community college actually transferred. Students experienced stress

related to the length of time it took to evaluate the transferability of their LCC credits.

During this process, students experienced the stress of not knowing the outcome.

Falconetti (2007) discusses the need for enhanced communication so that students are

able to understand transferability of credits. For many participants, the lack of

communication was a challenge and only after receiving information about the classes

that would transfer was the stress relieved. The stress that it caused is discussed by

several of the participants:

I was worried about what was going to transfer. When I met with [my advisor],

he told me how my classes would sync up. I met with him twice before I knew

what would transfer. I was told what would transfer. This is what would fill in.

[My advisor] simplified the information for me. This is what would transfer. I

transferred in all of my A.A.S. classes. That was a relief. (Alpha)

There were misconceptions and I didn't know what questions to ask. It's like being in a confusing class and the professor asking are there any questions, but not knowing what questions to ask to help me to understand. I only had 6 more classes to finish at [the LCC]. Then I spoke with an advisor, they advised me the best that they could, but I was never told to speak with an advisor at [the LUU]. I was never told what classes to take at [the LCC] that could have transferred to [the LUU]. At [the LCC], they had their best interest in mind. They told me what classes that I needed to take to satisfy my 2 year degree to get finished. When I went to meet with an advisor at [the LUU] I wanted to know how my classes were going to transfer. They were able to pull over what I had into my directed area of emphasis. When I talked with [my advisor] I asked about a couple of other classes and he said that they could transfer. I left after speaking with him, crying because of the relief. (Bravo)

I was stressed out because I didn't know how the transfer was going to work. I was wondering if I would need to drive in to [the LUU]. When you're working 50-60 hours per work it's stressful! I was worrying about what was going to transfer. Once I met with [my advisor] he had everything highlighted and laid out. He took the time to look at it. This is what you have. This is where you need to go. He transferred the maximum number of hours. (Charlie)

I was initially worried about what was going to transfer. I didn't know that you could transfer A.A.S. classes. I thought that you had to have an AA or something else, but my tech classes came over. [My advisor] was wonderful. He gave me a degree plan and told me this is what you need to take and this is where your

transfer hours cut off. He was great at advising. He made you feel good about [the LUU]. I felt like I had a personal connection in advising. I transferred in 66 hours. I had about 75 hours overall. (Foxtrot)

I was going overseas to visit my family. I hadn't spoken with anyone about my transfer. I needed to find out what was going to transfer so that I would have a good holiday. I met with [my advisor] and she helped to put everything together for me. I felt better about where I was at [the LUU]. (India)

I kind of had the jitters not knowing what to expect. Until you know what transfers, it doesn't feel like you've made the transition. It's an uncomfortable feeling, not knowing if you're going to be able to transfer in and how things are going to come over. I felt really better after I met with [my advisor] and he told me what was going to transfer. He gave me my degree plan with everything already lined out. (Mike)

I was told that my A.A.S. classes might be able to transfer. Might transfer. Right. I thought that everything from the community college was transferrable. It's what you read and hear about. Go to community college and transfer to a university. You see it on billboards. Then, when you actually talk to someone it's like, well maybe they'll transfer. I can't believe that we're told one thing, then it turns out to be false. Thank goodness, though in my situation, I was able to transfer most of my credits – 66, I think. (November)

Now I'm a little older than the rest of the students around. I didn't know how my A.A.S. was going to transfer. There wasn't anyone that I felt that I could talk to.

I was a little worried before I made my appointment. I didn't speak with anyone except [my advisor]. After sitting down with him and getting my degree plan lined out, I felt like a weight had been lifted. (Papa)

Not knowing what to ask. As stated earlier, Handel (2008, p. 11) points out that students, when seeing an advisor, frequently "do not know what they do not know." For some of the participants this was a topic of discussion – not knowing what questions to ask.

At [the LCC] I didn't realize what to do, so I didn't speak with an advisor about transfer. I didn't know what to ask. I was still growing up and maybe I felt intimidated. (Alpha)

I didn't know what questions to ask. It's like being in a confusing class and the professor asking are there any questions, but not knowing what questions to ask to help me to understand. Where are you supposed to learn what questions to ask? Honestly, for the first several semesters, I just winged it. Maybe if I would have known what to ask I wouldn't have spent my last semester taking those other classes instead of taking logic or finite math or statistics. (Bravo)

Not knowing the questions to ask was a barrier. When I went in to speak with someone at [the LCC] the first time about the GI bill, I didn't know what to ask. When I got to [the LUU] I pretty much knew what to ask. (Charlie)

I met with 10-12 advisors overall. There were handouts. I was clueless. I didn't know what anything was. I was taking one class per semester. I wandered around for 10 years. I didn't know what to ask. I knew that I wanted a

bachelor's. They would just tell me to take the basics, that was what would transfer. (Delta)

When I met with my advisor, I don't feel like I was able to ask all the questions that I wanted. But, I felt that I got all of my questions answered. I was nervous and it felt rushed. Afterwards, I felt that I didn't know what to ask and that I had forgotten to ask some questions. My advisor was nice. (Echo)

Like I said before, it felt like they herded you through advising at [L1]. It was rushed. If you didn't have your questions ready when you met with your advisor, you probably weren't going to get all of the answers. If you forgot something, you would have to start all over again – sign in and wait. (Papa)

We are not Freshmen. The transition for some of the participants was a challenge from the perspective of pride. While they were very proud to be a part of the university academe, they did not want to be treated as underclassmen. Townsend (2008) discusses that transfer students do not want to be treated as freshmen. This was evident from many of the participants, particularly during orientation - *We are not freshmen. We have already experienced college.* Here are a few examples of what was said:

When I went to orientation, I thought that I was in the wrong place. They were talking to the people like no one had ever been in college. I needed someone to show me how to get into the computer system so that I could register for classes, not tell me where I need to go to pay for them. I can do that on my own. (Bravo)

As a single mother, I didn't feel exactly comfortable being around others who were ten or more years younger than me. I don't need to know about dorm rooms

or about all of the different places to go to here on campus. That's for 18 year olds. I'm here to get my education, not to play games. I've got the [mascot] pride. (Delta)

You know, I'm not eighteen. I'm proud to be here, but I don't need to be told about things on campus. I'm here to get my degree. I need someone to help me with my degree plan and to show me how to sign up for classes. I can figure out where to park and to eat. It was the little things at orientation that made me feel like they were just talking to a bunch of freshmen. (Hotel)

I already know where things are located around here. My sister told me a lot about the campus and I would come here to visit. If I could have avoided orientation, I would have. I really didn't like the part about showing you all around. I've been here before and I don't need a tour. Tell me what I need to do to get into classes and to be successful. That's what I need to know. (India)

It was pointless for me to do orientation. That's for people who are going to live on campus. They give you trivia about the university and that's great, but I want to sign up for classes. But I've already been through an orientation since I was going to college and already know how to sign up for classes. We already know what college is like. We've already experienced that shock. But at least I learned the fight song. (Juliett)

A common theme among all of the participants was that they were looking for a baccalaureate program that would accept their credits and one from which they could quickly graduate. All of the participants had been taking community college classes for

some time. Many wanted to complete a baccalaureate for either the job or for personal

satisfaction/accomplishment. Here are a few of their stories:

I needed a baccalaureate for work. I had been at [the company] for nearly ten

years and a friend told me that I should look at completing my degree. He said

that it was probably going to be a requirement for anyone going into management.

I had been at [the LCC] already for a couple of years and I knew that I didn't want

to have to start over. I was looking for a degree that would help me to finish up.

That's when I found the [baccalaureate] degree at [the LUU]. It allowed me to

finish up quickly. (Alpha)

My mom was helping me to look for a baccalaureate degree. She has her

bachelor's and master's and I wanted to get finished so that I could say that I have

my degree, too. Plus, I now have my little girl. I want to be able to go out and to

get her education. I wanted to be a role model for her, like my mom was for me.

(Bravo)

I don't think of myself as an average student. I work 50 to 60 hours per week.

I'm in quality and I'm looking to be in management soon. The only way that I

could do that is with a bachelor's degree and that is why I went into the

[baccalaureate] degree. It takes my community college credits and I've been able

to get classes in the evenings, which is what I need. I'm close now to finishing.

This should be my last semester. (Charlie)

I've been going to school for what feels like a really long time. I wanted to be

finished. I'm working and I need my degree. The [baccalaureate] degree was

what I was looking for. I was able to get my A.A.S. transferred and finish up my other classes. I was able to transfer in 66 hours. I had a bunch of hours from community college. It worked out really well for me. (Foxtrot)

I just want to graduate. My younger sister already has her degree. Most of my friends do, too and they're working on their master's degree. I feel like I'm a little behind all of them. I did some research on my own and it looked like the [baccalaureate] degree would accept the most credits from [the LCC]. I think that my mom and dad will be really happy when I'm finished. (India)

This was the perfect degree for me. It took my credits and I was able to finish fast. I didn't have a job, but my husband wanted me to get out as fast as possible so that I could start looking for one. I now have a job! (Quebec)

I came here looking for a degree that I could use for work. The [baccalaureate] degree was what I found and I was able to apply all of my credits and get out fast. The [baccalaureate] degree was exactly what I had been looking for. When I initially came here, I went over to [another College] and they told me that most of my credits wouldn't transfer and that I would need to take all of their classes. That's why I love the [baccalaureate] program. I could get in and get out, quickly. (Romeo)

Support of the Transfer Process. I was interested in understanding the ways in which the community college supported the transfer process. During the interviews with the participants several questions were asked concerning their experiences. (See Appendix D for the complete list of questions) The participants discussed their

experiences during their time at the community college and several themes emerged: social integration, advising, other advisors, transferring to university and not knowing what to ask.

