

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AND

FRESHMAN STUDENT RETENTION:

AN APPLICATION OF TINTO'S MODEL

By

KATHLEEN SHEA SMITH

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded
Spring Semester, 2004

The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Kathleen Shea Smith defended on March 3, 2004.

Barbara A. Mann
Professor Directing Dissertation

Gary W. Peterson
Outside Committee Member

Beverly L. Bower
Committee Member

Hollie B. Thomas
Committee Member

Approved:

Carolyn D. Herrington, Chair, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, Dennis Joseph Smith, Avery Joseph Smith, and Ella Marie Smith. Your gifts of love, support, and time made it possible to turn this dream into a reality. Mommy's dissertation is now finished. Let's go play!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with much appreciation and gratitude that I thank the following individuals who dedicated themselves to the successful completion of this dissertation. Dr. Barbara Mann, my Major Professor and Advisor, maintained her post right by my side from the inception to the completion of this research project. In 1994 she expressed, “Kathleen, the door to the doctoral program will stay open for you until you are ready to enter.” At that point, I was the mother of a two-year old son, expecting a baby daughter and was one of the first generation of females in my family given the opportunity to pursue a college degree. Dr. Mann, thank you for believing in me and never wavering in your commitment to my work. I would also like to acknowledge the guidance and wisdom of the faculty members who served as members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Tom Anderson, Dr. Beverly Bower, Dr. Hollie Thomas, and Dr. Gary Peterson.

A group of individuals deserve special recognition for their assistance. Thank you Betty Brown for your gift of time and SPSS expertise. Thank you David Sacks for serving as my statistical gatekeeper. You gave me the space to test my knowledge and encouraged my growth as a researcher. Thank you Alice Earp and the Division of Undergraduate Studies at Florida State University for providing me full access to the data. Thank you Dr. Peterson for the many sessions of statistical tutoring and for your commitment to my learning. Thank you Nikki Raimondi, Doug Waddell, and John Carter, the Advising First management team, for granting me the flexibility to complete a dissertation while balancing a full-time academic advising position.

From Tallahassee to Burlington and many stops along the way, a great number of friends extended their encouragement and support throughout this journey. I would like to thank the members of my dissertation group, Perry Crowell, Catherine Duncan, Sandra Kowalchyk, Karinda Barrett, Mark Palazeski, and John Mabley. Our shared stories and laughter kept me going and lightened the weight of the dissertation. Added to that list are Naomi Barrel, Anna Blackman, Harry and Lynda Dillon, Donnie Harris, Carolyn Herrington, Craigie Huston, Sean Millard, Jimmy Pastrano, Sheri Rainey, Nancy Whichard and Lakwanza Williams. Each of you

touched my life in a meaningful way and played a special role in the personal development that coincided with my academic progress.

With great love and respect I thank my parents, Janice Weigand Shea, and William Thomas Shea. Your sacrifices and commitment to higher education planted the seeds that grew into my passion and love for this discipline. I wish to also extend a special thank you to my siblings Mary Louise Shea, William Thomas Shea, Jr., Ph.D., Ellen Shea Mendelson, Christine Elizabeth Shea, and Margaret Milmore Shea. Thank you for your phone calls, emails, guidance, encouragement, and help with Avery and Ella. I feel very fortunate and proud to be forever connected to you.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my husband Dennis Smith. Thank you for your unceasing commitment and patience. I could not have done it without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
ABSTRACT	xi
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	1
Scope of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Questions	4
Conceptual Framework	4
Significance of the Study	5
Limitations	7
Definitions of Terms	8
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	10
Overview	10
Tinto's Theory of Individual Departure	10
Interactional Causes of Student Withdrawal	10
Stages of Separation and Transition	13
Durkheim's Study of Suicide and the Relationship to Educational Departure	14
Validation of Tinto's Theory	16
Methodological Appeal of Tinto's Model	16
Foundational Studies	16
General Validation Studies	17
Tinto's Model in Varying Institutional Settings	21
Tinto's Model and Subgroups of Departing Students	23
Overview of Findings from Foundational Literature	25
Student and Faculty Interaction	28
Significance of Student and Faculty Interaction	28
Dynamics of Student and Faculty Relationships	29
Synthesis of Findings	32
Academic Advising	33
Academic Advising as an Effective Institutional Strategy	33
The Role of the Academic Advisor	34
Advising Delivery Systems	35
Student Perceptions of Academic Advising	37

