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The Relationship Between State Financial Aid and Student Persistence and Success in College: An Examination of Hispanic Undocumented Immigrant Students in Texas Community Colleges

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE FINANCIAL AID AND STUDENT
PERSISTENCE AND SUCCESS IN COLLEGE: AN EXAMINATION OF HISPANIC
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By

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Dedicated to: Nakya, Patricia, Byron and Bobby

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ABSTRACT

Immigration trends indicate that undocumented students have the potential to participate in the American higher education system. Although 5% to 10% of the undocumented population attends college, research suggests that these individuals often have difficulty in completing a program of study. College retention can be attributed to a myriad of factors, to include financial assistance. As a result, many higher education institutions have implemented financial aid and academic programs for minorities, non-traditional, first time in college (FTIC), foreign born and low-income students to assist in raising students' levels of retention, academic performance and program of study completion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Conversely, the primary benefactors of educational and financial subsidies have been deemed as "legitimate benefactors of rights, privileges and social goods" – those of legal U.S. residency and citizenry (Perry, 2004, p. 3).

The purpose of this study was to determine if financial aid [receipt and amount] among other student characteristics improved student success and persistence. In order to better understand factors associated with undocumented student success and persistence, the researcher conducted a quantitative methodology. The data was obtained from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which entailed the undocumented student population enrolled as 2003 – 2004 first time in college (FTIC) cohort members [n = 31,769] of two-year Texas colleges. Of this sample, the researcher utilized the data referencing only 54% of students who actually received financial aid to determine the correlation between student success and persistence. Logistic regression and stepwise regression analysis suggested that among the influential independent variables, financial aid [amount], being of the female gender, enrolled full-time, and classified as limited English proficient (LEP) positively influenced and persistence and success. Further, among the variables that negatively influenced success and persistence were those who were classified as being academically disadvantaged. Moreover, parental educational status did not render any significant correlation with success and persistence. Finally, financial aid [receipt] warranted a negatively correlation on student success, which was the inverse finding for student persistence.

This study contributed to the body of literature regarding factors [background and pre-collegiate characteristics] that influenced success and persistence among undocumented college

students. Additionally, further research is needed to analyze additional “identifiable” variables that could potentially enhance student persistence and success; and determine the degree completion rates and rates of return for this particular population.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Office of Immigration Statistics estimated that 11.6 million foreign born legal permanent residents and 10.5 million undocumented foreign born immigrants resided in the U.S (Erisman & Looney, 2007). In some U.S. cities (e.g. Miami, Los Angeles and New York) immigrants and their children accounted for more than half their populations (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Malone, Baluja, Costanzo, and Davis, 2003). In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), the number of children in the United States whose parents are immigrants (*foreign-born*) is expected to grow from 5.1 million in 1990 to 9.1 million in 2010.

The foreign-born population is comprised of those who are not born in the United States of America (U.S.) (e.g., undocumented individuals, naturalized citizens, permanent residents, and non-immigrant visa holders) (Passel, 1986). Often, immigrants tend to migrate to the U.S. because of numerous motivational factors despite consequences or sanctions (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Poverty, deprivation, genocide, death, serfdom, and exile are several phenomena that persuade foreign-born individuals, specifically the undocumented, to relocate to other countries (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

“America offers opportunities for many immigrants to improve their earnings relative to what they could earn in their countries of origin” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 1). Immigrants often arrive to the U.S. soliciting their marketable skills and spirit of determinism as a conduit for upward social and economic mobility. Considering immigrants continue to grasp the importance of how education can positively influence their lives and the lives of those around them, one of the many mediums through which they attempt to achieve economic success is the American higher education system (Vernez, Abrahamse, & Quigley, 1996).

Immigration Trends

Approximately more than 1 million immigrants arrive in the U.S. annually, representing 12 percent of the total U.S. population, with much of the growth occurring in U.S. municipal regions (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Fix, Passel, Enchautegui, & Zimmermann, 1994; Larsen, 2004). Of this 12 percent, Gonzales (2007) reported that approximately 30 percent of the

immigrant population enters the U.S. without appropriate documentation and legal authorization. Asian and Latin American countries have been the principle regions from which immigrant individuals migrated. In 2005, 47 percent of immigrants were Hispanics, 24 percent Asian / Pacific Islanders, 21 percent White non-Hispanics, and 8 percent Blacks (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003; Wasem, 2007).

Immigration trends indicate that this population is likely to enroll in the American higher education system, more specifically in community colleges (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). In 2007, the median age of the foreign-born population was 38.1 years, with 10 percent under age 18 and 58.7 percent between the ages of 25 – 54 (Wasem, 2007). Moreover, foreign born students attending American high schools were found more likely to enroll in U.S. colleges and universities than did their native counterparts, representing 12 percent of the undergraduate population (Gray & Vernez, 1996; IHEP, 2007).

Higher Educational Access

Undocumented U.S. immigrant residents will be likely to bring with them certain levels of cultural and social capital to the U.S. and its higher education system (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). They will be likely to come from communities where customs, languages and values are preserved from their parents' countries of origin (Bourdieu, 1986; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). To this end, student affairs professionals would need to be equipped with the necessary training and skills which promote student learning and success; thereby embracing, accepting, and responding to the needs of that particular learning community.

Access to higher education is essential for the economic success of undocumented individuals, as well as the U.S. and global economy (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998). The U.S. higher education system not only functions as a catalyst in providing most individuals with social and economic opportunities, but serves as an agent of continuous global economic competitiveness (Perna, 2003). One of those acting agents in higher education that provides the most substantial access to higher education is the community college (Bailey, & Weininger, 2002).

Community colleges are designed to provide open-access to all citizens and represent higher education's commitment to democracy (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). They strategically evolved as a result of an institutional response to answer students' needs and better serve the

changing population (Brilliant, 2000; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cross, 1981). With community colleges being more affordable and conveniently located than most four-year institutions, offering remedial courses and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and catering more towards the non-traditional and adult population, it is feasible to conclude that the community college appeals to the educational needs of undocumented individuals (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002).

Financial Assistance

Ultimately financial aid can be related to student persistence, performance, and success. It increases students' needs to avert distractions and focus on academic activities that will assist in lowering their chances of dropping or stopping out for lack of funds (St. John, Andrieu, Oescher, & Starkey, 1994; St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2001). Local and federal governmental involvement is important for students, institutions, and the local economy. In fact, the U.S. general public benefits privately and publicly when U.S. residents gain access to and matriculate successfully in higher education (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998; Perna, 2003). However, the fact remains that in-state tuition for undocumented students is only offered in 10 U.S. states – California, Texas, Utah, Washington, New Mexico, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New York, and Oklahoma (Ferg-Cadmia, 2003; National Immigrant Law Center, 2003). And, of those 10 states, only three U.S. states – New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas offer in-state financial aid to undocumented individuals (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2005).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between the receipt of financial aid and the amount of financial aid on the persistence and success of Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in community colleges. Additionally, this study will further explore how student background characteristics relate to success and persistence. In 2000, 28.4 million people who were foreign-born lived in the U.S., colonizing in some U.S. geographic regions such as New York, New Mexico, California, Texas, and Florida, respectively (Simanski, 2005). As such, this study will be conducted in the state of Texas, one of the many localities where most of the growth of the foreign-born population, specifically the undocumented population, has spiraled (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). These undocumented individuals are possibly attracted to

Texas because it is one of 10 U.S. states that offers key educational and financial resources that will assist undocumented U.S. residents with entry into higher education (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

Research Questions

The research questions reflect the purpose described above. This study intends to answer following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?
2. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?
3. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?
4. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?

Significance of Study

The influx of immigrants, particularly the undocumented subgroup, has obtrusively changed the process in which the United States has executed its policies and procedures. In fact, the increased undocumented populace has tremendously necessitated a reorganization and restructuring of American higher education (Laden, 2004). Colleges and universities have taken on a more diverse clientele in order to better serve the changing population (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cross, 1981). Yet as the enrollment of college students increases, the issue of retaining students continues to emerge as an area of concern. Previous studies have illustrated that retention can be attributed to students' characteristics, such as race, gender, employment status, socio-economic status and ethnicity (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pike & Kuh, 2005; St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2001; Tierney, 1999; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993). As a result, many higher education institutions have implemented financial aid and academic programs for minorities, non-traditional, first-time in college (FTIC), foreign born and low-income students to assist in raising students' levels of retention, academic performance, and program completion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Unfortunately, not all higher education institutions or even U.S. states are aware of the needs and relevant issues pertaining to other student populations, specifically undocumented [Hispanic] students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Undocumented immigrants are continuously seeking America's higher education system

as a resource of opportunity. However, although they make up a fraction of the 12 percent U.S. undergraduate immigrant population, their persistence and completion rates are below the U.S. national average (U.S Department of Education, 2004). This challenge can be attributed to a number of factors to include financial assistance, length of stay in the U.S., employment, parental educational level, and socioeconomic status. Therefore, this study is significant considering that the data collected and findings gathered in this study can potentially assist higher education administrators in targeting essential identifiers (characteristics). Variables that do not promote undocumented student success can be readily identified and postsecondary administrators would be able to immediately establish intervention strategies that would help facilitate college student retention and success.

Of another significance, American educational access has been the most debated topic since its (American education) inception. From the establishment of the Morrill Land Grant Acts, creation of the G.I. Bill, and erection of community colleges, the query of who should be “authorized users” of the American educational system has been continuously called into question. Currently, one of the most debated issues in American higher education is whether or not to allow undocumented individuals to receive in-state tuition and financial aid.

Although undocumented immigrants contribute to the competitiveness of the global economy, many governmental entities and interest groups (e.g., Congress in 1996; California’s 187 Proposition; Federation for American Immigrant Reform) have proposed laws to limit undocumented immigrants usage of public services (e.g. education) (Anrig, Jr. and Wang, 2004; Martin, 1995). Specifically, Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIR 1996) prohibits “states from providing post-secondary benefits to aliens not lawfully present unless any citizen or national is eligible for such benefit” (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2005, p.1; Russell, 2007). Some would conserve this notion because they believe that providing these benefits would legitimize and provide a corridor for additional illegal immigrant activity (Chu, 2005). Others such as proponents of the Development Relief and Education Act for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), proposed by Senator Richard Durbin in 2005, would differ (National Immigrant Law Center – NILC, 2007).

Currently, foreign born immigrant children can only obtain legal status through their parents/ guardians (NILC, 2007). Sponsors of the DREAM Act and Student Adjustment believe

that children of illegal immigrants should be provided an opportunity to earn conditional permanent residency (NILC, 2007). The passing of these bills would amend the IIRIR Act of 1996 by providing undocumented individuals equal opportunities to participate in the American higher education system, and possibly decreasing the attrition rates in undergraduate education.

Moreover, although researchers Szelenyi and Chang (2002) indicate that the foreign born residing in the U.S. are likely to enter into the U.S. higher education system and enroll in two-year postsecondary institutions, surprisingly there is minimal research measuring the correlational effects of undocumented [Hispanic] students' outcomes (e.g. success, persistence, graduation) in higher education, specifically in two-year colleges. If not all students are receiving an equal opportunity to be successful and persist in college, then institutions are not effectively contributing to the welfare and economic advancement of all college students or society at large (Zumeta, 2001). The researcher believes that results from this study may allow postsecondary educators to gain an awareness and understanding of the factors that may influence the persistence and success of undocumented Hispanic students.

Definition of Terms

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2001), **foreign-born U.S. residents** are individuals born outside the United States, including permanent residents, naturalized citizens, nonimmigrant visa individuals, and undocumented / illegal aliens. Moreover, **immigrants** are defined as those individuals who have plans to live in the U.S. permanently, whether or not they hold at this time permanent residency or U.S. citizenship. Based on this definition, immigrant students are defined as students who are naturalized citizens, permanent residents, or seek to obtain status to live in the U.S. permanently (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a).

The **receipt of in-state financial aid** in the context of this research study refers to whether or not students are allocated state funds per academic year. That is, whether or not students are eligible for the Texas student assistance grants and are awarded the Texas student assistance grants (Andreu, 2002). Currently, Texas offers an opportunity for foreign born students to compete for three student assistance grants. These grants are the Texas Public Educational Grant (TPEG), Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG), and the Toward

Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant (THECB, 2008b). Established in 1975 by the Texas Legislature and administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the Texas Public Educational Grant (TPEG), the Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG), and the Toward Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant are grants rendered to “students attending institutions of higher education in Texas whose educational costs are not met in whole or in part from other sources and to provide institutions of higher education with funds to supplement and add flexibility to existing financial aid programs” (THECB, 2008b, p.1).

The receipt of in-state aid is comparable to the amount of financial aid in terms of financial subsidy. However, the **amount of financial aid** is defined as the numeric value of in-state aid received. That is, the amount of the award varies upon the specific Texas in-state aid received. For example, the TEOG and TEXAS Grant are similar in nature. The “amounts of the TEOG and TEXAS Grant awards (to include state and institutional funds) are equal to the student’s tuition and required fees” (THECB, 2007, p.1.). Conversely, the TPEG differs because each public postsecondary institution has the capability of setting its own maximum award, and the individual award may be more than the student’s financial need (THECB, 2007).

Persistence and college success are variables utilized to determine the influential nature of financial aid [amount]. **Academic success** is defined as having maintained a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better, on a 4.0 scale (grade “C” or better) (ACCD, 2008). Customarily, Texas postsecondary institutions and the majority of U.S. colleges and universities define the term grade point average (GPA) “as an overall level of academic achievement used as a measure in making decisions regarding good standing, probation, dismissal, transfer, and graduation eligibility” (EPCC, 2008, p.12). Grade point averages are based upon a 4.0 scale with the following:

A = 4 grade points per course

B = 3 grade points per course

C = 2 grade points per course

D = 1 grade point per course

F = 0 grade point per course

Students whose GPAs are 2.0 (C) or higher are considered in “good academic standard” (EPCC, 2008, p. 12). **Persistence** is defined as a dichotomous variable indicating whether a student who

enrolled in fall 2003 as a degree seeking student re-enrolled or earned a certificate / degree in the consecutive spring 2004 semester (Andreu, 2002; Bers and Smith, 1991).

