A study of the perceived collegiate experiences of “native” and transfer agricultural students at a Mississippi land grant university

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This text reflects on the perceptions of “native” and transfer agricultural students during their time at a Mississippi land grant university through a quantitative survey to all undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. This research used an ex post facto survey to look at perceptions of native and transfer students enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University and determine if there were significant differences between the two groups in constructs of student experience. This study identified transfer and native students’ perceived collegiate experience in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University using an online survey. The findings from this study show no statistical significance between native and transfer students for any of the four constructs, but find a median value for all constructs to be higher than neutral on a Likert scale.
DEDICATION

For all the homemade science experiments, the inherited passion for learning, and the nights spent in a pool watching planes fly through the Little Dipper - I dedicate this thesis to my Grandmother, Darlene Stowers Dickey.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Carla Jagger, for the continuous support of my study and for her patience, motivation, and guidance through this process. I would also like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. Carley Morrison and Dr. Michael Newman for their insightful comments and encouragement.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ............................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vi

LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER

I.  INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1

   Statement of the Problem ...................................................................................... 3
   Purpose of the Study and Research Questions ....................................................... 3
   Significance of the Study ....................................................................................... 4
   Limitations ............................................................................................................. 4
   Assumptions ......................................................................................................... 5
   Implications ......................................................................................................... 5
   Definition of Terms .............................................................................................. 5

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ...................................................................................... 7

   Transfer Students ................................................................................................ 8
   Native Students ................................................................................................... 8
   Graduation Completion ....................................................................................... 8
   Collegiate Support ............................................................................................... 9
   Reed-Nolan’s 2009 Study .................................................................................... 10
   Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................... 11
      Academic and Intellectual Development ......................................................... 11
      Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching ......................... 12
      Social Integration ............................................................................................ 13
      Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment ............................................ 13
   Framework Model ............................................................................................. 14
   Summary ............................................................................................................. 15

III. PROCEDURES ....................................................................................................... 16

   Research Design ................................................................................................ 16
   Population .......................................................................................................... 17

iv
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1  Instrument Constructs and Related Questions for Objective II.................................19
Table 3.2  Reliability Statistics for Survey Instrument ...............................................................20
Table 4.1  Frequency Distribution – Student Type (n = 150)......................................................22
Table 4.2  Frequency Distribution – Highest Degree Planned (n = 127).....................................23
Table 4.3  Frequency Distribution – Highest Degree Planned at MSU (n = 126).........................24
Table 4.4  Frequency Distribution – MSU Orientation Attendance (n = 130)...............................25
Table 4.5  Frequency Distribution – MSU Orientation Helpfulness (n = 109)...............................25
Table 4.6  Frequency Distribution – MSU Institutional Ranking (n = 130) .................................26
Table 4.7  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Academic and Intellectual Development (n = 149)..........................................................27
Table 4.8  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Academic and Intellectual Development (n = 149) ..............................................................28
Table 4.9  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching (n = 149) ..........................................................29
Table 4.10 ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Faculty Concern of Student Development and Teaching (n = 149) ..................................................29
Table 4.11 Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Peer Social Integration (n = 149)..................................................................................30
Table 4.12 ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Peer Social Integration (n = 149)..................................................................................31
Table 4.13  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Faculty Social Integration (n = 149) ........................................................................................................32

Table 4.14  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Faculty Social Integration (n = 149) ....................................................................................................................32

Table 4.15  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment (n = 149) ..................................................................................33

Table 4.16  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment (n = 149) ..................................................................................................34
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure ........................................15
Figure 5.1 Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure ........................................41
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

With the global population predicted to reach 8.5 billion by 2030 (United Nations, 2015), the goal of food security is more difficult than ever for our diminishing agricultural workforce. America alone could see a population of over 350 million by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). An estimated 54,000 agriculture, food, and natural resources career openings were predicted to occur annually between 2010 – 2015, with just under 30,000 college of agriculture and life sciences graduates expected to fill those positions (Goecker et al., 2010).

Since the 1960s, colleges of agriculture have faced problems with recruiting and retaining students within their programs (Cole & Thompson, 1999). Institutional percentage rates of any degree completion have not increased substantially since the 1990s (Beck & Davidson, 2019). Dyer et al. (1995) discovered similar issues at the University of Illinois, finding within one freshman class in the college of agriculture only around 60% intended on graduating within the department. In a later study, it was also found that students with high class rankings were more likely to drop out of agricultural departments to pursue other majors (Dyer et al., 2002). Smith (2019) found that faculty advising can impact graduation rates and retention of CASNR students, if there is not a sense of inclusion.
Student perception of their collegiate experience through survey analysis is important in the process of student recruitment and retention (Reed-Nolan, 2009). Elliot and Shin (2002) stated “universities can best attract and retain quality students through identifying and meeting students’ needs and expectations” (p. 197). However, there is student optimism that once faculty and staff heard the students’ perspective, faculty and staff would have a willingness to improve the experience of students throughout their time at the university (Young, 2015). Young (2015) studied perceptions and experiences of specifically transfer students, with most participants having expressed “never having had the opportunity to express their opinions, perspectives, and experiences solely from the viewpoint of a transfer student” (p. 88).

There has been little research in the realm of exploring native and transfer students’ perceptions of their collegiate experience within agriculture at Mississippi State University. Stewart (2009) defined native students as an “undergraduate student whose initial enrollment in postsecondary education was at the four-year university” (p. 10), otherwise known as first-time students in college or students starting college at a four-year university. Smith-Moore (2013) defined a transfer student as an undergraduate “student who attends more than one college or university, transferring credits earned from one institution to another” (p. 7). The instrument used in this study is a 77-question survey adapted from a previous study that was conducted by Kimberly Reed-Nolan (2009) in which she studied and compared the perceptions and performance of a random sample of native and transfer undergraduate students at Mississippi State University. This study will assess the perceptions of native and transfer students’ experiences and determine if there is a significant difference between the two groups in categories of student experience defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.
Statement of the Problem