Social Integration. The feeling of closeness while at the community college was a common theme discussed by participants. Townsend and Wilson (2006b) discuss that students experience social integration issues when moving to a different institution. This was true of many of the participants. There was an uneasiness associated with making the move to the university. The participants felt a sense of "home" when discussing their time at the community college. Here are a few comments:

At [the LCC] everything is laid out for you, like at home. The classes are offered all of the time. I had some of same people in my classes from other classes. The classes are smaller. I knew my instructors; they knew me. It was like family. (Bravo)

At [the LCC] I felt like they were like family. I could come in to talk with my teachers and they knew me. I felt like I could talk to them about almost anything. It was personal. At least that's how it felt to me. I really enjoyed my time at [L2]. (Echo)

I was really close to one instructor. She was my mentor, but she felt like a sister or something. I could ask her about college and she would help to point me in the right direction. She helped me find the [baccalaureate] program. (Foxtrot)

It was pretty close to family at [L6]. It felt very caring and it was convenient.
They helped me with my benefits. I felt like I could come in and speak with my
benefits advisor at any time. She was good. (Golf)

[The LCC] felt like home with smaller classes and I didn't get lost there. I was
used to small classes, 15- 20 people. I liked that the campus was smaller, too.
There were times when really didn't think that I'd go to [the LUU] because it's so
big. (India)

Advising. The experience of speaking with an advisor at the community college
for many of the participants was one of frustration. While reviewing the statements of
students by campus location, the feeling of unimportance resonated. "I felt like a
number," came up several times, as did, "I didn't feel like they cared." Similarly, other
students said:

There wasn't any transfer advising. It was just walk-in. I met with the advisors 3
or 4 times. I was paranoid. They changed systems and I had to be integrated into
the new system, but it didn't integrate correctly. It was terrible. I don't know if it
was their unwillingness to tell me what to take, but it bums me out that I spent my
last semester taking classes that didn't transfer. But I didn't know. I didn't know
what questions to ask. I met with a different person each time and each person
had a different answer. That was about two years ago and I don't remember
everything. It was always someone promising to help me, but not following
through. I remember wondering if I was going to graduate. No one would get
back to me about graduation. I remember waiting and I kept calling to find out.
They don't let you know because it's your last semester. (Bravo)

At [the LCC] they said to come in and sign up and wait. You were just a number.
They just tell you to sign up for classes and tell you to go see the bursar. They
never ask you what it is that you want to do, long term. Plus, you have no one
person to talk with. There were so many different advisors that I spoke with.
You just pull a number and you just walked in and met with someone in an open
bay for 5 minutes. You're not assigned to a specific person. You speak with
multiple people. They were inside-sales order takers. They were there to take the
order, plug it in and send you on your way. Not even customer service people.
There is no sense of direction for the student. (Charlie)

At [the LCC], I can only recall one person that was any help. Then you had to
come in and sign up and wait. Then that person wasn't there the next time that I
went for advising. At [the LCC], it was like they really didn't have any
knowledge. If you found one that was good, you were lucky. I spent one time
just showing the advisor how to see my classes. Over a 10 year period, I met with
at least 10-12 advisors and they were all different, and at the different campuses.
They just provided handouts. (Delta)

When I would need to go see an advisor about classes, it was stand in line, get a
buzzer, wait a few minutes and they call you and you go sit with an advisor. At
[L2] I didn't feel like they knew what they were doing. It seemed like they were
feeling their way along. They could only tell me that this is the admissions
deadline and be sure that you have these prerequisites before signing up for this
class. (Golf)

At [the LCC] you would walk up to the desk and ask to see an advisor and they would give you a buzzer and wait to see an advisor. Sometimes I had a wait time of two hours and they wanted to get you out as soon as possible. They would never have a conversation with you. They would give you an answer and then it felt that they wanted you to leave. They wouldn't ask you questions about what you wanted to do or where you were going. It was just in and out. (India)

A lot of times they [at the LCC] would have to find someone else to get an answer. Some of the advisors that I met with were students. Maybe they were student workers, but they would be advising. I was not very happy about that because I had some of them in my classes and they weren't very smart. So, I'm thinking to myself, "Why would [the LCC] have these people up here advising other students?" It didn't seem to make much sense. (November)

I remember going to set up an appointment and they told me there wasn't any appointments. They told me that I had to sign in on this sheet and wait to see someone. I asked how long that would take and the lady told me that it looked like about a 20 -30 minute wait. I told her that I didn't have time to wait around. I work and I needed to get on to my job. I was really mad because you can't schedule an appointment. (Oscar)

There are student workers that are heavily used at [the LCC]. I think that's where ill advising came about. They shared what they knew, but if they really didn't know it, then the student that they didn't get good advising - they were short-changed. I was working in an office there at [L1] and students would coming in

saying that they were advised to take a particular class and we would tell them,

"No, that's the wrong class." Then they would have to get the dean's approval to

get into the correct class. It seems like they're herding the students through. It's

like they're always busy and they assume that you already know things. (Papa)

I met with the advisors a few times. It wasn't all that good. I had to wait to see

someone every time and it always took about an hour. Sometimes they would tell

me one thing, then when I went back, someone would tell me something different.

It seemed like they didn't have all of the information. (Quebec)

The advising experience of the participants while at the LCC show that support at

one location may be very different than that at another. Here are a few comments from

those who had a positive advising experience:

The ones at [the LCC], I almost knew them at a personal level. The people there

seemed more interested in me. They were so adamant to know what I was going

to do after community college. I felt like they were my family there. I talked

with three advisors and one of the ladies that I would speak with would always

remember me. She would always go through with what I had left to do on my

degree. They were always asking how I was balancing my work and school.

They wanted to make sure that I kept my GPA high. (Echo)

My teacher in visual communication was always very helpful. I think that [my

teacher] at [L5] was very caring. She treated me like I was the most important

person there and she would always ask where I was going after here. I felt like I

was number one. (Foxtrot)

When I needed to meet with a veterans person, the first campus didn't have anyone there who could help me. They were lost. There's a ten year window to use the GI Bill and I only was able to use it for two years. They heard about it, but they couldn't tell me how to use it. The lady that I would talk to said that someone would be there on certain days of the week and she would talk with that person, but no one would get back to me. So I would take the classes that I could pay for out of my pocket. I didn't get any benefits until I spoke with someone at the second campus. There was one person there who was very knowledgeable and she would help me out. I was able to use it for two years and it was done. The advisor there did help me out and told me that I only had a couple of classes left on my associate's. She was really, really helpful. More so than the person at the first campus. Hazelwood is working for me now. (Golf)

Many of the participants reached out to someone outside of the institution for advising and for advice. I found that many relied on family members for advice about where to go and the type of baccalaureate degree to research. Burns (2010) discusses the importance for students to have social networks and family and friends as resources to rely upon for advice when making decisions about their education. Here are several comments:

I didn't like the advisors at [the LCC]. So, my mother was my advisor. I would talk with her about what classes to take and what to do at [the LCC]. Since she had worked there, I felt that she knew what would be best for me. Plus, she knew how things worked there. I would ask her about how to do something and she always had an answer or knew who to ask. (Bravo)

If it wasn't for my sister, I wouldn't have gone to college. My older sister was my advisor. She advised me to get a degree. With her and my teacher as advisors, I felt that I was going to be OK. (Foxtrot)

My sister helped to guide me through. She's already in a master's program and she had gone to community college and to university, so she helped me. I didn't really know what to ask. Sometimes the student doesn't know what they're getting themselves into. (India)

My mom knew what to do since she worked at [the LCC]. She's been there for a while and she know a lot of people in advising. I asked her about classes and registration and she helped me out. If she didn't know the answers, she would find someone who did know and have them speak with me. (Lima)

I spoke with a friend of the family who had gone to [the LCC]. She helped me to figure out where to go and what to do. Actually, it was her mother who helped me out, but I had classes with [student] and she would ask her mother about my problem. It was better than going to an advisor because I could depend on getting a straight answer. (Mike)

My grandfather helped me with deciding what to do. He has a lot of knowledge and he lives with us. After talking to him, I realized what I wanted to do. I told him what I had decided and he helped me to get into [the LCC]. (November)

I talked a lot with my husband about what to do. You might say that he was my advisor. I would ask him about what I needed to take. He had already finished his degree, so he knew what to do and who to talk to. (Quebec)

Transferring to University. When asked specifically about their experience with advisors when asking for information about transferring to the LUU, they consistently reported that communication was lacking. When asked about the information that was provided by the community college about transfer to university, many of the participants responded that there wasn't any or that they were told to go to the university for information. Below are examples of the information that were provided:

[The LCC] always had very long lines. It was an hour long wait. It was kind of like when they found out that I was going to [the LUU] they said to go speak with them. They just gave me a degree plan. They didn't have any information. I guess that they didn't need to give out too much info since the university was a big client. The information that they did provide was generalized. (Alpha)

I assumed that, alright I've got my core. I come over here - my core is done - I take these classes over here and I'm done in two years. But that's not the case. Only if you take five classes per semester. It's all about communication. They really, really don't have any transfer advising. It's more like plug-and-play - take this class and it plugs in here. I didn't feel like they cared. If they cared, they would have told me to talk with a [LUU] advisor before I started to take classes. If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't have cared less about the [LCC] curriculum. I would have taken the classes that I needed for [LUU]. There wasn't

any transfer advising. It was just walk-in. They give you a degree plan, that's it. (Bravo)

When you went to [the LCC] they wanted you to sign up for classes. They weren't interested in transfer advising. You walked in, took a number and met with someone in an open bay for 5 minutes. It was pretty much worthless. They didn't go into detail. It was high level. They told me to take basic courses, something that was generic. They were very little help to me. (Charlie)

I can only recall one person that was any help, then that person wasn't there the next time that I went for advising. There was never any help for choosing a university, they never any help on what to take that would transfer to a university. They always say, "Go to that university." They would say only take general courses like English or history. They would have a generic template of what would transfer. It was like they really didn't have any knowledge. If you found an advisor that was good, you were lucky. Once I knew where I wanted to go, they would plain out tell me to go talk to the [LUU]. There was no advising. They were zero help. If you find someone that was good, they would give you some advice, but they still had no knowledge. Sometimes the older advisors were the worst. They were sometimes very rude and they could care less if they helped you or not. Customer service isn't practiced at [L1]. I didn't feel like I received any help. Maybe if I went to [L5], it would have been better. (Delta)

I wasn't told anything specific. They didn't advise that one college was better than another. It was about figuring out who you are and what your strengths and

weaknesses are and what is it that you want to do. They were knowledgeable. For working with [the LCC] veteran representative, she was a 9 or 10. As for as the information about transferring to [the LUU], I would give them a 6 or 7 only because of some of the false information that was given. I had to go to [the LUU], then back to their office. It was pretty difficult to get through that. Each time that I told them that this is what [the LUU] said, they would go into their system and they would say, "But this is the agreement that we have with them. You should be able to do this." So I would have to come to [the LUU] then go back and tell them that this is who I talked to and they would call up [the LUU] and have a conversation with that person right in front of me and they would have disagreements. It wasn't like they were arguing, but it was like that advisor at [the LUU] didn't have the specific information – the contract that the person at [the LCC] was looking at. In the end, I just needed to enroll. (Golf)

They told me that my degree would transfer and I would be able to take my last two years at [the LUU]. But that's not really the case. As I'm finding out, they weren't very knowledgeable and the information that I was given wasn't very accurate. At that time I just believed them because I didn't know any better. (India)

You can find everything online so I didn't need to talk to anyone. There is so much online so I found it myself. (Juliett)

On the other hand, three participants had good experiences with transfer advising at the community college. Here are their comments:

At [the LCC] they asked me about where was I transferring. They told me about transfer. They gave me contact information. They were really great in telling me about [the LUU]. They told me that there were so many different degrees, how [the LUU] has almost anything that you want. They asked me about what I wanted to do. When I said that was thinking about [another university], she said that [the LUU] offers this, but [another university] might not offer it. They showed me so many different things about [the LUU]. When I went to my advisor she went over things about going to the university like the difficulty of classes and such. They were very pro-[the LUU]. They gave me business cards. They gave me pamphlets. The [LCC] advisor would follow up with me about my advising with [the LUU]. The information given to me from [the LCC], it was dead on accurate. I would describe my advisors as very knowledgeable and very interested, very personal, interested in seeing the student succeed. (Echo)

My teacher, [name], asked me what I was going to do after [the LCC]. I told her that I wanted to go on to get my bachelor's degree. She had information about the [degree] program and she said that she thought that I should look into it. She told me that it was meant for people with A.A.S. degrees, for people with degrees, or people who had hit plateaus. She was really good. She had a brochure or something in her desk and she showed that to me. It had the courses on it from [the LCC] and from [the LUU]. I guess that it was like a transfer paper listing out what would transfer from [the LCC]. I met with her a couple of different times to talk about how the [degree] would help me. She was right. It did help – a lot. I have a good job now. (Foxtrot)

I spoke with my co-op teacher [name] about what degree I could transfer my

credits from community college to the university. I was interested in getting a

degree that my classes would transfer. She told me about the [degree] and she

gave me what she had – a sheet of paper with the classes listed on it. It said that

you could transfer your A.A.S. degree to the [degree]. She helped me. I guess

that she had gotten with [the LUU] advisors to get the information for her

students. She was the only person that I spoke to about transfer. (Papa)

Impressions of University. The theme of the university as being more

professional, especially during advising, resonated throughout the interviews. The

participants viewed the advising as having a more professional demeanor, especially

since they were asked to schedule an appointment. Their stories are told below:

When I would set up an appointment and come in for advising, all they would

need to do is to pull my file. They were set up and very organized, very

professional – not that the community college wasn't professional, but it felt

different. At [the LUU], they always had my file. Everything was very

professional. I remember that I once had an appointment with [my advisor] and

he said to go back to Lone Star and take these course, this how they fit and how

they transfer. It saved me a few bucks. He could have easily told me to take

those courses at [the LUU]. [My advisor] was very accurate with his advising.