Additionally, student background characteristics in this study are defined as the following:

Enrollment status: The enrollment status will be computed as the number of academic credits for which a student is enrolled per semester. Students are considered full-time if they are registered for at least 12 semester hours. Students who enroll in fewer than 12 hours are considered part-time (EPCC, 2006).

Gender: A self-reported descriptor that defines an individual as a male or female (Bean and Metzner, 1987).

Parental educational status: Individuals who have at least one parent who has graduated from any form of post-secondary education are considered continuing-generation students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Conversely, any individual whose parent(s) has/have not graduate from any form of post-secondary education are considered first-generational (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Academically Disadvantaged. The academically disadvantaged consisted of those who did not have college entry level skills in reading, writing or math; or students who enrolled in remedial courses based on the results of institutional or state placement tests (THECB, 2010).

Economically Disadvantaged. Texas higher education institutions may use one or more of the following standards to determine whether an individual is economically disadvantaged: 1. Annual income at or below the federal poverty line; 2. Eligibility for Aid to Families with Dependent Children or other public assistance programs (includes WIC program participants); receipt of a state program of need-based financial aid assistance; 4 eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 or the Health and Humans Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines (THECB, 2010)

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): Those of LEP include all students who enrolled in LEP courses or who were determined based on a local placement test to be Limited English Proficient and in need of remediation (THECB, 2010).

First-Time-In-College Student (FTIC): A freshmen student entering any Texas public community college who has never attended any postsecondary institution.

Hispanic / Latino ethnicity: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (THECB, 2010).

Limitations of the Study

The study limitations arise from the location of the study and the nature of the sample. The data is collected from a state that offers in-state financial aid to undocumented immigrant students; and the sample used in the study is drawn from those who are recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as degree /certificate seeking Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in Texas community colleges. The researcher acknowledges that by limiting the sample to degree/ certificate seeking students enrolled in Texas community colleges districts in the fall 2003 – 2004 academic year, study findings will not be representative of the entire Texas higher education system or other U.S. or international postsecondary two-year institutions. Thus, students enrolled in different segments of higher education will not be included. Additionally considering community college persistence averages 50% from semester to semester and retention efforts are usually implemented on a semester to semester basis rather than an academic year to academic year , the research focus is limited to student persistence and success from semester-to-semester enrollment (fall 2003 – spring 04) (Elkins, Braxton, James, 2000; Riehl, 1994; SREB, 2003; Tinto 1988). The researcher understands that by collecting only two semesters of data this study will not address additional factors that may impact student persistence/success after the spring 2004 semester. The limitation is the result of attempting to work within existing resources and access to this particular population; and of attempting to examine the influences of financial aid and other factors on immigrant [undocumented] student success and persistence, which is identified through research as playing a vital role in the successful matriculation of students enrolled in higher education. Additionally, due to possibly obtaining “identifiable” undocumented student information from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the THECB declined to provide certain student characteristic information (i.e., age, employment status, dependency status, etc.). Therefore, these items could not be presented in the data or study. Further, the sample in this study consists of those who were required to self-report certain individual and background characteristics (such as age, parental education, gender, and social security numbers). Thus, individuals who did not self-report social security numbers were assigned pseudo numbers. Therefore, not all students identified as “undocumented Hispanic students” may be genuine Hispanic undocumented students.

Organization of the Study

The study contains five chapters. Chapter I provided an overall view into the nature and scope of the study by substantiating the research need, establishing a theoretical framework, enumerating the research questions, and describing the study limitations. Chapter II imparts a review of existing literature in three areas connected to the research topic: effects of financial aid and other factors on persistence and retention, state and federal financial aid policies in relation to financial aid and undocumented students, and the human capital theory from the economic theoretical perspective. Chapter III details the methodology of study in relationship to the research questions and the literature review. Chapter IV presents the analysis procedures and findings resulting from the analysis. Finally, Chapter V presents conclusions as it relates to the research questions, literature review, practical applications, and theoretical implications.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the enrollment of college students increases, the issue of retaining students continues to emerge as an area of concern (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Erisman & Looney, 2007). This section analyzes the literature related to the persistence and academic success of undocumented students in higher education. Specifically, the researcher will examine the literature pertaining to characteristics of undocumented individuals in the U.S. educational context, college student persistence, and college success.

The cost of attending a postsecondary institution can be insurmountable. According to Harklau (1998), most foreign born individuals, particularly the undocumented, lack the financial resources and academic preparation for college and have needs for remediation in the core curriculum and linguistics. They and other prospective students are encumbered with numerous expenditures and deficiencies such as educational charges, living costs, and limited income while attending college (St. John, 2003). Researchers consistently confirm that postsecondary educational expenditures are on the rise. For example, in the 2001-2002 academic year, the average tuition charged by four-year public and private postsecondary institutions respectively increased by 7.7 and 5.5 percent (\$3, 754.00 and \$17, 123.00) from the previous academic year (NCES, 2001). In that same academic year, two-year private and public institutions charged an average of \$7, 953.00 and \$1, 738.00, an increase of 5.5 percent and 5.8 percent (NCES, 2001).

Researchers illustrate that student aid has increased over the years (Heller, 1997; St. John, 1990; St. John & Noell, 1989; St. John & Starkey, 1995). However, according to Perry (2004), the primary benefactors of educational and financial subsidies have been those deemed as “legitimate benefactors of rights, privileges, and social goods” – those of legal U.S. residency and citizenry (p. 3). Of course, this can exclude a large percentage of the foreign-born population. As such, these policies are problematic because many foreign-born immigrant students have higher unmet financial need than the U.S. native undergraduate and are more likely to earn associates degrees or certificates rather than bachelor degrees (Erisman, & Looney, 2007).

Immigration and its impact on the US and the American Educational System

U. S. courts have endorsed the democratic value of equality by determining that foreign born individuals should be granted fundamental rights (Fowler, 2004). U. S. federal and state laws do not prohibit undocumented individuals from matriculating in the U.S. educational system. However, federal and state policies minimally assist in ensuring and improving undocumented individuals' access to educational opportunities (Biswas, 2005).

According to Fix, Passel, Enchautegui & Zimmermann (1994), foreign born immigrants experience economic and social difficulty in the U.S. In order to effectively compete in the U.S. and global economy, these individuals need to be equipped with higher skill and educational levels. Although the U.S. federal government has adopted policies that make it easier for foreign born students to afford to attend postsecondary institutions, only 20 percent of U.S. states have implemented policies that assist with the affordability of higher education for undocumented individuals.

One of the landmark decisions that has served as a catalyst in ushering foreign born undocumented individuals into the U.S. higher education system is *Plyer v. Doe*. In 1977, two years after the Texas Legislature revised its education laws to prohibit the enrollment of and use of state funds for foreign born undocumented immigrant children, a class action suit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the East District of Texas. This action challenged the state of Texas, the superintendent and members of the Tyler Independent School District for excluding school-aged "illegal immigrant" children from attending public schools in Smith County, Texas.

Superintendent Plyer and other school board members contended that Texas Statute 21.301 was designed as a financial measure to avoid the state's fiscal depletion. The District Court and eventually the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that public schools would alleviate additional costs associated with educating foreign born children. However, it held that the quality of public school curriculum would not depreciate because of the admittance of undocumented foreign born individuals. In turn, both Courts concluded that Texas Statute 21.301 had violated the Supremacy Clause, and that illegal [alien] immigrants were entitled to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyer v. Doe* that all children were assured access to public education in grades kindergarten through twelfth, regardless of immigrant and legal status. The Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that foreign born immigrant children were not ultimately responsible for being in the U.S. illegally, and therefore should not be

punished. The U.S. Supreme Court found that although education was not a fundamental right its denial was detrimental to the individual and society.

Plyer v. Doe allowed U.S. immigrant students to legally obtain a U.S. high school diploma. However, as U.S. states face an increased number of foreign born students graduating from high schools, *Plyer v. Doe* has not resolved whether the denial of undocumented students' access to higher education is unlawful. Since 2001, only 10 U.S. states have passed laws allowing foreign born undocumented students to pay in-state tuition (Biswas, 2005; National Immigration Law Center, 2006). These laws require foreign born undocumented individuals to attend a school in a specific state for a certain number of years; graduate from high school in that specific state; and sign an affidavit stating that they either applied to legalize their status or will do so as soon as eligible (National Immigration Law Center, 2006). Moreover, federal laws such as Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act of 1996 prohibit foreign born undocumented students from benefiting from federal assistance programs, allowing most U.S. public postsecondary institutions to deny foreign born undocumented students admission and charge out-of-state tuition (Biswas, 2005; National Immigration Law Center, 2006).

U.S. State Policies and their response to Foreign Born Students in Higher Education

According to Coleman (2000), one of the most important developments in the economics of education in the 20th century has been the concept of human capital. Coined by Becker in 1964, human capital is identified as the resources which are embodied in people and are capable of generating income. Becker (1962) posited “human capital is an investment of activities that influences potential income through imbedding resources in people” (p.9). Investments include, but are not limited to, knowledge, intrapersonal skills, and training. Although investments can differ in amount, size of return, and effects on earnings and consumption, they [investments] make possible the attainment of certain items, such as social status and wealth that would otherwise not be possible to obtain (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 2000; Portes, 2002).

In more developed countries, human capital investments, such as knowledge and education, are the sources of increased success (i.e., social position and/or earnings) (Aukrust, 1971; Becker, 1976; Schultz, 1961). Whereas human capital can be measured by individual achievement, it can also be measured by parents' educational attainment and socio-economic

status – variables that often aid increased success (Coleman, 2000). Providing the foundation for establishing education as an investment, the concept of human capital embraces the ideas that (1) individuals benefit from the economic returns of their investment in education; and (2) individuals would pursue higher education if the benefits outweighed the cost of obtaining an education (Becker, 1964; Becker, 1993).

Higher education is an economic benefit that assists in stabilizing the U.S. economy. Attending college and successfully completing a degree program provides private economic and social benefits, as well as public benefits (Institute for Higher Education, 1998; Perna, 2003). Public economic benefits are those that have an overall effect on the labor markets, and result in the improvement of the national economy (Institute for Higher Education, 1998). These benefits include greater productivity, reduced crime rates, increased consumption and charitable giving, increased tax revenues and workforce flexibility, and decreased reliance on government financial support (Institute for Higher Education, 1998).

Specially, Thurow (1970) found that the productivity of an individual did not depend solely on his/her motivation, ability, or passion for his/her work, but depended on the amount invested in him/her. Legislators invest in human capital as producers and promoters of public goods (Thurow, 1970). However, in view of the fact that the U.S. federal government requires states to render educational, health, and social services to the foreign born population, the immigration influx has resulted in states continuously seeking reimbursements from the U.S. federal government for these provisions (Espenshade, 1995). Under these circumstances, some U.S. states have not implemented laws that would possibly enhance the access of educational opportunities for foreign born undocumented individuals. For example, in 2003 Virginia and Florida legislators introduced and passed supportive legislation for the foreign born undocumented population to gain access to higher education (Biswas, 2005). Yet, due to fiscal constraints, the states' governors vetoed the legislation, barring foreign born undocumented students from receiving financial assistance and/or being admitted to the states' public postsecondary institutions (Biswas, 2005).

Educational attainment is essential when competing in the economic market (St. John, 2003). U.S. state and federal governments can assist with removing barriers to access for foreign born undocumented individuals interested in enrolling in higher education (Biswas, 2005). One

of the leading states that has been considered an advocate for foreign born immigrant access to higher education has been Texas (Biswas, 2005).

According to Biswas (2005), “Texas has been a pioneer in adopting policies that make it easier for foreign born undocumented students who graduate from Texas high schools to afford to attend a Texas public college or university” (p. 3). In 1999, local community college governing boards within the Dallas Community College District (DCCD) began receiving applications from undocumented foreign born high school graduates. Unfortunately, DCCD could not retain this population due to the fact that foreign born undocumented students could not afford to pay of out-of-state tuition (Biswas, 2005). To increase the retention rate of this population, DCCD decided to allow foreign born undocumented students who graduated from Texas high schools to pay in-state tuition rates and create a scholarship applicable to foreign born undocumented students (Biswas, 2005). In 2000, State Representative Rick Noriega took the lead on this initiative by introducing Texas House Bill 1403 (H.B. 1403, 77th Legl, Reg. Sess. Tex. 2001). Currently, this statewide initiative enacted into law in June 2001 and later revamped and renamed the Senate Bill (S.B.) 1528 has increased the enrollment of foreign born students in postsecondary education (Biswas, 2005; H.B. 1403, 77th, Legl, Reg. Sess. Tex.2001).

Foreign Born Individuals in the Educational Context

PK – 12 Education

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), the number of children in the United States whose parents are immigrants is expected to grow from 5.1 million to 9.1 million in 2010. In 2003, Fix and Passel reported that approximately 1.6 million children (under the age of 18) residing in the U.S. were foreign born. These data suggest that the increased immigrant populace will continue to necessitate a reorganization and restructuring of the American educational system.

As the number of immigrants continues to steadily increase, the issue of retaining immigrant students in the U.S. educational system continues to remain an area of concern. Research indicates that the retention rate of foreign-born students is significantly less than U.S. native-born students (Erisman & Looney, 2007; NCES, 2002). Although immigrants comprise about one-tenth of the U.S. population ages 16 through 24, they account for one-quarter of the dropouts in this age group (Erisman & Looney, 2007). In fact, NCES (2000) reported that the

dropout rate of 29.1 percent for immigrants ages 16 through 24 was nearly three times the rate of 9.9 percent of those born in the United States.

