THE IMPACT OF APPRECIATIVE ADVISING
ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF APPRECIATIVE ADVISING ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TRANSFER STUDENTS

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Transfer shock and transfer phase satisfaction with the senior institution reported by
community college students after transferring into Western Carolina University's RN to
BSN Nursing Program were examined to determine if differences exist in students who
received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. Results of this study may serve to
inform college personnel in policy development and further the evolution of academic
advising. Improvements in the advising process may eliminate transfer barriers and
improve academic achievement, retention and graduation rates.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statistics indicate that the number of students transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions is steadily increasing (Rhine, Milligan & Nelson, 2000). Research also indicates that many community college students originate from more academic and socially disadvantaged backgrounds than students who attend only four-year institutions (King, 1994). For example, community college students are more likely to be first-generation college students, be employed full-time and older than traditional four-year institution students (Laanan, 1996; Pascarella, 1999; Rhine, Milligan & Nelson, 2000). These differences have the potential to make the transition from the community college to the four-year institution cumbersome and stressful, often resulting in a decline in academic performance or worse, withdrawing all together (Laanan, 2001). These difficulties transfer students face at four-year institutions are commonly referred to as transfer shock (Hill, 1965). Transfer shock has been studied by scholars for decades and yet, despite ample literature and research examining its cause and effect, the phenomenon continues to impact students (Thurmond, 2007).

To address transfer shock, faculty and administrators have developed various means aimed at alleviating the pressures transfer students face, particularly students transitioning from a community college (King, 1994; Eggleston & Laanan, 2001). Orientations, campus tours, articulation agreements and other outreach programs have been developed to address transfer shock with varying degrees of success (Kisker, 2007; Cameron, 2005; Glass & Harrington, 2002; Swing, 2000; St. Claire, 1993). Recurrent recommendations for minimizing transfer shock in the literature include connecting advisors who are specifically trained to work with transfer students to this target

population (Leader, 2010; Hatton, Homer, & Park, 2009). Appreciative Advising, a relatively new concept in academic advising, is a method for helping students reach their maximum potential by having college advisors ask positive, open-ended questions which may identify students' strengths and facilitate goal attainment (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008). Although Appreciative Advising was only introduced to higher education within the last nine years, a number of studies have been conducted to determine its efficacy with specific student populations (Bloom, 2002). While preliminary research has indicated Appreciative Advising improves retention and program satisfaction for populations identified as at-risk, graduate students and distance learning students, no research exists on the impact of Appreciative Advising on Associates Degree in Nursing (ADN)-prepared community college transfer students. Western Carolina University offers a program for ADN-prepared community college students who are actively licensed as registered nurses (RN) to pursue the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. This degree option is referred to as the RN to BSN Program.

With the shortage of registered nurses predicted to rise as a new generational wave of the population enters a stage of increased healthcare needs and the number of registered nurses entering retirement (AACN, 2010, September 20; Duvall & Andrews, 2010; Nevidjon & Erickson, 2001), the need for improved retention rates in all nursing programs becomes ever more apparent. This workforce crisis, combined with the barriers inherent in transfer for community college students, heightens the urgency for improving transfer process methods that will improve retention and completion rates in RN to BSN programs.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Appreciative Advising on

ADN-prepared community college students' experiences during the transfer phase and first semester in the RN to BSN program at the senior institution, Western Carolina University. Admission to the RN to BSN program is contingent upon satisfying specific course prerequisites, having at least a 2.50 cumulative undergraduate GPA and holding a current, unrestricted license to practice as a registered nurse. Students are notified of their acceptance four months prior to matriculation. For the purpose of this study, the transfer phase is defined as beginning upon acceptance into the RN to BSN program and ending at the completion of the first semester at Western Carolina University. Transfer shock and satisfaction with the transfer phase was studied to determine if there is a difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and change in GPA for transfer students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. Student satisfaction is defined in this study as students' perceptions of the quality of services and experiences they receive at Western Carolina University during the transfer phase.

As the number of students enrolled in community colleges continues to rise (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005), it is expected that the number of students intending to transfer to senior institutions will also continue to rise. Furthermore, as the number of students enrolling in ADN programs continue to rise, so too will the number of students transferring into RN to BSN programs at senior institutions. During the 2008-2009 academic year, 3,424 new students enrolled in North Carolina ADN programs compared to only 1,237 new students who enrolled in a traditional 4-year pre-licensure BSN program (Lacey Research Associates, 2008). During the same academic year, 988 new students enrolled in RN to BSN programs in North Carolina (see Table 1), only 249 fewer students than the total number who enrolled in a traditional 4-year pre-licensure

program. These statistics indicate the number of students transferring from community college ADN programs into university RN to BSN programs are substantial and represent a significant portion of the total nursing program enrollment. As a result, administrators should be cognizant of these trends and have processes in place to assist in the transfer process that will mitigate transfer shock specific to this unique population of students.

Table 1

Applications, Admissions, and New Enrollees by Nursing Program and Student Types, Academic Year 2008-2009

	Total number of applicants	Number of qualified applicants	Qualified applicants as % of total	Total number of new admissions	New admissions as % of qualified	Total number of new enrollees	New enrollees as % of new admissions
PNE Programs	6,870	3,557	51.8%	1,830	51.4%	1,354	74.0%
Pre-Licensure RN Programs							
Hospital diploma	757	584	77.1%	272	46.6%	177	65.1%
ADN Generic RN	20,251	7,900	39.0%	4,127	52.2%	3,424	83.0%
ADN LPN-RN	1,085	518	47.7%	349	67.4%	307	88.0%
Prelicense BSN	3,100	2,353	75.9%	1,441	61.2%	1,237	85.8%
Accelerated BSN	635	487	76.7%	298	61.2%	202	67.8%
Prelicense MSN	63	61	96.8%	32	52.5%	32	100.0%
Prelicense RN Totals	25,891	11,903	45.9%	6,519	54.8%	5,379	82.5%
Post-Licensure RN Program							
RN-BSN	1,423	1,231	86.5%	1,187	96.4%	988	83.2%

Note. Adapted from "North Carolina Trends in Nursing Education: 2003-2008," by Lacey Research Associates, 2008.

It is imperative that senior institution faculty and administrators make every effort to assess and incorporate best practices for diminishing transfer barriers such as "financial background and academic readiness…[or] campus climate and culture" (Zamani, 2001, p. 16) for the growing number of community college transfer students. Outcomes from this study will serve to inform decisions made on policies and programs developed to serve the community college transfer student population.

Academic Advising

Academic advising in American higher education has been evident since the establishment of the first college in the mid-17th century (Gillispie, 2003). Although expanding and evolving over the years, academic advising has become more prominent on campuses nationwide within the last few decades (Kuhn, 2008). Academic advising equips students with information to improve learning and achieve goals, both inside and outside the classroom (Kuh, 2008).

At its core, academic advising combines teaching, curriculum and learning outcomes to increase and expand students' experiences and aspirations (NACADA, 2006). From degree and course selection to advice on campus activities and careers, academic advisors offer assistance with a myriad of campus resources and services to maximize student success (Henning, 2009).

Throughout the years, advising has expanded to assist students with issues beyond basic program or degree information. Subsequently, academic advising also began to shift away from a primary reliance on faculty to provide this service; as a result, an increasing number of student services departments are providing primary and supplemental advising support for students (Cook, 2009). As professional advisors and advising centers became increasingly recognized as integral functions of the college experience, research to evaluate and determine best practices quickly followed (Habley, 2009).

Over the last few decades, prescriptive and developmental advising emerged as two of the leading approaches to advising (Crookston, 1972; Eckhardt, 1992; Smith & Downey, 2002). The prescriptive advising method involves a one-directional format in

which the advisor provides students with such information as institution policies and requirements (Winston and Sandor, 1984). Prescriptive advisors provide students with pertinent information, such as course offerings or graduation requirements, with minimal emphasis on peripheral opportunities, such as campus activities or tutoring workshops. Conversely, developmental advising represents a more multi-dimensional, student-centered context that expands beyond a student's immediate needs by working collaboratively with the student to incorporate life goals, aspirations and limitations into the advising model (Williams, 2007; King, 2005; Crookston, 1994/1972).

Credited as the founder of the developmental advising concept, B. B. Crookston (1994) noted that academic advising has the ability to affect students beyond simply interpreting and implementing an institution's policies and procedures. "Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment," including most notably one's academic advisor, and "focuses on the whole person" to maximize learning and growth for all involved parties (King, 2005, para 1). Rather than solely providing answers or solutions in a prescriptive advising model, Crookston (1994) noted that growth and learning among both parties could be achieved when an advisor and student engaged in dialogue and assessments that stimulate ideas and goals beyond standard advising protocol.

In a 1987 study, Andrews, Andrews, Long and Henton found a correlation between a student's preference for an advising style and specific profile characteristics. At-risk students, those who are on academic probation due to low grade point averages, showed a stronger preference for the supportive qualities involved in developmental advising, while students who were excelling academically tended to prefer the more basic

and concise aspects of prescriptive advising. These findings suggested that students who were struggling academically more often relied on and appreciated the support afforded by a developmental advising approach while students who were performing at a higher academic level felt they needed less collaborative engagement with their advisors.

Appreciative Advising

Another model has emerged in the last decade that expands the concept of developmental advising; it aims to advance student potential by matching students' strengths and goals with institutional resources. Known as Appreciative Advising, this method incorporates Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Sorenson, Whitney & Yaeger, 2000), an organizational development theory-based model that uses open-ended questions to generate deeper feedback, and positive psychology to better identify and assess student conditions and aspirations and design plans to facilitate goal attainment (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008).   Appreciative Inquiry uses a "systematic approach" to "search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them" (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d., p. 3). Appreciative Inquiry is the practice of asking positive, open-ended questions to engage a participant in a dialogue to yield greater individual and organizational potential through the identification and activation of ideas (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.). Appreciative Inquiry draws from the principles of a relatively new branch of psychology known as positive psychology (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008) which examines how "positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions" promote personal success (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005).