(Alpha)

[The LUU] feels more professional, more grown up, feels like they have more

invested in their students because it is so much more professional. It's not a take a

number and take a seat and I love that. The classes were more professional. The

rooms, the desks, everything was more professional. I was excited. When I

wanted to speak with an advisor I would make an appointment. Yes, I had to wait

a few days, but at least I didn't have to wait a few hours. He [the advisor] already

has your file in front of him. It was in and out. Because I feel like when I have

that appointment and when I walk in, they see me at my appointment time, I don't

have to wait. It feels like I am getting my money's worth. I tell everyone to go

see [my advisor]. He knows what transfers. He's knowledgeable, friendly,

understanding. He helped me a lot. He went over what should have been gone

over during orientation. He caught that I wasn't listed as core complete. The

transcript did not list that I was core complete. I came over with 54 credits, I

believe. Unfortunately, some of the classes that I took at [the LCC] didn't

transfer. (Bravo)

At [the LUU] you would make an appointment. At [the LUU] it was more

formal, more businesslike – professional. It was a personal feel, very business

like. When I went in for advising, [my advisor] had everything highlighted and

laid out. He took the time to look at it. This is what you have. This is where you

need to go. He transferred the maximum number of hours. (Charlie)

At [the LUU], it's different. They all know what they're talking about. They're

more professional. They treat you more professionally. It was a step up. I had a

problem with orientation because I didn't understand why we needed to attend.

So I went to [my advisor] and asked for help and she straight out asked me, "Do

you want to attend a Tier One University? " I said yes and she said – then go.

She had a point and it was well taken. After orientation I met with [my advisor]

again. I could see light at the end of the tunnel. I could see what I have taken and
how things would fit in. I was very clearly able to understand what I need left to
take. It was also very exciting to be at a university! You have to work for it –
you have to want it. (Delta)

[My advisor] was wonderful. He gave me a plan and told me this is what you
need to take and this is where your transfer hours cut off. He was great at
advising. I had a personal connection in advising. [My advisor] went over the
basic stuff with me and then I met with another advisor because [my advisor] had
to go to a meeting. He went over all of the courses. My A.A.S. courses came
over without any issues. I had to take a history class and a biology class, actually
it was a nutrition class that I had substituted for biology. I was able to get the
max transferred over. (Foxtrot)

When I would make an appointment, they had my folder and it had everything in
it that I had previously taken. It didn't have on my plan the computer course and
the technical writing class wasn't on there. They said that they would look into
the tech writing class, but I never heard anything. The computer course was
written in by hand and initialed. The advisors in the college were always very
willing to help. [My advisor] worked out my GPA on numerous occasions. He
calculated it up to the last minute so that I could focus on that so I could graduate
magna cum lauda. It helped me to focus that last semester. (Hotel)

In [the LUU College] you can either walk in or you can make an appointment for
advising. I made an appointment and met with [my advisor] and had a really

good experience. He had originally lost my paperwork, but sat right in front of me and wrote it up. I felt so proud that 66 hours transferred! It was really a good experience. I don't think that it could have been any more efficient or professional. Every time that I would come in, he would have my file with everything in it. (Juliett)

I was very impressed with [the LUU] advisors. They were very knowledgeable about the programs. Going to see them, you had to get an appointment. It felt very professional, polished. I think that the longest that I had to wait to see someone was about a week. You would just go online to make the appointment. On the [college] website, you just go to advising and they have it set up so that you can make an appointment online. You can see what is available for any of the advisors and you can set your own appointment. I have it set to where it comes over onto my phone calendar and notifies me. Once I made an appointment with [my advisor], he would always have everything in front of him when I would come in. I liked the fact that I knew exactly when he was going to see me. If I had questions about classes, he would answer them. It was great. In and out without having to wait around with a buzzer. (November)

I just want to get finished. While all participants were focused on completing their baccalaureate degree, it was clear that for many of them, their education appeared to be taking too long to complete. In their view, they had been in school too long, and it was time to complete their degree. Here are some of their stories:

Initially deciding what I wanted to do was a challenge. I took classes at the community college, but wasn't focused. I was 18. My parents told me to decide

what on what I wanted to do. It was now my responsibility. I had a lot of hours

at [the LCC]. I needed to transfer to get my baccalaureate finished. [The LUU]

was here and when I found out about the [degree] program and that it was

available, I knew that this was what I wanted. I was able to finish up quickly.

(Alpha)

I came over core complete. They were able to pull over what I had and then with

my A.A.S. courses, they could pull those classes into my directed area of

emphasis. When I talked with [my advisor] I asked about a couple of the classes

and he said that they could transfer, too. I was looking to get out as soon as

possible. (Bravo)

Everything transferred over. In the [degree] program I was able to use all of my

A.A.S. classes. The maximum hours 66, I think, transferred in. As a single

mother, I just want to get finished. It seems like I have been going to school for a

long time. (Delta)

I have three kids at home. When I met with [my advisor], I told him that I needed

to find a degree that would take my credits from [the LCC]. He told me about the

[degree] program. It sounded like a good degree and it was one that I can work

and go to school at the same time. It was really convenient. I've been going to

school for a while and I just want to get my degree. (Echo)

In my family, it's a huge accomplishment to get a degree. I only had one other

cousin who had a degree. My mom had an associate's degree and that was a huge

accomplishment for her. I had gone to [the LCC] after the military and got

finished, but I wanted more. I came to [the LUU] and spoke with an advisor. He

pointed me to the [degree] program. I told him that I was interested in getting

finished quickly so that I could start graduate school. You know, that was two

years ago and now I'm finishing up my master's. (Golf)

I was thinking about my classes that I had taken at [the LCC]. I spent a lot of

time taking those classes and I wanted to get my bachelor's degree. Eventually, I

want to be a teacher, so I needed to hurry up and finish so that I could get into

graduate school. I got out pretty quick in about a year and a half. (Juliett)

When I was thinking of transferring, I spoke with my advisor at [the LCC]. I told

her what I wanted to do. I was taking A.A.S. courses and core courses and I was

wanting to got my bachelor's degree. I felt like [the LCC] was much like high

school – it was good, but I wanted more. When I went to [the LUU] I was

nervous because I felt that it made me more responsible. Now I need to finish.

My goal is just to get out of here. (Oscar)

My goal was to get finished quickly. I transferred from another community

college out of state to [the LCC]. They accepted my classes and when I was

finished there, I wanted to get my baccalaureate. I found the [degree] program

and spoke with an advisor about it. He put together my degree plan and I finished

up in about a year, going year round and taking eighteen hours per semester. And

I was working, too. (November)

Barriers Encountered. Many students encountered barriers during their first

experiences with the university. While barriers were a nuisance for most, for some the

barriers created unpleasant experiences that either caused delays or prevented them from registering for classes. Two themes emerged during this discussion: financial aid and orientation.

Financial Aid. Some students found that when applying for financial aid there were additional steps that were not included in what they thought should have been a completed process. For these students, applying for financial aid wasn't the barrier. Rather, it was the red tape associated with receiving the aid. Here are some of their comments:

> I did need financial aid and I did have to go through an audit. I do remember going through that and it was a pain. I couldn't get the necessary documents in time. I thought that I wasn't going to be able to get into my classes. I wouldn't have if I wouldn't have asked what to do. The way through that is to set up a deferment. They don't tell you about the deferment up front. I guess that they want you pay with a credit card or something. With a deferment, that gives you time to get your paperwork in for the audit. Your classes are paid for and as long as you pay it on-time, then you're OK. It was a hoop to jump through, but when you asked about it, they had the answer. My financial aid finally went through about 3 weeks into the semester. Then, there was a problem with my Pell grant. They overpaid me by $300. When they realized their mistake, they credited my account. When I went to register for classes, I couldn't because they said that I owed $300. I called to ask if they could take it out of my next award. They said no, it doesn't work that way. Luckily I was able to get things straightened out and pay the money and get my grades. (Bravo)

About fours ago after taking classes at [the LCC], I found out that if I took two classes per semester that I would be eligible for financial aid. That's the first time that I applied for it. For some reason, it took over a year to get financial aid. I had to go to the head lady in the department to speak with her about my situation. She was very sweet. She helped me to get my financial aid for the prior three semesters. (Delta)

At [the LUU], going in I applied for financial aid. The guy that I spoke with in financial aid told me that I made too much money so there's no need to get a loan. While it may seem that I make a lot of money, I have 3 kids and bills to pay and the classes at [the LUU] are more expensive. What I had to do was to take money out of my 401K plan to pay for classes. My company has educational benefits, but I max out each semester. I need to set money aside each month so that I can pay for classes. (Echo)

The financial aid was a problem. You apply for it and you go through all of the federal stuff. But then, [the LUU] would take a while to pay it out and I never understood why sometimes it would go out the first day and at other times it would take three weeks. And then, there's the master promissory note. There is nothing within the [the [LUU] system it would tell you about the status. One time they held my disbursement for three weeks. But there is nothing in the system to tell you where you were. (Hotel)

When I went to financial aid they asked about my parent's information and they needed it to complete my application. I had to drive down there to talk with them

and I live here. Then they needed my citizenship document and I took it down to

them and they scanned it. Then here I am four months later and they tell me that

when it was scanned it came out blurry and I needed to bring it back in for them

to rescan it. Why couldn't she have told me that when she originally scanned it.