In 2003, foreign-born naturalized citizens were 10.8 percent more likely to have graduated from a U.S. high school than noncitizens (Larsen, 2004). However, according to Erisman & Looney (2007), almost two-thirds of immigrants obtain no more than a high school education. Studies indicate that these individuals most times shy away from continuing their education because they are under-prepared academically, and/or are hindered by limited English speaking abilities and socio-economic status – thereby reducing their chances of entering into higher education (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

Postsecondary Education

Moreover, according to Zhou (1997), since the 1980s, children of immigrants have become the fastest growing and the most ethnically diverse segment of the U.S. child population. As such, immigrants have been younger in age and have been more prone to be school-bound (Gray & Vernez, 1996). According to the Urban Institute, about 65,000 undocumented foreign born individuals graduate from U.S. secondary schools (Fix, Passel, Enchautegui, & Zimmermann, 1994). Yet, among this group, only 5 to 10 percent actually attend college (Fix & Passel, 2003). Although the overall percentage of undocumented foreign born students who graduate from high school is relatively small, postsecondary institutions continuously explore new ways to facilitate institutional access and academic success, as well as ensure equal opportunities for social and career mobility for this particular population (Laden, 2004).

The Community College Setting

Access to higher education is essential for the economic success of foreign-born individuals, as well as the U.S. and global economy (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998). The U.S. higher education system not only functions as a catalyst for providing most individuals with social and economic opportunities, but serves as an agent of continuous global economic competitiveness (Perna, 2003). One of those acting agents in higher education that provides the most substantial access to higher education is the community college (Bailey, & Weininger, 2002; Canonica, 2002).

Community colleges are designed to provide open-access to all citizens and represent

higher education's commitment to democracy (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). They strategically evolved as a result of an institutional response to students' needs and to better serve the changing population (Brilliant, 2000; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Cross, 1981). With community colleges being more affordable and conveniently located than most four-year institutions, and catering more to the non-traditional and adult population, it is feasible to conclude that community colleges appeal to the educational needs of foreign born immigrant students (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002).

Szelenyi and Chang (2002) suggested that community colleges are the largest and most vital gateway into American higher education. Community colleges offer developmental, occupational, and English as second language courses that according to Canonica (2002) diversify their student body population. In January 2008 the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) reported that almost half of all undergraduate students were educated by community colleges, contributing to the enrollment of 11.5 million students enrolled in the 2007 – 2008 academic year. Additionally, the AASCU (2008) reported that community colleges enrolled 55 percent of all Hispanic and Native American students, 46 percent of Asian / Asian Pacific Islander students, and 46 percent of all African American students enrolled in postsecondary institutions.

Numerous studies indicate that community colleges play a vital role in educating foreign-born individuals and provide them an opportunity to participate in the U.S. higher education system (Chase & Mahoney, 1996; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Verneze, Abrahamse, & Quigley, 1996). For example, Verneze, Abrahamse, & Quigley, (1996) found that immigrant students, especially Hispanics, were 10 percent more likely than their native born counterparts to begin and complete their postsecondary education at community colleges. In 1995, the AACC requested 1,154 two-year colleges to provide information on the number of immigrant and international students (legal permanent residents, undocumented individuals and refugees) enrolled in their programs (Chase & Mahoney, 1996). Of the 624 institutions that responded, 476 cumulatively reported a total of 164,000 immigrant and international student enrollment (Chase & Mahoney, 1996). Results of this study indicated that the majority of foreign born students were enrolled in California, Florida, Maryland, Texas, Washington, and New York community colleges, constituting about 73,000 foreign born U.S. residents (Chase & Mahoney, 1996).

Summary

In sum, immigration has dramatically impacted the U.S. in immeasurable ways. Currently, research suggests that the American higher education system has been more accessible to the undocumented segment of the U.S. population, than in past centuries (Chase & Mahoney, 1996; Verneze, Abrahamse, & Quigley, 1996). This can be attributed to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Plyer v. Doe, and other legislative proponents of equal access in postsecondary institutions. Although foreign-born individuals, particularly the undocumented, are more prone to enroll in community colleges, they often face challenges that can impede their program of study completion. It is indeed important to assist in ushering the undocumented population in the American higher education system and promoting a competitive global economy, as well as facilitating a program of study completion.

College Student Persistence

Higher education administrators have been drawn to implement programs and services with the objective of increasing student retention. Currently, there are several models that depict how students matriculate successfully through institutions of higher education (Hu and St. John, 2001; Spady, 1971; St. John, 1990; Tinto, 1975). To provide a theoretical foundation for this study, the researcher will discuss the importance of examining semester to semester retention data; and present several models of college student persistence relating to integration, financial assistance, and precollegial variables.

Semester to Semester Retention Data and Persistence

“The freshmen year is the pivotal time for postsecondary students’ success” (Southern Regional Education Board - SREB, 2003, p.1). According to Riehl (1994), one of the measurements used to determine the success of a cohort is the first year retention rate. Specifically, what percentage of the class returns for a consecutive academic term. Researchers have attributed student persistence and success to variables such as social integration, student background characteristics, institutional commitment, and institutional type (Elkins, Braxton, and James, 2000; Feldman, 1993; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini, 2004; Tinto,

1975). The type of an institution and student background characteristics are particularly important considering some students achieve better academically and socially in various institutions than others. For example Tinto (1975) suggested that public institutions (particularly two-year institutions) tended to have higher dropout rates than others. He attributed this concept to the institutional selection process, quality and size of the institution, and institutional commitment (Tinto, 1975; U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

In 1991, the Department of Education established that the best predictor of student persistence was the admissions selectivity. That is, colleges and universities with higher admission standards tended to have the higher retention rates because they were more prone to admit better academically prepared students (Riehl, 1994). Accordingly, community colleges are accessible to anyone interested in continuing his/her educational tenure. Unlike four-year postsecondary institutions, they enroll students not on predisposed criterion, but on the premise of accessibility. As such, two-year colleges are more prone to accept those who are more than likely to dropout during their first year of enrollment (Elkins, Braxton, and James, 2000; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1988).

Early studies (American College Testing Program, 2001; Clark, 1960; Thornton, 1966) found that more than 40% of community college freshmen did not re-enroll for their second year in any institution of higher education. Similarly, the SREB (2003) reported that “55 percent of the fall 1998 class of first-time, full-time, degree or certificate-seeking students left the public two-year college at which they first enrolled and had not transferred to another institution” (p.1). And, that about half of those who did leave left within or during their first academic year (SREB, 2003). Moreover, Tinto, Russo, and Kadel (1994) discovered that only one-third of first-time-in-college full-time students earn associates degrees. More recently, Fike and Fike (2008) quantitatively investigated several potential predictors of first year student retention at a public urban Texas community college. This study identified first-time in college (FTIC) students who first enrolled in fall 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 semesters (n = 9,200). Data collected on these students included the following: internet-based courses taken, financial aid received, parents’ educational status, number of semester hours enrolled and dropped, age, ethnicity, gender, student services received, and developmental programs registered. Analysis of the data indicated the following demographics: 56% female, 66% Hispanic with a median age of 19; 12 (average) semester hours enrolled; 99.8% enrolled in less than 20 semester hours; two-thirds of students

enrolled in developmental mathematics; 27% enrolled in developmental reading; 60% received financial aid; one-fourth had one or more parent to obtain some college level education; and one-third enrolled in internet classes. The study also found that approximately one-third of the FTIC students who enrolled in fall did not re-enroll at the same institution; and more than one-half of the FTIC students who enrolled in the fall did not enroll in the subsequent fall semesters. Using a multivariate analysis approach, Fike and Fike (2008) determined that the number of semester hours enrolled in the first fall semester was a positive predictor of persistence. However, gender and ethnicity were not significant predictors of retention. Specifically, the analysis depicted that additional positive predictors of fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention were passing a developmental reading course, taking Internet course, participating in the Student Support Services program, not taking a developmental reading course, passing a developmental mathematics course, receiving financial aid, father having some college education, and student age.

Essentially, retention rates, particularly in the first year, remain a “hot ticket item” for colleges and universities. Student departure affects students as well as higher education institutions. It is critical to examine first year persistence data, particularly in community colleges, considering that community colleges educate approximately half of those enrolled in higher education, have less stringent admission standards, tend to enroll the underrepresented and/or underserved populations, and have an open door policy (Cohen and Brawer, 2003).

Demographic and Matriculation Factors Related to Persistence

Individuals participate in the American higher education system embraced with various characteristics that have the potential to influence departure decisions and degree attainment. As a result, numerous researchers have examined a myriad of factors that could potentially best predict college student persistence (Allen and Nora, 1005; Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980; Berger and Lyon, 2005; Bers and Smith, 1991; Bui, 2002; Pascarella, et. Al, 2004; Pike and Kuh, 2005). Persistence indicators are not necessarily attributed to institutional climate or culture, but as a result of the intrinsic nature of the student (e.g. age, gender, and ethnicity) and other pre matriculation and academic variables (e.g. parental educational status). By examining such factors as these, higher education administrators can be better attuned and equipped to address the needs of their homogenous student populations.

Parental Education. Although parental educational status has been proven to influence a

program of study completion, currently, there has been minimal research conducted in the area of first generation, Hispanic undocumented college students and the factors that influence their successful matriculation. While researchers have investigated the characteristics of first generation college students, there have been few studies attempting to associate the personal characteristics of first generation Hispanic undocumented college students with college success and persistence (Bui, 2002; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

First generation students (FGs) are often identified as those whose parents have not attended college or graduated from college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). These individuals tend to be non-white, Hispanic, female, working full-time, have lower educational aspirations and self esteem, and older in comparison to their counterparts (Brown, Santiago, & Lopez, 2003; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Choy (2001) reported that since 1995, first generation students have comprised 53 percent of the students in two-year colleges and 34 percent of students in four-year institutions. Moreover, in 2007, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) estimated that about 15.9 percent of college students were categorized as first generation college students, with the Hispanic population remaining the most likely group to be first generation college students (38.2 percent) at four-year colleges.

Undocumented foreign-born Hispanic students are more likely to be first generation college students as well. As indicated, first generation students tend to be non-white, minority individuals residing in the U.S. These foreign born students come from areas, such as Latin America, Asia, and Africa, that would warrant them being defined as “minority” once they enter into U.S. territory (Gonzales, 2007). Additionally, Erisman & Looney (2007) and Fix & Passel (2003) suggested that almost 23 percent of foreign-born immigrants obtain no more than a high school education; and that this particular population is prone to have children under the age of 18. This research implicates that foreign-born individuals who obtain no more than a high school diploma, are likely to have children who will compose of the 5 to 10 percent of foreign born individuals who attend college (Fix & Passel, 2003).

Several studies have indicated that first generation college students tend to be at risk for numerous reasons (Bui, 2002; Inman & Mayes, 1999; Ishitani, 2006; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Tinto, 1993). For example, Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) found that first generation students typically took fewer credit hours, studied

fewer hours per week, took fewer humanities and fine arts classes, had lower levels of parental support and income, and lacked knowledge about the postsecondary setting than did their counterparts.

In a more recent study, Ishitani (2006) also found that first generation students showed higher risks of attrition than did their continuing-generation counterparts. Utilizing transcript data provided by the NCES, Ishitani (2006) discovered that first generation students were 8.5 times more likely to have withdrawn; and that “they faced the highest risk of departure during their second year” (p. 866). With similar results as Ishitani (2006), Bui (2002) examined the background characteristics of first generation college students at a four-year university, their reasons for entering higher education, and their first year experience as compared to their counterparts. She recruited 205 students enrolled as freshmen in the third quarter of their first year at the University California, Los Angeles (UCLA) to participate in her study. Sixty-four students were first generation college students recruited from the Program of Learning to Undergraduate Success (PLUS). The remaining 143 students were recruited from the UCLA introductory psychology participant pool and comprised the comparison group in her study. Findings indicated that first generation college students were likely to be the “ethnic minority,” speak a language other than English at home, and score lower on the SAT than their counterparts (Bui, 2002). Moreover, the results indicated that FGs differed in their reasons for attending college and in their overall first year experiences, as compared to those in the comparison group. Whereas those in the comparison group attended college because of familial influence, first generation college students attended college to gain respect and status, bring honor to their families, and financially assist their families upon completion of a degree program. Furthermore, while matriculating in college, first generation college students reported that they felt less prepared, worried more about financial assistance, were less familiar with the social component of the environment, expressed a lower level of self assurance when making decisions about college, and feared failing in college more than those in the comparison group.

Gender. Women are increasingly bombarding the American higher education system. According to Lamb and Brady (2005) women of all demographics enroll in colleges and universities more often than their male counterparts. In fact in 2005, 57 percent of Bachelor’s degrees were conferred to women in the U.S. (American Council on Education, 2005). This phenomenon can be attributed to many facets of life. Considering the stability of the economy,

increased costs of living, escalating divorce rates, job loss, death, or career limitations, women have been more inclined to participate in higher education (Johnson, Schwartz and Bower, 2000).

Although women participate in higher education at alarming numbers, the roles of a female student can be challenging and conflicting in nature. Women tend to be the primary caregivers of those in the household. They often find difficulty in juggling familial and academic obligations, therefore increasing their probability of being more likely to withdraw (Bradburn, 2002). For example, in 2000, Johnson, Schwarz and Bower attempted to identify major sources of stress for adult women in higher education. Surveying 350 adult female students enrolled at a public community college, they discovered that child care concerns were the greatest source of stress, followed by health concerns. Similarly, Johnson (1996) reported that females were twice as likely to report experiencing familial or personal issues during enrollment. In 2004, Zhai and Monzon found that of the first time in college students who withdrew in fall 2000, the proportion of female students' departure was higher than males.

Of course, not all researchers have similar opinions concerning the impact of gender on persistence. Other studies have suggested that gender has no significant impact on college student persistence. According to Leppel (2002), utilizing the NCES data and logit analysis, the impact of persistence among men and women were similar. Characteristics such as marriage, age, hours worked had significantly negative impact on both women's and men's persistence. Additionally, she discovered that g.p.a., family income, being more integrated into the college experience, and being Asian had significantly positive impacts on persistence for both men and women. Similarly, Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005) utilizing data from the NCES, found no significant difference in completion rates in terms of gender.