Academic Advising and Student Retention	39
A Review of the Advising and Retention Literature	39
Summary of Advising and Retention Literature	45
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES	47
Theoretical Framework	47
Research Questions	48
Instrumentation	48
Satisfaction Inventories and Student Retention	48
Undergraduate FSU Satisfaction Inventory	49
Validity and Reliability of the Instrument	50
Validity	50
Construct Validity Using Factor Analysis	51
Reliability	52
Test-Retest Reliability Rating	53
Internal Consistency Reliability Rating	54
Academic Integration Scale	55
Social Integration Scale	55
Commitment Scale	56
Academic Advising Scale	56
Population	57
Sample Selection	57
Undergraduate FSU Satisfaction Inventory Sample	57
First Time in College Students Subset Sample	58
Analysis of Research Questions	59
Research Question One	59
Research Question Two	60
Research Question Three	60
Research Question Four	61
Research Question Five	61
Research Question Six	62
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	63
Purpose Statement	64
Demographic Description of the FSU Satisfaction Inventory Sample	64
Research Questions	70
Research Question One	70
Research Question Two	72
Research Question Three	74
Research Question Four	76
Research Question Five	77
Research Question Six	78
Academic Advising and Academic Integration Domains	78
Academic Advising and Social Integration Domains	84

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	85
Summary of Results	86
Research Question One	86
Research Question Two	86
Research Question Three	87
Research Question Four	87
Research Question Five	87
Research Question Six	87
Discussion	88
Student Perceptions of Academic Advising	88
Advising Delivery Systems	90
Academic Advising and Academic Integration	91
Academic Advising and Enrollment Behavior	92
Limitations of the Study	93
Proposals for Addressing Survey Limitations	94
Recommendations for Future Research	95
Implications for Practice	97
Concluding Remarks	98
APPENDICES	99
Appendix A-Undergraduate FSU Satisfaction Inventory	99
Appendix B-Letter of Informed Consent	111
Appendix C-Registrar's Letter of Permission	113
Appendix D-Dean's Letter of Permission	116
Appendix E-Human Subjects Approval	118
REFERENCES	120
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	126

LIST OF TABLES

1	Factor Analysis Results for the Academic Advising Scale	52
2	Test-Retest Spearman Brown Reliability Coefficients	54
3	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Ratings	57
4	Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Year	64
5	Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Enrollment Status	65
6	Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Gender	65
7	Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Ethnicity	67
8	Sample Composition by College	68
9	FTIC Demographic Measures	69
10	Means, Standard Deviations and Percentage of Participants	70
11	ANOVA Comparing Mean Advising Scores Based on Advising Delivery System	72
12	Effect Size Between Groups of Advisors	73
13	Independent Samples T Tests Comparing Mean Advising Scores Based on Enrollment Groups	74
14	Independent Samples T Test Comparing Summated Means	76
15	Discriminant Analysis Utilizing Tinto's Constructs	77
16	Discriminant Analysis Utilizing Tinto's Constructs and Academic Advising	78
17	Canonical Correlation Between Academic Advising and Academic Integration Scale	79
18	Standardized Coefficients for the Canonical Correlation Examining Academic Advising and Academic Integration Domains	81

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to examine student perceptions of academic advising and determine the relationship between academic advising and student persistence. The first focus assessed views on academic advising and compared students' perceptions of advising based on their primary advising delivery system: faculty advisor, professional advisor or peer advisor. Directed by Tinto's (1975) theory of individual student departure, the second focus examined the predictive quality of factors associated with student enrollment. Perceptions of academic advising were isolated and added to the model and their unique contribution to student enrollment behavior examined.

Two separate data sets were constructed for the purpose of this research study. The first sample consisted of 3943 undergraduates at Florida State University enrolled during the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 academic years. The FSU Satisfaction Inventory, an instrument designed to evaluate experiences within the campus setting, was the data source for this study. The second sample comprised a freshman subset of the original sample and included 2064 participants. Satisfaction data was combined with academic and enrollment information and groups of returning and departing students were compared.

Quantitative findings revealed areas where students were most and least satisfied with academic advising. Significant differences were observed among advisor types. Students were most satisfied with advising when professional advisors were selected as their primary advisor compared to faculty or peer advisors. No significant differences or multivariate effects were observed between returning and departing students in regard to academic advising or the other constructs of Tinto's model including social integration, academic integration or commitment levels. Results revealed three significant and positive correlations between the academic advising and academic integration scales. These results suggest that perceptions of academic advising function as a valid place within the academic integration construct.

It is recommended that institutions educate students on where to seek academic advising on their campuses, and for advisors to make every effort to deliver developmental advising to their students. It is suggested that further research on this topic continue to explore an empirical link between academic advising and student retention through the use of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.