And because of that, I didn't get financial aid that semester. Initially, that was

very hard. They need to make sure that the student isn't rushed. (India)

Orientation. There was a distinct theme of dissatisfaction by participants over the

LUU's insistence that every student, whether freshman or transfer, attending the

institution must attend orientation. Orientation is mandatory for all students at the LUU

and a hold is placed on every new undergraduate student's account until that person has

attended on his/her scheduled orientation session. Juliett was most vocal:

Orientation, orientation, orientation. The fact that it exists is preposterous. It was

pointless for me to do orientation. That's for people who are going to live on

campus. They give you trivia about the university and that's great, but I want to

sign up for classes. But I've already been through an orientation since I was

going to college and already know how to sign up for classes. I needed to sign up

for classes and it was frustrating watching, for three months before I could sign up

for classes because of orientation, to see those classes getting full and not being

able to sign up or do anything about it. I think that transfer orientation should be

different from freshman orientation because we've already had to sign up for

classes online. We already know what college is like. We've already

experienced that shock. Orientation wasn't until two weeks before classes started.

If they're going to have it, it needs to be early. I was stressed because I couldn't

sign up for classes. I went through orientation for the summer, but I couldn't sign

up for classes. And when I could, I could only sign up for two classes because

orientation was so late and the classes were already filled. So, I got bumped out

of classes that first semester. I went to the university orientation in the morning,

then the college after lunch. The classroom was full and people were standing.

There were people trickling in all of the time. It was stressful for everyone.

(Juliett)

Similarly, here are additional quotes from students pertaining to orientation:

The pointless orientation. I was really hoping that transfer orientation would have

helped, but it didn't because we didn't have time, I felt gypped. I drove all the

way out here and I didn't meet with anyone. Maybe if I would have, I wouldn't

have to take 5 classes a semester like I am now. Because of the construction, we

were just going around and around and no one would help me to find my car. I

with Van once. He went over what should have been gone over during

orientation. He caught that I wasn't listed as core complete. The transcript did

not list that I was core complete. (Bravo)

I was going to be out of town when they scheduled my orientation and they would

not work with me to reschedule. I didn't know what it would be like. I was upset

that I couldn't reschedule [the LUU] orientation. The person that I spoke with

[name], told me that I needed to come in for orientation or that I couldn't sign up

for classes. I was nervous because I was going back to work full time and it was

university. (Delta)

There was a mandatory orientation into the [degree] program. I felt like just a number because there were so many people there. It was large enough of a session that it filled up two rooms. There were maybe 50-60 people there. I may have gotten 2 or 3 minutes with [my advisor] to answer questions. If I didn't go, then I wouldn't have been able to register for classes. There needs to be more staff there to answer questions. (Hotel)

In 2009 I was overseas visiting my family and had to fly back early just to attend orientation. It was a mandatory orientation or I couldn't take classes. So I had to fly back early. It was a mess. I had to attend that. I came back the night before and I was jet-lagged. It was stressful having to change tickets to get back early. I wasn't prepared for that. (India)

Orientation was a pain. I think that they just wanted us there so we would have to pay the fee. They have you over a barrel because you can't sign up for classes or anything until they remove those holds on your record. If you don't go, then you're stuck having to find another day for orientation. A friend of mine got hung up like that. She didn't get to register for classes because she missed the orientation session. They just show you how to sign up for classes. That and you get a tour of the university. I come here once or twice a week. Why do I need a tour? (Lima)

I work full time. They wanted me to come in for orientation and I asked if there was one on Saturday. They told me, no, that orientation was only during the week. For me to come to orientation, I have to take a day off from work. I don't

think that that's right to force people to come to this orientation. I need to register

for classes, not get a tour of the campus and know where to go get something to

eat. (Papa)

I came to orientation because I had to, not because I wanted to. There are holds

on your account and until you go to the mandatory orientation and show proof of

bacterial meningitis vaccination, those holds prevent you from signing up for

classes. I went because I had to get the hold off my account. (Quebec)

Transfer. The final area of discussion is transfer. This is where I asked students

specifically about one area – articulation. I was interested to know if any advisor at the

LCC or at the LUU had broached the subject with them of articulation or agreements

between the community college and the university.

Articulation. The participants' stories concerning information provided about

articulation at the LCC and the LUU are nearly identical: It is nonexistent. When asked

about the information provided by advisors from each institution concerning articulation,

most responded by asking for a definition of the word. Here are comments from the

participants:

No one said anything to me about articulation. Articulation wasn't discussed.

They may have glazed over the information. They just gave me a degree plan. I

was told what would transfer. This is what would fill in. [My advisor] simplified

the information for me. This is what would transfer. (Alpha)

If they did, they didn't call it articulation. No one spoke with me about a transfer

agreement. The credits from [the LCC] are more accepted at [the LUU]. I don't

recall the term articulation, but I understand that classes transfer. [My advisor] would answer my questions about transfer classes. When I talked with [my advisor], he helped to move classes around so that I could use some here and over here. He talked about transfer, but not articulation. It helped the classes to fit. Four classes from [the LCC] transferred over into the directed area. That's a whole semester worth of work! (Bravo)

There wasn't anything about articulation from [the LCC]. I can't recall from [the LUU]. [My advisor] talked about an agreement, then he went into transfer. He did say an agreement, but I don't remember much more. (Charlie)

No one specifically spoke to me about an articulation agreement with the institution. But the one with the State of Texas, yes, I was aware of that one. They talked about transfer, what classes transferred, but nothing about articulation. (Delta)

I don't remember anything about articulation. They may have said something about transfer. I spoke with some of the people at [the LUU] and they talked to me about how [degree] would transfer. (Echo)

With [the LCC], nope. You guys, maybe. My advisor at [the LCC] mentioned that there was a block that they could transfer in 66 hours so she did make me aware of that. I don't think that she said articulation. She just said that it could transfer in 66 hours. (Foxtrot)

There was nothing about articulation, no. I know the term, but not in this context. Transfer, absolutely. My advisors would talk about transfer. They used transfer a lot. (Golf)

I had no idea what articulation was before coming to [the LUU] and talking with [advisor]. That's when I learned about articulation. No one spoke to me about transfer that I can remember. But, I wasn't too talkative and never asked, either. (Hotel)

No one that can I remember at [the LCC] or at [the LUU] ever spoke to me about articulation. It wasn't something that ever came up. They talked about transfer. When I asked about transfer, [the LCC] said that I was done. They didn't say anything else about transfer. (India)

No one ever spoke with me about articulation. Nothing that I can remember. I know about the Texas Common Core, but I don't remember anyone ever saying anything to me about articulation. They may have said something about transfer, but I really don't remember. I looked things up online to see what would transfer before coming in to talk with an advisor. I knew what I needed to take. (Juliett)

Articulation? I don't know that anyone ever talked about that. I know what articulation means, but maybe not in this sense. I don't remember anything about articulation ever coming up when I met with an advisor. (Kilo)

Student Advice. At the end of the interviews I asked students to take a moment to think about ideas for making transfers more seamless. One theme emerged: the need

for better communication throughout the entire transfer process. Here are their comments:

> As far as transfer, just to reiterate how important it is to talk with an advisor at the institution. Get your classes set up ahead of time. Know what your end goal is, speak with advisors from both institutions so that you can move forward with a plan. (Bravo)

> The seamless transition would be to get that connectivity between the two institutions. There isn't any marketing, it's vague. Where is the bridge between the two? You need to have recruiters working on the campuses talking to people. Having trained advisors. That's the biggest thing. (Charlie)

> Get [the LCC] to work with [the LUU]. At least who to talk to at [the LUU]. Get information to [the LCC] about what students need to do to get to [the LUU]. No one told me anything about how to go about transfer and the process. I know that they have transfer night, but it's not them – it's from the university. (Delta)

> I am thinking as a mother, not as a student. Education is a big thing for me. My son is getting ready to go to college in the fall. To see those students who drop out, we should stress the importance to stay in school. Students finish high school and think that its done. Have university students go to the community college to show the success rate. Also, having more people available for people coming in for the first time coming to campus. Get existing students to talk to potential students. (Echo)

If you could hold something about transfer at the community college. There needs to be more communication about the degrees. Have an advisor there who knows something about the degrees. It would be good to have students from the university go into the classroom to promote the degree. (Foxtrot)

The advisors here should have an in-service with the community college about what their students are taking and what questions their students are asking so that the advisors can either tell them that this is how it works. If there can be someone who is a point of contact at the university for the community college, that could make a difference. I just wish that there would have been someone there to help us through when I was there – to have someone to talk to who knows transfer. (Golf)

I would recommend that for orientation, more staff and faculty attend to answer student questions. I think that would be beneficial. (Hotel)

Advisors need to improve the knowledge that they have. Look at it from the student's perspective. They are our first point of contact and they need to be better at it. Understand how to transfer the courses and transfer equivalencies - some kind of a guide maybe for the different community colleges. (India)

 I think having student workers to help with students to sign up. You don't need an advisor to do that. That could take some of the pressure off of the advisors and it could provide an alternative to orientation. Maybe have grad students to help as well. Have people available to answer question and have things accessible online. I found answers to my questions just by looking around. Maybe have a transfer

student portal – a place where you can readily find information. Make it easy for those people who already know what they are doing. Don't bog people down to talk to people when they don't need to. Students can help other students. (Juliett)

If I could say anything that would help transfer it would be to get better information out to students. Maybe have students talk to students, from university to community college. Have us talk to them about the degree, what to expect. Something like that might help other students to decide if this major is for them. (Lima)

I would like to have been able to talk to someone about the program ahead of time. Not that I don't like it, but I think that if you can ask questions about what choices you might have before coming the university, that might help future students to make up their minds about a major. (Oscar)

Schedule transfer sessions at the community college. Have students who are in the programs to be there to speak with potential transfer students. I know that it works because we've done it. (November)

Summary

The findings in this chapter provide a better understanding of A.A.S. degree students' challenges and experiences of the transfer period from community college to a four-year research-intensive institution of higher education. The interviews were semi-structured, designed to elicit spontaneous reaction from each person. The themes that emerged were developed from participant experiences concerning their transfer to a four-year research-intensive university as described to me during their interview. Many of the

interviews contained similar information about their experiences as they transferred from community college to university.

The participants were from various backgrounds, age groups and ethnicity. Some were single while others were married with children. Most worked full time while going to school. Fourteen had more than 66 hours at the community college when transferring to the university. The maximum number of hours one student had taken at community college prior to transfer was 100 hours. Ten were allowed to transfer to the university with the maximum hours allowed by the institution, 66 hours. The rest transferred in between 54 – 64 hours. Some could not remember if they had graduated from the community college and some could not remember if they had completed an associate of applied science, associate of arts, or associate of science degree.

What is clear is that they did have distinct memories of transferring from community college to university. Some had a positive experience while others had a negative experience. Their stories are compelling and do provide a tapestry of the experiences of students who have made the transition from community college to university. They provide their insights into the themes of challenges, support of the transfer process, barriers encountered and transfer. Their ideas of what would help in making transfer more seamless centered on communication – the need to have better trained advisors to better communicate with students and the need to have student to student interaction, where students from the university interact with students from the community college to field questions about transfer, the major, and the institution.