Ethnicity. The growing diversity of the American higher education student body is phenomenal. Colleges and universities are continuously becoming more ethnically diverse and multicultural. However, although individuals come from all walks of life creating the melting pot in American higher education system, persistence and graduation rates between minorities and whites are vast in nature (Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach, 2005; NCES, 2005; Opp, 2002; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1998; Szelenyi, 2001).

In a recent study conducted in a Southeastern state, Li (2008) examined the relationship between student persistence, financial aid and other student characteristics to include gender,

race, class level, student type, high school and college g.p.a., standardized test scores, type of institution, and monetary amounts (i.e., loans, scholarships, unmet need, work study). The descriptive analysis entailed the following about the sample study: 89 percent enrolled in research universities; 52 percent white; 59 percent female ; 88 percent FTIC; 3.56 average GPA; 2.56 average college g.p.a. ; 20.4 average age; 1, 000 average family income; average SAT score 11.20.78; 12 percent transfer or early admitted; an average unmet need was 3, 488; and the average amount of monetary gain (scholarships, loans, work-study, grants) was 1952.60.

This study was unique in nature. The researcher intended to include all first time in college students who enrolled in 11 of the state's public universities in fall 2005. However, considering that the state's financial aid database only provided information concerning those students who actually received financial aid, undergraduate students who did not apply or receive financial aid were exempt from this study. Utilizing a logistic regression, Li (2008) found that students who were male, minority, older, and enrolled in research universities were less likely to persist as compared to their counterparts; and academic variables such as high school and college GPAs had significant effects on persistence.

Specifically in community colleges, although they are the leading enrollment agents of minority students, the graduation rates of minorities are not comparable to the rates of their enrollment (Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach, 2005). For example, the NCES (2005) reported that of the 550,000 degrees awarded in U.S. community colleges, over 65 percent were earned by white students. Many researchers have differed regarding the reasons for this disparity. Some have attributed the escalating attrition rate to institutional and environmental barriers (Opp, 2002; Seidman, 2005). While others have attributed the increased dropout rate to cultural values and belief systems (Larimore and McClellan, 2005; Szeleny, 2001; Tinto, 1993). Apart from the source of the disproportional rates of minority retention, research conducted in community colleges and other postsecondary institutions find that race is one of the most vital indicators of persistence (Bailey et. al, 2005; Hawley and Harris, 2005; Opp, 2002; Szelenyi, 2001; Tinto, 1993; Zhai and Monzon, 2004). Minorities tend to have the lowest completion rates, substandard persistence rates, and highest attrition rates, as compared to their white counterparts.

Age. Colleges and universities are continuously enrolling a diverse cohort of students. Participants of higher education are not only ethnically enriched, but are mature in age as well. Adults are enrolling in increasing increments in the American higher education system. Some

participate as FTIC students; while others return to college due to job loss, to enhance skills, employment promotion, or leisure.

In 2006, a survey conducted by Merrill Lynch indicated that 71% of Americans age 25 – 70 preferred to continue working past their retirement age. For the purpose of reaching this goal and continuing to increase their employability, additional education is essential. That is, those with higher levels of education are more likely to possess the necessary skills and training needed to compete in the job market. However, with age accompanies responsibility (Byun, 2000; Samuels, 2006; Tinto, 1993). Generally, the adult student is a full-time employed, part-time enrolled mother who lives off-campus, often finding it tedious to manage familial responsibilities, academic course requirements, and employment tasks (Byun, 2000; Zhai and Monzon, 2001). Because of ample and sometimes overwhelming responsibilities, factors that influence the adult students' persistence differ from those who are considered traditional-aged students (Bean and Metzner, 1985).

Results of studies conducted on age differences in persistence and retention have varied. Several studies have indicated that older students are more likely to withdraw than younger students, due to class scheduling, lack of child care, funding, or lack of awareness of available services (Bean and Metzner, 1985; Byun, 2000; Hagedorn, 2005; NCES, 2005). Other researchers found a positive relationship between age, g.p.a., and persistence in college (Cofer and Somers, 2000; Dulaney, 1997; Owen, 2003). In 2004, Zhai and Monzon found that 45 percent of students under the age of 25 were more likely to withdraw during the first semester. Conversely, in 2001, these same researcher surveyed students who had withdrawn from the San Diego Community College District during fall 2000 and did not return spring 2001 (Zhai and Monzon, 2001). They found that students who withdrew during the semester tended to be female, older, part or full time workers; and discovered that students who did not persist in the following semester tended to be younger, employed, had higher incomes, and higher GPAs.

Integration and College Persistence

As aforementioned, college persistence is influenced by a variety of factors (Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1988). One of the many variables that contribute to student departure is institutional integration. Integration is a process in which individuals attempt to establish

membership (Tinto, 1993). According to researchers (Spady, 1951; Tinto, 1975) after a student moves away from past norms and behaviors of previous association, he/she is faced with establishing competent memberships within the campus environment. Because some students are not able to establish “competent intellectual and social memberships” in the campus community, they eventually withdraw from postsecondary institutions (Tinto, 1988, p. 447).

Emile Durkheim’s suicide theory is one of the most widely referenced theories applied to social integration and persistence in higher education. Consistent with academic integration, social integration has been found to influence student persistence in postsecondary institutions, particularly among the minority and disadvantaged populations (Alon, 2007; Spady, 1951; Tinto, 1971).

In 1951, Durkheim presented four types of suicide – egotistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic – while investigating social suicide rates and the variation of suicide among groups and social categories (Durkheim, 1951; Pope, 1976). Durkheim proposed that the incidence of suicide among individuals in specific social environments (i.e., married men, divorced persons, soldiers, Catholics, etc.) depended upon two explanatory variables – regulation and integration (Breault & Barkey, 1982; Durkheim, 1951; Pope, 1976). He contended that when either integration or regulation was high or low, suicide rates escalated; and when both were moderate, suicide rates were low (Durkheim, 1951). That is, as the level of integration fluctuated, individuals detached themselves from their social community; allowed their goals to supersede those of the social community; depended less upon the group or “social community;” and considered their own private interests (Durkheim, 1951; Durkheim, 2006).

Students enroll in postsecondary institutions with various characteristics. These characteristics have a tendency to influence (1) students’ decisions to persist or withdraw; and (2) how students integrate into their social and academic environments (Tinto, 1975). Once students withdraw from colleges or universities, they may decide never to return to postsecondary institutions. This decision does not only affect individuals and higher education institutions, but the societal welfare. One of the first theoretical models to specifically address student persistence was developed by Spady in 1970.

Spady utilized Durkheim’s (1951) suicide theory to apply to student attrition. Similarly to Durkheim, Spady shared the premise that influence of social integration on college retention was based on a cause-effect relationship. Characteristics such as economic status, ability,

academic performance, family background, and institutional commitment were identified by Spady as influential in determining the probability of college student retention.

More specifically, Spady (1971) developed a conceptual framework that emphasized the interaction between students' characteristics and the college environment. Spady (1971) proposed that during the interaction a student's attributes (skills, values, institutional commitment, etc.) were exposed to norms of a college environment (staff, students, faculty). If the student and the campus environment were congruent in norms, then the student would assimilate more successfully academically and socially, thereby increasing his/her chances of persistence (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Spady, 1971).

Spady (1971) analyzed survey responses collected in a longitudinal study of University of Chicago freshmen enrolled in the cohort of 1965 through 1970. The participants varied by gender, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, and high school ranking. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were female, 33 percent ranked in the upper two percent of their graduating high school cohort, and 66 percent scored above the 90 percentile on the SAT. Results indicated that student departure was impacted by various factors, including gender, high academic achievement, integration, and interpersonal needs.

Building upon Spady's (1971) theoretical foundation, and Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide, Tinto (1975), developed a theoretical model in response to increased rates of college student dropout. In 1951, Durkheim found that people who were not socially and normatively integrated into their existing societal structure were more prone to have suicidal tendencies. For this reason, Tinto believed that inadequate social integration and commitment into the collegial environment could result in increased attrition, just as the lack of appropriate integration would result in increased suicidal behavior (Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon, 2004). Although Tinto (1975) found Durkheim's (1951) suicide theory to be synonymous to the collegial environment, he deemed Durkheim's theory insufficient for describing longitudinal dropout behavior. In 1975, using Durkheim's suicidal theoretical framework (as Spady had done in 1970), Tinto proposed that students' individual characteristics such as gender, race / ethnicity, pre-college schooling experiences, and family background, contributed to their departure decision, institutional commitment, and completion of a program of study.

Moreover, Tinto (1993) proposed a similar study to Spady (1971), but more extensive model of student persistence. In addition to social integration and commitment, he examined

students' personal intentions and external commitments as they related to persistence. The model proposed that student intentions and external commitments to families, employment, and peer networks also had a direct impact on students' goals and institutional commitments. Thus postulating that the more attention students placed on their external commitments, the less likely they were to be retained and continue toward completion of a program of study (Tinto, 1993).

Financial Aid and College Persistence

For decades student persistence has been a continuous area of concern for postsecondary institutions. Numerous studies have examined several important characteristics that influence student persistence in higher education (Allen & Nora, 1995; Alon, 2007; Bean, 1980; Hu & St. John, 2001; Nora, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Spady, 1970; St. John, 1994; Tinto, 1975). One of the characteristics that has identified as influencing student persistence is financial assistance. In a study by Nora(1990), numerous forms of financial aid (e.g. National Direct Student Loans, Student Opportunity Grants, and College Work Study) were examined to determine their influence on college student persistence. This longitudinal study involved 170 first-time-in college Chicano students enrolled in a south Texas two-year institution, between fall 1982 and summer 1985. All exogenous and endogenous variables, and the dependent variable (retention) were collected from students' files and transcripts. Multiple indicators were used to provide a measure for three of the following constructs: "campus-based resources," retention, and "non-based campus resources." Three single item indicators (Campus Work Study, National Direct Student Loan, and Student Educational Opportunity Grant) were used to measure the construct "campus-based resources." The total number of hours earned by the end of summer 1985, total number of semesters enrolled by the end of the study period, and credentials earned were utilized to measure the "retention" construct. Finally, the "financial need" construct represented a measure of each student's relative cost to attend college, by computing the difference between student or family resources and the individual's college costs. Utilizing student background characteristics in addition to the aforementioned constructs, Nora (1990) reported that all forms of financial assistance, campus and non-campus based resources, positively influenced college student persistence at four-year residential institutions. In fact, both campus and non-campus based resources were found to have an even larger influence in the retention process than students' high school grades and cumulative grade point averages at the

two-year institution. Findings indicated that Hispanic college students were withdrawing from higher education because of academic deficiencies, but largely because of financial reasons. Although he found that financial assistance was positively associated with persistence for Hispanic students, evidence illustrated that the results may have varied among student populations and higher education institutions, such as proprietary, distance learning, commuter, private, four-year, and public (Nora, 1990). In 1992 Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda developed a model of persistence based on college students attending a large public urban commuter college. The sample consisted of 466 college students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Utilizing a longitudinal research design, Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1992) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between financial aid and student integration, and found that financial aid, employment, and integration significantly related to persistence and commitment to stay in college. Essentially, as students received financial aid, the less likely they were to find employment, and the more socially integrated they became in the college environment.

One of the principal investigators of the relationship between student aid and persistence is Edward P. St. John. In a quantitative study, Hu & St. John (2001) attempted to examine student persistence and the impact of financial aid. More specifically, utilizing the Indiana Commission for Higher Education's Student Information System (ICHE- SIS), they selected three cohorts (1990 – 91, 1993 – 94, and 1996 - 97) of full-time undergraduate students enrolled in Indiana's public four-year institutions. Although the effects varied across academic years and racial/ethnic groups, the researchers found that recipients of one of three financial aid packages (grants only, loans only, or grants and loans) were more likely to persist than non-aid recipients. Moreover, during the academic years 1990 -1991 and 1996 – 1997, Hispanics, African Americans, and Whites persisted better than non-aid recipients.

Specifically in community colleges, researchers Lanni (1997), Makuakane-Drechsel and Hagedorn (2000), and Stolar (1991) contend that students who receive financial assistance are more likely to persist than those who do not receive financial aid. Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn (2000) examined Hawaiian students' persistence at four community colleges on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Utilizing the University of Hawaii Community College Student Tracking System and financial aid information from the Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate (KSBE), their study covered the fall 1991 cohort of first-time students over a 5-year 10-semester

period (through spring 1996); and systematically examined factors promoting persistence pursuing liberal arts or vocational-technical degrees. The study comprised of 547 students, with 235 students enrolled in liberal arts programs, 312 pursuing vocational-technical degrees, and approximately 7.7% between the ages of 17 and 24. Using a logistic regression analysis, the researchers found that roughly four to six variables were significant in predicting student persistence in both disciplines. Cumulative GPA, receipt of financial aid, average credit hours, and enrollment on a specific campus were common variables positively influencing the persistence of those enrolled in vocational technology courses and those enrolled in liberal arts colleges. Additional variables associated with increased student persistence at liberal arts colleges were location of high school, and previous four-year institution experience (reverse transfer). However, unlike liberal arts students, vocational-technology students who attended Campus 4 did not have a positive persistence correlation.

Lanni (1997) conducted a longitudinal study and attempted to identify factors associated with student success at a large Eastern community college. The relatively moderate sample included those enrolled as first-time-in-college students in fall 1990. Comparing 522 American Black students to 893 American White students, he found that among the students who were successful Black male students (22%) more frequently received financial aid than did their White male counterparts (6%) – indicating financial aid as possibly having a greater impact on Black students as compared to White students. Similarly, Stolar (1991) investigated potential variables such as demographic characteristics, academic grades, etc. as they related to the persistence of nontraditional aged students (between the ages of 25 – 55 years). The study was conducted at Cumberland County College where the student demographics were as followed: predominately female, 35 years of age, white, married with children, and enrolled and employed part-time. Stolar (1991) deemed this study of importance because in the 1990-91 academic year, only 33% of students returned the following spring semester. Of those who did not re-enroll, the most frequently cited reasons for not returning were financial constraints, parenthood, and conflicting job hours.