Agricultural colleges have faced problems with recruiting and retaining students within their programs (Cole & Thompson, 1999). There have been several studies conducted on the perceptions of college native and transfer students across the nation (Pace, 2001; Young et al., 2013; Hearn, 2016), but little research has been conducted specifically in the realm of exploring native and transfer students’ perceptions of their collegiate experience within agriculture at Mississippi State University. This poses a challenge for faculty and staff of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to recruit and retain students through the ability to predict and react to the challenges faced by transfer students of community colleges, as well as perceptions from native students. This research will use a quantitative survey to look at perceptions of native and transfer students enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The goal of this research was to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups in categories of student experience defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of collegiate experience between native and transfer students within specific agricultural departments of the Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture Life and Sciences to determine if there were statistically significant differences between transfer and native students. The constructs were defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure. The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe native and transfer student demographics.
2. Determine if a significant difference exists between Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native and transfer students’ perceptions of the four constructs defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study stems from the need for student success, recruitment, and retention in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The success of transfer students and native students alike partially depends on the leadership of the college through administration, faculty, and staff to predict success barriers from the perspectives of transfer students and native students. Their success not only benefits the students directly, but also the faculty who guides them, the administration that leads them, and the credibility of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Science. This study may predict trends of success from the perspective of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture Life and Science undergraduate students.

**Limitations**

1. The results of the survey were received from one institution and may not be generalizable to other students at other institutions.

2. Due to the sample being within the College of Agriculture and Life Science, the results may not be applicable to students within other departments or colleges at Mississippi State University.

3. Due to the sample size being under 10% of the population, the results may not be applicable to the entire student population of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University.

4. Certain questions may be interpreted differently depending on the participant.

5. The number of participants who chose to respond may be different than a demographic or population that didn’t respond, creating bias.
Assumptions

1. Students volunteering to take the survey were being truthful in their responses.

Implications

The results of this research add to the literature by comparing the perceived collegiate experience of students specifically within an agricultural college at Mississippi State University. The results of this research also add to practice by informing the Mississippi State University agricultural faculty and staff of the recorded perceived student collegiate experience. If the study shows statistical significance between transfer and native students within academic performance, faculty and staff interaction and performance, or peer group interactions and extracurricular activity, predictors can be established through analyzing the data and informing faculty and staff of what to be aware of when advising specific categories of students.

Definition of Terms

This section defines terms that were used throughout this study. The following list contains the terms used throughout this study, and their definitions from research literature:

- Academic and Intellectual Development – a construct that identifies the transition into “adulthood” as well as the progress of GPA and academics (Tinto, 1998).
- DDS – an abbreviation for Doctor of Dental Surgery, a graduate degree.
- DO – an abbreviation for Doctor of Osteopathic medicine, a graduate degree.
- DVM – an abbreviation for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, a graduate degree.
- Faculty Concern – a construct that identifies the perceived level of concern faculty have for students in the classroom setting (Tinto, 1993).
- Goal and Institutional Commitment – a construct that identifies the level of commitment a student has to graduating at their current institution (Tinto, 1993).
• GPA – an abbreviation for grade point average, the mean of all coursework grades.

• Institutional Commitment – the perceived level of intention to graduate from a university (Tinto, 1993).

• MSU – an abbreviation for Mississippi State University.

• MD – an abbreviation for Doctor of Medicine, a graduate degree.

• Native student – “an undergraduate student whose initial enrollment in postsecondary education was at the four-year university” (Stewart, 2009, p. 10).

• Social Integration – a construct that identifies a student’s newly established network of faculty and peers (Tinto, 1993).

• Study question participant – a study participant from an optional survey question.

• Transfer shock – a transfer student’s significant dip in GPA within the first transfer semester (Ishitani, 2008).

• Transfer student – “an undergraduate student who attends more than one college or university, transferring credits earned from one institution to another” (Smith-Moore, 2013, p. 7).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review examines native and transfer students’ collegiate experiences, history and background of higher education, and the four topics of Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure. Tinto’s model, used within the survey instrument, was taken from the institutional experiences portion of the theory – academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, social integration, and students’ goal and institutional commitment (1993). Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure (1993) was used in this study as a theoretical framework based on the inclusion of the model within Reed-Nolan’s dissertation survey (Reed-Nolan, 2009).

The theoretical framework will examine how these four topics affect student perception, performance, and institutional commitment (Tinto, 1993). The framework will also describe the differences between the student categories of “native” students and transfer students (Stewart, 2009). The study is fashioned after a dissertation study done by Reed-Nolan (2009) at Mississippi State University.
Transfer Students

Smith-Moore (2013) defined a transfer student as an undergraduate “student who attends more than one college or university, transferring credits earned from one institution to another” (p. 7). The United States Department of Education (2006) stated “nearly 60 percent” of college graduates attended multiple institutions (p. xvi). There is statistical significance in the relationship between students’ perceptions of what their college experience will be and the decision to transfer from a community college to a university (Hearn, 2016). There is an increasing number of transfer students to universities, and Reed-Nolan (2009) stated that if transfer students’ needs are not addressed by faculty and staff and universities, issues with recruitment and retention will persist.

Native Students

Stewart (2009) defined native students as an “undergraduate student whose initial enrollment in postsecondary education was at the four-year university” (p. 10), otherwise known as first-time students in college or students starting college at a four-year university. Xu et al. (2018) refer to them as “native four-year” students (p. 1). Native students share many of the same general student experiences defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure including the concept of institutional commitment, or the perceived level of intention to graduate from a university (Tinto, 1993).

Graduation Completion

The level of intention to graduate from a university is a challenge that all university students encounter (Tinto, 1993). Tennant’s (2013) study done at the Agricultural and Human Sciences department at Tennessee Technological University, a neighboring state to the
Mississippi land grant university, revealed that 66.7% of transfer students graduated as compared to 87.5% of native students. After comparing the graduate completion rate of community college students from five Mississippi’s 4-year public universities, Dale (2014) recommended additional research was necessary to evaluate why almost “60% of transfer students do not finish a degree from the university” (p. 105).

Dickerson (2008) found that native students not only graduated at a significantly higher rate than the transfer students from community colleges, native students “appeared to be better prepared to graduate or have less difficulty graduating” (p.90-91). These differences were also shown to remain significantly different among demographics (Dickerson, 2008). Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students were also at a disadvantage, and “appear to be less prepared to graduate or encounter more obstacles to graduate than students in the other academic discipline categories” (Dickerson, 2008). STEM transfer students and STEM native students alike were statistically less likely to graduate than students majoring in other academic categories (Dickerson, 2008, p. 90-91).