Chapter V

Data Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction and Overview

Access to a better life for many people has been through education – high school, community college and university. To those striving for upward mobility for themselves and their families, higher education has been a means to success (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). According to Tenbergen, (2010) "In the new global economy, prosperity for nations and states requires significantly more workers with higher levels of knowledge and skills" (p. 39). Clearly, this is in alignment with Georgetown University's assertion that future jobs will demand employees with post-secondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010a). A path for those workers to attain "higher levels of knowledge and skills" can be through one of many A.A.S. degrees offered by community colleges across the country and to then transfer to a four-year university. While studies of transfer of traditional associate degrees, associate of arts and associate of science, have been conducted over the years, for example by, Kalogrides (2008), Roksa and Keith (2008), and Townsend (1995) among others, studies of transfer for those students with an associate of applied science degree seeking to transfer to a four-year institution have not been fully explored.

The purpose of this study is to focus on transfer of A.A.S. students and the challenges that they face as they endeavor to transfer to a research university to earn a baccalaureate degree in a technology-related area at a four-year institution. By asking the question, "*What are the experiences and perceptions of A.A.S. degreed community college students transferring to an articulated baccalaureate program at a four-year*

research-intensive institution?" I was able to understand and gain insight into the student experience and views of transfer from their perspective. By better understanding the student experience of transfer and how students construct the views of transfer to a four-year institution we gain an insight into their world as they see it from their perspective. According to Laanon (2001), "The community college student who transfers to the four-year institution faces new psychological, academic, and environmental challenges" (p. 5). Indeed, the experiences as told by students who have made the transition from community college to a four-year institution can help to illuminate the evolution of events that they have personally encountered. While a quantitative approach for data asks for information that can be answered with numbers, a qualitative approach asks how and why (Friese, 2002). Each participant's story provides useful information for researchers who wish to further examine transfer of A.A.S. students to four-year institutions. As I began each interview with my participants, I stressed to them that their information is *a* story, not *the* story and that their experience is but one of many that is being captured in this moment in time.

All of the participants of the study attended a community college and either completed the A.A.S. degree or took A.A.S. classes and transferred to the university. The review of literature begins by reporting on the origins of community colleges and the debate that ensued among administrators concerning the type of education that was being provided at the junior institutions. The review continues with the discussion of the origins of transfer to provide the reader with an understanding that early administrators were concerned about course offerings at community colleges and that students would eventually want to receive credit for the courses taken at the junior institution. We then

see that junior colleges were offering not only academic courses to its students, but began offering various vocational subjects such as architecture, civil, electrical and mechanical engineering, journalism and others – subjects that are now part of academe. Qualitative and quantitative studies on transfer, which provide recent information that has been presented on the subject, are then discussed.

The literature review then moves to introduce the reader to the A.A.S. degree with language from three separate institutions in three different states to illustrate the ambiguity, confusion and misunderstanding of the degree that is rooted in vocational education. While this may be historically accurate, it is not an accurate definition of the modern-day A.A.S. degree. Surely, if we can't come to a common definition of the A.A.S. degree, how can we expect students to understand it?

A history of vocational and workforce education is provided to show the connection between vocational/occupational/workforce education. I present a discussion of oversight of workforce education and transfer along with information to support that the transferability of A.A.S degrees is making progress among institutions and, therefore, that students are not penalized for their A.A.S. degree. The discussion then shifts to illustrate support for vocational education by the government. A robust review of the most prominent federal legislation over the last 90 years to sustain vocational education is presented to the reader to show the respect that legislators have for skilled labor and that vocational and academic courses would eventually need to be integrated. Evidence of vocational students intending to transfer to four-year institutions is then provided, which helps the reader to understand that the issue of transfer, which had been on the minds of administrators from the early 1900's, is still in flux with administrators today.

A presentation about articulation, the primary mechanism used to ease student transfer between institutions, is given. The history of articulation agreements dating back to the 1920's provides a look at the early attempts by administrators to help students to transition and also serves to enlighten the reader on the challenges faced by students and administrations. The discussion of articulation continues with information about state articulation agreements that have helped to ease transfer by creating policies that require commonality between junior and senior institutions with regard to general education "core" courses. However, the discussions also show that states are still struggling to establish enforcement of transfer and articulation policies. Articulation at the institutional level is presented to the reader to illustrate that while states may mandate certain aspects of policy, the individual institutions that must then negotiate with each other to bring the agreement to execution. It is argued that communication between institutions is an important factor that must be understood to develop a successful articulation agreement.

The literature review concludes with information about cultural differences between community colleges and universities and explains that transfer students, while familiar with their previous environment, can experience "shock" upon arrival at the university. Furthermore, students often find themselves in classes that are much larger than they have previously experienced, are frustrated by anonymity at the university, have a lower GPA than before and sometimes struggle to integrate into their new environment. This information is provided to the reader to offer a glimpse into some of the challenges that transfer students often experience and to provide evidence of factors that affect adjustment for students.

While information exists about transfer students in general, there is little information about A.A.S. transfer students and their journey through the transfer conduit. There is a great amount of information about vocational/technical/occupational education and the support that it has had over the decades, but little information exists about how students who have taken this path have been affected when attempting to transfer to a four-year institution. Information exists about articulation agreements in general, but there is little, if any, information on articulation agreements pertaining to A.A.S. degrees and students who are in those degree programs. Finally, there is ample information about challenges that transfer students in general experience while transitioning to a four-year institution, but little information about the experiences of A.A.S. transfer students. Therefore, the literature that has been reviewed provides evidence that additional research on A.A.S. student transfer and their experiences is necessary.

The area of A.A.S. student transfer is fertile ground for research. While quantitative data may exist about how many have transferred, where they have transferred, how long it took to graduate and other information, the qualitative data to explore individual and social human problems (Creswell, 2009) has been lacking. The idea to use a qualitative methodology to explore the experiences of A.A.S. transfer students came from my associations with community colleges and the students who transfer. The way in which students construct their world has fascinated me and I was interested to see how they constructed their realities. Since there is no one perception that is 'right' or more 'real' than another (Glesne, 2006) it became evident to me that a qualitative approach would be the best for this study. Taping the interviews provided for the opportunity to review and re-review the information for a complete understanding

from those 'unimpeachable data sources' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The analysis of the

data consisted of hours of review of the transcripts, field notes and taped interviews and

utilizing the "interactive, cyclical process analysis" activity Miles and Huberman (1994)

discuss as "data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (p. 11 - 12).

Using this process enabled me to think about the information presented not as bits and

pieces, but as robust data that presented patterns that emerged as themes.

The students' stories are their representation of the events that occurred to them

during their transition from community college to university, as told to me and are retold

in their voice. I begin by introducing the participants and describing their characteristics.

This is an important piece to bring to the reader as it serves to present a record of each

participant, albeit a small record, but nonetheless important to see that each person is

unique and is different from one another. The diversity of the population of participants

is representative of the diversity that exists in both institutions in the study: African-

American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic and Other. The information gleaned from each is

representative of the "social realities" (Ogbu, 1995, p. 5) that they, collectively,

understand. While they come from different cultures, they have very similar experiences,

which is evident in their discussions. Their transition from community college to

university strikes similar chords. They have a shared sense of experiences and feelings

(Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman, 1995).

Interpretation of Information

Through qualitative research I explore student perspectives on transition so that

we, academe, may have a better understanding of their experiences. As discussed by

Diefenbach (2008) "Qualitative research is *explorative*" (p. 877). To gain an

understanding of their experiences, this study used five sub-questions to help to discover their perceptions: 1) What are the challenges confronted by A.A.S. transfer students; 2) In what ways do community colleges support the transfer process; 3) In what ways does the receiving university support the transfer process; 4) What institutional barriers have been encountered by transfer students; 5) In what ways has articulation guided A.A.S. transfer students? These questions guided me through the interview process, and I use the material the participants provided to answer those questions.

What are the challenges confronted by A.A.S. transfer students? Before transferring to the university, the students in the study had only attended the community college. For them, that was their point of reference. At the community college, there was a feeling of closeness, family community, small and convenient that echoed in their conversations. The theme of initial shock upon transfer to the university was something that many experienced. Recall that Alpha said, "It shocked me how large [the LUU] was. I spent more time on the road to get there." The perception of largeness of the new environment was prevalent in the discussions. The implication for administrators at institutions that are physically large is that there needs to be some type of description for students who have never been on the campus to understand. In this age of new technology, perhaps providing an overlay of the campus map showing a community college campus for comparison. Perhaps having several different overlays available for students to choose from, so that might make them feel comfortable with the physical size of the institution before making the transition. Kilo's comment about the campus size and that he wound up getting a bike just to get across campus was enlightening. I see students riding bicycles around campus, but have rarely thought about the size of the

campus as a challenge. Perhaps November's comment best summed up the feelings for

the participants: "I felt like a small fish in a big sea, especially coming from community

college."

For many of the participants there was a period of time that was required to

become adjusted to their new environment. Adjustment was the second theme that

emerged during the interviews. For some, the time to adjust was relatively short –

several weeks – and in others' experience, several semesters. In the case of India, she

said, "Sometimes I feel like I haven't adjusted." It takes time to adjust to the new

surroundings, the new environment. The participants came from a community college

environment where, as I previously discussed, they felt a sense of closeness, family and

smallness. Now at the university, they are faced with a new reality, new environment,

new classes, new friends. Recall the description from Hotel: "It took me probably two or

three semesters. I had no plans to become social. It just seemed that after two or three

semesters that I began to recognize people and to make some friends." His perspective

was that the university was new to him and he was going to do what he could just to get

by and to integrate eventually. To help new transfer students to adjust to their new

environment in a shorter amount of time, it may be useful to institute a volunteer transfer

student organization where students who are seniors in their program may partner with a

new transfer student to acquaint him/her with the new surroundings. Since the

participants in this study were working students, that is, working and attending school

part/full time, it may help to have a volunteer with a similar background pair with the

new student. As November commented, "Adjusting for me was about getting to know

where I had to go. And once I got to know the people in my classes I really started to feel like I was part of the campus."

All of the participants experienced stress in one form or another during their transition. There were three sub-themes, which emerged from the conversations: parking, bureaucracy and classes that transfer. The participants were already feeling stress about their new environment, especially about parking. Recall that Papa said, "I was stressed out about getting to class. It was at 2:00 and I freaked out. I needed to get there on time. I'm a non-traditional student and I take things seriously. I don't know where to park, I don't know the buildings, I don't know where things are." She, like the other participants, wanted to do well at her new institution and what better way to get started but to get to the campus early so that she would be on time for class. However, at this university, parking is limited. It becomes a shock for many students that parking can be a daily challenge. As Alpha stated, "You have to follow people around in the parking lot to see if they were leaving" and Foxtrot stated, "If you were in the cheap parking, you would stake out a place and wait for someone to show up and hope that they would leave." The pressure to find a parking spot becomes more heightened as time to class grows shorter. As India noted, "Being late to class because of parking. I've gotten a couple of tickets for parking and I've been towed because I didn't know that I couldn't park here because I had an economy badge." Many of us can relate to the stress of finding a parking space when going to the airport to catch a flight. As departure time nears, and we have not found a parking space, the more stress we experience. To mitigate some of the stress, which students experience with parking, administrators could provide information about campus parking on their website which would show which lots

experience the most traffic and the times at which they are most heavily used. Too, with today's technology, developing an "app" for the smart phone to show real-time parking information should not be that difficult. To develop an application of this nature could be a project for a class in many of the science, technology or engineering programs on campuses.