Financial aid is one of the many fundamental variables that can influence student persistence in any institutional type. That is, it can be a major predictor a program of study completion. Aforementioned studies demonstrate that the lack of financial aid can delay the program of study for students regardless of their background characteristics. Accordingly, the

receipt of financial aid helps to improve student retention because it assists students in their financial hardships and promotes college student success.

Summary

Several studies have indicated that student persistence can be influenced by a myriad of factors. Some demographic factors include ethnicity, age, gender, and parental education. And, other factors include successful integration and the allocation of financial aid. Although results of studies differ in terms of findings, most researchers can agree that the examination of influential factors on persistence is a continuous exploratory process. This study is unique considering the sample source – Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in community colleges. Participants in postsecondary education are not homogenous in nature. Individuals of all backgrounds are continuously enrolling in American higher education. Therefore, it is a necessity to identify student characteristics and other variables that may help facilitate a program of study completion.

College Success

As the enrollment of college students increases, college success continues to emerge as an area of concern. Typically individuals are accepted into postsecondary institutions based on their grade point averages (GPAs), community service hours, and/or national exam scores. However, after these individuals become official “college students,” they sometimes lack the necessary traits and skills needed to complete their program of study.

Many college students face numerous demands that could influence their success in college. They are expected to be self-motivated, financially responsible, globally aware, and self-sufficient. Often, these added roles and responsibilities can be difficult, intimidating, overwhelming, and even unmanageable when attempting to transition into the higher education environment and campus climate. Previous studies (Foster, 1998; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Tinto, 1975; Wolfe & Johnson, 1995) have interpreted and measured college success in various ways. Student integration, high school performance, parental educational level and socioeconomic status, and other non-cognitive variables are just some of the components linked to increased college success (Foster, 1998; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Ting & Robinson, 1998; Tracey & Sedlacek (1982). In 1982, Tracey and Sedlacek attempted to predict academic success by race by using non-cognitive variables. They recruited 573 incoming freshmen enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park. Using the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) –

developed by Sedlacek and Brooks in 1976, the researchers were able to examine seven non-cognitive dimensions – positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understanding of and ability to deal with racism, preference for long-range goals over short-term or immediate needs, availability of a strong support person, successful leadership experience, and demonstrated community service. The study results indicated that for Whites, non-cognitive dimensions were strongly related to grade point average; whereas for blacks, only two (positive self concept and realistic self-appraisal) of the seven non-cognitive variables were related to grade point average. Additionally, the variables that were directly related to college persistence for blacks were support, community service, and positive self-concept. Specifically, the ability to ask for support when needed, and the availability of community service experiences positively related to staying in college (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976).

In 2003, Pritchard and Wilson designed a study to identify the relationship between emotional and social factors and student success. To determine the relationship they sought to examine the impact of student emotional health and stress on student GPA and retention. They recruited 218 students attending a private Midwestern university to participate in the study (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). The majority of participants were White Americans, ranging in age from 18 to 30 years (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). This study required the participants to self-report their demographic variables and intent to drop-out, and to self-report their emotional health, level of perfectionism, self-esteem, and alcoholic behaviors utilizing likert-type scale questionnaires (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). To examine the relationships between the dependent variable and 9 independent variables, multiple logistic regressions were used. Using several measurements (demographic variables, emotional and social health, self-esteem, perfectionism, affective states, and alcoholic behaviors) the researchers were able to determine that emotional and social factors influenced GPA, and emotional factors influenced attrition (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

Summary

Choosing a college or university is one of the most paramount decisions an individual makes. The cost of attending a postsecondary institution can have a profound effect on students and/or their parents. State governments attempt to ensure access to higher education and lessen financial burdens by offering need or merit based financial aid to students enrolled in colleges and universities. However, most states only offer financial or educational assistance to native

U.S. citizens. Currently, educational attainment is the essential conduit of globally competing in the market (St. John, 2003). Unfortunately, policies and laws enacted by state legislators impinge on immigrants or foreign born individuals achieving their “American dream” – that of hope, financial stability and security, and the pursuit of wealth, liberty and happiness.

The undocumented immigrant segment of the higher education population requires the understanding of the influences that can attribute to a successful graduation and matriculation. In the higher education field, numerous demographic and personal factors have been associated with academic success and persistence (Bean, 1980; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; St. John, Hu, & Weber, 2001; St. John, Paulsen & Starkley, 1996; Tinto, 1975). In fact, not only has persistence and success been vastly termed, these notions have also been linked with psychological, sociological, and economic perspectives. For the purpose of this research, the outcome variables will be whether or not students persisted and were academically successful through the academic year (FIGURE 1). Specifically, students who enrolled in the fall 2003 semester and re-enrolled or received a certificate degree in the spring 2004 semester will be considered as persisters. Additionally, students who enrolled in the fall 2003 semester and maintained a 2.0 or above will be considered academically successful.

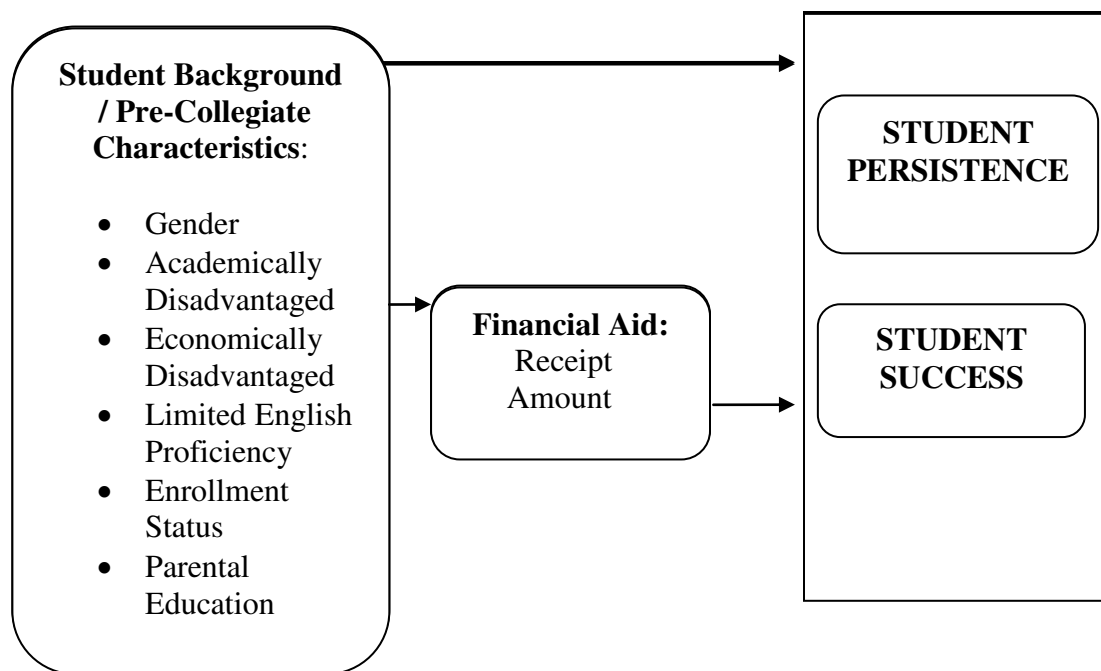


Figure 1

In summary, theoretical literature relating to college persistence and success is immense. Research indicates that college student retention is crucial to the “success of the student, institution, and advancement of knowledge” (Johnson, 2005, p.2). Several factors influence college student persistence and success. Among these factors, individual student characteristics, financial aid, and family background characteristics are the most vital indicators for a successful program of study completion. Notably, foreign born immigrants are continuously seeking America’s higher education system as a resource of opportunity. Individuals and the global economy benefit both publicly and privately from the economic returns of students’ investments in their education. To this end, the researcher will examine the characteristics to determine the possible impact of factors associated with the success and persistence of foreign born undocumented students enrolled in two-year institutions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to investigate and determine those factors that contribute to the persistence and success of Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in community colleges. The information presented in chapter one detailed the significance and purpose of this study, and the research questions that support the intent of the study. In chapter two, relevant literature was reviewed detailing the variables that compose the conceptual framework of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodological framework and procedures that will be used in this study.

The Research Setting

Description of Research Site

According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2003), foreign-born immigrants are those who are considered legal permanent residents, temporary migrants, humanitarian migrants, and unauthorized migrants. In 2000, 31.1 million individuals accounted for the foreign-born population residing in the U.S. (Texas Comptroller, 2006). Of this total, approximately two-thirds of the population migrated to urban areas in California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York.

In 2005, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that approximately 21 million foreign born immigrants resided in the U.S. Of these, Texas accounted for approximately 1.6 million individuals, with 40 percent of this population having lived less than five years in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). In 2001, the foreign born population comprised the largest group in 4 of the 5 largest cities in Texas - Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and El Paso (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Largely due to migration from Latin American countries and Mexico, one of the many essential state institutions that have been affected has been the Texas community college system.

According to Biswas (2005), community colleges (particularly public community colleges) typically serve as the “first point of entry” into U.S. higher education for many low

income, foreign-born, underserved, and minority individuals (p. 2). For example, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2008a), the total statewide enrollment in higher education for fall 2003 was approximately 1.24 million. Of this total, 52.3 percent of the individuals were enrolled in public two-year colleges; and 49.4 percent were of non-white ethnicity. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will examine the data collected from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Community college districts within the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provide opportunities to pursue Associate in Applied Science degrees, Associate Arts degrees, Associate in Science degrees, and certificate programs; and serving a diverse and unique group of individuals in all Texan counties.

Specifically, in the 2003-04 academic-year, some community college districts (e.g. the Alamo Community College District, Houston Community College System, Dallas Community College System, and the El Paso Community College District) within the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board credit enrollment exceeded 50,000 students, increasing by 5.3 percent from spring 2003 enrollment. Also, the enrollment statistics for fall 2003 semester within the THECB revealed the following student demographics: approximately 60 percent of the population was female students; 40 percent of the population was male students; and over 50 percent was between the ages of 18 and 35.

Population and Sample of Study

Population

The target population for the study is those undocumented students who are enrolled in the community college districts in Texas as degree-seeking students. These students were those enrolled in associate or certificate programs at the community colleges during the 2003-04 academic year. According to the data received by the THECB, 31,769 Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in all two-year public colleges in the 2003- 2004 academic year as first time in college students (FTIC).

Sample

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), in 2001 the foreign born population comprised the largest group in 4 of the 5 largest cities in Texas - Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and El Paso. For the purpose of this study, public Texas community college districts were selected due to the increased enrollment of the foreign-born student population, especially the

undocumented (Texas Comptroller, 2006). Therefore, the sample was selected from the 50 public community college districts with more than 70 community college campuses. The researcher included all degree-seeking Hispanic undocumented students (n = 31,769) enrolled in the 2003-04 academic year as FTICs. Accordingly, the researcher analyzed all Hispanic undocumented students included in the study (n = 31,769) to determine the results of the following research questions: 1) What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success; and 2) What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence. Additionally, in an attempt to analyze research questions 3 and 4 the researcher only examined the 54% of those who actually received financial aid to determine if the amount was related to persistence and success of this particular subgroup. Further, students classified as non-undocumented students will be excluded from this study for the purpose of maintaining the consistency with the research objectives of this study. Finally, the researcher will also examine the descriptive statistics of all undocumented Hispanic students who enrolled the 2003-2004 academic year. Considering a percentage of students who enrolled in fall 2003 [in the 2003 - 2004 academic year] as first time in college students [FTICs] did not re-enroll, the size of the sample in spring 2004 decreased by 14.6% (n = 27,130).

Data Sources

The data sets analyzed in this study are drawn from the Institutional Research Department (IRD) of the THECB. According to the THECB (2007), all public postsecondary institutions in the state of Texas are required by the THECB to submit student information. Specifically, each public junior and community college certified by the commissioner of higher education and that receive appropriations made by the legislature are required to submit Coordinating Board Management (CBM) reports (THECB, 2007). The Coordinating Board Management (CBM) reports are submitted electronically and are inclusive of information related to student success, student demographics, enrollment management, fiscal resources, and financial aid allocation and distribution (THECB, 2007).

Additionally, in keeping with its mission, “enabling well-prepared students to attend public and private nonprofit institutions of higher education in Texas,” THECB administers three state grants (as detailed in the Texas Education Codes 56.303, 61.221 – Subchapter F, and 56.031 –

Subchapter C) that any Texas resident is entitled, if eligible. Funding for the Texas student assistance grants was made possible by the accomplishments of Texas Representative Rick Noriega and the passing of House Bill 1403 (HB 1403) (H.B. 1403, 77th Legl, Reg. Sess. Tex. 2001). Introduced in 2000, the historic HB 1403 (also known as the “Noriega Bill”) allowed qualified foreign born students to pay in-state tuition at colleges and universities, and allowed these students to receive in-state financial aid. Students were eligible for in-state financial aid if they met the following criteria:

- Graduated from a public or private secondary school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in the state;
- Resided in the state for at least three years prior to the high school graduation date or receipt of a high school diploma equivalent; registered as an entering student in a postsecondary institution not earlier than the 2001 fall semester; and
- Provided to the institution an affidavit stating that he/she would file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest opportunity the individual was eligible to do so.