Based on four stages of inquiry, Appreciative Inquiry uses a systematic assessment approach to seek out undiscovered potential within an individual to incite

personal and organizational growth and change (Corporation for Positive Change, 2010). The first stage, Discovery, involves asking individuals or a large group questions to better understand the characteristics and perspectives helping to shape an organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.). In the next phase, Dream, questions are asked that seek to stimulate ideas and possibilities to promote prosperity. The third phase, Design, is when ideas from the Dream phase are incorporated into a strategic plan that is designed to see these goals through to fruition. The final phase, Delivery, is the implementation and attainment of the plans and goals created in the Dream phase.

Appreciative Inquiry has been commonly credited as a successful practice of seeking out and achieving change and growth within organizations, including higher education institutions (Calabrese, Roberts & McLeod, 2008; Yoder, 2005). In 2002, Bloom and Martin discussed the value of adding Appreciative Inquiry to the practice of professional advising. Noting the potential, Appreciative Inquiry was adopted by academic advisors as a method to help students set and achieve academic goals (Bloom, et al, 2008). However, certain aspects of Appreciative Inquiry were deemed insufficient in its ability to "adequately address" or stress important factors when advising a student (p. 26). As a result, two additional phases, Disarm and Don't Settle, were added to the Appreciative Inquiry model as well as changing the name of the Destiny phase to the Deliver phase.

Appreciative Advising advances traditional advising models by allowing the advisor to further explore students' strengths and dreams, and to collaboratively develop a plan for seeing goals through to fruition through a series of six phases (See Figure 1). Advisors following the Appreciative Advising model transition from the first phase

through to the final phase over the course of consecutive academic advising sessions and record their notes from their meetings with students. Ideas, goals and issues are then assessed and reflected upon both by the advisor after the session and collaboratively with the student during each subsequent session.

The first step toward identifying and realizing a student's potential is to mitigate factors that may impede building a trusting relationship between the advisor and the student. Not included in the Appreciative Inquiry model, the Disarm phase was added to ensure that advisors establish and maintain an environment that is welcoming and sensitive to the student's needs (Bloom, et al., 2008). From encouraging signage adorning office walls to affirming body language, Appreciative Advisors are keenly aware of threatening verbal and nonverbal signals that may impede advising progress.

Figure 1

The Six Phases of Appreciative Advising

Note: Adapted from "The Appreciative Advising Overview," by Bloom, J. (2009).

The goal of the second step, the Discover phase, is to utilize "positive, open-ended questions…to extract narratives" that provide advisors with information to "help students identify their strengths, passions, and skills" (p. 43). Bloom, Hutson and He (2008) give examples of questions advisors might use to elicit detailed responses (pp. 44-45):

- Tell me a story about a time you positively impacted another person's life.

- Who are your two biggest role models? Why are they role models to you and what about them do you hope to emulate?

- What were you doing the last time you lost track of time? When time just flew by and you looked up at the clock and thought it must be wrong?

During this phase, the advisor uses affirming language, such as "I am impressed by" phrases and positive follow-up questions to encourage students to be forthcoming with details that will highlight positive attributes and values.

In addition to asking general questions during the Discover phase, a group of academic advisors developed a self-assessment inventory to "help advisors get to know students better" (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008, p. 45).

Referred to as the Appreciative Advising Inventory (AAI), this 44-question tool asks students to rate their perceptions of a variety of topics, including their outlook about the future, family support and campus engagement (see Appendix A). Advisors can ask students to complete the AAI prior to or during the appointment and then discuss the students' ratings during the advising session. This exercise allows the advisor to gain a broader understanding of a student's strengths and goals, and begin collaboratively developing a plan for achieving the goals.

The Dream phase follows the Discover phase of Appreciative Advising. This phase assists students as they identify hopes and dreams for the future (Bloom et al., 2008). Using "guided imaging" to assist students in detailing their ambitions, advisors are able to develop a deeper understanding of students' aspirations. Examples of questions, provided in *The Appreciative Advising Revolution* (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008), meant to help guide a student in the Dream phase include:

- Imagine that you are on the front cover of a magazine 20 years from now. The article details your latest and most impressive list of accomplishments. What is the magazine? Why have you been selected to appear on the cover? What accomplishments are highlighted in the article?
- When you were approximately 9 years old someone asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" What was your answer? What is your answer to that question now?

In the Dream phase, advisors begin to make connections between students' responses to questions asked during the Discover phase and the Dream phase. Once a theme or vision is identified, the advisor transitions to the Design phase to begin developing with the student a plan to achieve the goals and objectives (Bloom et al., 2008). The referral of students to campus resources, such as special interest groups or career planning centers, also seeks to maximize goal attainment by apprising students of pertinent resources. Although the advisor may be a student's primary source of information and support on campus, the student must begin to take "ownership of her/his own self-authored plan" (Bloom et al., p. 85).

Students enter the Deliver phase once they have identified their goals. Through

continued positive feedback and active listening, advisors can help "revise, modify, and prioritize the plan" (p. 96). The final phase of Appreciative Advising, the Don't Settle phase, was designed to motivate students to think beyond their initial goals and identify even greater ambitions. As illustrated in Table 1, the Appreciative Advising method can be cyclical in nature however subsequent advising sessions may involve skipping across phases depending on the student's progress and plans. Once the final stage has been reached, advisors can revisit the initial phases to develop strategies for achieving new goals.

To date, Appreciative Advising has been implemented to varying degrees in more than eight higher education institutions (Bloom et al., 2009). The Academic Services Office at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and the Academic Centers for Excellence Office at the University of South Carolina (USC) are two programs that have fully adopted Appreciative Advising as the theoretical infrastructure for their offices. Eastern Illinois University's Bachelor of Arts in General Studies Office has also adopted the Appreciative Advising Approach for their work with adults. At USC, graduate students enrolled in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program are also advised using the Appreciative Advising approach.

Though Appreciative Advising has only been in practice for a relatively short period of time, several pivotal studies have been conducted to determine the efficacy of this method on various categories of students (Pembleton, 2009; Bloom, et al, 2009; Hutson & Bloom, 2007; Redfern, 2008; Truschel, 2008). From at-risk students to distant learners and graduate students, studies on the impact of Appreciative Advising for such populations have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of this newly emerging

advising model. Early research has concluded that Appreciative Advising does promote student success and targets "retention and satisfaction" (Bloom, et al, 2009), among various student demographics. However, no research exists that studies the impact of Appreciative Advising on community college transfer students.

Community College Transfer Students

Community college students represent a substantial segment of the overall higher education population. In 2009, 1,177 community colleges nationwide served 6.7 million students enrolled in credit-based courses (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2009). During this same year, community college students accounted for 44% of the total number of undergraduate students in America (AACC, 2009).

The original intention of the American junior college was primarily to offer general education for students planning to transfer to four-year institutions (Townsend, 2001). After completing the equivalent of the freshman and sophomore years at the junior college, students then transferred to a four-year university to complete their degree. In 2009, 34% of community college students who had completed some coursework but had not yet earned a degree, transferred to a four-year institution (AACC, 2009). The same study found that in that same year, 48% of community college graduates who had received a transfer degree also transferred to a four-year university. These figures represent a significant number of community college students whose intention is to complete a bachelor's degree by transferring to a senior institution.

Also central to the community college mission is the commitment to open access to education (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Whereas public and private four-year institutions expect students to satisfy various admission requirements, community colleges impose

only minimal admission requirements on applicants. Minimum barriers to entry, including affordable tuition, allow for a wider portion of the population to gain access to higher education (Shannon & Smith, 2006). As a result, the demographics at community colleges tend to reflect societal characteristics different from most colleges and universities.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), when compared to the average university student's profile, a typical community college student is older, stems from a low-income household, and is more likely to have children of their own (Kojaku & Nunez, 1998). The typical community college student is also more likely to be a minority, to be a first-generation college student and less likely to have received a high school diploma.

Given that community college students typically originate from a more socioeconomically disadvantaged background than university students, a transfer to an institution where the campus population demographics are vastly different can be intimidating and present cultural challenges. Though studies show that community college students who earn a transfer degree and move on to a four-year institution are ultimately as successful, and often more so, in completing a four-year degree when compared to native students (Urso & Sygielski, 2007; Berger & Malaney, 2001), the initial phase of adjustment to the new campus environment can present challenges.

Transfer Shock

Students who transfer from one institution to another must adapt to the new institution's academic standards and social settings. Often, transfer students struggle to adjust at the new institution during the initial semester and as a result, this is reflected in

their academic performance. "Transfer shock" describes the negative impact that adjustment to a new institution has on transfer student's grades during the first semester (Hill, 1965). Not unique to community college students, transfer shock can affect students regardless of their academic and socioeconomic background (Laanan, 2001). However, considering the nature of the average community college student's background, the propensity for suffering from transfer shock would appear greater than that for a traditional university student transferring to another institution.

Studies indicate that community college transfer students who receive traditional academic advising report lower levels of transfer shock and experience shorter durations of the effect of transfer shock (Thurmond, 2007). While ample research suggests traditional academic advising can impact transfer shock levels, to date, no studies exist that show what affects Appreciative Advising may have on transfer shock experienced by ADN-prepared community college transfer students.

Purpose of the Study

The identification of best practices in advising to mitigate the degree to which community college students experience transfer shock is imperative given that statistics indicate a growing number of students are enrolling in community colleges with the intention of later transferring to a senior institution (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Appreciative Advising on the experiences of ADN-prepared community college-to-university transfer students during their first semester in the RN to BSN Program at the senior institution, Western Carolina University. Specifically, satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and change in GPA were studied to determine if Appreciative Advising impacts satisfaction with the transfer

phase and transfer shock experienced by ADN-prepared community college students.