**Collegiate Support**

Understanding the issues college student anxiety can help universities focus treatment and action to develop appropriate forms up support to implement (Jones et al., 2018). Many institutions have organized or expanded counseling centers to address various stressors collegiate students face (Jones et al., 2018). Open educational resources have also been implemented into institutions, providing free educational materials posted online for students and teachers (Nies, 2018). Strengths-based initiatives have been implemented at institutions world-wide as efforts to enhance student retention and degree completion, but a study within the Oklahoma State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources no significant differences in
retention through the implementation of this resource (Gazaway, 2019). Reed-Nolan (2009) stated that it was imperative for institutions to develop strategies and programs that help transition processes for students that ensure students receive the best level of education possible.

Reed-Nolan’s 2009 Study

The dissertation from which the research in this study was modeled focused primarily on Mississippi State University’s community college transfer and native student’s perceptions from across the university (Reed-Nolan, 2009). The instrument was approved through a review board of educators, and tested for reliability and validity (Reed-Nolan, 2009). After analyzing the data, Reed-Nolan (2009) stated the results could help institutions better understand the needs of students through studying respondents’ perceptions.

This study’s purpose was to provide data on any differences that exist among the transfer and native student demographics (Reed-Nolan, 2009). Through the demographic frequency distributions, Reed-Nolan (2009) found 67% of study participants ranked Mississippi State University as their first school of choice, but only 31% planned to pursue an advanced degree at MSU. While no statistical significance was found within the constructs of academic and intellectual development, social integration, or student goals and institutional commitment, data analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in transfer and native students’ perceptions of faculty concern for student development (Reed-Nolan, 2009).

Reed-Nolan (2009) stated the results of this study mirrored previously conducted studies, in terms of a lack of adjustment of the university’s community college transfer students. However, Reed-Nolan (2009) recommended additional research be done to further investigate the constructs and their impact in an institutional setting. Using Reed-Nolan’s (2009) dissertation
as a guide, this study utilized Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure for four constructs.

**Theoretical Framework**

Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The basis of this model is the fact that pre-entry constructs, goals, institutional experiences, and academic and social integration affect the outcome of a student’s commitment to an institution (Tinto, 1993). Through this theory comes the idea that the more integrated and connected students are with their institution through faculty and involvement, the greater chance the student will remain at the institution for academic success (Tinto, 1993).

This study focuses on four constructs of the theory to analyze students’ perceptions and performance of their experience in the College of Agriculture and Life Science at Mississippi State University. The student perceptions of these categories can either be positive or negative and affect the commitment level a student has toward a university (Tinto, 1993). The following constructs outlined are major factors in college students’ decisions on whether they stay at a university through graduation (Tinto, 1993).

1. Academic and Intellectual Development
2. Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching
3. Social Integration
4. Student’s Goal and Institutional Commitment

**Academic and Intellectual Development**

Tinto (1998) suggests the student academic and intellectual development stages are crucial, especially the first six months. Completing the first year of higher education, regarding
the persistence of graduating, is “more than half the battle” (Tinto, 1998, p. 439). Tinto (1998) states that each stage of this model transitions youth into “full membership” of adulthood and creates the next generation of adults (p. 440). Research from Dickerson (2008) suggests that once students reach 48-hours of collegiate credit, GPA is a significant indicator of graduation rate prediction. A significant dip in GPA within the first transfer semester, per Ishitani (2008) was defined as a ‘transfer shock,’ and is also associated with “reducing a student’s chance to return for the second semester” (p. 412).

Reed-Nolan’s (2009) study at Mississippi State University, which included respondents from throughout the university, revealed that “transfer students’ GPAs were significantly related to their perceptions and/or views of their academic adjustment on the university level” (p. 124). Reed-Nolan (2009) found significance in the comparison of experience perceptions from the community college level. Research by Reed-Nolan (2009) also found significant differences between the grade point averages (GPAs) of the native students and transfer students at the university, with the trend being a statistically significant percentage of native students having GPAs higher than transfer students.

**Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching**

Students who are engaged in their colleges and involved in programs perform well academically (Moore, 2012). Faculty’s role as a primary contact and connection to the university is important in the experience of college students (Zerquera et al., 2018). Higher levels of faculty and student interaction have been shown to increase student satisfaction and perception of the college experience and increased student success rates (Pace, 2001; Young et al., 2013). Stickle (1982) reported that students rated their faculty consistently lower in effectiveness in advising
than faculty rated themselves. This distorted sense of effectiveness could hinder student progress with an advisor.

**Social Integration**

Many college students eventually leave the university as a result of not having the ability to make their own networks, and therefore are not integrated into campus social life (Tinto, 1993). Students face a ‘stage of separation’ when entering the first year of their college experience, being forced to disassociate themselves from built social communities from past academic institutions or, if moving to a new city, their last place of residence (Tinto, 1993). This could prove disorienting to students who have not established a new network of peers at their university (Tinto, 1993). Orientations for introduction into student life on campus and the opportunities offered outside of academic courses are often short in duration and the type of extended contact required for proper establishment and a sense of community membership is not provided by short-term orientations (Tinto, 1993).

**Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment**

Lack of social integration within a university may cause students to transfer to a different institution or officially withdraw from college and not complete a degree program (Tinto, 1993). Beck and Davidson (2019) suggest students suffer from weak institutional commitments if they feel their basic needs through the university are unsatisfied. However, if students feel their needs are being satisfied as they pursue a goal, then their degree institutional commitment will be strengthened (Beck & Davidson, 2019).
**Framework Model**

Students begin their collegiate timeline with varying pre-entry attributes including family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling (Tinto, 1993). Prior schooling could refer to high school education or prior collegiate schooling, labeling them as transfer students for this study (Tinto, 1993). Students, regardless of prior schooling, start at a higher institution with a level of institutional commitment and goals (Tinto, 1993). Goals and institutional commitment were one of the four constructs used within this research, but as an ex post facto survey the construct is only measured after a time spent through institutional experiences (Tinto, 1993).