Currently Senate Bill 1528, enacted in 2005 as a repeal of HB 1403, continues to offer eligible foreign born students in-state tuition and in-state financial aid such as the Toward Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant, Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG), and Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG) (Texas Comptroller, 2006). According to the Office of the Texas Comptroller (2006), in 2005 Texas legislators “revisited the issue of resident status via the Senate Bill (S.B.) 1528, which made residency requirements essentially uniform for all students, regardless of their legal status” (p. 4) (APPENDIX A). Effective September 1, 2006, students have been eligible for in-state financial aid and tuition if they met the following criteria:

- Must have graduated from a Texas high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma (e.g. GED) in the state of Texas;
- Must have resided in the state of Texas for the three years immediately preceding graduation from high school or the receipt of the GED certificate;
- Must not have established a residence outside the state of Texas during the 12 months prior to enrollment at postsecondary institution;
- Complete a Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA)
- Complete a verification worksheet for Dependent Students;

- Provide individual and/or parents'/guardian's tax returns; and
- Must provide a notarized letter stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident of the U.S. at the earliest opportunity the individual will be eligible to do so (APPENDIX B).

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher petitioned Florida State University's Institutional Review Board per approval of study. Post receipt of approval and for the purpose of this study, data pertaining to foreign born [undocumented] students' receipt of in-state financial aid, success and persistence, specifically for the academic year 2003-04 was requested from the Higher Education Coordinating Board Institutional Research and Effectiveness Services (IRES) department. After speaking with THECB Educational Data Center and Grants and Special Programs directors, formal requests for information and FSU IRB approval documentation concerning the aforementioned was sent to the Directors of the IRES departments via email, and/or electronic request for information forms. The email and/ or electronic request forms explicated the variables and data needed to successfully complete the study, the purpose of the study, and target audience. Upon approval, the THECB Educational Data Center and Grants and Special Programs directors forwarded the requested data to the researcher.

As indicated previously, the main purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between students' success and persistence and the receipt and amount of in-state financial aid. However, prior studies have explored the relationship between success and persistence, and other characteristics such as gender, classification, age, and ethnicity (Bui, 2002; Hu and St. John, 2001; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Therefore, the researcher will also include those variables - gender, academically disadvantaged, enrollment status, parental education, economically disadvantaged and limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the study to determine the effects of those variables, if any, on the dependent variables.

Description of Variables

Since the main objective in this study is to examine the factors contributing to success and persistence, the researcher will therefore consider success and persistence as dependent

variables. For the purpose of this study, the **academic success** variable is identified as SUCCESS, defined as a dichotomous variable, and measures whether a student has grade point average of 2.0 or higher (1 =Yes; 0 = No). **Academic Success**, a dichotomous variable, will be defined as a continuance of a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better, on a 4.0 scale (grade “C” or better) by a student who enrolled in a certificate or degree program at a community college during the 2003 – 2004 semester (Andreu, 2002; ACCD, 2008) (TABLE 1).

Persistence will be defined as a dichotomous variable indicating a continued attendance of a student who enrolled in a certificate or degree program at a community college during fall 2003 semester and remained enrolled at the end of spring 2004 semester (Andreu, 2002) (TABLE 1). For the purpose of this study, the persistence variable is identified as PERSIST, defined as a dichotomous variable, and measures whether a person has re-enrolled in spring 2004 (Andreu, 2002; Bers and Smith, 1991) (TABLE 1).

The **receipt of in-state financial aid** is identified as FINAID, defined as a dichotomous variable, and measure whether a person is receiving in-state financial aid (1 =Yes; 0 = No) (TABLE 1). The receipt of in-state financial aid in the context of this research study refers to whether or not students are awarded state funds, i.e. whether or not the students to be studied are eligible to receive the Texas student assistance grants and are awarded such grants.

The **amount of in-state aid** is defined as the numeric value of in-state aid received. That is, the amount of the award varies upon the specific Texas in-state aid received (TABLE 1). For example, the TEOG and TEXAS Grant are similar in nature. The “amounts of the TEOG and TEXAS Grant awards (to include state and institutional funds) are equal to the student’s tuition and required fees” (THECB, 2007, p.1.). Conversely, the TPEG differs because each public postsecondary institution has the capability of setting its own maximum award, and the individual award may be more than the student’s financial need (THECB, 2007).

Furthermore, the independent variables to be examined and identified are as followed: Enrollment status (EnrollC) (part time or full-time), parents’ educational status (Peduc), gender (Cgender), academically disadvantaged (AcadDC), economically disadvantaged (EconDC), and limited English proficiency (LEPC) will be examined to determine significant differentiations among those included in the sample.

TABLE 1. Coding of Variables

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:

Receipt (FinAid): Yes = 1; No = 0

Amount (TotalFinAid): Measured in numerical value (\$100.00 increments)

Gender (CGender): Female = 0 Male = 1

Parents' Educational Status (Peduc) (college degree): Yes= 1; No = 0

Academically disadvantaged (AcadDC): Yes = 1; No = 0

Economically disadvantaged (EconDC): Yes = 1; No = 0

Limited English Proficiency (LEPC): Yes = 1; No = 0

Enrollment Status (EnrollC):

Full-time status (enrolled in 12 credit hours or more) = 1

Part-time status (enrolled in less than 12 credit hours)-= 0

DEPENDENT VARIABLES:

PERSISTENCE (PERSIST): Yes = 1; No = 0

SUCCESS (SUCCESS): Yes = 1; No = 0

Academically Disadvantaged. The academically disadvantaged consisted of those who did not have college entry level skills in reading, writing or math; or students who enrolled in remedial courses based on the results of institutional or state placement tests (THECB, 2010).

Economically Disadvantaged. Texas higher education institutions may use one or more of the following standards to determine whether an individual is economically disadvantaged: 1. Annual income at or below the federal poverty line; 2. Eligibility for Aid to Families with Dependent Children or other public assistance programs (includes WIC program participants); 3. receipt of a state program of need-based financial aid assistance; 4. eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 or the Health and Humans Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines (THECB, 2010)

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): Those of LEP include all students who enrolled in LEP courses or who were determined based on a local placement test to be Limited English Proficient and in need of remediation.

Enrollment status: The enrollment status will be computed as the number of academic credits for which a student is enrolled per semester. Students are considered full-time if they are

registered for at least 12 semester hours. Students who enroll in fewer than 12 hours are considered part-time (EPCC, 2006).

Gender: A self-reported descriptor that defines an individual as a male or female (Bean and Metzner, 1987).

Parental educational status: Individuals who have at least one parent who has graduated from any form of post-secondary education are considered continuing-generation students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Conversely, any individual whose parents have not graduate from any form of post-secondary education are considered first-generational (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Data Analysis

According to Stokes, Davis and Koch (2000), recognizing and selecting the appropriate scale of measurement is essential when analyzing categorical variables. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, via the Statistical Analysis System (SAS), logistic regression is utilized throughout the entire data analysis. This procedure allows the researcher to adequately dissect the data and be able to observe the relationship among the variables. Once the data has been explored, the researcher will proceed to the main analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?
2. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?
3. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?
4. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?

Research questions 1 –4 are answered in similar methods. Considering the focus of this study is to examine the impact of student [background and pre-collegiate] characteristics and financial aid (receipt and amount) on academic success and persistence, logistic regression was used to estimate the probability of various outcomes. According to Peng, Lee, and Ingersole (2002), logistic regression is the best method for “describing and testing hypotheses about relationships between a categorical outcome variable and one or more categorical or continuous

predictor variables” (p.4). Therefore, the researcher combined categorical and continuous variables and investigated the effect of those variables (Table 2)

Table 2. Research Questions and Statistical Analysis Procedures

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Statistical Analysis Test</i>
What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?	Logistic Regression
What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?	Logistic Regression
What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?	Logistic Regression
What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?	Logistic Regression

SUMMARY

In sum, secondary data was collected from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). In an effort to answer the aforementioned research questions, data pertained to individuals enrolled as FTIC Hispanic undocumented students in public two-year institutions within the state of Texas were acquired. Data included [unidentifiable] pre-collegiate and student background characteristics that could be appropriately analyzed to illustrate their influential nature on student success and persistence. Research questions were analyzed using Logistic Regression. Accordingly, research questions 1 and 2 were analyzed utilizing the total Hispanic undocumented student population (n = 31,769); and in an attempt to analyze research questions 3 and 4 the researcher only examined the 54% of those who actually received financial aid to determine if the amount was related to persistence and success of this particular subgroup. The findings in this study assisted the researcher in determining the relationship and significance among variables. The researcher believes that this study is researchable and is contributory to the body of knowledge. However, the sample studied is not representative of the total community college population in the U.S. and in the state of Texas, particularly in the private community college arena. Therefore, findings can only be generalized to the sample in the study. Additionally, most information collected by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating

Board is based on the self-reporting of students. These limitations are the result of attempting to work within existing resources and access to this particular population; and of attempting to examine the influences of financial aid on undocumented immigrant student success and persistence, which is identified through research as playing a vital role in the successful matriculation of students enrolled in higher education.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between financial aid [receipt / amount] and the persistence and success of undocumented Hispanic students enrolled in community colleges. Specifically, the researcher determined the significance of the correlation between the aforementioned variables. This study also intended to identify other variables that may have influenced student success and persistence during the 2003 – 2004 academic year.

This chapter presents the analysis of quantitative data through logistic regression using SAS software. The data presented assists the researcher in discussing the relationships between the dependent variables (student success and persistence) and independent variables (individual student pre-collegiate characteristics, receipt of financial aid and amount of financial aid). Through the analysis of data the researcher will answer the research questions that channeled this study.

1. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?
2. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?
3. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?
4. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?

Sample Characteristics

Hispanic undocumented students enrolled in Texas [public] community colleges were the selected sample in the study. Specifically, data were collected that included 31,769 students enrolled in the 2003- 2004 academic year as first time in college students (FTICs). The collected data derived from the Institutional Research Department (IRD) of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). More specifically, the researcher obtained reports concerning financial aid allocation and distribution, student success and student demographics (THECB, 2007). Thus, the researcher analyzed all Hispanic undocumented students included in the study ($n = 31,769$) to determine the results of the following research questions: 1) What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success; and 2) What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence. Student demographic descriptives for the aforementioned population ($n = 31,769$) are located on table 3. Moreover, in

an attempt to analyze research questions 3 and 4 the researcher only examined the 54% of those who actually received financial aid to determine if the amount was related to persistence and success of this particular subgroup. Student demographic descriptives for those who received actually received financial aid (n = 17,155) are located on table 3.

Table 3: Student Demographics (all students and recipients of financial aid)

Variables	All Students Enrolled in the 2003 – 2004 academic year (n = 31,769)	Recipients of Financial Aid – (n = 17, 155)
Total	31,769	17,155
Gender		
Male	13,911	6,776
Female	17,857	10,379
Academically Disadvantaged	18,187	10,430
Economically Disadvantaged	13,222	7,136
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	1,488	995
Parental Education	3,313	3,316
Enrollment		
Part-time	6,862	3,964
Full-time	24,906	13,191

Students receiving financial aid for the 2003 – 2004 academic year comprised 54% of the sample. Men comprised 43.79 % of the sample. The largest percentage of students 57.25 % in this study was reported by two-year Texas public institutions as being academically disadvantaged. Whereas 41.62% were reported being economically disadvantaged; and 4.56 % were reported as being limited English proficient. Students who were enrolled as full-time students (enrolling in 12 or more credit hours per semester) consisted of 83.55 %. And, 10.43% of students had one or more parents to graduate from any postsecondary institution. The largest percentage of students persisted and re-enrolled the spring 2004 semester at 85.4 %. Specific student demographic information can be located on Table 4.

Table 4. Student Demographics (Fall 2003)

Individual Characteristics	Percentage of Total Sample
Receipt of Financial Aid	54.0
Gender:	

Male	43.79
Female	56.21
First generational student	89.57
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	4.56
Academically Disadvantaged	57.25
Economically Disadvantaged	41.62
Enrollment Status:	
Full-time Enrolled	83.55
Part-time Enrolled	16.45
Academically Successful	72.0

n = 31, 769

Likewise, considering a percentage of students who enrolled in fall 2003 [in the 2003 - 2004 academic year] as first time in college students [FTICs] did not re-enroll, the size of the sample in spring 2004 decreased by 14.6% (n = 27,130). Therefore, the researcher examined the demographics of those students who actually re-enrolled in the spring 2004 semester as well. Of the 85.4% that remained, women comprised 57.69 % of the sample. The largest percentage of students 50.03% in this study were reported by two-year Texas public institutions as being academically disadvantaged. Whereas 48.33% were reported being economically disadvantaged; and 5.31% were reported as being limited English proficient. Students who were enrolled as part-time students (enrolling in less than 12 credit hours per semester) consisted of 21.60%. And, 11.22% of students had one or more parents to graduate from any postsecondary institution. Spring 2004 student demographic information is located on Table 5.

Table 5. Student Demographics (Spring 2004)

Individual Characteristics	Total Percentage of Sample
Receipt of Financial Aid:	54.17
Gender:	
Male	42.41
Female	57.69
Parental Education	11.22
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	5.31
Academically Disadvantaged	50.03
Economically Disadvantaged	48.33
Enrollment Status:	
Part-time Enrolled	21.60

Full-time Enrolled	78.40
Academically Successful	85.4

n = 27, 130

Moreover, Table 6 illustrates the students who persisted and continued with enrollment in the spring 2004 academic year. Among the 85.4 percent that remained, of those who were classified as being academically disadvantaged, 50.03 percent re-enrolled in the sequential semester; females were more likely to persist than males; of those deemed as being economically disadvantaged, 48.33 percent persisted; 5.31 percent of those defined as being limited English proficient persisted; students enrolled full-time persisted more so than their counter parts; and finally of those who were not first generational, 11.22 percent re-enrolled the sequential spring 2004 semester.