Research Questions

Data were collected to answer the following research questions:

1.   Is there a difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

2.   Is there a difference in attrition during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

3.   Is there a difference in change in GPA during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

These questions were addressed by analyzing data provided by WCU's School of Nursing's Office of Student Services as well as results from student surveys and interviews. After analyses had been conducted on the data and results were reported, recommendations were made as to whether the Appreciative Advising model should be integrated among additional community college-to-university RN to BSN programs' transfer student support services.

Conceptual Framework

Appreciative Advising fundamentally served as the conceptual framework for this study. The roots of Appreciative Advising include Appreciative Inquiry, positive psychology, and development advising (Bloom et al., 2008). This study was also guided by two key concepts related to Appreciative Advising. Because the foundation of Appreciative Advising is based on the use of Appreciative Inquiry to engage students,

this theory served as a guide for this research. Grounded in organizational theory, Appreciative Inquiry was developed as a method for soliciting feedback from employees using open-ended questions to bring about positive ideas and change (Cooperrider, et al., 2000). Appreciative Inquiry is also firmly rooted in positive psychology, including Abraham Maslow's Motivation and Personality (Bloom, et al., 2008), which indicates that individuals can be motivated to affect change through the use of positive interactions.

Because no research exists related to the impact of Appreciative Advising on transfer shock, this study may offer a significant contribution to the academic advising body of knowledge. Using the outcomes of this study, college administrators and academic advisors can make more informed decisions regarding best practices for advising community college transfer students and mitigating the adverse effects of transfer shock.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms have been uniquely defined for added clarity and consistency.

1. Transfer student refers to a student who has only attended a community college prior to matriculating to a senior institution.

2. Native student is defined as a student who attended a four-year institution as a freshman and has not transferred to another institution.

3. Senior institution is used interchangeably with four-year institution and university, a senior institution is a four-year institution to which community college students transfer to purse a Bachelor's degree.

4. The transfer phase begins when a community college student applies for

admission to a senior institution and ends upon the completion of the student's

first full semester.

5.   Matriculation is the act of a transfer student enrolling in a senior institution.

6.   First generation college student is defined as a student whose parents did not

attend a higher education institution.

7.   Attrition is defined in this study as the act of dropping all classes during the first

semester at the senior institution.

An in-depth analysis of the impact of Appreciative Advising on ADN-prepared

community college transfer students may inform program development by identifying the

extent to which this advising practice may mitigate transfer shock and improve transfer

phase satisfaction, retention and academic performance. The outcomes of this study may

also benefit both university and community college faculty and administrators in their

development of transfer student support programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the typical community college student profile will be described based on a review of current literature and empirical research. A more specific examination of the RN to BSN transfer student profile will also be discussed. This topic will then transition the focus of the literature review to transfer shock, including the nature of this phenomenon and programs developed to mitigate the symptoms. Noting that advising is a common element among programs designed to assist students during the transfer phase and Appreciative Advising is central to this research study, the literature review will end with a thorough review of this newly emerging concept.

Community College Students

According to Fusch (1996), community colleges were developed to offer access to higher education to a diverse population, many of whom may not have had the opportunity to attend college otherwise. While this may have been true at the onset, for many students now, community colleges are commonly the first step toward earning a four-year degree (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In a 2000 study that sampled 3,219 community college students, Voorhees and Zhou (2000) found that 66.4% of the participants' "original goal was to earn a certificate or degree or to transfer to a four-year institution". Between 1995-1996, 50.8% of the total number of students enrolled in a community college transferred to a senior institution (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Now, a more modern version of a community college is one whose mission is "centered on transfer" programs (p. 159). According to The Chronicle of Higher Education's 2010-2011 Annual Almanac, 3.98 million students were enrolled in a community college during 2010 (2010). The Almanac also predicts that by the year 2018, the number of

students enrolled in a community college will likely increase to 4.26 million.

Because the traditional profile of a community college student is one that faces greater challenges toward attending higher education than a senior institution college student (Kojaku & Nunez, 1998), the emphasis on ensuring a smooth transition for the growing number of transfer students is heightened. To determine what factors contribute to a successful transition from a community college to a four-year institution, a study examined attributes of community colleges with high transfer rates and found that "enhanced counseling and advising" were associated with these institutions (Striplin, 1999, p. 4).

A 1998 Canadian study by Bell found that though community college transfer students may encounter greater challenges, such as degree completion time, when compared to native senior institution students, these students (as cited by Bryant, 2001) overcame such obstacles and "did better academically than students entering college directly from high school" (p. 88), due in part to more attentive faculty and staff. Further research indicates that community college students must contend with more socioeconomic impediments than native students. Studies show community college students are more likely to be first generation college students and come from low-income households than native students (Cohen, 2003). A larger percentage of community college students also hold part-time or full-time jobs and are more likely to have children when compared to native students (Kojaku & Nunez, 1998).

A 1965 empirical study by Knoell and Medsker was conducted to determine the extent to which such socioeconomic factors impeded the transfer process for community college students (as cited by Glass & Bunn, 1998). The study sampled 4,026 community

college transfer students and 3,349 native students to compare graduation persistence. The researchers found that while 62% of the community college transfer students did graduate from 4-year institutions, most experienced an initial drop in their grade point averages immediately following the transfer. The study also found that 29% of the community college transfer students had not graduated four years after transferring and cited finances as the main factor for impeding graduation persistence.

Glass & Bunn (1998) also noted that a similar study in 1971 by Stirewalt found comparable outcomes. "Stirewalt's study confirmed Knoell and Medsker's findings that transfer students' grade point average dropped after transfer" (p. 242). The pattern of stumbling academically after transferring was coined "transfer shock" in 1965 (Hill) and has since been cited in countless studies that analyzed the transition for community college students transferring to a senior institution (Nolan & Hall, 1978; Keeley & House, 1993; Ishitani, 2008).

RN to BSN Transfer Students

As the demand for registered nurses has steadily increased over the past few decades, so too have the number of educational options for earning nursing degrees (Raines & Taglaireni, 2008). A traditional option is to enter a four-year pre-licensure program at a university to earn the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Another option is to complete the two-year Associates Degree in Nursing (ADN) program at a community college. Gaining in popularity in recent years is the ADN to BSN program option or what is recognized by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing as an RN to BSN program (AACN, 2010, December 1). This program allows the licensed Registered Nurse (RN) to earn the BSN after completing the ADN program at

the community college level (AACN, 2010). In 2009, RN to BSN students represented 27% of all actively enrolled undergraduate nursing students (AACN, 2009). Regardless of the program, research indicates that although current literature on attrition in nursing programs is limited, attrition rates are moderately high across all undergraduate nursing programs (Wells, 2003).

In contrast to ADN-prepared nurses who account for 70% of practicing RNs (Megginson, 2008), BSN-prepared have the ability to practice at an advanced level and have consistently been shown to make fewer clinical mistakes (Aiken, et al, 2003). As a result, BSN-prepared nurses are at an increased demand among employers (AACN, 2010). According to the AACN, the number of students enrolled in RN to BSN programs increased by 12.8% from 2008 to 2009 (2010). Conversely, in a 2007 study on nursing program persistence rates by Papes and Lopez, statistics showed that only 83% of students enrolled in the participating RN to BSN programs graduated within the standard four-semester plan (Papes and Lopez, 2007).

High attrition rates in RN to BSN programs can be the result of many factors, including transfer process impediments that are applicable to all students, however, RN to BSN students are a unique demographic that present additional challenges that can lead to attrition. According to Robertson, Canary, Orr, Herberg, & Rutledge (2010), RN to BSN students are "generally older, married, and going to school part-time while working and juggling family responsibilities" (p. 99). In a phenomenological inquiry study that examined modern barriers and incentives for nurses pursuing RN to BSN programs, Megginson (2008) cited fear and a lack of academic support during their ADN programs as two factors that discourage RN-prepared nurses from enrolling in a bachelor's degree

program. These factors, coupled with standard transfer barriers, can compound students'

inability to persist in and complete an RN to BSN program.

According to the AACN, the Health Resources and Services Administration, a

division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, projected that a 90%

increase in nursing graduates would be required to quell the nursing shortage (AACN,

2010, September 20). In a study by Robertson, et al (2010), that measured RN to BSN

Program outcomes, the two highest factors noted as initiatives for enhancing student

success included faculty/staff support and advising center support. Identifying ways to

improve the transfer process and assist students through advising as they adjust during

the pivotal initial semester at the senior institution may yield higher academic

performance, persistence and graduation rates.

Transfer Shock

Transfer shock describes a drop in grades that occurs during the first semester

after a student has transferred from a community college to a senior institution (Hill,

1965; Ishitani, 2008). Additional factors that have been attributed to transfer shock

experienced by community college students include inadequate academic preparation by

the community college and access to financial aid (Porter, 1999). To determine the

validity of transfer shock, "a plethora of studies" were conducted that compare "the

differences in academic achievement (typically measured by grade point averages)

between transfer and native students" (Ishitani, 2008, p. 404). Proving the concept to be

reliable, research consistently shows that a community college transfer student's

academic achievement is likely to be negatively impacted during the first semester after

transferring to the senior institution.

However, grade point averages are not the only aspect impacted by the transfer process. Research also indicates community college transfer student retention and graduation rates decrease as a result of transfer shock (Porter, 1999). In 1999, Porter conducted a study that compared the performance of community college transfer students to native students on several factors: retention, graduate rates, grade point averages and academic dismissals. The study indicated that "transfer students as a whole perform worse than native students on four academic outcomes: one-year retention, one-year graduation, cumulative grade point average and academic dismissals" (p. 19). Porter posited that transfer students are "either not academically prepared or not as motivated to finish their degree as the average native student" (p. 19).