The stress of dealing with various levels of bureaucracy concerning services was the second sub-theme of stress which was discussed. This was experienced at both institutions. Recall Echo's experience: "The classes here cost more than at the community college. The guy that I spoke with in financial aid told me that I made too much money so there's no need to get a loan. While it may seem that I make a lot of money, I have 3 kids and bills to pay and the classes at [the LUU] are more expensive." Her story was not unique. Golf, who is a military veteran experienced a similar situation at his first community college. He said, "Even though I went to the veterans affairs office at [L2] and spoke with them about my GI Bill benefits, no one was able to help me to get the documents through." India had a similar experience, "Then they needed my citizenship document and I took it down to them and they scanned it. Then here I am, four months later and they tell me that when it was scanned it came out blurry and I needed to bring it back in for them to rescan it." Their experience with a bureaucracy within the institution is one that they will carry for many years to come. As administrators, we want our students to have a good memory of their time at our institution. The reputation of academia suffers every time its bureaucracy fails to provide excellent customer service. What we can do to lessen the stress of bureaucracy for our students is to provide a high level of service for all students and make every attempt to

assure that students are accommodated. This is especially true in the area of financial aid. Indeed, students who apply for financial aid do so out of necessity, not convenience. They do not need to be lectured to by staff members about receiving aid, as many students, young and not so young, feel embarrassed that they must seek assistance in order to attend an institution. Excellent customer service and professional, positive communications would promote higher satisfaction and less stress among all students, but especially among transfer students.

The final sub-theme of stress involved the worry and apprehension experienced while waiting to find out what classes actually transfer. The participants discussed that there was a lack of communication between the institutions about the actual A.A.S. classes that would transfer. Many of them had an idea or actually knew that their core courses, English, history, political science and others would transfer, but there was little information about their applied science classes. How were those to transfer? Would they transfer? How many additional or leveling classes would they need to take to complete their baccalaureate? This was worrisome for most of the participants, and it was very stressful. Recall Alpha's discussion: "I was worried about what was going to transfer. When I met with [my advisor], he told me how my classes would sync up. I met with him twice before I knew what would transfer. I was told what would transfer. This is what would fill in. [My advisor] simplified the information for me. This is what would transfer. I transferred in all of my A.A.S. classes. That was a relief." His comments were echoed by Charlie: "I was worrying about what was going to transfer." and by Foxtrot, "I was initially worried about what was going to transfer. I didn't know that you could transfer A.A.S. classes." Virtually every participant had a similar experience to

share about their worry of classes taken at the community college and of how and if they would transfer, especially their A.A.S. classes. A choice for administrators is to work more closely with its transfer institutions to develop information that may be given to potential transfer students so that they may know, in advance, what will transfer or to develop a guide that will instruct students about transfer classes. The goal should be for advisors at the LCC to understand the long-range goals of the student and whether those goals include completion of a higher level degree at an LUU. If their goals include higher level studies, then selection of classes at the community college should be based on the likelihood of future transfer. Likewise, advisors at the LUU should aim for increased knowledge of individual student goals. Working together, the two systems can smooth the way for maximizing student success and for minimizing student stress and loss of credits.

New technologies may help to ease student stress over transferability of classes. Smart phone apps may be one way in which that information could be communicated. Institutions could design an app that students may use to be able to track classes that are transferrable. Using an app does not preclude setting an appointment with an advisor to get information from a live person, but it does present the student with an option to get immediate information. With workforce classes, community colleges and universities will need to work together to develop information. However, that may take more time since there are certain rules and regulations from accrediting bodies which must be taken into account. I will discuss this further in my recommendations and in the conclusion.

Students may be overwhelmed with different ideas about continuing their education and as a consequence do not have a basis of reference for questions to ask. The

theme of not knowing what to ask was something that some of the participants had experienced. This became apparent for those who did not have a personal connection with someone else in a similar situation such as a coworker, friend or family member. The feeling of awkwardness presented itself while discussing their particular situation. Bravo summed up the views with, "It's like being in a confusing class and the professor asking are there any questions, but not knowing what questions to ask to help me to understand. Where are you supposed to learn what questions to ask?" Because the institution needs to remember that transfer students are new to the campus, the administration needs to provide better communication between the student by offering readily accessible information and better communication pathways. Hopefully, these improvements will help students feel more comfortable and knowledgeable about their new environment.

For the transfer students in this study there was a sense of pride at moving to their new environment – the university. This was clearly a step up for them. For these students, who were working and who had already experienced college, there was a sense that they were not new to the scholastic endeavor; rather they were new to the institution, the environment. As such, they did not want to go through an orientation that was for many, pointless. Even though the orientation that they attended was to be for transfer students, many were not happy having to take a day off work just to come to campus to become oriented. Bravo's statement, "When I went to orientation, I thought that I was in the wrong place. They were talking to the people like no one had ever been in college" was indicative of the perceptions of the group. Although the idea that all students need to complete an orientation of some sort is a good idea; however, I believe that it would be

best to tailor that orientation to the group, the audience. Who are these people? What are their needs? What do they need to know? These are fundamental questions that need to be answered at any institution. Also, for this group, since they were working individuals, it was an inconvenience to have them to take a vacation day off work just to attend orientation. Attending orientation is not the issue. The issue is that working students must take a day off work. To mitigate this, the institution could have orientation in the evenings and on the weekends. This is something that I have heard from many other students across campus and it makes sense and is easily accomplished.

In what ways does the community college support the transfer process? Unlike the perception of being lost in a rather large sea at the university, the participants expressed the feeling of closeness while at the community college. There was a homelike atmosphere that was evident in the discussions about their experience at the community college. Several of the participants pointed out that it was like family. While they had the feeling of closeness with their teachers, the same could not be said about the perception of their advisors for most of the participants. This was true of the group of participants who attended the L1 location of the community college. Theirs was not a good experience. While developing my research and questions to ask, I did not think about the potential differences among the different community college campuses. It stood out that the largest of the campuses had advisors who were not well versed in transfer and that waiting to see an advisor was frustrating and not something that many wanted to do. Their descriptions of the wait to see an advisor illustrated their dissatisfaction with the service at this location. "You were just a number" resonated throughout the narratives. Too, the participants who attended L1 spoke about the use of

student workers, some in the role as an advisor. November and Papa discussed their

encounter with students who were advising and neither was happy with the outcome.

The L1 location has the largest student body and is less than 10 years old.

In contrast, students who attended the two oldest locations, L4 and L5, reported a

very different experience with advisors at those campuses. Their perceptions of the

advisors at these location were exactly opposite of those who had attended the L1

locations. While those students who attended either L4 or L5 reported having to wait to

see an advisor, no one reported any displeasure with their experience during the advising

session. Recall that Echo said, "The ones at [the LCC], I almost knew them at a personal

level. The people there seemed more interested in me. They were so adamant to know

what I was going to do after community college. I felt like they were my family there. I

talked with three advisors and one of the ladies that I would speak with would always

remember me." Her experience with the advisors was very positive. They helped her to

make her way through by remembering who she was and by asking where she was going

with her education. It appears that the two oldest campuses understood their audience

and had a good staff of advisors who had been on the job for some time, were

knowledgeable of the programs and of transfer and were well liked by the students.

Other institutions can take note of this when considering advisors.

Outside advisors were also a source of advising and of advice for some of the

participants. The social network of friends and family were resources that the

participants relied upon. Bravo and Lima relied upon their mothers for advice since they

had worked at or for a community college. Foxtrot and India had support from sisters

who had experience at the community college and had transferred. November relied

upon her grandfather and Quebec spoke with her husband. The resources that they had available provided useful information and direction for each participant, along with the information (good or bad) at the community college.

During the interviews I asked the participants about transfer information provided by the community college and the finding was similar to that of advisement. The L1 location provided little in the way communicating transfer information, while L4 and L5 provided the most information and provided a feeling of support. Overall, the students were split in their perception of how much support the community college provided with regard to transfer. Those attending the L1 campus reported transfer support to be lacking and those attending L4 and L5 reported receiving ample information from the advisors.

In what ways does the university support the transfer process? Upon transferring to the university, all participants reported a perception of more value, of more professionalism and of more esteem. To them moving to a university represented a positive step up in the level of education, in the prestige it would mean to their future career, and as an indicator of their level of personal motivation to succeed. I asked the participants about perceptions of the advisors they met with at the university. All noted the difference first encountered was the requirement of making an appointment to see an advisor, rather than just "stopping by" as was done at the LCC. This was the first indication that the advising at the university level was more professional. The perception that university level advising was more professional continued throughout their university career and was heard throughout the interviews. All noted the difference that they first encountered by just having to make an appointment to see an advisor. The term "professional" echoed throughout the interviews. Recall Charlie's statement: "…it was

more formal, more businesslike – professional. It was a personal feel, very business like.
When I went in for advising, [my advisor] had everything highlighted and laid out."
Each person noted that even though s/he had to make an appointment and in some
instances had to wait a few days, that just making the appointment had the feel of
professionalism and made him/her feel good about being a student at the university.
Also, when they attended their respective advising appointment, they noted that the
advisor was prepared for the meeting, with their student folder, information and degree
plan laid out on his/her desk to review. Even though in some instances the advising
session was relatively short, participants reported acquiring the answers, solutions, or
plans they needed. There was, in most cases, no need for a follow-up conversation.
There was also a perception that the advisors were well versed in the knowledge and
information about the programs of study offered, classes required, and class availability.
This helped the participants feel confident that the information they were receiving was
correct. The ability to make an appointment to see an advisor was an advantage that each
person liked. November discussed that she was able to get an appointment using her
smart phone as the institution had the advisor's schedules available, much the same way
that doctor's offices now have online or cell phone scheduling available for
appointments.

The participants also discussed that for their baccalaureate, the university was
able to successfully transfer the credits from their A.A.S. degree. While many had
reported that the information from the community college concerning A.A.S. class
transfer to university was vague or nonexistent, after meeting with an advisor in the
STEM college they found that their A.A.S. classes did transfer. This meant that they

would have the opportunity to finish as quickly as other transfer students who had an associate of arts or an associate of science degree. In some instances students reported that they were able to transfer in the maximum allowable 66 hours from the community college. This was a distinct advantage. For students with existing expertise, the baccalaureate could accelerate careers, enhance futures, increase career marketability, and expand earning potential. And in several cases, participants were able to finish within two years.

What institutional barriers have been encountered by transfer students?