Table 6: Demographic Comparison: Persisters vs. Non-Persisters

	All	Persisters	Non-Persisters
Total	31,769 (100%)	27,130 (85.4%)	4,639 (14.6%)
Gender			
Male	13,911	11,478 (82.52%)	2,432 (17.48%)
Female	17,857	15,651 (87.65%)	2,206 (12.35%)
Academically Disadvantaged	18,187	13,573 (74.60%)	4,614 (25.4%)
Economically Disadvantaged	13,222	13,111 (99.16%)	111 (0.84%)
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	1,488	1,440 (97.0%)	48 (3.0%)
Parental Education	3,313	3,043 (11.22%)	270 (08 %)
Financial Aid Receipt	17,155	14,696 (85.67%)	2,459 (14.33%)
Success	22,873	19,724 (86.0%)	3,371 (14.0%)
Enrollment			
Part-time	6,862	4,463 (65.0 %)	2,399 (35.0%)
Full-time	24,906	22,666(91.0%)	2,240 (9.0%)

Finally, of the 31,769, 54 percent of students received financial aid. Therefore, research questions 3 – 4 utilize data gathered for the 17,155 students who actually received financial aid, to determine the influential nature on success and persistence. Statistical descriptive are located on Table 7.

Table 7. Recipients of Financial Aid (Demographic Statistics)

Individual Characteristics	Percentage of Total Sample
Gender:	
Male	39.50
Female	60.50
Non-First Generational Student	19.33
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	5.80
Academically Disadvantaged	60.80
Economically Disadvantaged	41.60
Enrollment Status:	
Full-time Enrolled	76.90
Part-time Enrolled	23.12
n = 17, 155	

Research Questions

The following section reports the findings for the research questions that guided this study. The research questions are analyzed utilizing logistic regression. Logistic regression analysis method was selected for the purpose of determine if a correlation existed between the dependent variables (success and persistence) and independent variables (amount and receipt of financial aid).

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?

The researcher utilized a logistic regression analysis to identify the specific relationship that existed between the receipt and financial aid and success. The results indicated a p-value less than .001 for the following variables: receipt of financial aid, academically disadvantaged, limited English Proficiency, enrollment status, and gender – determining a relationship among success and other independent variables; and a p-value less than .01 for those classified as being economically disadvantaged. Specifically, those who received financial aid were less likely to be academically success than those who did not [B = -.298; Odds Ratio = .743]. Compared with females, males were less likely to earn a grade point average (g.p.a.) of 2.0 or higher [B = -.387; Odds Ratio = .679]. Students who were enrolled full time were more likely to be academically successful than their counterparts [B = .645; Odds Ratio = 1.906]. Compared with native English speaking students, those who were limited English proficient were more likely to be

academically successful [B = .378; Odds Ratio = 1.460]. And, students who were academically disadvantaged were less likely to earn a g.p.a. of 2.0 or higher as compared to their counterparts [B = -.510; Odds Ratio =.601]. Finally, students classified as being economically disadvantaged were more times as likely to be successful than their counter parts [B = .093; Odds Ratio = 1.097]. Moreover, parental education did not prove a significant correlation with success. Statistical descriptives are located on table 8.

Table8: Financial Aid Receipt (1 = yes, 0 = No) on Academic Success

n = 31,769

Variable	B	Odds Ratio	Sig
Financial Aid Receipt	-.298	.743	***
CGender	-.387	.679	***
Peduc	.005	1.005	
AcadDC	-.510	.601	***
EconDC	.093	1.097	**
LEPC	.378	1.460	***
EnrollC	.645	1.906	***

*Beta significant at .05. ** Beta significant at .01. *** Beta significant at .001

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?

The researcher utilized a stepwise regression analysis to identify the specific relationship that existed between the receipt of financial aid and persistence. The results indicated a p-value less than .001 for the following variables: receipt of financial aid, academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, limited English Proficiency, enrollment status, and gender – determining a relationship among persistence and other independent variables. Specifically, those who received financial aid were more times as likely to be persistent than those who did not [B = .406; Odds Ratio = 1.50]. Additionally, enrollment status was shown to be the most significant predictor of persistence [B = .967; Odds Ratio = 2.630]. Those who were enrolled full-time were more times as likely to persist as compared to those who were enrolled part-time. Further, academic success was found to be the second significant predictor of persistence [B =.918; Odds Ratio = 2.504]. Students who earned a 2.0 or higher were more times as likely to re-enroll the sequential semester. Finally, being classified as economically disadvantaged was

the tertiary significant predictor of persistence [B =.524; Odds Ratio =1.689]. Thus, students classified as being economically disadvantaged were more times as likely to persist than compared to their counterparts. Compared with females, males were less likely to enroll in the spring 2004 semester [B = -.192; Odds Ratio = .826] . Students who were enrolled full time were more likely to be persistent than their counterparts. Compared with native English speaking students, those who were limited English proficient were more likely to be persistent [B = .369; Odds Ratio = 1.447]. And, students who were academically disadvantaged were less likely to enroll in the spring 2004 semester as compared to their counterparts [B= -.788; Odds Ratio = .455. Moreover, parental educational status did not correlate (negatively or positively) with persistence. Finally, of particular interest is the influential nature of academic success (when introduced) on other independent variables. The statistical significance of each variable was synonymous, all rendering p-values of .001, with the exception of parental education – rendering no significant correlation; and the correlation of all variables were synonymous, rendering positive or negative relationships with persistence, prior to the addition of the academic success variable. Statistical descriptives are located on table 9.

Table 9: Receipt of Financial Aid (1 = yes, 0 = No) on Persistence

n = 31,769

Variable	B	Odds Ratio	Sig	B	Odds Ratio	Sig
Financial Aid Receipt	.406	1.500	***	.484	1.623	***
CGender	-.192	.826	***	-.115	.891	***
Peduc	-.081	.922		-.094	.910	
AcadDC	-.788	.455	***	-.697	.498	***
EconDC	.524	1.689	***	.519	1.680	***
LEPC	.369	1.447	***	.308	1.361	***
EnrollC	.967	2.630	***	.868	2.382	***
Academic Success				.918	2.504	***
Cox and Snell Psuedo R Square	.067			.097		

*Beta significant at .05. ** Beta significant at .01. *** Beta significant at .001.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?

Due to the amount of financial aid not being defined as a continuous variable, the researcher conducted a logistic regression analysis. Further, the researcher divided the total

amount of financial aid received by \$100.00, to determine the potential affect of financial aid if distributed in increments of \$100.00. The researcher utilized a logistic regression analysis to identify the specific relationship that existed between the amount of financial aid and success. The results indicated a p-value less than .001 for the following variables: amount of financial aid, academically disadvantaged, limited English Proficiency, enrollment status, and gender – determining a relationship among success and other independent variables. Specifically, for every one hundred dollars (\$100.00) received, student success was positively influenced [B = .012; Odds Ratio = 1.012]. Compared with females, males were less likely to earn a grade point average (g.p.a.) of 2.0 or higher [B = -.362; Odds Ratio = .696]. Students who were enrolled full time were more likely to be academically successful than their counterparts [B = .686; Odds Ratio = 1.986]. Compared with native English speaking students, those who were limited English proficient were more likely to be academically successful [B = .382; Odds Ratio = 1.466]. And, students who were academically disadvantaged were less likely to earn a g.pa. of 2.0 or higher as compared to their counterparts [B = -.333; Odds Ratio = .716]. Finally, parental educational status and being classified as economically disadvantaged did not warrant any significant correlation with academic success (Table 10).

Table 10: Amount of Financial Aid on Success

n = 17,155

Variable	B	Odds Ratio	Sig
Financial Aid Amount	.012	1.012	***
CGender	-.362	.696	***
Peduc	-.003	.997	
AcadDC	-.333	.716	***
EconDC	.000	1.00	
LEPC	.382	1.466	***
EnrollC	.686	1.986	***

*Beta significant at .05. ** Beta significant at .01. *** Beta significant at .001.

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?

Finally, considering the amount of financial aid not being defined as a continuous variable, the researcher conducted a logistic regression analysis. Further, the researcher divided

the total amount of financial aid received by \$100.00, to determine the potential affect of financial aid if distributed in increments of \$100.00. The logistic regression analysis identified the specific relationship that existed between the amount of financial aid and persistence. The results indicated a p-value less than .001 for the following variables: amount of financial aid, academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged and enrollment status; the parental education variable results indicated a p-value less than .01 – determining a relationship among persistence and other independent variables. Specifically, for every one hundred dollars (\$100.00) received, student persistence was positively influenced [B = .063; Odds Ratio = 1.065]. Additionally, academic success was shown to be the most significant predictor of persistence [B = .786; Odds Ratio =2.196]. Further, enrollment status was found to be the second significant predictor of persistence [B = .566; Odds Ratio = 1.762]. Finally, being classified as economically disadvantaged was the tertiary significant predictor of persistence [B = .339; Odds Ratio =1.404]. Therefore, students who were enrolled full time were more likely to persist than their counterparts. Compared to students not classified as being economically disadvantaged, those who were economically disadvantaged were more likely to persist. And, students who had one or more parents to graduate from college were less as likely to enroll in the spring 2004 as compared to their first generation counterparts [B = -.171; Odds Ratio = .843]. Finally, students who were classified as being academically disadvantaged were less likely to persist compared to their counterparts [B = -.807; Odds Ratio = .446]. And, gender and being limited English proficient (LEP) did not render any significant correlation with persistence. Finally, of particular interest is the influential nature of academic success (when introduced) in the logistic regression analysis. The statistical significance of each variable was synonymous - all rendering p-values of .001, with the exception of parental education (p-value = .01); and LEP and gender – rendering no significant correlation. The correlations of all variables were synonymous, rendering positive, negative or no relationships with persistence, prior to the addition of the academic success variable. Statistical descriptives are located on table 11.

Table 11: Financial Aid Amount on Persistence

n = 17,155

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Financial Aid Amount	.063	1.065	***	.062	1.064	***
CGender	.003	1.003		.077	1.080	
Peduc	-.171	.843	**	-.189	.827	**
AcadDC	-.807	.446	***	-.748	.473	***
EconDC	.339	1.404	***	.343	1.409	***
LEPC	.134	1.143		.066	1.069	
EnrollC	.566	1.762	***	.475	1.608	***
Academic Success				.786	2.196	***
Cox and Snell Psuedo R Square*	.067			.097		

Beta significant at .05. ** Beta significant at .01. *** Beta significant at .001.

Summary

This chapter provided results of the data analysis obtained from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The data collected involved first time in college (FTIC) cohort members of the 2003 -2004 academic year who were enrolled in Texas [public] two year institutions [community colleges]. Research questions were addressed through statistical analysis [logistic regression] to determine if success and persistence were influenced by financial aid [receipt / amount] and other individual student characteristics.

Essentially, for the 2003 fall and spring 2004 semesters, the receipt and amount of financial aid proved to have positive significant impacts on persistence, attaining a p-value < .001. However, the receipt of financial aid negatively affected student success. Additionally, the amount of financial aid positively influenced student success. As such, those who received financial aid and additional funding in increments of \$100.00 were more likely to re-enroll the following semester than those who did not. Similarly, those who received financial aid in increments of \$100.00 were more likely to earn a g.p.a. of 2.0 or higher than compared to their counterparts. Conversely, those who received financial aid were less likely to earn a 2.0 or higher g.p.a. than compared to the counterparts. Additionally, the logistic regression analysis determined that academic success positively influenced persistence. Therefore, students who maintained a grade point average of 2.0 or higher were more likely to re-enroll the sequential semester than their counterparts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the influential nature of financial aid [via receipt and amount] on successful student matriculation. Persistence and success are among the many variables necessitated to effectively complete a program of study. This chapter details the conclusions drawn from the study, in addition to the limitations of the study. Furthermore, this chapter details recommendations for future research and implications for future practice.

Considering the current immigration trend, it is feasible to conclude that undocumented immigrants will be likely to participate in the American higher education system. Access to higher education is not only essential for the undocumented individual [specifically], but for the society at large. Community colleges were designed to better serve the changing populations. However, in order for the U.S. to adequately respond to the needs of the undocumented immigrant student, legislators need to further explore additional variables that will promote (1) student learning and success; and (2) a greater rate of return for this particular learning community.

The researcher evaluated the effects of financial aid and student success and persistence received by undocumented students enrolled in two-year Texas public institutions. The following five research questions were presented relating to the aforementioned variables in addition to other student individual characteristics:

1. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and success?
2. What is the relationship between the receipt of in-state financial aid and persistence?
3. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and success?
4. What is the relationship between the amount of financial aid and persistence?

Limitations

The study limitations arise from the location of the study and the nature of the sample. The data was collected from a state that offers in-state financial aid to undocumented immigrant students; and the sample used in the study was drawn from those who were recognized by the

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as degree /certificate seeking students enrolled in Texas community colleges. The researcher acknowledges that by limiting the sample to degree/ certificate seeking students enrolled in Texas community colleges districts in the 2003 - 2004 academic year, study findings were not representative of the entire Texas higher education system or other U.S. or international postsecondary two-year institutions. Thus, students enrolled in different segments of higher education were not included.

Additionally considering community college persistence averages 50% from semester to semester and retention efforts are usually implemented on a semester to semester basis rather than an academic year to academic year , the research focus is limited to student persistence and success from semester-to-semester enrollment (fall 2003 – spring 04) (Elkins, Braxton, James, 2000; Riehl, 1994; SREB, 2003; Tinto 1988). The researcher understands that by collecting only two semesters of data this study will not address additional factors that may impact student persistence/success after the spring 2004 semester. The limitation is the result of attempting to work within existing resources and access to this particular population; and of attempting to examine the influences of financial aid and other factors on immigrant [undocumented] student success and persistence, which is identified through research as playing a vital role in the successful matriculation of students enrolled in higher education.