Diaz (1992), found that of the 62 institutions examined 79% of transfer students experienced transfer shock while only 67% improved their GPA and progressed beyond the initial transfer semester. A study to determine the effects of transfer shock on specific academic disciplines was conducted by Cejda in 1997. Citing the lack of previous research on a possible correlation between transfer shock and a student's major, the study examined 100 community college transfer students who were pursing degrees in five different disciplines at Benedictine College: business, education, fine arts and humanities, mathematics and sciences, and social sciences. Outcomes indicated that students across all disciplines were impacted by transfer shock though some disciplines, such as education and the fine arts, experienced increased GPAs. The author concluded that although transfer shock is undoubtedly prevalent among community college transfer students, generalizations should not be made across disciplines but rather based on the specific degree (Cejda, 1997).

Rhine, Milligan and Nelson (2000) noted the importance of addressing transfer shock given that studies project continued increases in the number of community college-to-university transfer students. Because community college students often face "a variety of academic and social challenges" not experienced by native students, transferring to a senior institution can be an arduous and intimidating process (Rhine et al., 2000, p. 443). Rhine et al. (2000) referenced additional factors that have also been linked to transfer shock including age and finances.

When comparing the average age of a native student upon graduation, 22, to the average age of a community college transfer student upon graduation, the difference is significant (Piland, 1995). The average age range of community college-to-university transfer students is 22 to 26; as a result, these students are typically 30 by the time they reach graduation, eight years older than the average native student. According to Rhine et al. (2000), a possible explanation for this discrepancy is an inconsistency in enrollment, "skipping semesters, even years at a time," possibly due to financial hardships or employment needs result in a delay of matriculation and graduation for community college transfer students at the senior institution (p. 446).

Research indicates community college students also face added financial burdens when compared to the average native senior institution college student. With backgrounds that stem more heavily from the working-class socioeconomic strata, community college students must rely more on employment to meet their financial needs (Pascarella, 1999). Subsequently, the added strain of financial burdens and household demands for an older community college student poses greater challenges when transferring to a senior institution, resulting in transfer shock (Rhine, Milligan & Nelson,

2000).

Because senior institutions typically are not set-up to accommodate students with such lifestyle needs like community colleges, community college transfer students tend to face greater challenges when adjusting to their new college environment. A study conducted by Davis and Casey (1999) compared different aspects of campus life experienced by community college students between their initial college enrollment and the senior institution to which they transferred. The study found a significant number of transfer students felt they received a greater degree of personalized attention at their community college compared to their senior institution.

To help ease the impediments inherent in the transfer process for community college students, and to reduce the degree of transfer shock, senior institutions must increase and improve services available to incoming transfer students. According to Rhine, Milligan, and Nelson (2000), "appropriate changes and steps can be taken [by faculty and administrators] to ease the [transfer] process" (p. 448).

Programs Developed to Address Transfer Shock

A 1996 study by Laanan analyzed the impact of the Transfer Alliance Process (TAP), a program developed by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to improve the transfer process for community college students and mitigate the impact of transfer shock. The objective of the TAP program was to implement a combination of more congruent articulation agreements between California community colleges and UCLA resulting in an "enriched academic curriculum through faculty leadership, support from the academic senate and links with student services" (p. 70) with the aim of alleviating the effects of transfer shock once community college students matriculated to

UCLA. In the study, transfer students were asked a series of questions about their experiences in community college and at UCLA. Laanan found that, similar to the findings of the Davies and Casey study (1999), more often students cited feeling more connected to the community college and conversely, more like "numbers in a book" at UCLA (1996, p. 79). The study also concluded that, due to the disparity in academic attention received by TAP students in the community college compared to UCLA, "a greater percentage of TAP students than non-TAP students experienced transfer shock, [and] increased levels of stress" (p. 79). As a result, Laanan (1996) made several suggestions for improving academic services offered to community college transfer students by senior institutions.

Included in Laanan's (1996) recommendations was the idea of increasing "students' exposure to four-year college campus life prior to transfer by establishing linkages with various departments and counseling offices at the senior institution" (p. 82). Laanan (1996) posited that students with a greater sense of familiarity with the senior institution's policies and processes would not require as much adjustment and concluded that it is the responsibility of "administrators and student affairs professionals" to ensure that transfer students "are well equipped with the tools to handle the transition into a complex organization of the senior institution" (p. 83).

Other suggestions for lessening the impact of transfer shock include improved communication among community college and senior institution faculty, administration and particularly advisors (Rhine, Milligan & Nelson, 2000). "Advisors should have connections at 4-year colleges and universities to which students commonly transfer and should have knowledge about specific requirements at each institution" (p. 450). In

doing so, students would have access to current information and become more accustomed to the senior institutions policies and services well before transfer occurs thus lessening the degree of transfer shock experienced upon matriculation.

According to King (1994), "many creative approaches to enhancing transfer among colleges and universities" have been developed to assist students during the transfer process and mitigate the effects of transfer shock (1994, p. 7). Working in collaboration with community colleges, senior institutions have begun designing handbooks and orientations to specifically target the unique needs of transfer students during the matriculation process. King (1994) also cited the University of Arizona's Higher Education Linkage Plan, a strategy for eliminating transfer impediments by forming a network of academic support personnel selected to work exclusively with transfer students to address their specific needs and reduce levels of transfer shock.

More recently, a review of literature by Eggleston and Laanan (2001) on transfer shock and programs in place to assist transfer students at senior institutions found "support programs for transfer students at senior institutions do not formally exist" (p. 92). However, Eggleston and Laanan (2001) noted that, while previous research revealed that many senior institutions did not have transfer student support programs in place, recent statistics indicated an increase in such programs to meet the demands of a rise in transfer rates.

A review of literature on ways in which higher education institutions were addressing transfer process barriers by Zamani (2001) found transfer centers and institutes have become popular approaches for addressing transfer shock. Recognizing "financial background and academic readiness" are factors that can negatively impact

success at the senior institution for transfer students, the author also noted institutional factors, such as campus culture, can also negatively impact matriculation (Zamani, 2001, p. 16). A summary of programs targeting the myriad factors that contribute to transfer shock revealed which programs have been successful in mitigating transfer shock. The Summer Scholars Transfer Institute (SSTI), is a partnership program between community colleges in the Los Angeles area, the University of California at Irvine and Santa Ana College, which provides a residential summer program for disadvantaged community college students, such as low-income, first-generation student and minority students. The goal of the SSTI is to "blend institutional cultures of the participating colleges while structuring condensed academic courses and social support systems to ensure success" (Zamani, 2001, p. 20). Results of an analysis of the SSTI program by McGrath and Van Buskirk (1998) revealed that the program was successful in doubling the number of minority students who transferred to the University of California (as cited in Zamani, 2000).

In Illinois, a federal grant allowed for the creation of outreach programs and transfer centers to target transfer students. One of the funding recipients, Oakton Community College, used the resources for workshops and "campus visits to four-year institutions" (p. 21). While the programs cited in Zamani's review have proven successful at improving transfer rates and retention, the author notes the "responsibility should not lie solely with the two-year sector" (p. 22). Glass and Harrington echo this assertion and add that "four-year institutions should continue to seek effective ways of reaching out to these students, perhaps through counseling, tutoring, and mentoring, in an effort to help them adjust more effectively to the academic and social life of the school"

(2002, p. 13).

According to Swing (2000), initiatives that have been introduced on senior institution campuses to improve the transfer process include the addition of orientations and advisors whose aim is to specifically address the unique needs of transfer students. The results of a study conducted by Sacramento State University's Institutional Research and Planning Department on the institution's transfer student population recognized that while the institution "does not have transfer centers or specialized support services to foster a smooth transition" (Sujitparapitaya, 2005, p. 11), the author did acknowledge "academic support programs and services designed for [transfer students] will be more effective when they are designed to meet their unique needs and characteristics" (p. 10). Similarly, the results of a study by Swing (2000) conducted on 60 senior institutions to determine what programs and practices were being implemented to improve transfer student success found that nearly twenty of the institutions did not have support services in place.

In their report on transfer student support programs offered at senior institutions, Eggleston and Laanan (2000) noted "there is only a limited amount of research on the development and evaluation of support services" (p. 93). The authors did however cite several empirical studies on support programs have been integrated on community college campuses to introduce students to many of the academic and social aspects of the senior institution prior to transferring. Three programs were reviewed, each of which had the common goals of improving the transition process and increasing student retention and graduation rates.

The first two programs reviewed, the Exploring Transfer program at Vassar

College and the Transfers Summer program at UCLA, served as bridge programs for transfer students, allowing students to enroll early at the senior institutions. The common goal of these bridge programs was to allow students to matriculate into the senior institutions during the summer to adjust to the new campus environment prior to the starting their regular schedules in the fall semester.

Two additional transfer support programs that were reviewed include the University of Arkansas' Office for Non-Traditional Students and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Multicultural Transfer Admissions Program (Eggleston & Laanan, 2000). Central to each program is the delivery of enhanced student services offered specifically to transfer students. According to Eggleston and Laanan (2000), the intent of the University of Arkansas' Office for Non-Traditional Students is to enhance a transfer student's potential for success by providing customized support and services for their unique needs. Similarly, transfer students who participate in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's transfer program becoming more acculturated to the senior institution by offering a myriad of services and information through open houses, campus tours and academic advising, all of which have been tailored to address the specific needs of transfer students. This program also assists transfer students by pairing each with an academic advisor who specializes in disseminating information about resources that can expedite the acclimation process and ease transfer shock.