Participants reported two main type of barriers: financial aid difficulties and necessity for student orientation. These barriers, if not overcome, would have prevented them from registering for classes or if they were registered for classes, would have caused them to be dropped from their courses. The barrier in financial aid, which participants discussed, was the paperwork required and the deadlines. There is a maze of paperwork that must be processed before the student receives financial aid and in some cases the financial aid does not come through in a timely manner. Delays in approval of financial aid can occur when the students application for financial aid is selected for audit. When this occurs, the student must produce detailed documentation, often from many different sources such as government agencies and the Internal Revenue Service, to verify the details of their application and substantiate their need for aid. During this time the process for approval of financial aid is halted, which means that the student must find an alternate means to pay for classes by the published payment deadlines. If classes are not paid for within a few days before the start of the semester or after the beginning of the semester, the student is dropped from all classes. In either event, the student may wind up without

classes to take since many of the courses fill quickly, and there are waiting lists for students seeking to get into the already filled classes. Bravo explained her experience:

> I couldn't get the necessary documents in time. I thought that I wasn't going to be able to get into my classes. I wouldn't have if I wouldn't have asked what to do. The way through that is to set up a deferment. They don't tell you about the deferment up front. I guess that they want you pay with a credit card or something. With a deferment, that gives you time to get your paperwork in for the audit. Your classes are paid for and as long as you pay it on-time, then you're OK.

The solution to financial aid delays is deferment. But students may not know to ask about options when delays are encountered. Once again, communication of information about the audit process and deferment would smooth the way for transfer students needing financial aid.

As for orientation, there are many valid reasons to require students to attend orientation at the university campus. But this presents several problems for the A.A.S. transfer student. First, a hold is placed on their student account until they attend orientation. This means they cannot register for classes, which often fill up early and quickly. Second, orientation sessions are often scheduled just two weeks before classes begin, creating a problem for A.A.S. transfer students, who are trying to get into classes that were filled during class registration conducted much earlier. This begs the question, just how are students to register for already full classes? Recall Quebec's comment: "I came to orientation because I had to, not because I wanted to. There are holds on your account and until you go to the mandatory orientation and show proof of bacterial

meningitis vaccination, those holds prevent you from signing up for classes. I went because I had to get the hold off my account." The implication for administrators is that schedules should be reviewed to assure that for those students attending the later scheduled event there is still enough time for those students to enroll in classes. It also implies that admissions and orientation must be coordinated such that students are able to schedule classes that they need for their education. Third, the timing of those orientation sessions is particularly troublesome for A.A.S. transfer students, many of whom hold full time jobs. It becomes a burden to impose an orientation during the week when these students work. It becomes a matter of practicality when making decisions of when to schedule orientation for working students. Administrators could look into conducting orientation in the evenings after work or on the weekends to accommodate these working men and women. Finally, participants reported that orientations were geared for the freshman student, without college experience. Transfer students have already put in considerable time and effort in learning how to attend college, manage time, and meet schedules. What they need to know is the information necessary for getting around campus, what resources are available, etc. An orientation focused on the transfer community would respond to the particular needs of this group rather than combining them with those without any college experience and would be scheduled at times convenient to their working schedules such as evenings or weekends. Implementation of these improvements would significantly improve the experience of transfer students getting started at the university.

In what ways has articulation guided A.A.S. transfer students? The participants were queried in two ways about articulation. What information did the student receive

from advisors at either institution concerning articulation and the articulation that was in place between the two institutions and did the articulation agreement that is in place help them with transfer? Surprisingly, participants reported they were not told about articulation and many of them did not know the meaning of the word. While most reported a discussion with their advisor over transfer, a discussion of articulation was nonexistent. Some of the participants reported that they had an understanding of the requirements for core class articulation, from information produced by the State, but they never had a discussion with an advisor about program articulation. The implication is that there is a complete disconnect between programs and advisors. This was true of advisors in the community colleges where program articulation agreements exist. If the information is not being relayed to the students, then the students don't know what questions to ask. But maybe the information disconnect goes back further, in that the advisors are not getting the articulation information in the first place. Without information, if a student has a question about articulation, advisors are unable to provide answers. Communication must exist at and between all levels to better serve our students.

While the lines of communication concerning articulation between program and advisors may have been lacking and the advisors did not have information to provide to students, recall that each participant reported having over 50 hours to transfer. In fact, many transferred in 66 hours, which is the maximum number of hours allowed by the institution. As a result of the existing articulation agreement between the institutions, which was unbeknown to the students, they were able to join the program, transfer their hours and in several instances graduate in a relatively short amount of time.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to note for this study. First, this is a qualitative study conducted on a small population and may not be generalizable to a large population. For this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used – criterion. Purposeful sampling, criterion based, was used to identify potential study participants (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdon, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013). There were three distinct criterion used to select the sample: A.A.S. students, local community college and articulated program. From these criteria, I found that 57 students met the conditions and a total of 20 replied, with 18 actually participating in the interview. Therefore, the size, while appropriate, may not be generalizable to the entire population of A.A.S. transfer students. It should also be noted that since I only spoke with students from one community college, the findings may be different for other community colleges. The same may be said about the university as well.

The second limitation to note is the interpretation of the student's voice. While conducting this research, I used several methods (recordings, reflexive journal and member checking) to help me to accurately capture the voice of the participants. The challenge in qualitative inquiry is to accurately represent the participant's voices (Hays & Singh, 2012). I have attempted to do so by reading and rereading the interviews and by staying neutral to present the most reflective and poignant pieces that accurately reflect the views of the participants. Nonetheless, I must recognize that the passages that I have chosen have meaning to me as a researcher and as someone who is closely associated with A.A.S. students and with transfer. As a qualitative researcher, I understand that

because of my role in the interview, I can minimize my bias by staying neutral (Mehra, 2002).

Implications and Recommendations

During the interviews the participants provided insight into their experiences during transfer. For them, the theme of need for better communication emerged. This was true at both institutions.

Communications between institutions

The need for better lines of communication between institutions concerning transfer should be a priority. Transfer advisors especially need up to date information concerning transfer. Since advisors may be considered stakeholders, it would be beneficial to have advisors from the community college visit with their counterparts at the university so that they may get a sense of what students should expect in the way of environment, faculty, parking, staff, services and other areas of the institution. A physical meeting of the community college and university advisors would produce results beyond familiarity with each other's campuses. The visits would also open doors to better communication, sharing of best practices, process improvements, etc. In the end, by collaborating, advisors at both levels may be able to better answer student questions and improve the experience of transfer students.

Communications between students

Students themselves are the primary stakeholders in the transfer process. They are the ones who have made the transition and have the actual experience of successfully traversing the transfer process. Some community colleges hold "transfer day" events where universities set up an informational booth or table. Representatives of those

universities, typically, advising staff members, work these tables, hand out brochures and provide information to students. While those individuals may provide good information to the students who attend, a better approach may be to have program specific university student representatives there to answer the questions of potential transfers. Imagine the impact of having a student who navigated the transfer process into a university program speaking to a community college student considering transfer? Student to student interaction would provide a high level of trust for those looking to transfer and the feedback gathered from the student representatives may be more useful than information gathered from advising staff. Again, when students don't know what to ask, someone who has been there can generate a more useful conversation with potential transfers.

Program communication

In addressing the problem that potential transfer students don't know what questions to ask when considering transfer, perhaps increasing their understanding of university programs would enhance their ability to envision themselves in those programs. Typically, students visit an institution for a day or two, and sometimes for just a few hours, to get a feeling for how it would be for them to transfer to the university. Single visits of just a few hours are normal for potential transfers: they come, they visit and they leave. While some engage in a formal campus tour, many just walk the campus. It may prove useful to develop a bridging program pairing potential transfer students with upper level university students to engage in a long term activity, a research project, a paper, and a presentation. This bridging immersion program will foster a better understanding of the institution, its culture, resources and processes and the demands of particular programs. An innovative partnership between programs might be forged to

allow students from the community college to work with students from the university prior to transfer. For example, sophomore students in certain programs may be paired with senior students in courses in their potential transfer program so that they may get a better sense of the program, the college and the institution. A collateral benefit to this bridging program is the early formation of friendships and connections with faculty and staff that can make the transition to the university easier.

Electronic communication

While it's true that we can't predict the future, we do know that devices we use today for electronic communications will be antiquated tomorrow. Today we rely heavily on the Internet as a means for communicating educational information to students. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are among today's most used means of communicating with people. Old thinking held that social networks and the Internet were time wasters; but we now know that these resources encourage collaboration, build community, and speed location and dissemination of information as never before. But are they really the best modes for enhancing communications with potential and current students? How do we know the latest and best way to communicate in this rapidly changing digital environment? Put simply, we ask. I suggest we survey the target audience and find out what they are using. Too many times we assume to know what an audience wants, or how they want it delivered, or on what device, platform or site they are using at any given time. Likewise, when we get their answers, we need to move in the direction they are going and communicate with them using those new technologies.

Faculty outreach

Students often look to faculty for advice. Recall that Foxtrot and Papa sought information from faculty concerning transfer. For community college faculty to have a better understanding of the university program(s) and of the institution, it would be beneficial to have university instructors lecture to the community college programs or classes or speak at faculty functions. Similarly, community college instructors would be invited to lecture at the university. This exchange program would benefit both institutions and would symbolize a partnership or collaboration between the institutions. It would also provide an opportunity for communications between program faculty at each level concerning articulation and transfer processes. The lecture exchange program could facilitate new or higher levels of networking, professional development opportunities, and participation in grant proposals, student exchanges and curriculum development. Finally depending upon the credentials of the person, if an adjunct position were to open at the respective institution, the faculty member could apply and teach at that institution. By having this type of experience, each participating faculty member can be better informed about the programs, the institutions, the transfer processes, and how to better advise potential transfer students.

Simplify orientation

Orientation for transfer students, while necessary and required, can be made easier and more responsive to the needs of the transfer student. The biggest complaint from all participants was that orientation was unnecessary. However, because the university experience is far different from the community college experience, orientation is a necessary step towards student success. The university should respect that transfer students have already experienced college life and academia at their previous

institution(s) and that their needs for orientation are different from those of an incoming freshman. Extensive advising and the opportunity to have questions answered would be an important part of this transfer orientation. A condensed orientation to convey the essential information about resources available, an abbreviated tour of campus, a discussion of the differences between the university and previous institutions, an overview of campus activity opportunities, and meetings with program faculty, staff and administrator are examples of orientation items that are of interest to transfer students as well. Also, participants found that orientation session dates were not convenient to transfer students, many of whom work full time or part time while attending school. Many of the other participants had to take a day off work to attend. If orientation must occur, then administration should make it available to those who need to come at times when they are available, not when it is convenient for the institution. If the students are the customers of an educational institution, then it makes good business sense to fix schedules and dates around the times that serve the customers, the students. Many universities are moving to a model of separate transfer orientations at times and with abbreviated schedules to meet the needs of transfer students. (UC Davis, Purdue, BYU, SUNY, Cal State all have innovated separate transfer orientations) Knowing that first impressions matter, a separate, tailored transfer student orientation could create a more positive first experience for an A.A.S. student transferring to the university. There is no denying that the first impression is an important first step into building a positive relationship with our customer-student.