Finally, due to possibly obtaining “identifiable” undocumented student information from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the THECB declined to provide certain student characteristic information (i.e., age, employment status, dependency status, etc.). Therefore, these items could not be investigated. Moreover, this study obtained secondary data that included self-reports by students on their individual characteristics, i.e., parental education and gender. Therefore the information collected per the aforementioned variables could possibly be skewed. Further, the sample in this study consists of those who were required to self-report certain individual and background characteristics (such as age, parental education, gender, and social security numbers). Thus, individuals who did not self-report social security numbers were assigned pseudo numbers; therefore, not all students identified as “undocumented Hispanic students” may be genuine Hispanic undocumented students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the indicators in this study determined that the receipt of financial aid varied in terms of impacting success and persistence, the amount of financial aid positively influenced success and persistence. Unfortunately, less than 10% of the U.S. states offer in-state financial aid to undocumented students. Some deem that rewarding undocumented individuals financial aid would perpetuate deviant behavior (Chu, 2005; Russell, 2007). Others argue that furthering the education of undocumented individuals would promote civility (NILC, 2007).

Academic Success – Operationally Defined

The effects of financial aid (receipt / amount) have been prevailing in several peer-reviewed articles and books for decades (Glenn, 2007; Herzog, 2005; Hu & St. John, 2001; Nora, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Although the effects of financial aid have received mixed reviews in terms of negative or positive correlations to persistence (Fenske, Porter & DuBrock, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), limited research has attempted to determine the influence of financial aid (receipt / amount) on academic success – thereby defining success “academic success” as having earned a grade point average of 2.0 or higher. Indeed persistence is associated with successful matriculation. However, few researchers have investigated the effects of financial aid on Hispanic undocumented students’ academic success. For example, in 2008, Haynes reported that an average of 25% of students receiving state grant funding have stopped or dropped out per academic year since the conception of Texas grant programs in 1999. Further, Dowd and Coury (2006) measured the persistence rates of community college students. The researchers included independent variables such as gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, and types of financial aid received to determine if they influenced persistence by any means. The findings suggested that student loans negatively impacted persistence; and academic performance and familial / personal financial obligations were indicators of persistence and degree completion.

Essentially, findings in this study concluded that the receipt of financial aid negatively affected student success, however positively influenced persistence. It is feasible to conclude that financial aid would have correlated positively with persistence, due to considerable research pertaining to this particular topic. However, there is no detailed explanation of the negative affects of financial aid on academic success, considering that this study is quantitative in nature. For this purpose, the researcher suggests an additional evaluative qualitative component to further enhance the findings in this particular study.

Financial aid and the Glass Ceiling Effect

The U.S. Department of Labor (1991) defined *glass ceiling* as those barriers, usually non-visible and artificial in nature “based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions” (p.1). The *glass ceiling effect* can be found in any local or global organization. In relation to the higher educational structure, while it is true that numerous studies have shown that a college degree can enhance the individual and community, once an undocumented individual graduates from a post secondary institution, he /she is still unable to acquire employment in the United States – a *glass ceiling*. The reason? No social security number – *the glass ceiling*. Yes, it is imperative to financially and academically assist the undocumented population with obtaining a postsecondary degree. Conversely, it is also more important to assist these individuals with becoming gainfully employed (without repercussions) after the degree has been earned. If an undocumented individual receives a degree, then he/she is left with a piece of paper that does not have any value [economically or self-worth]. Therefore, it is essential for state legislators to identify those factors that hinder local economic growth and competitiveness in the global economy; and implement adequate policy that will provide a higher rate of return for this population.

Financial Aid and the negative affect on Success

A college or university has to provide the highest quality of customer service to its main patrons – enrolled college students. They [the enrolled] are often recognized as financial assets to postsecondary institutions – no students, no university / college. Among the “enrolled” are those classified as persisters (those who re-enroll the sequential semester). Fees incurred and paid by a student or because of a student [persister or newly admitted] assist with the payment of the following: utilities; tenured, weekly, and annual salaries; and other ancillary charges – the fiscal enrichment of an institution. Hence, the researcher infers that although student success (grade point average) is essential to a program degree completion, persistence is more pervasive in literature as it relates to the affects of financial aid.

In various instances, students who may not be academically successful continue to persist in college. Therefore, those receiving financial aid may persist (re-enroll) without earning a minimum of a 2.0 g.p.a. For example, in 1998 the THECB quantitatively explored the effects of financial aid and additional variables on persistence. The sample included 136 students enrolled in South Texas Community College. Findings indicated that while financial aid positively correlated to persistence [re-enrollment], receiving financial aid and being placed on academic

probation negatively impacted persistence [retention]. Therefore, those who had not earned a minimum of 2.0 or higher g.p.a. continued to receive financial aid [grants] and re-enroll the sequential semester.

Moreover, academic probation is determined when a student has accumulated a grade point average below 2.0 as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) (1998). Students who are placed on academic probation will maintain this status until the scholastic deficiency is no longer, or until expulsion is assigned. In the Texas Higher Education Coordinating System within community colleges, students are placed on a warning (academic probation) and eventually an academic suspension, if the cumulative g.p.a. has not increased to a 2.0. Once the student is placed on academic probation, he/she will be removed from academic probation during the first probationary semester when minimum academic standards have been met (2.0 g.p.a.) and the quality of scholastic work has improved (THECB, 2010). Conversely, if at the end of the first probationary semester the g.p.a. has increased (i.e., 1.76 to a 1.78) – not necessarily having earned a 2.0 g.p.a., the student may continue to persist and will then be placed on a secondary probation semester (THECB, 1998). Essentially, if the student improves his/her g.p.a. as compared to the previous semester, he/she will be allowed to persist, remained enrolled, potentially receive financial aid and placed on probationary semesters, until he/she has increased the g.p.a. to a 2.0 or higher (2010).

Further, students who receive financial assistance in the form of grants (TEXAS , TEOG, TPEG) will continue receiving financial aid in their first year, regardless of academic status. Per the THECB (2010), it is not until the second year that the student is required to establish and maintain a collegiate minimum cumulative g.p.a. of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale). Therefore, the researcher concludes that it is possible for a student to receive financial assistance in the forms of grants and persist, and still be scholastically deficient or not academically successful (as defined by the researcher).

Finally, researchers have proven that financial aid recipients are more prone to persist and be academically successful in postsecondary institutions (Hu & St. John, 2001; Nora, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, not all forms of financial aid (i.e., loans only, grants and loans or grants only) absorb additional educationally related expenses (such as books, childcare, housing, technological equipment, etc.) a student of low socioeconomic status may encounter – the unmet need (Choy, 2000). The unmet need is defined as the educationally

related cost remaining after the disbursement of student and familial contributions and financial aid awards (Choy & Premo, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to St. John (1990), as the unmet need increases, students' attrition rates increase and college access / choices lessen. Essentially, the findings in this study suggest that financial aid negatively impacts student success. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that although students received financial aid, they were not academically successful because their need was not met due to a substantial financial gap.

Retrieving Identifiable Information

As noted, institutional policies have been developed to promote a program of study completion. Colleges and universities have restructured their organizations to create more accommodating and supportive environments conducive for all learning – providing the highest quality of customer service to their patrons [enrolled college students]. However, the researcher believes further investigative study is needed to examine the affects of financial aid and additional co-variables on success (grade point average), academic probation, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and graduation rates. Indeed individual researchers are not necessarily able to gain all information pertaining to the undocumented college student population [due to receipt of “identifiable information”]. However, if postsecondary institutions conducted their own thorough research [presentable to legislators] then this may assist in the cause. Findings obtained could potentially prove that funding allocations for the undocumented are warranted for the purpose of equipping this population with the essential skills and services needed to effectively compete in a global economy.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER OF APPROVAL

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673, FAX (850) 644-4392

RE-APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 9/27/2010

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Re-approval of Use of Human subjects in Research
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE FINANCIAL AID AND STUDENT
PERSISTENCE AND SUCCESS IN COLLEGE: AN EXAMINATION OF
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 9/26/2011, you must request renewed approval by the Committee.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your renewal request, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this re-approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting of research subjects. You are reminded that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: []
HSC No. 2010.4889

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF PROVISIONS OF H.B. 1403 and S.B. 1528 FOR ESTABLISHING
TEXAS RESIDENCY

Comparison of Provisions of H.B. 1403 and S.B. 1528 for Establishing Texas Residency

H.B. 1403 Requirements To become residents, must (2001)	S.B. 1528 Requirements (2005)
1. have resided with a parent or legal guardian or conservator during at least a portion of the 3 years leading up to high school graduation or the receipt of a GED certificate.	n/a
2. have graduated from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in this state;	same
3. have resided in this state for at least three years as of the date the person graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;	same
4. have registered as an entering student in an institution of higher education not earlier than the 2001 fall semester;	n/a
5. provide to the institution an affidavit stating that the individual will file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest opportunity the he or she is eligible to do so; and	Only required if student is not a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident
6. have not established a residence outside this state	Must have lived in Texas the 12 months prior to enrollment.

Note: Opportunity available to all persons meeting these requirements, whatever their citizenship or INS status, including U.S. Citizens

APPENDIX C

S. B. 1528 AFFIDAVIT

S. B. 1528 Affidavit

State of Texas

County of _____

Before me, the undersigned Notary Public, on this day personally appeared

_____, known to me, who being by me duly sworn upon his/her oath,
deposed and said:

1. My name is _____ I am _____ years of age
and have personal knowledge of the facts stated herein and they are all true and correct.
2. I graduated or will graduate from a Texas high school or received my GED certificate in Texas.
3. I resided in Texas for three years leading up to graduation from high school or receiving my GED certificate.
4. I have resided or will have resided in Texas for the 12 months prior the census date of the semester in which I will enroll in _____. (college/university)
5. I have filed or will file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest opportunity that I am eligible to do so.

In witness whereof, this _____ day of _____, _____.

(Signature)

(Printed Name)

(Student I. D. #)

SUBSCRIBED TO AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME, on the _____ day of _____, _____, to certify which witness my hand and official seal.

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

EDUCATION

Spring 2011 Florida State University (FSU) Ed.D., Higher Education Administration	Tallahassee, Florida
2008 Florida State University (FSU) Ed.S., Student Affairs / Higher Education	Tallahassee, Florida
2002 Florida Agricultural Mechanical University (FAMU) M.S.W., Administration & Community Development	Tallahassee, Florida
2000 Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) B.S., Sociology, Minor in Social Work	Tallahassee, Florida
1998 Coastal Georgia Community College (CGCC) A.S., Sociology	Brunswick, Georgia

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Capital Health Care Center

Social Service Director

Tallahassee, Florida

January 2003 – July 2005

Responsibilities: Participated as a member of an interdisciplinary team to promote the highest quality of life for residents and their families. Provided services to address the medical, rehabilitative, and social needs of resident and their families. Consulted with the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCS) to establish Medicaid eligibility for constituents; addressed all grievances voiced by residents, families, and staff; and facilitated educational training sessions with family, staff, and patients.

SECONDARY EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Clayton County Public School System

Substitute Teacher

Clayton County, Georgia

August 2009 – August 2010

Responsibilities: Abided by the policies as set forth by the Clayton County Public School System and the Georgia Department of Education. Continued the instructional program as described by the regular teacher or designee; maintained safety of the students; and performed the duties and responsibilities as a principal may expect of a teacher.

HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Member of Golden Key International Honor Society

Member of Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society

Georgia Perimeter College, Advising, Counseling and Retention Services
Student Affairs Counselor

Decatur, Georgia
November 2009 – present

Responsibilities: Assist students in registration procedures. Explain the prerequisite requirements and course sequences to students for the placement in academic courses. Assist in the development and maintenance of required databases. Refer students to campus and/or community resources for any issues other than academic, such as placement testing, personal counseling. Ensure adherence to federal, state, college and department guidelines that relate to the job. Support key departmental operations, including tracking statistics, strategic planning, program assessment, and assisting with monitoring institutional benchmarks. Advise students concerning their academic plans and progress, academic schedule, choice of major, other academic activities and career goals, to assist the student in making decisions concerning personal educational goals leading to a program of study completion.

Florida State University, Division of Student Affairs: Office of Multicultural Affairs; Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE); Advising First Center for Exploratory Students; 2007 Florida State Institute on College Student Committee (Donations Chairperson); Dean of Students (First Year Experience Program; Students Rights and Responsibilities).
August 2005 – August 2009

Responsibilities: Coordinated and directed campus orientation programs and activities related to incoming multicultural first-time-in-college students, first generation students, and high school students. Assisted with the collection and compilation of retention data using scientific processes; performed program management and assessment of student retention and success; assisted student populations with career concerns using a developmental academic advising model; and advised underserved students in the use of university services and programs designed to enhance their scholastic and personal development for the purpose of enhancing their academic success at the University.

Florida A & M University, Department of Social Work:

Responsibilities: Participated as a member of the “Diabetes and You Project” funded by the Governor’s Revitalization Council. Coordinated services and provided adequate resources address the health care needs of the diabetic population. Population consisted of minority individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who received educational training and proper diabetic equipment needed to enhance their quality of life and activities of daily living.

COMPUTER SKILLS

Proficient in Microsoft Office (Publisher, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS), ESAMS, SMARTS and Banner; Familiar with E-listening and E-learning, General office technology, and Internet

CERTIFICATIONS

Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

April 2002

Graduate Certificate in Gerontology

Georgia Professional Standards Commission
School Social Worker (S-6)

September 2008

HONORS / AWARDS

SACS Travel Grant Recipient, 2007

Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, 2007

Graduation Tuition Scholarship Fund, Spring 2008

Dissertation Research Grant recipient, Fall 2008

PRESENTATIONS

“Understanding GPC Major Requirements & Plan for Success”, **Georgia Perimeter College (Decatur)**, Decatur, GA - 2010

“V.A.L.U.E.S.” (Viewpoints that Alter Life’s Unique Encounters and Situations), **Florida State University**, Tallahassee, FL, Multicultural Leadership Summit - 2008.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Lake City Elementary

Parent Volunteer for Second Graders

Fall 2009 - present

North Florida Christian School

Parent Volunteer (Classroom Parent)

Fall 2008 – Spring 2009

United Way

Volunteer

Volunteered in various capacities for Florida and Georgia agencies