Of the four transfer student support programs reviewed by Eggleston and Laanan (2000), the authors concluded that, while each program had beneficial aspects for transfer students, only Vassar College's Exploring Transfer program proved to have a resounding impact on both retention and graduation rates. However, the authors noted none of the

senior institutions have conducted program evaluations using "comparative measures of transfer students who use or do not use its services with respect to the effects of transfer shock" (Eggleston & Laanan, 2000, p. 95), yet suggest these models serve as foundational resources for further development of programs designed to alleviate transfer shock. The absence of substantial research on the impact of various transfer student support programs necessitates the immediacy for studies on programs currently in place, especially considering the increasing number of students transferring from community colleges to senior institutions (Rhine, Milligan & Nelson, 2000).

Prescriptive Advising

Prescriptive Advising is characterized as a basic, advisor-led, one-directional method for providing students with standard information such as academic policies and course requirements (Appleby, 2001). In a hierarchical manner, prescriptive advisors supply students with specific information related to the students' academic requirements and do not collaborate with students to identify or further explore potential goals (Fielstein, 1989). Prescriptive advisors will assist students with problems as they arise but they do not formulate academic plans that draw on various campus resources to assist students with their issues or goals. Prescriptive advisors give instructions on how to complete academic requirements and the students follow these orders (Crookston, 1995). Very little to no emphasis is placed on assisting students with developing certain skill sets, providing campus resource information, or working collaboratively in any capacity to facilitate a greater understanding of students' strengths and goals.

Appreciative Advising

Defined during a presentation at the 2006 National Academic Advising Association annual conference as "the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, probing questions that help identify and strengthen a student's ability to optimize their academic performance," Appreciative Advising has the capacity to assist students of all backgrounds in maximizing their potential (Amundsen, Bloom & Hutson). Although Appreciative Advising is a relatively new concept (Amundsen & Hutson, 2004), many studies have been conducted on the impact of this method since its inception and introduction to higher education in 2002 (Hutson, He, & Amundsen, 2006; Bloom et al., 2009).

When the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) implemented Appreciative Advising into the Strategies for Academic Success (SAS) program, a course for at-risk students, research indicated that after three advising sessions, retention rates among these students increased by 18% (Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen & Atwood, 2007). In 2008, the University of South Carolina (USC) implemented Appreciative Advising into the Academic Centers for Excellence's (ACE) academic coaching program targeted at helping at-risk students (Hall, 2008). Originally developed in 1995 to improve the retention rates of probationary students, the ACE program is now available to any student wishing to receive academic support. Though a formal study has not been conducted on the impact of the ACE program on retention rates, Hall (2008) posits that "initial reports from ACE coaches indicate that [Appreciative Advising] has been much more effective in helping coaches build rapport with their students".

While preliminary studies on the impact of Appreciative Advising and various

student populations, such as at-risk, distance learning and graduate students, have shown improved retention rates and student satisfaction (Bloom et al., 2009), no studies have been conducted to examine the potential impact of Appreciative Advising on community college transfer students. As evidenced in the literature review, transfer student support programs place great emphasis on academic support services, particularly academic advisors, as the primary source for connecting with transfer students to mitigate the impact of transfer shock.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Appreciative Advising on ADN-prepared community college-to-university transfer students' satisfaction with the transfer process, attrition and change in GPA. According to Laanan, "further research about the experiences of students at the community college who do transfer to senior institutions is necessary to determine the complexity of their adjustment process" (2001, p. 6). In regard to a flat trend in retention and graduation rates, Cohen made the assertion that "so much attention has been paid to transfers in the past 25 years…that the wonder is that rates have not increased more than they have" (2003, p. 23). Thurmond (2007) also cites the abundance of research conducted on transfer shock and yet recognizes this phenomenon continues to exist to largely due to inadequate support systems for transfer students. Thurmond's solution for mitigating transfer shock is to provide academic advising forums to provide transfer students with "individual attention and guidance" during their initial semester at the senior institution. The author concludes that "this strategy will provide transfer students with their best chance of minimizing transfer shock".

To ensure the appropriate Appreciative Advising methods are implemented for

RN to BSN students in the intervention group, an Appreciative Advising operational

outline was developed by the WCU School of Nursing Office of Student Services and

approved by Dr. Jennifer Bloom, the co-creator of Appreciative Advising (see Appendix

B). The outline describes the guidelines followed by the advisor to implement the

Appreciative Advising format, process and timeline for the intervention group.

Summary

In chapter two, an overview of transfer shock, community college transfer

students, academic advising, and current transfer programs were reviewed to highlight

what is known about these topics and to provide evidence for the need to conduct this

study. Appreciative Advising was also reviewed to provide further support for the

purpose of this study and to describe the nature and implementation process of this

advising method. In the next chapter, the design of the study will be explained and how

the research was executed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the research design will be described to explain how the study was implemented. The setting of the study, the participants and the variables will be reviewed as well as the format for collecting and analyzing the participant data. Finally, possible threats to the study are explored and resolutions for mitigating these possibilities will be examined.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Appreciative Advising on ADN-prepared community college-to-university transfer students' experiences and attitudes during their first semester in the RN to BSN Program at the senior institution, Western Carolina University (WCU). Specifically, student satisfaction with the transfer process, attrition and change in GPA was studied to determine if Appreciative Advising impacts transfer shock experienced by community college transfer students.

The impact of Appreciative Advising on students' experiences and attitudes during the transfer process was assessed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

2. Is there a difference in attrition during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

3. Is there a difference in change in GPA during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

The research hypotheses for this study addressed the nature in which Appreciative Advising stood to influence levels of transfer shock, specifically regarding satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and academic achievement as measured by change in GPA.

▪ Research hypothesis #1: RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising will report a higher degree of satisfaction with the transfer phase compared to RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

▪ Null hypothesis #1: RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising will not report a higher degree of satisfaction with the transfer phase compared to RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

▪ Research hypothesis #2: RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising will demonstrate attrition rates compared RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

▪ Null hypothesis #2: RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising will not demonstrate lower attrition rates compared to RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

▪ Research hypothesis #3: RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising will demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement as measured by a positive change in GPA compared to RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciate Advising.

▪ Null hypothesis #3: Research hypothesis #3: RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising will not demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement as measured by a positive change in GPA compared to RN to BSN transfer students who did

not receive Appreciate Advising.

　　To answer the research questions, the study was conducted using a mixed-methods sequential format. Cameron notes that while "qualitative and quantitative research methods" have "inherent strengths and weaknesses," a study that combines both "paradigm[s]…maximizes the strengths of each" (2005, p. 26). The first phase of the study included a quantitative, ex-post facto design to compare the differences in satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and change in GPA between RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising during their first semester at WCU and students who received Prescriptive Advising during their first semester at WCU.

　　After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, a Qualtrics survey was delivered via email to all students in each group after the semester in which the intervention group received Appreciative Advising to measure satisfaction with the transfer phase. The data generated from the survey was then analyzed using SPSS to determine if there was a significant difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who received Prescriptive Advising.

　　Research indicates that the most reliable data for measuring transfer shock include the change in grade point averages after transferring, retention rates and graduation rates (Kozeracki, 2001). During the first phase, existing data from WCU's School of Nursing's Office of Student Services was collected on attrition rates and grade point average in the nursing major at the community college level, current WCU RN to BSN program grade point average. This data was collected in order to explore possible relationships between Appreciative Advising and the easing of students' transfer shock.

Additional covariates including gender, age and ethnicity were also provided by the

School of Nursing's Office of Student Services to determine if these demographics have

an effect on the outcomes independent of whether or not students received Appreciative

Advising.

The second phase of the mixed methods sequential study involved interviews with

students from each group who volunteered to participate. According to Townsend

(1995), interviews are effective in eliciting details about issues with the transfer process

beyond what can be gleaned from a survey. The qualitative component of the study

followed a phenomenological approach. The purpose of adhering to a phenomenological

method was to identify common experiences from each group of students. According to

Creswell 2007), a phenomenological study focuses on "what all participants have in

common as they experience a phenomenon" (p. 58). In the qualitative, interview portion

of the study, the phenomenon being examined was satisfaction with the transfer phase.

The focus of the interviews was to ask questions that prompt students to discuss in more

specific detail their experiences after transferring to WCU. Qualitative data generated by

the interviews were then analyzed to identify themes and evidence that support or

contradict the survey findings related to satisfaction with the transfer phase.

The rationale for using a combination of quantitative and qualitative statistical

measures is to generate more conclusive outcomes based on varied and more thorough

data. Because the Appreciative Advising sessions occurred prior to collecting the data,

using an ex-post facto design was optimal. In addition to analyzing data supplied by

WCU's School of Nursing's Office of Student Services, the use of a survey to gather

transfer experience data directly from students would, according to Kozeracki, "provide

additional illumination to the transfer process" (2001, p. 64). The decision to include interviews in the research design was based on research that indicates conducting interviews with transfer students is an effective method for identifying community college transfer students' issues (Myhre, 1998). The intention of analyzing the data using a mixed methods approach was to maximize the depth and breadth of data generation to provide a thorough analysis of the impact of Appreciative Advising on transfer shock and transfer phase experiences at WCU.

Setting

Western Carolina University is one of the 16 public four-year institutions that comprise the University of North Carolina system (College Portrait, 2010). During the Fall 2009 semester, 6,165 full-time undergraduates and 1,040 part-time undergraduates attended WCU. During the same semester, 677 full-time graduate students and 1,302 part-time graduate students also attended WCU. Since its founding in 1889 as a teachers college (Western Carolina University, Heritage & History, 2010), WCU has grown to offer a wide variety of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate degrees (Western Carolina University, About WCU, 2010). WCU is comprised of six academic colleges, including the College of Health and Human Sciences which encompasses the School of Nursing (Western Carolina University, Departments, Schools & Colleges, 2010).

Founded in 1969, the WCU School of Nursing has grown in size due in part to its mission to meet the healthcare needs of the region and as a result, has an alumni body of over 2000 graduates (Western Carolina University, About the School of Nursing, 2010). In Fall 2009, 448 undergraduate and 92 graduate nursing students were actively enrolled in WCU's School of Nursing (WCU School of Nursing Office of Student Services,

2010).