Intended use of this model measures institutional commitment before and after institutional experiences at a university, recognizing that the constructs of academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, and social integration could affect goals and institutional commitment levels in the timeline (Tinto, 1993). Figure 2.1 shows Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure, highlighting the portion of the model that three constructs were modeled from. The model the timeline beginning with and leading to goals and institutional commitment, with institutional experiences in-between (Tinto, 1993). Three of the constructs of this study were formed from the red highlighted portion of Figure 2.1, with the final construct of goals and institutional commitment appearing before and after the highlighted portion in the timeline (Tinto’s, 1993).
Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure is a framework designed to determine student experience leading to retention, which serves as the foundation for the constructs of the instrument. Tinto’s (1993) model suggests that goals and institutional commitment can be affected by the constructs of academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, and social integration. Reed-Nolan (2009) found significant differences between transfer and native student populations and their commitment to success. The theoretical model used found college students may leave a university as a result of not having proper integration among all four constructs utilized in this study (Tinto, 1993).
CHAPTER III
PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the perceptions of collegiate experience between native and transfer students within Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture Life and Sciences to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in constructs of student experience defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure:

1. Academic and Intellectual Development
2. Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching
3. Social Integration
4. Student’s Goal and Institutional Commitment

Research Design

The research design is an ex post facto survey study modeled after a 2009 dissertation done by Reed-Nolan at Mississippi State University (Reed-Nolan, 2013). Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire sent through email. The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe native and transfer student demographics.
2. Determine if a significant difference exists between Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native and transfer students’ perceptions of the four constructs defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.

**Population**

The population for this study was of undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. Little research has been conducted specifically in the realm of exploring native and transfer student’s perceptions of their collegiate experience within agriculture at Mississippi State University, so this study was created for this population. A survey study email was sent to all undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with voluntary responses.

There were 149 voluntary survey respondents \( n = 149 \) out of the approximate 1920 undergraduate students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University \( N = 1920 \). This survey study had a respondent census of approximately 7.8% out of the total population of undergraduate students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. Sappleton (2016) suggests email response rate may be low because of the sheer volume of daily messages that are received leads to recipients choosing to ignore some messages or not read them all fully.

**Data Collection and Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study is a 77-question survey adapted from a previous study that was conducted by Kimberly Reed-Nolan (2009). In this study, Reed-Nolan (2009) studied and compared the perceptions and performance of a random sample of native and transfer undergraduate students at Mississippi State University. I was granted permission to use the instrument on April 6, 2019.
Survey Methodology

After Mississippi State University approval of IRB-19-131, the survey was sent by the director of advising for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences undergraduate students on April 16, 2019. The survey was sent through email following best practices stated by Hulland et al. (2018) who state surveys are used over 60% of the time in online research. The survey was voluntary and concluding data was linked to existing student demographic data by the researchers’ major academic advisor, then given with no identifying information to the researcher to analyze, as stated to participants in question one of the instrument.

A reminder email was forwarded through the original recipient list by the researcher. The reminder email was sent on May 2, 2019, reminding all undergraduate students of the opportunity for their input for the voluntary survey. Sakshaug et al. (2019) found that a paper invitation followed by a paper reminder achieves the highest response rate, but e-mail invitation and a paper reminder sequence achieved a similarly high response rate. For this study, we used an email invitation followed by an email reminder.

Guided by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure (1993) the survey instrument used in this study identifies four topics of student experience including academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, social integration, and students’ goal and institutional commitment (Reed-Nolan, 2009). Based on the suggestion from Lucas and Madre (2018) that survey incentives can create a response bias, this survey did not include any tangible incentives for the respondents by the researcher. Table 3.1 shows the constructs defined by the instrument questions they were modeled from.
### Table 3.1 Instrument Constructs and Related Questions for Objective II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Instrument Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Integration and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Concern of Student Development and Teaching</td>
<td>15, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration (Peer)</td>
<td>13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration (Faculty)</td>
<td>17, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Goal and Institutional Commitments</td>
<td>8, 9, 24, 35, 36, 37, 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reliability/Validity**

Reed-Nolan (2009) created the survey with a panel of experts with experience in research, statistics, community college students, transfer students, and university students. The survey was piloted and tested for reliability by Reed-Nolan (2009) before official data collection. A Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient was used, as it has been described as “one of the most important and pervasive statistics in research involving test construction and use” (Cortina, 1993, p. 98). The survey average passed the acceptable reliability value of .70 with a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of .706 (Cronbach, 1951). Table 3.2 shows the reliability statistic for the test as a whole, as ran by Reed-Nolan (2009) in her study.
Table 3.2  Reliability Statistics for Survey Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Chonbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.706</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The acceptable reliability value of a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is .70.

Non-Response

Non-respondent response rate for online surveys is very low (Lucas & Madre 2018). This survey was available to the entire population rather than administering random sampling, but representation errors may occur since people can choose whether to be part of the voluntary study (Bonnichsen & Olsen, 2016). A follow up email reminder was sent to increase chance of lowering non-response rate within the population, mirroring Reed-Nolan’s (2009) dissertation.

Data-Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 26 (SPSS) was used to perform all statistical analysis in this study. The constructs and questions were directly from Reed-Nolan’s (2009) study, derived from objectives used in Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure. The scales were analyzed through an ANOVA test between native students and transfer students, with the following survey questions composing each construct.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 26 (SPSS) was also used to perform all frequency distributions in this study. Frequency distributions were derived from the demographic data received from the Mississippi State University’s office of the registrar. Objective II, the description of demographic data, is composed of these descriptive frequency distribution.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There were 240 respondents \( n = 240 \), complete and partial, for this survey. The only question in the survey that was mandatory was determining if a respondent was a transfer or native student, in which an average of 149 respondents \( n = 149 \) was utilized for constructs. The survey and all questions except the one determining transfer and native student groups were voluntary, so in some questions there was some fluctuation with response rate. Each table will show the respondent rate for the specific construct.