Future Research

Elements to consider for future research are based on information in this study. Certainly, more information would benefit the community at large. While this list is not all-inclusive, it does represent areas that were not part of this study and therefore may provide additional information to future researchers.

- ✓ Programs which accept A.A.S. transfer and the requirements necessary to transfer. While the focus of this study was to identify and interview students transferring into one particular baccalaureate program, it would be beneficial to know what programs at the university level accept A.A.S. transfer and the requirements necessary for students to transfer.

- ✓ Differences in the requirements for A.A.S. transfer in the different regional accrediting bodies. What are the differences and why do they exist? Since funding for vocational programs across the U.S. comes from federal sources, how do the different accrediting bodies require their institutions to meet the federal requirements?

- ✓ Differences between A.A.S. transfer students and transfer students with traditional associate degrees. We know that students with associate degrees, regardless of the type of degree, want to transfer. By identifying particular differences, it may be possible to better assist both groups with an easier pathway to the baccalaureate.

- ✓ Most wanted/needed A.A.S. degrees in the region/state/country. Identifying the most wanted/needed degrees would help articulation between community college programs and potential baccalaureate programs.

✓ Review of successful institutional articulation programs. By examining the information/language contained within those documents, other institutions may be able to craft or revise agreements to better serve transfer students (much like the work done by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2014), which surveyed and analyzed the different types of articulation agreements, published a state by state directory of links to kinds of articulation agreements, published an articulation agreement fact sheet, and created a bank of individual school agreements available on their website).

✓ Survey of students with an A.A.S. degree who have completed a baccalaureate degree. What are the demographics of this population? What degrees did they acquire in community college and what degrees did they obtain at the university? How long did it take to complete? Academia is becoming more obsessed with the idea that students must/should complete a baccalaureate in four to six years. What does the data show for this demographic? Is four to six years realistic for this population?

✓ Further research on the history of the A.A.S. degree, its beginning in the junior college and how, through the decades, it has provided a working degree for the community.

Final Thoughts

The data gathered through the surveys and interviews provided a better understanding of A.A.S. degree students' challenges and experiences during the transfer period from a community college to a four-year research-intensive institution of higher education. The introduction provides a discussion of why this study is necessary: the

labor market has been demanding better educated workers. Johnson (1991) discusses that

a competitive advantage for companies across the globe is to have highly skilled workers.

Accordingly, the educational requirements for those workers have increased. The sectors

of the job market that will be most affected, administrative support, construction,

education, healthcare and management, will require its professional workforce to be

better educated. To meet the demands of a better educated workforce, President Obama

has committed resources that would provide America with the highest proportion of

college graduates in the world by 2020. The A.A.S. degree provides students with the

skills necessary to fulfill job requirements in a specific area. For those wanting to

continue their education via transfer, the pathway can be daunting and confusing. By

providing well executed articulation agreements, administrators may be able to provide

for those students a more seamless transition to the university. McKinney, Field, Kurth

and Kelly (1988) discuss the benefits of articulation as increased service to students,

program improvement, student retention, program cost reduction and increased service to

employers (p. xiii).

By conducting a qualitative study and interviewing university students who were

in A.A.S. programs or took A.A.S. courses and matriculated to university, I have a better

understanding of their journeys. I have presented their voices and the information they

provide enlightens us with their perspectives on transfer. Surveys and interviews provide

information on where gaps have occurred in the transfer process and provides for

opportunities to make corrections. The participants related experiences of their struggles

with shock, stress, social integration, transfer, and barriers. While they experienced

challenges during their transition, most found the challenges more of a nuisance they

were eventually able to overcome. That does not mean we should overlook these areas and continue to do business as usual. These are students who are looking for a better life by getting a better education. They are not looking for an easier education; they are looking for a smoother transition. Students pursuing A.A.S. degrees will continue to transfer to universities. According to Nowak (2004) "Approximately 1/3 of all college students will transfer" (p. 188). If we expect to meet the challenge to have the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020, then we need to understand the challenges that face them and make corrections as necessary. The findings in this study demonstrate the rich data gathered through student experiences. Thompson, Orr, Thompson and Grover (2007) suggest that it is necessary for institutions to understand the perspectives of students to better meet their needs. This is true regardless of the time period. Needs will change over time. The needs of the institutions will change and so will the needs of the students. By conducting periodic studies such as this one, we gain an understanding of the perspectives of students at a particular moment in time. With that knowledge we can make adjustments, as necessary to improve our customer service to this growing student population. At that point, with improved communication of information, greater understanding of transfer and articulation among advising staff, and innovation in meeting the needs of the transfer student, we should see significant improvement in the overall experience of the student in transferring from community college A.A.S. programs to university programs.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter Sent to Prospective Interview Students

Dear Student or Former Student:

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Mr. Jerry Pyka from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Houston as part of a dissertation study conducted under the supervision of Dr. Yali Zou.

I would like to ask for your help. I am collecting data for research that I am conducting about transfer students to [the LUU]. You have been identified because you previously attended [the LCC], and my research is specific to those students who attended [the LCC] and are in, or have graduated from, the [degree] program in the [the College]. If you would like to participate in my research, please go to http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FNDM3W8 and complete the short survey. The demographic data that you provide will be kept strictly confidential and only attainable by me.

The purpose of the study is to understand the complexities and effectiveness of an articulation agreement for workforce education (A.A.S. degree) between a two year and four year institution of higher education. The focus is to understand the problems facing students as they transfer from a two-year institution to a four-year Tier One research institution in Texas. If you would like to participate, the total time commitment would be two hours or less. Should you elect to participate a short form with additional information will be provided in a consent to participate letter.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9240.

Thank you for your time.
Jerry Pyka

Jerry Pyka
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education
University of Houston
Houston, Texas 77204-4023
713.743.3741

Appendix B

Demographic Data Form

Dissertation Research for Jerry Pyka

This is a very short survey. The first four questions are mandatory. The rest are optional.

* 1. Name:

[   ]

* 2. E-Mail Address:

[   ]

* 3. Telephone Number:

[   ]

* 4. I would like to participate in your research.

○ Yes
○ No

5. Gender:

○ Male
○ Female

6. Ethnicity:

○ African-American
○ American Indian
○ Arab
○ Asian
○ Caucasian
○ Hispanic
○ Other

7. Age Range:

○ 18-25
○ 26-34
○ 35-43
○ 44 and older

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. Expect to hear from me shortly.

[Done]

Consent to Participate Letter

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
A CARNEGIE-DESIGNATED TIER ONE
PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PROJECT TITLE: Student Perspectives on Transition from Community College A.A.S. Programs to Baccalaureate

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Mr. Jerry Pyka from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Houston as part of a dissertation study conducted under the supervision of Dr. Yali Zou.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand the complexities and effectiveness of an articulation agreement for workforce (A.A.S.) education between a two year and four year institution of higher education. The focus is to understand the bottlenecks facing students as they transfer to a Tier One research institution in Texas. The duration of this study is one (1) month.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of approximately 14 subjects invited to take part in this project.

This research will involve a set of qualitative case studies. This requires that participants will participate in interviews, telephone or face-to-face, that will allow for the collection of stories and information. The instruments used will be a survey/questionnaire, interview, and observation notes. There will be audio recordings used. I will have the audio recordings transcribed and you will have the opportunity to review your comments and to make revisions. I will use the transcripts to determine common themes among interviewees. Demographic information will be collected from the questionnaire. I will take the opportunity to write observation notes based on initial entry and introductions. I will note appearance, demeanor, accent, and anything that may occur during our time

together. Every subject will receive the same version of the survey in the same format. Also, all subjects will be asked the exact same interview questions. Each participant will be asked for approximately two hours of their time. There will be no follow-up interviews, only an invitation to review your comments for accuracy.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your participation in this project is confidential and your responses will remain anonymous. Your privacy will be maintained throughout and no information about you other than age range, gender and ethnicity will be used. A pseudonym will be used for your name and only I will have your information.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand the transfer from community college and the complexities and effectiveness of an articulation agreement for workforce (A.A.S.) education.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES

If you consent to take part in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below.

- ☐ <u>I agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.
- ☐ <u>I do not agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.

If you do not agree, you may still participate in the study. I will take notes throughout the interview. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.

2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.

3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.

4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.

5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Jerry Pyka at 713-743-3741. I may also contact Dr.Yali Zou, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-4982.

6. **Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-9204).** **All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of Houston are governed be requirements of the University and the federal government**.

SIGNATURES

I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in this study, and have been provided with a copy of this form for my records.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date: _____

The subject has read this form. An explanation of the research was provided and questions from the subject were solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the subject has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

Principal Investigator: Jerry Pyka, Doctoral Candidate_____
Signature of Principal Investigator: _____
Date: _____

Appendix D

Student Interview Questions

Question	Probing Question
What are your experiences and perceptions transferring to a four-year research-intensive institution?	• Describe your experience with academic advisors at both campuses. • Did one know more about articulation and transfer than the other? • Describe your perception of advisors at each institution. • Did you experience any shock once you were on the university campus?
What challenges confronted you as an A.A.S. transfer student?	• Thinking about your transfer experience at both institutions, did you experience any challenges? Explain. • How were your A.A.S. courses treated? • Did you experience any type of distress when you transferred? • How long did it take you to adjust to [the LUU]?
In what ways did [the LCC] support the transfer process?	• Describe your experience with transfer advising at {the LCC}. • What were you told about transferring to {the LUU}? • Were you given contact information for [the LUU] advising? • Did you learn anything new during your session? • How would you describe your advisors?
In what ways did [the LUU] support the transfer process?	• Describe your experience with transfer advising at [the LUU]. • Did you receive advising from the University and from the College? • Discuss the information that you received, its accuracy. • How many times did you meet with an advisor before you felt that you knew what classes would be accepted for transfer? • How many credits transferred? • How accurate was the information that you received from [the LCC] with regard to transfer to [the LUU]?
What institutional barriers have you encountered?	• Discuss problems that you encountered during transfer. • Describe your most difficult moment during transfer. • Discuss what was done to help you with your problem..
Has articulation helped you to complete your baccalaureate?	• Did the advisors discuss articulation with you during your appointment? • What did the advisors help you to understand articulation? • Tell me about the information that you found outside of school. • Was this information more reliable than the information provided by the institution/advisor?
What can we do better?	• Is there anything that we as administrators can do to make transfer more seamless for A.A.S. transferring students? • What services are needed that we do not already have available? • What suggestions do you have that may help to improve transfer?

Appendix E

Participant Pseudonym Chart

Alpha	Participant 1	Name
Bravo	Participant 2	Name
Charlie	Participant 3	Name
Delta	Participant 4	Name
Echo	Participant 5	Name
Foxtrot	Participant 6	Name
Golf	Participant 7	Name
Hotel	Participant 8	Name
India	Participant 9	Name
Juliet	Participant 10	Name
Kilo	Participant 11	Name
Lima	Participant 12	Name
Mike	Participant 13	Name
November	Participant 14	Name
Oscar	Participant 15	Name
Papa	Participant 16	Name
Quebec	Participant 17	Name
Romeo	Participant 18	Name