Participants

Students who entered the RN to BSN Program during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters define the sample size. Thirty students were accepted to begin the RN to BSN program during the Fall 2010 semester (WCU School of Nursing Office of Student Services, 2011). At the end of the Fall 2010 semester, nine students had withdrawn from the program. Twenty-eight new students were accepted to begin the program during the Spring 2011 semester. Nine students also withdrew from the program by the end of the Spring 2011 semester. The 28 students who began the RN to BSN Program in the Spring 2011 semester are defined as the intervention group since they received Appreciative Advising and will be referred to as the Appreciative Advising group in this study. The 21 continuing students in the Fall 2010 incoming class are defined as the control group since they did not receive Appreciative Advising; this group are referred to as the Prescriptive Advising group in this study because they received traditional, prescriptive advising from the School of Nursing's Office of Student Services staff.

Students in the Prescriptive Advising group were given basic information and guidance beginning at the time of acceptance, four months prior to matriculating into the RN to BSN program. The Prescriptive advisor, an employee of Western Carolina University's School of Nursing's Office of Student Services, delivered standard prerequisite and transitional information such as first-semester course registration details, how to pay tuition and how to navigate the online university resources, MyCat and WebCat. The Prescriptive advisor did not work with students in a collaborative sense to better understand their strengths or academic aspirations nor did the advisor develop an

advising plan that incorporated various campus resources to assist students throughout their time in the program. After providing basic information to assist students during the transfer phase, the advisor was available throughout the semester if needed but did not reach out to students to develop a collaborative plan to help students reach their goals.

The advisor who implemented the Appreciative Advising method for the students who began the RN to BSN program during the Spring 2011 semester also served as the researcher of this study as is employed by Western Carolina University's School of Nursing's Office of Student Services. Prior to implementing Appreciative Advising, the researcher read *The Appreciative Advising Revolution* manual and developed an operational plan for implementing this form of advising with the intervention group (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). Prior to advising students in the intervention group, the Appreciative Advisor reviewed the Appreciative Advising operational outline (see Appendix B) with Dr. Jennifer Bloom, co-creator of Appreciative Advising and first author of *The Appreciative Advising Revolution*. Once the Appreciative Advising operational outline was approved by Dr. Bloom, a subsequent meeting was scheduled with Dr. Bryant Hutson, second author of *The Appreciative Advising Revolution*, to discuss methods for preparing to properly implement this method of academic advising.

Students accepted to begin in the Spring 2011 semester began receiving Appreciative Advising four months prior to their matriculation into the RN to BSN program. This process began with students receiving an email from the advisor written in a warm and inviting tone telling students about the advisor and what lies ahead for the students. In keeping with the Disarm phase guidelines, the advisor gave reassurance to students that they would have student support services available throughout the transfer

phase. Students were also asked to complete the Appreciative Advising Inventory (see Appendix A) to provide the advisor with more details about the advisees prior to the first individual advising sessions.

The advisor led an online University Experience 101 (UE 101) course to introduce the Appreciative Advising students to Western Carolina University's online resources in the weeks leading up to the start of the semester. Following the Disarm phase guidelines, lively icons, inspiring quotes, encouraging discussion board posts and feedback were interspersed throughout the UE 101 course to help students adjust. During the UE 101 course, the advisor asked students to answer Design phase-related questions such as "Who are you biggest role models," and "Describe a peak experience when you felt really good about yourself and what you had accomplished," to learn more about the students' strengths. Students posted their comments on a discussion board and the advisor sent individual feedback to the students.

On the first day of the Spring 2011 semester, the Appreciative advisor led group activities such as having the students gather in small groups to learn three things about the others in their group. Each person was then asked to tell the class about one thing they learned about the others in their group. Students were also asked prior to the first day to imagine themselves on the cover of a magazine in 10 years. The students were instructed to select a magazine and write the details of what the article would say about their accomplishments. This exercise was intended to draw out students' goals as outlined in the Dream phase of Appreciative Advising.

After the group advising session concluded, the advisor met with each student individually in an office setting to recap what the advisor had noted up to that point and

to begin collaboratively developing a plan to help the students achieve their goals. To expand further on the Design phase elements, the advisor identified and noted various campus resources, such as the Western Carolina University Smarthinking online tutoring center and Continuing Education Testing Center, to support students in achieving their goals. The advisor completed a Goal Attainment Plan for each student based on the plans collaboratively identified during the individual advising session. The students were advised to then begin implementing the plans as outlined in the Deliver phase of Appreciative Advising. Throughout the semester students were contacted by phone and email to measure their progress toward obtaining their goals. The advisor documented their progress and updated their Goal Attainment Plans accordingly.

Due to the timeframe of this study, it was noted in the Appreciative Advising Operational Outline that an adequate amount of time may not elapse to fully accommodate reaching the Don't Settle phase. During the last scheduled advising session of the first semester, the Appreciative Advising advisor once again asked students about their progress toward meeting the goals outlined in their Goal Attainment Plans and offered support and suggestions to challenge the advisees to not only stay focused on meeting but exceeding their goals.

Aside from the differentiating factor of having received Appreciative Advising or not, students in both groups are similar in that they all have met the same admission requirements, completed the same application processes, live and work in the same geographical region and have completed the same first semester of courses at the time of data collection. Furthermore, as illustrated in Table 2, both the groups' demographics are very comparable.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Appreciative Advising and Prescriptive Advising Group

Demographic	Appreciative Advising Group (n = 19)	Prescriptive Advising Group (n = 21)
Gender		
Male	2 (10%)	4 (19%)
Female	17 (90%)	17 (81%)
Age		
21-25	1 (6%)	1 (5%)
26-30	3 (16%)	1 (5%)
31-40	9 (46%)	7 (33%)
41-50	5 (26%)	9 (43%)
51-60	0 (0%)	3 (14%)
61 or older	1 (6%)	0 (0%)
Race		
Black/African American	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
Hispanic/Latino	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Native American/American Indian	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
White/Caucasian	17 (90%)	18 (85%)
Multiracial	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
Previous Bachelor's Degree		
Yes	6 (32%)	7 (33%)
No	13 (68%)	14 (67%)
Enrollment		
Part-time (11 hours or less)	19 (100%)	17 (81%)
Full-time (12 hours or more)	0 (0%)	4 (9%)

Instruments

Two instruments, a survey and a list of interview questions, were used to measure students' satisfaction with the transfer phase. Both the intervention and control groups received the survey. The survey also contained questions assessing students' perspectives of the different aspects related to each phase of Appreciative Advising. Questions specifically related to each of the six phases of Appreciative Advising were embedded in the survey to determine if certain aspects of the Appreciative Advising method are more impactful than others. The intervention group's responses were

compared to the control group's outcomes to assess whether Appreciative Advising is more effective in making students feel welcome, exploring and identifying their strengths and goals and helping to achieve these goals or if these qualities are inherent in traditional advising as well.

A panel of experts was identified to review both instruments and provide feedback. After receiving consent from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), each instrument was sequentially piloted on current RN to BSN students not included in the control or intervention groups to measure for validity and reliability. The first instrument was a survey containing a series of questions developed to measure satisfaction with the transfer phase using a Likert-type format (see Appendix C). The survey included a limited number of open-ended questions asking participants to provide additional feedback about their experiences regarding the transfer phase. According to Sue and Ritter, open-ended questions are ideal for gaining additional insight about unconventional topics however, respondents "will usually skip open-ended items when they can" (2007, p. 43).

A survey was developed to address the specific attributes of the online RN to BSN program and its students in lieu of a pre-existing student satisfaction survey. A review of current transfer student satisfaction surveys revealed that questions are primarily targeted to students much unlike those in the RN to BSN program. For example, questions related to transitioning into a campus-based environment and who may or may not yet have declared a degree major were commonly included in transfer student satisfaction surveys (University of Southern California, 2010; Bowling Green State University [BGSU], 1998). Online student satisfaction surveys do assess advising

and transfer phase impressions but only as small components among many other aspects such as technical assistance and mental health counseling services (LaPadula, 2003) or program and course-specific questions (Thurmond, Wambach, Connors & Frey, 2002). As a result, a new survey was developed in response to the unique aspects of the RN to BSN Program's student and transfer phase characteristics.

The second instrument was used during the interview portion of the study. A preliminary set of interview questions were identified, reviewed by the panel of experts and piloted. The final set of interview questions were selected based in part on data gathered from the surveys and feedback from the panel experts and pilot study results (see Appendix D). The interview survey intended to have students expound on their impressions of the transfer phase by providing more specific and unique details about their experiences.

Pilot Study

The survey was developed by the researcher to identify the participants' satisfaction with the transfer phase and determine if there is a significant difference between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. A pilot study was performed to ensure that the survey instrument was both valid and reliable. The survey was first distributed to a panel of experts for review to address content validity. The panel of experts was comprised of Dr. Jennifer Bloom, Appreciative Advising co-founder; Dr. Bryan Hutson, Appreciative Advising co-founder; Dr. Sharon Jacques, former Western Carolina University RN to BSN Coordinator; and Dr. Barbara St. John, former RN to BSN faculty member.

The survey was revised based on the panel's feedback and then distributed to

current RN to BSN students who were not in either the Prescriptive Advising (control) group or the Appreciative Advising (experimental) group. The primary changes recommended by the expert panel included removing or combining items that asked the same question multiple times and adding questions that correlate with the six phases of Appreciative Advising.

The survey was sent to all RN to BSN students who did not fall into the Appreciative Advising or Prescriptive Advising groups. The survey was sent to 68 students. A reminder was sent to all non-respondents asking for their participation approximately two weeks after the survey was first dispensed. Eight respondents completed the initial test survey. To implement a test-retest reliability measure, the survey was resent to all eight respondents one week following the reminder. Of the eight respondents who completed the first survey, only six completed the re-test survey.