**Results of Analysis for Objective One**

*Describe native and transfer student demographics.*

**Native vs. Transfer**

For this question, as it was the only mandatory one in the instrument, there was a total of 150 student respondents \( n = 150 \). This respondent count consists of both native and transfer students. Table 4.1 shows the frequency distributions of Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native students and transfer students.
Table 4.1 Frequency Distribution – Student Type (n = 150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Degree Attainment

*Highest Planned Degree Attainment*

Study participants were asked about the highest degree they are planning to attain. This question was optional, with 127 respondents having reported their degree attainment plans. Students planning to attain an associate degree was smallest representation, with only 0.8% of the survey question participants, with only one transfer student responding. Students planning to attain a bachelor’s degree accounted for 20.5%. Students planning to attain a MD, DDS, DO, or DVM degree accounted for 17.3%. Students planning to attain a master’s degree, including an MBA, accounted for 32.3%. Students planning to attain a doctoral degree, Ph.D or Ed.D, accounted for 29.1% of survey respondents. There were more participants who reported plans to attain a master’s degree than any other degree, with a doctoral degree close behind. There is no statistical difference between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain, considering the respondent numbers between transfer and native. Table 4.2 shows the frequency distributions of the highest degree that students report they are planning to attain.
Table 4.2    Frequency Distribution – Highest Degree Planned (n = 127)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Percentages Between</th>
<th>Percentages From Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s (Including MBA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D or Ed.D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD, DDS, DO, or DVM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highest Planned Degree Attainment at MSU**

The following survey question asked the highest degree participants planned to complete at Mississippi State University. This question was optional, with 126 respondents having reported their degree attainment plans. Of the 126 respondents, students planning to attain an associate degree at Mississippi State University was smallest representation, with only 0.8%. Students planning to attain a bachelor’s degree at Mississippi State University accounted for 46.8% of the survey question participants, while students planning to attain a master’s degree,
including an MBA, accounted for 30.2%. Students planning to attain a doctoral degree at Mississippi State University accounted for 13.5% of respondents. There were more participants who reported plans to attain a bachelor’s degree at Mississippi State University than any other degree. There is no statistical difference between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain, considering the respondent numbers between transfer and native. Table 4.3 shows the frequency distribution of the highest degree that survey participants plan to complete at Mississippi State University.

Table 4.3  Frequency Distribution – Highest Degree Planned at MSU (n = 126)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Percentages Between</th>
<th>Percentages From Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s (Including MBA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D or Ed.D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD, DDS, DO, or DVM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MSU Orientation**

Study participants were asked about their attendance of a college orientation at Mississippi State University. This question was optional, with only 130 respondents \( n = 130 \) and 83.8% having stated attended Mississippi State University’s orientation prior to their first day of classes. Table 4.4 shows the frequency distributions of student attendance of Mississippi State University’s orientation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you attend orientation</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study participants were asked about the helpfulness of the attended college orientation at Mississippi State University. This question was optional, and 109 of the 150 survey respondents reported their orientation attendance. Of the 109 survey question respondents, 76.1% of students that attended Mississippi State University’s orientation prior to their first day of classes reported it to be helpful. Table 4.5 shows the frequency distributions of students that found Mississippi State University’s orientation to be helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you find orientation helpful</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional Ranking

Study participants were asked about where Mississippi State University ranked in their choices of colleges and universities. This question was optional, and only respondents reported their institutional rankings. Of the 130 respondents, 66.9% reported that Mississippi State University was ranked as their top choice of college or university. Another 23.1% reported that Mississippi State University ranked as their second choice. The remaining 10% of survey question respondents ranked Mississippi State University as their third choice or lower on their list of collegiate choice rankings. Table 4.6 shows the frequency distributions of institutional rankings reported from the survey question participants.

Table 4.6 Frequency Distribution – MSU Institutional Ranking (n = 130)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Ranking</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSU as #1</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSU as #2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSU as #3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSU as Lower than #3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Analysis for Objective Two

Determine if a significant difference exists between Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native and transfer students’ perceptions of the four constructs defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.
Construct I: Academic and Intellectual Development

The relationship between the groups of students and the construct of academic and intellectual development was evaluated through an ANOVA statistical test. The ANOVA statistical test was conducted at a .05 alpha level. The descriptive statistics were made up of the means and standard deviations for each group of students, native and transfer. The means were similar, as the mean for transfer students was 2.24 while the mean for native students was 2.25. The mean overall for both groups was 2.24. Standard deviations were also similar among student groups, as the standard deviation for transfer students was .68 while the standard deviation for native students was .58. Table 4.7 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the ANOVA test.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Academic and Intellectual Development (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses based a 5-point rating scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

The ANOVA test between the student groups of native and transfer students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences revealed that no significant differences existed. The test results show $p = .92$ and $f = .008$, with an alpha level set at .05. Therefore, it can be statistically stated that the perceptions of the construct of academic and intellectual development do not vary among native and transfer students within the College.
of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The results from the significance test between student groups is displayed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Academic and Intellectual Development (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>57.01</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57.01</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: p < .05/

Construct II: Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching

The relationship between the groups of students and the construct of faculty concern for student development and teaching was evaluated through an ANOVA statistical test. The ANOVA statistical test was conducted at a .05 alpha level. The descriptive statistics were made up of the means and standard deviations for each group of students, native and transfer. The means were similar, as the mean for transfer students was 2.59 while the mean for native students was 2.47. The mean overall for both groups was 2.51. Standard deviations were also similar among student groups, as the standard deviation for transfer students was .66 while the standard deviation for native students was .52. Table 4.9 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the ANOVA test.
Table 4.9  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses based a 5-point rating scale with 5 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

The ANOVA test between the student groups of native and transfer students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences revealed that no significant differences exist. The test results show $p = .929$ and $f = .008$, with an alpha level set at .05. Therefore, it can be statistically stated that the perceptions of faculty concern of student development and teaching do not vary among native and transfer students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The results from the significance test between student groups is displayed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Faculty Concern of Student Development and Teaching (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>49.10</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49.56</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $p < .05$
Construct III: Social Integration

*Social Integration (Peer)*

The relationship between the groups of students and the construct of peer social integration was evaluated through an ANOVA statistical test. The ANOVA statistical test was conducted at a .05 alpha level. The descriptive statistics were made up of the means and standard deviations for each group of students, native and transfer. The means were similar, as the mean for transfer students was 2.57 while the mean for native students was 2.56. The mean overall for both groups was 2.56. Standard deviations were also similar among student groups, as the standard deviation for transfer students was .54 while the standard deviation for native students was .42. Table 4.11 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the ANOVA test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Responses based a 5-point rating scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

The ANOVA test between the student groups of native and transfer students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences revealed that no significant differences exist. The test results show \( p = .912 \) and \( f = .012 \), with an alpha level set at .05. Therefore, it can be statistically stated that the perceptions of peer social integration do not vary among native and transfer students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at
Mississippi State University. The results from the significance test between student groups is displayed in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Peer Social Integration (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>32.11</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.12</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: p < .05

Social Integration (Faculty)

The relationship between the groups of students and the construct of faculty social integration was evaluated through an ANOVA statistical test. The ANOVA statistical test was conducted at a .05 alpha level. The descriptive statistics were made up of the means and standard deviations for each group of students, native and transfer. The means were similar, as the mean for transfer students was 2.50 while the mean for native students was 2.25. The mean overall for both groups was 2.34. Standard deviations were also similar among student groups, as the standard deviation for transfer students was 1.00 while the standard deviation for native students was .82. Table 4.13 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the ANOVA test.
Table 4.13  Descriptive Statistics for Native and Transfer Students of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as it Relates to Faculty Social Integration (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses based a 5-point rating scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

The ANOVA test between the student groups of native and transfer students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences revealed that no significant differences exist. The test results show $p = .107$ and $f = 2.632$, with an alpha level set at .05. Therefore, it can be statistically stated that the perceptions of faculty social integration do not vary among native and transfer students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The results from the significance test between student groups is displayed in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14  ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Faculty Social Integration (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.632</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>117.23</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119.32</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $p < .05$
Construct IV: Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment

The relationship between the groups of students and the construct of students’ goal and institutional commitment was evaluated through an ANOVA statistical test. The ANOVA statistical test was conducted at a .05 alpha level. The descriptive statistics were made up of the means and standard deviations for each group of students, native and transfer. The means were similar, as the mean for transfer students was 2.52 while the mean for native students was 2.40. The mean overall for both groups was 2.44. Standard deviations were also similar among student groups, as the standard deviation for transfer students was .47 while the standard deviation for native students was .45. Table 4.15 shows the descriptive statistics for the results of the ANOVA test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Type</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Student</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses based a 5-point rating scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

The ANOVA test between the student groups of native and transfer students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences revealed that no significant differences exist. The test results show $p = .105$ and $f = 2.65$, with an alpha level set at .05. Therefore, it can be statistically stated that the perceptions of goals and institutional commitment do not vary among native and transfer students within the College of Agriculture.
and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. The results from the significance test between student groups is displayed in Table 4.16.

### Table 4.16 ANOVA Test Results of Native and Transfer Students’ Perceptions to Students’ Goal and Institutional Commitment (n = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>30.01</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>30.55</td>
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*Note: p < .05*

### Summary

In this chapter, data analysis results of the survey questions were discussed. The gender demographic information of survey participants was discussed using frequency distribution. The Likert scale research objectives were analyzed with the use of ANOVA tests, with a significance level of $p < .05$ utilized in the statistical analysis of objective one.

The data analysis results revealed no statistically significant differences between the native students and transfer students among the four constructs, which were academic and intellectual development, social integration, faculty concern for student development and teaching, and student goal and institutional commitment. Descriptive statistics for these constructs show mean values all below 3.0. The responses based a 5-point rating scale with $1 = $ strongly agree and $5 = $ strongly disagree, which demonstrates mean values for all four constructs more positive than the neutral value of 3.0.

There is no statistical difference between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain. This lack of statistical significance does not change within
degrees planned to attain at Mississippi State University. There was also no statistically significant difference found in institutional ranking of Mississippi State University among native and transfer student demographics.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of collegiate experience between native and transfer students within specific agricultural departments of the Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture Life and Sciences to determine if there were statistically significant differences between transfer and native students. The constructs were defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure. The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe native and transfer student demographics.

2. Determine if a significant difference exists between Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native and transfer students’ perceptions of the four constructs defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.

Review of the Methodology

After Mississippi State University approval of IRB-19-131, the survey was sent by the director of advising for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences undergraduate students on April 16, 2019. The survey was sent through email following best practices stated by Hulland et al. (2018) who state surveys are used over 60% of the time in online research. The survey was voluntary and concluding data was linked to existing student demographic data by the researchers’ major academic advisor, then given with no identifying information to the researcher to analyze, as stated to participants in question one of the instrument.
A reminder email was forwarded through the original recipient list by the researcher. The reminder email was sent on May 2, 2019, reminding all undergraduate students of the opportunity for their input for the voluntary survey. Sakshaug et al. (2019) found that a paper invitation followed by a paper reminder achieves the highest response rate, but e-mail invitation and a paper reminder sequence achieved a similarly high response rate. For this study, we used an email invitation followed by an email reminder.

Guided by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure (1993) the survey instrument used in this study identifies four topics of student experience including academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, social integration, and students’ goal and institutional commitment (Reed-Nolan, 2009). Based on the suggestion from Lucas and Madre (2018) that survey incentives can create a response bias, this survey did not include any tangible incentives for the respondents by the researcher.

Objective One

*Describe native and transfer student demographics.*

The results of this study found a majority of the respondents (64.7%) were native Mississippi State University students, with the minority of respondents (35.3%) representing the transfer student population. There is no statistical difference between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain, considering the respondent numbers between transfer and native, including degree attainment planned at MSU. Of the 83.3% of the respondents who reported attendance of a MSU orientation before beginning their institutional experience, 76.1% found the orientation to be helpful.
Objective Two

*Determine if a significant difference exists between Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences native and transfer students’ perceptions of the four constructs defined by Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure.*

Despite Reed-Nolan’s (2009) findings of a statistically significant difference existing between native and transfer students perceived experience of faculty concern for student development and teaching, results from this study did not show any statistically significant difference between student groups for any of the four constructs. The constructs mirrored from Reed-Nolan’s (2009) dissertation including academic and intellectual development, faculty concern for student development and teaching, social integration, and students’ goal and institutional commitment also resulted in each median value higher than neutral on the Likert scale. Despite Reed-Nolan’s (2009) dissertation finding lack of adjustment of the university’s community college transfer students, median values higher than neutral suggest not only no statistically significant difference between student groups, but an overall median of MSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences rating higher than neutral on institutional experiences and commitment.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The student perceptions received from this study led to the formulation of multiple conclusions regarding the perceived student experience of transfer and native students in Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. It is necessary first to address the limitations that a study of this nature creates. The results of the survey, with a population of Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences may not be generalizable to other students at other institutions.
Due to the sample being within the College of Agriculture and Life Science, the results may not be applicable to students within other departments or colleges at Mississippi State University. The census size of the study’s population fell under 10%, thus, data may not be applicable to the entire student population of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University. Certain questions may be interpreted differently depending on the participant. The number of participants who chose to respond may be different than a demographic or population that didn’t respond, creating bias.