A Cronbach's alpha was completed to determine if the student satisfaction survey was valid; a Pearson correlation analysis was also completed to determine if the student satisfaction survey was reliable. The pilot survey instrument was found to be internally consistent based on the finding of $\alpha \geq .80$. The pilot survey instrument was also found to be reliable based on the findings from the test-retest correlation analysis results ($p < .05$).

An interview instrument was also developed to gather qualitative data from students in each advising group about their experiences and satisfaction with the transfer phase and further discern if a relationship exists between Appreciative Advising and students' satisfaction with the transfer phase. The interview questions were to be based, in part, on the results of the satisfaction survey. After reviewing the results of the pilot survey, an initial series of interview questions were sent to the same panel of experts

during the pilot phase for feedback (see Appendix D). The primary recommendations from the expert panel included combing or eliminating questions that were redundant in nature, reordering a few questions and identifying questions that would allow for the triangulation of the survey results with the interview responses and the six different phases of Appreciative Advising. The interview questions were then piloted on current RN to BSN students not enrolled in either the control or experimental groups to test for reliability and validity of the instrument. Results were reviewed by panel members to affirm the reliability and validity of the results.

Data collection

All student data was collected and tracked using uniquely assigned number/letter combinations as identifiers to protect student information and maintain confidentiality of the records. The survey, interview questions and respective accompanying consent information was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. Once IRB approval was received, the survey was then emailed to RN to BSN transfer students in both the control and intervention groups to gather data for the first phase of the study. The email stated the purpose of the survey and the nature of the confidentiality of their feedback. A link to the Qualtrics site administering the survey was also included in the email. A second email was sent approximately two weeks later to students who had not yet responded asking again for their participation and feedback. Once completed, the survey results were stored on the Qualtrics server. The final data was imported from the Qualtrics server into an (SPSS) file for analysis. Existing attrition and GPA data provided by the Western Carolina University School of Nursing's Office of Student Services was also imported to an SPSS file for analysis.

Once the survey data was collected and analyzed, a follow-up email was sent to all students who received the survey asking for their further participation in the interview. The email also contained the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their feedback.

Students who replied indicating a willingness to participate were scheduled for an interview. A second email was sent two weeks later to students who had not yet responded asking again for their participation in the study. All telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher using the speakerphone option so as to record the conversations for transcription purposes. Students were informed in the email and reminded prior to starting the interview that the conversations would be recorded and kept confidential. The students were asked a series of questions intended to collect additional qualitative data about their transfer experiences. In the event students exhibited or express trauma from discussing their transfer experiences, a list of support service contact information, including the WCU Academic Advising Center and Counseling Center, would have been provided to assist students in mitigating the effects however the need did not arise.

Data Analysis

The analysis chapter begins by providing an overview of the quantitative data gathered using descriptive statistics. A summary of the participants' demographics have been described to provide of foundational understanding of the sample groups. Average age, age range, gender percentages, ethnicity, number of children in the household, hours worked per week and full-time or part-time enrollment statistic distributions for each group are presented using various frequency tables. Composite transfer phase

satisfaction scores gathered from the survey have also been detailed using frequency tables.

Independent two sample t-tests were used to test for differences in transfer phase satisfaction between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who received Prescriptive Advising and change in GPA (Creswell, 2005). A chi-square analysis was used to test for differences in attrition for RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising versus those who received Prescriptive Advising. A MANCOVA analysis was intended to allow for multiple controls to be examined to determine if additional independent variables not manipulated by the researcher, such as gender, age or ethnicity, also share a significant correlation with transfer phase satisfaction, attrition and GPA (Newton & Rudestam, 1999). However, sufficient statistics could not be generated due to low participant number in each demographic category.

Once all interviews had been conducted, the conversations were transcribed for analysis. The transcribed interviews were then uploaded into Atlas.ti, a software package developed to facilitate the organizing and analysis of qualitative research (Atlas.ti, 2010). Once processed, the interview transcripts were analyzed to identify patterns and themes associated with transfer phase satisfaction and transfer shock among RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who received Prescriptive Advising (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Findings from the interviews have been presented as categories based on thematic analyses and illuminated by anecdotal quotes.

Variables

The independent variable was participation in Appreciative Advising sessions. Covariates included gender, age, number of hours worked per week, full-time or part-

time enrollment status in the program, ethnicity and previous bachelor's degree attainment. Several dependent variables were also examined.

The first dependent variable, level of satisfaction with the transfer phase, was examined using data generated from the survey. Students were given a series of questions related to the transfer process and asked to rate their level of satisfaction with this phase. To determine if a signification relationship exists between Appreciative Advising and level of transfer phase satisfaction, data generated from the survey was compared between groups who received Appreciative Advising and those received Prescriptive Advising using an independent two sample t-test.

Two dependent variables were also examined to measure transfer shock: attrition rates and change in GPA. First semester attrition rates for the two groups were compared using a chi-square analysis to determine if a significant relationship exists between drop-out rates and Appreciative Advising. A second dependent variable to measure transfer shock was the change in grade point average in the nursing major from the community college to the GPA for completion of the first semester at Western Carolina University. The differences in change of grade point average between the group of transfer students who received Appreciative Advising and those who received Prescriptive Advising were also tested using an independent two sample t-test to determine if a significant relationship exists between Appreciative Advising and levels of transfer shock.

Threats to Reliability

Because research designs have the potential to inaccurately predict or explain outcomes and threaten the quality of the study (Creswell, 2005), numerous measures were taken to eliminate such possibilities. Before an instrument can be considered valid

and suitable for use in this research, it must be confirmed that the outcomes are reliable. According to Gay "establishing reliability is a prerequisite for establishing validity" (Gay, 1987, as cited in Moskal and Leydens, 2000).

A possible threat to the reliability of this study was the inability of the survey to produce consistent results. To mitigate the internal threat of producing unreliable data, the survey was developed to measure only one construct: student satisfaction with the transfer phase. After administering the survey to a pilot group, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine if the results for measuring student satisfaction with the transfer phase were internally consistent. To ensure the instrument was reliable, the survey underwent a test/retest process to gauge consistency of the data collected. The survey was administered to current RN to BSN Program students who were not categorized as being in the control or intervention groups.

To negate the threat of producing unreliable measures of transfer shock as indicated by attrition rates and change in GPA, archived attrition and GPA data were used to conduct the analyses. Ensuring the quality of data collected from the interviews to measure student satisfaction with the transfer phase was also consistent and credible, several measures were integrated into the study. First, the interview survey was conducted using participants from the same pilot group that received the survey. Data collected from the pilot group interviews were analyzed to confirm consistency of the outcomes. Results that conclude an inconsistency in the data would have mandated a revision and retest of the interview survey instrument however, this was not necessary. Further assurance of reliability of the interview data was confirmed by providing individual interview transcripts to the respective control and intervention group

participants to confirm the accuracy of their collected information.

Threats to Validity

A possible threat to the validity of this study was the potential for using instruments that do not accurately assess the nature of the research questions. To ensure the instruments were capturing the appropriate information related to the research questions, the survey and interview survey instruments were first reviewed by a panel of experts to examine the appropriateness of the questions. The instruments were then piloted on RN to BSN students not participating in the study to determine if feedback indicated the impact Appreciative Advising has on transfer shock and satisfaction with the transfer phase. Significant deviations in the data would have resulted in revisions of the instrument(s) until the results more accurately assess the impact Appreciative Advising has on transfer phase satisfaction and transfer shock however this was not necessary.

Another possible threat to the internal validity of this study was the potential for not eliminating plausible alternative explanations. This threat was to be addressed by isolating relationships that do have significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Isolation of significant correlations was to be accomplished through the use of a MANCOVA procedure however low participant numbers in each demographic category prohibited the generation of adequate statistics.

The appropriate selection of the archival data provided by the Western Carolina University School of Nursing's Office of Student Services Office of Services combined with the timeliness of the administering of the survey also ensured that participants did not have a significant opportunity to be influenced by other factors after the advising

sessions. Participants of both groups also received the survey and interview during the same timeframe to ensure that a lapse does not threaten the internal validity of the study.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was limited to students Western Carolina University students who transferred into the RN to BSN Program during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters. The selection of participants was limited to Western Carolina University students who received Appreciative Advising as transfer students accepted to begin the RN to BSN Program in Spring 2011 and those accepted to begin the RN to BSN Program in Fall 2010 and received Prescriptive Advising during their transfer into Western Carolina University.

Conclusion

Community college students represent a population with unique and often limiting characteristics that make transferring to a senior institution arduous and often unattainable. Furthermore, transfer students enrolled in a nursing program face additional challenges that impede academic progress and program completion rates. Faculty and administrations at both community colleges and senior institutions should capitalize on every plausible opportunity to explore ways for improving the transfer process. It was the intention of this study to make recommendations based on the research findings that will inform policy and program changes that may enhance the transfer process for future community college students.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Appreciative Advising on ADN-prepared community college students' experiences during the transfer phase and in the first semester of Western Carolina University's RN to BSN Program. To determine the impact of Appreciative Advising on satisfaction with the transfer phase and transfer shock, three questions guided this research:

1. Is there a difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

2. Is there a difference in attrition during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

3. Is there a difference in change in grade point average during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

To provide a more robust analysis of students' experiences, the study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. First, a survey was implemented to gather data on students' satisfaction with the transfer phase. Interviews were then conducted to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and satisfaction with the transfer phase. Finally, attrition and GPA data were collected and analyzed to determine what impact Appreciative Advising had on continued enrollment and academic achievement.