The results of this research project can help inform faculty and staff at Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences of the diverse needs of undergraduate students, regardless of native or transfer status. Understanding the perspective of students makes it easier to ensure success in their collegiate experiences. The constructs were based on Tinto’s (1993) model and were defined by the variables of: (I) academic and intellectual development, (II) social integration, (III) faculty concern of student development and teaching, and (IV) students’ goal and institutional commitment. The following findings were based on an analysis of data.

Although studies (Dickerson, 2008; Reed-Nolan, 2009; Tennant, 2013; Dale, 2014) have shown transfer students have a lower graduation rate than native students, statistical results from this study shown in Table 4.12 and 4.13 show no statistical difference between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain. There was also no statistically significant difference found between transfer and native student responses of the highest degree planned to attain at Mississippi State University. This finding reflects Beck and Davidson’s (2019) statement that if students feel their needs are being satisfied as they pursue a goal, then their degree institutional commitment will be strengthened.
Despite United States Department of Education (2006) having stated “nearly 60 percent” of college graduates attended multiple institutions, statistical results from Table 4.11 show that the transfer student percentage of this study’s census is just over 35% (p. xvi). Although Tinto (1993) stated a sense of community membership is not provided by short-term orientations, this study found 76.1% of students that attended Mississippi State University’s orientation prior to their first day of classes reported it to be helpful, as shown in Table 4.15.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study should be replicated with the addition of a qualitative interview process with groups of transfer and native students should be established to bring insight to the quantitative data of the instrument. Open-ended questions allowing for more discourse and conversation bring more specific data to the perceptions of students, working alongside Likert scale data. Young (2015) studied perceptions and experiences of specifically transfer students, with most participants having expressed “never having had the opportunity to express their opinions, perspectives, and experiences solely from the viewpoint of a transfer student” (p. 88). The results of this study research with solely the perceived collegiate experience of transfer students in mind, including a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview process.

An ex post facto survey design limited the goals and institutional commitment data to one data collection after institutional experiences, so this study should be replicated with an extended timeline to include pre-assessment and post-assessment of these constructs to analyze if institutional commitment changes because of institutional experiences. This future study should include a mandatory survey entering an institution, repeating upon departure of an institution to produce data that is full representation of a population. Figure 2.1 shows Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure, highlighting the portion of the model that three
constructs were modeled from, both beginning with and leading to goals and institutional commitment.

Figure 5.1  Tinto’s (1993) Longitudinal Model of Student Departure

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendation is suggested for faculty within the Mississippi State University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with respect to providing an equal experience to native and transfer students. Individual conversations with native and transfer students need to be conducted to secure a qualitative idea of each student’s institutional experience, as higher levels of faculty and student interaction have been shown to increase student satisfaction and perception of the college experience and increased
student success rates (Pace, 2001; Young et al., 2013). The median value of the faculty concern construct shows a higher than neutral perspective of faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, but further discussion or possible faculty interviews with students need to be conducted to ensure the continuation of these values.
REFERENCES


Dickerson, J. R. (2008). The factors that influence the graduation rates of community college transfer students and native students at a four-year public state university (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (AAT 3331220)


Tennant, D. (2013). *Persistence to graduation of four-year university native students compared to community college associate degree transfer students by academic field and college entrance scores* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (AAT 3616066)


APPENDIX A

SURVEY
Welcome to the research study!

We are interested in understanding the perceived student experience of their time at college. You will be presented with information relevant to the college experience and asked to answer some questions about it. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 10 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Hannah Ford at hlf71@msstate.edu.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.
Your student NetIDs will be collected to obtain university collected demographic and educational records such as GPA, transfer status, transfer GPA, race, rank, age, and major. Only the faculty P.I. will have your information as it will be de-identified by the time I, as a student researcher, have access to the data.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

☐ I consent, begin the study (1)

☐ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate (2)

QID

We are asking for your Mississippi State NetID so that we can pull up the university collected demographic data. Your NetID will be disassociated with your survey responses once your demographic data is pulled.
List your Mississippi State University NetID below:


QEM

We are asking for your email address so that we can send you a message that can be used to verify extra credit to your professor or lab instructor (if offered). Please note- if you do not enter your email, you will not get a message for extra credit verification sent to you.

Your email will be disassociated with your survey responses once your demographic data is pulled.

List your email below:


50
Q1 Few of my courses this semester have been intellectually stimulating.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q2 I am satisfied with my academic experience this semester.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q3 I am more likely to attend a cultural event (such as a concert, lecture, or art show) now than I was a year ago.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q4 I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development this semester.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q5 Being on this campus is contributing to my overall growth and development as a young adult.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q6 In addition to the required reading assignments, I read many of the recommended books in my courses.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q7 My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has greatly increased since attending Mississippi State University.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q8 I am still unsure about my academic major.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q9 Getting good grades is not important to me.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q10 My academic experiences these past semesters have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in new ideas.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q11 My overall understanding and perceptions of life are being strengthened by my classroom and/or my campus experiences.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q12 My academic performance is as well as I expected it would be.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q13 I have developed close personal relationships with other students on campus.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q14 My interpersonal relationships with other students have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitude.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q15 Faculty, administrators, and/or staff seem to be willing to assist me in resolving issues that I may have academically.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q16 The student relationships I have developed this semester have been personally satisfying.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q17 My interpersonal relationships with university staff and/or faculty has had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q18 It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with other students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q19 I am dissatisfied with my current dating relationships.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q20 Few of the students that I know would be willing to listen and help me if I had any personal problems.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q21 Few of the faculty/staff members that I know would be willing to listen and help me if I had any personal problems.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q22 This campus provides adequate opportunities to participate in organized extracurricular activities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q23 I am happy with my living arrangements this semester.

- **Strongly Agree** (1)
- **Agree** (2)
- **Neutral** (3)
- **Disagree** (4)
- **Strongly disagree** (5)

Q24 Given where I am presently in my life, as it relates to both my social and academic desires, this campus is a good fit for me.

- **Strongly Agree** (1)
- **Agree** (2)
- **Neutral** (3)
- **Disagree** (4)
- **Strongly disagree** (5)
Q25 I am satisfied with the opportunities I have had this year to meet and interact informally with faculty members.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q26 Few of the faculty members I have had contact with this semester are willing to spend time outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q27 This semester, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one faculty member.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q28 My non-classroom interactions with faculty this semester have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interests in ideas.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q29 My non-classroom interactions with faculty this semester have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q30 My non-classroom interactions with faculty this semester have had a positive influence on my career goals and aspirations.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q31 Few of the faculty members I have had contact with this semester would be considered to be genuinely outstanding or superior teachers.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q32 Few of the faculty members I have had contact with this semester are genuinely interested in students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q33 Most of the faculty members I have had contact with this semester are genuinely interested in teaching.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q34 Most of the faculty members I have had contact with this semester are interested in helping students grow in many areas, not just in the area of academics.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q35 It is important for me to graduate from college.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q36 I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend this university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q37 It is likely that I will register at this university this upcoming semester.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q38 I am involved with social activities at this school.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q39 I am satisfied with the overall environment at this university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q40 Adjusting to the academic standards at the university has been difficult.

○ Strongly Agree (1)
○ Agree (2)
○ Neutral (3)
○ Disagree (4)
○ Strongly disagree (5)

Q42 My level of stress increased with I started at this university.

○ Strongly Agree (1)
○ Agree (2)
○ Neutral (3)
○ Disagree (4)
○ Strongly disagree (5)
Q43 My level of stress increased with I started at this university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q44 I transferred to Mississippi State from a community college.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If I transferred to Mississippi State from a community college. = No
Q45 Upon transferring I felt alienated at this school

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q46 It is much easier to make friends at the community college than at the university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q47 I feel more comfortable making friends with other transfer students than non-transfer students.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q48 I am satisfied with the overall environment at this university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q49 I was more involved in social activities while attending the community college than I am now.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q50 When compared to the level of involvement among university staff members, I found that the faculty members at the community college were involved at a much greater level with students than university members.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q51 I found the adjustment process to be a much easier process at the community college level than at the university level.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q52 I was more satisfied with the academic environment provided at the community college level than the one provided at the university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q53 I feel that my experiences at the community college level prepared me to be a successful student at Mississippi State University.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q54 Now that I am a student at Mississippi State University I wish I would have started my academic career here first instead of attending a community college.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q55 I don't feel that the community college environment gives you an accurate representation of true collegiate life as it relates to academic standards, social involvement, etc.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q56 While attending the community college, approximately how many hours per week, on the average, did you spend in organized extra-curricular activities?

- None (1)
- 1-5 Hours (2)
- 6-10 Hours (3)
- 11-15 Hours (4)
- More than 15 Hours (5)
Q57 How many hours a week did you work while attending the community college?

- None (1)
- 1-10 Hours (2)
- 11-20 Hours (3)
- 21-30 Hours (4)
- 31-40 Hours (5)
- More than 41 Hours (6)

Q58 Did you attend an orientation session prior to starting at the community college?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q59 Did you find the orientation session helpful and insightful?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Did not attend (3)

Display This Question:
if I transferred to Mississippi State from a community college. = Yes

Q63 While attending the community college, my living arrangement was in the:

- Residence Hall (1)
- Other University housing (2)
- Off campus house or apartment (3)
- With parents or relatives (4)
- Other (5)

Display This Question:
if I transferred to Mississippi State from a community college. = Yes

Q64 How many hours did you transfer from the last college you attended? (Your best guess)

▼ 1 (1) ... 60 or more (61)
Q65 What factors influenced you to attend the community college? For this question, rank selections based on their level of importance. (One answer is allowed for each factor listed.)
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83
Q41 My level of stress increased with I started at this university.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q66 In this section I would like to collect a little demographic information. Please select the answer that you believe most reflects your background or experience.

Q67 What was your cumulative GPA average while in high school?
Q68 Where do you live while you are in school?

- Residence Hall (1)
- Other University housing (2)
- Off campus house (3)
- With parents or relatives (4)
- Other (5)

Q80 Do you personally identify as a member of the LGBTQIPA+ community?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q83 What is the highest degree you plan to complete?

- [ ] Associate's (1)
- [ ] Bachelor's (2)
- [ ] Masters (including MBA) (3)
- [ ] Ph.D or Ed.D (4)
- [ ] MD, DDS, DO, or DVM (5)
- [ ] JD or LLB (6)
- [ ] Other (7) ____________________________________________________________________

Q85 What is the highest degree you plan to complete at this university?

- [ ] Associate's (1)
- [ ] Bachelor's (2)
- [ ] Masters (including MBA) (3)
- [ ] Ph.D or Ed.D (4)
- [ ] MD, DDS, DO, or DVM (5)
- [ ] JD or LLB (6)
- [ ] Other (7) ____________________________________________________________________
Q87 What is the highest level of education completed by your father?

- None (1)
- Elementary (2)
- Some High School (3)
- Some College (4)
- Associate's Degree (5)
- Technical School (6)
- Bachelor's Degree (7)
- Graduate Degree (8)

Q88 What is the highest level of education completed by your mother?

- None (1)
- Elementary (2)
- Some High School (3)
- Some College (4)
- Associate's Degree (5)
- Technical School (6)
- Bachelor's Degree (7)
- Graduate Degree (8)
Q89 What is the best estimate of your parent's total household income?

- Less than $20,000 (1)
- $20,000-$40,000 (2)
- $41,000-$60,000 (3)
- $61,000-$80,000 (4)
- $81,000-$100,000 (5)
- More than $100,000 (6)

Q90 Where did this university rank among your choices before enrolling?

- #1 (1)
- #2 (2)
- #3 (3)
- Lower than #3 (4)
Q91 Did you attend an orientation session prior to beginning at Mississippi State University?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Did you attend an orientation session prior to beginning at Mississippi State University? = Yes

Q92 Did you find the orientation session helpful?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q93 While in school at this university, how many hours a week do you work?

☐ None (1)
☐ 1-10 (2)
☐ 11-20 (3)
☐ 21-30 (4)
☐ 31-40 (5)
☐ 41 or More (6)
Q102 While attending Mississippi State University, approximately how many hours per week, on the average, do you spend in organized extra-curricular activities?

- None (1)
- 1-5 Hours (2)
- 6-10 Hours (3)
- 11-15 Hours (4)
- More than 15 Hours (5)