In this chapter, a summary of the instrument development phase will be outlined. Next, an overview of the survey participants' descriptive statistics will be provided followed by the results of the satisfaction with the transfer phase survey. An overview of descriptive statistics for the students included in the attrition analysis will then be presented followed by the results of the attrition findings. An overview of the descriptive statistics for the students included in the GPA analysis will also be presented followed by the results of the GPA findings. Finally, a summary of the data analyses will conclude

this chapter.

Overall Participant Demographics

Participants in this study were comprised of two groups of RN to BSN students. An overview of each group's descriptive statistics is outlined in Table 2. The first group, those students who received Appreciative Advising, was originally comprised of 28 students, however, nine students withdrew during their first semester leaving 19 students. The RN to BSN program's grade policy requires students to maintain a 2.50 GPA and earn a C or better in all courses. Students who fall below a 2.50 GPA or receive a D, F or U in any course will be dismissed. Four of the nine Appreciate Advising students who did not progress past their first semester in the program failed one or more of their courses. The remaining five Appreciative Advising students withdrew due to personal reasons. The second group, those students who received Prescriptive Advising, was originally comprised of 30 students however nine students withdrew during their first semester leaving only 21 students. Of the nine Prescriptive Advising students who did not progress beyond their first semester in the RN to BSN program, three were dismissed due to grades; the remaining six students withdrew during the first semester due to personal reasons. Examples of the personal reasons cited by students from both groups who withdrew during the first semester included conflicting work schedules, family issues and/or finances as the reason for their decisions.

Table 2 represents the demographics for students in both groups who successfully completed their first semester in the RN to BSN program. Of the 19 Appreciative Advising students who did successfully complete the first RN to BSN program semester, 90% were female compared to 81% of the Prescriptive Advising students. Forty-six percent of the Appreciative Advising students were between the ages of 31-40 compared with 33% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. Twenty-six perfect of students in the Appreciative Advising group were between the ages 41-50 compared to 43% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. Ninety percent of the

Appreciative Advising students were Caucasian compared to 85% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. Thirty-two percent of students who received Appreciative Advising had earned a previous Bachelor's degree compared to 33% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. One hundred percent of the Appreciative Advising students were enrolled part-time (11 hours or less) in the RN to BSN Program compared to 81% of Prescriptive Advising students.

Survey Respondent Demographics

The survey instrument was developed to measure one construct: students' satisfaction with the transfer phase (see Appendix C). Of those students who received the survey, 12 students, or 57%, in the Prescriptive Advising cohort completed the survey and 8 students, or 50%, from the Appreciative Advising cohort completed the survey (see Appendix E). One hundred percent of Appreciative Advising students who completed the survey were female compared to 83% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. Sixty-four percent of students in the Appreciative Advising cohort were between the ages of 31-40 compared to 25% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. No students in the Appreciative Advising group who completed the survey were between the ages of 41-50; forty-two percent of students who received Prescriptive Advising were between the ages of 41-50.

Fifty percent of the Prescriptive Advising respondents did not have children currently living in their household compared with 38% of the Appreciative Advising respondents. Seventeen percent of the Prescriptive Advising respondents had two children currently living in the household. Conversely, 38% of the Appreciative Advising respondents had the same number of children currently living at home.

When asked how many hours the students work on average per week, 67% of the Prescriptive Advising respondents reported working 41 hours or more compared with only 13% of the Appreciative Advising respondents. Seventy-five percent of the Appreciative Advising respondents reported working between 21-40 hours per week.

Students were asked to list their part-time (11 hours or less per semester) or full time (12 hours or more per semester) enrollment status. Sixty-seven percent of the Prescriptive Advising students were enrolled part-time while 100% of the Appreciative Advising respondents were enrolled part-time.

Interview Respondent Demographics

Once the survey responses had been collected, the interview phase was implemented. The interview phase was strategically aligned to be conducted immediately following the survey phase. The reason for formatting the study in such a way was to allow for the results of the satisfaction survey to inform and tailor the interview questions. This plan was originally presented to the expert panel with the understanding that they may be called upon again to review the revised interview instrument should the results of the satisfaction survey significantly change the nature and/or order of the questions. However, the results of the satisfaction survey did not predicate any changes to the interview instrument.

An invitation to participate in the telephone interview along with the consent information was sent to all students in the Appreciative Advising and Prescriptive Advising groups (see Appendix D). After a week lapsed with no signs of participation interest, a second email was sent stating that interview participants would receive a $10 gift card. Following this notice, five students replied stating their willingness to participate and provided consent for a telephone interview.

All of the interviews were conducted during a weekday and between the hours of 9am and 6pm. Two of the five interviews were scheduled with students in the Appreciative Advising group. Both Appreciative Advising group participants were female and between the ages of 31-40. All three of the Prescriptive Advising participants

were female. One of the Prescriptive Advising participants was between the ages of 26-30. The other two participants were between the ages of 31-40. One Appreciative Advising participant identified their race as Multiracial. All remaining participants in both advising groups identified their race as Caucasian. All interview participants had previously completed the satisfaction survey. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and inputted into Atlas.ti for analysis.

Student Satisfaction with the Transfer Phase Survey Results

The survey instrument was sent to the two groups of RN to BSN students: the 19 students who receive Appreciative Advising and the 21 students who received Prescriptive Advising. Eight students in the Appreciative Advising group and 12 students in the Prescriptive Advising group completed the survey. Appendix F represents the frequency rates for each survey item. A series of 40 satisfaction-related questions were listed in addition to two open-ended questions.

After the surveys were collected, the results were tallied based on one point being awarded for a Disagree response and two points for an Agree response. The item scores were summed to arrive at a total satisfaction score for each survey. The satisfaction scores were inputted into SPSS to conduct an analysis of the data. Students in the Prescriptive Advising cohort were designated in SPSS as Group 1 and the Appreciative Advising cohort was assigned as Group 2. To determine if there was a significant relationship between students who received Appreciative Advising and their satisfaction with the transfer phase compared to the students who received Prescriptive Advising, an independent two sample t-test was performed.

After conducting an independent two sample t-test to determine if a relationship

exists between satisfaction with the transfer phase and Appreciative Advising, the results revealed that there is no statistical significance between type of advising received and satisfaction with the transfer phase, $t(18)$, $p > .05$. Based on this data, RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising did not report a higher degree of overall satisfaction with the transfer phase than RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

Analysis of the comments received for the first open text statement "I would make the following suggestions to improve the transition into WCU," revealed similar results. Although not all respondents submitted comments, those that did expressed mixed satisfaction with their transfer experiences. Only one of the eight Appreciative Advising respondents provided feedback to this statement. Seven of the 12 Prescriptive Advising respondents commented on how they would improve the transition to WCU.

One of the Prescriptive Advising students noted that "I am a very satisfied customer," while another Prescriptive Advising student indicated that they know their advisor would have helped them with "any of the areas listed above for which I clicked disagree, but I did not require it. I found the transition to be smooth and acclamation was as easy as it could be." However, other Prescriptive Advising respondents expressed frustration with inaccurate advising information they received such as textbook requirements and transfer credit issues, which would indicate that their transfer experiences were less than optimal. The sole Appreciative Advising respondent praised their WCU academic advisor and noted that they are "relieved to be in the program and completing [their] courses."

The second open text statement included in the survey asked students how "My

first semester at WCU would have been better if." Six of the 12 Prescriptive Advising respondents provided feedback. Three of the eight Appreciative Advising respondents offered comments on their experiences and suggestions for improvement. Analysis of the comments for this statement also supports the statistical findings for the satisfaction with the transfer phase variable.

Four of the six Prescriptive Advising comments focused more on programmatic issues such as being allowed to take fewer hours per semester and having more time to talk with instructors. One Prescriptive Advising respondent was neutral in their feedback noting that they "have no recommendations at this time" while another respondent indicated that their WCU advisor "was good."

Responses from the Appreciative Advising cohort indicated a similar mix of recommendations. Two of the three respondents made only programmatic suggestions while the other respondent "had a wonderful first semester!"

Student Satisfaction with the Transfer Phase Interview Results

After the five interviews were transcribed and inputted into Atlas.ti, the comments were reviewed and coded to identify themes among the advising groups' responses. At the conclusion of the coding process, six major themes had emerged (see Table 3). All five respondents expressed mixed attitudes toward their transfer phase experiences.

Table 3

Transfer Phase Interview Themes

	Satisfied Overall with Transfer Phase	Appreciated Personalized Attention	Connectedness	Greater Goals	Lack of Information about Program Requirements	Advisor aided in Alleviating Anxiety
Appreciative Advising Group (n = 2)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Prescriptive Advising Group (n = 3)	2	2	1	2	3	1

Satisfaction Overall with Transfer Phase.

Four of the five interview respondents were pleased overall with the transfer

phase while one respondent found the transfer phase only to be sufficient. This student

was in the Prescriptive Advising group:

> I didn't feel like I had any support. I remember thinking my advisor at ---
> Community College was more helpful. And I was thinking, but this is a
> university. Aren't they supposed to be better at this? I got bounced around a lot
> when I had questions about my   classes and stuff and would call. It was pretty
> frustrating. (Interviewee #3, Prescriptive Advising group, personal
> communication, November 7, 2011).

Conversely, the remaining respondents felt that, while there were some aspects of the

transfer phase that needed improvement, they were satisfied overall with the process.

> I don't remember there being any big hiccups. I was concerned about juggling
> my schedule with work and still having kids at home but it was not too bad. I
> think I was a little too worried. I'm really glad I stopped putting it off and went
> through with going back to school. I was happy that it wasn't as hard as I thought
> it might be to get into the routine but having [my academic advisor] there really
> helped. (Interviewee #5, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication,
> November 10, 2011).

I was originally going to go through this with a co-worker but she had some things come up and couldn't do it at the same time. I got a little nervous thinking about doing this alone when I had been planning for so long to start with her. But [my academic advisor] [was] great. That made it easier. And now --- is getting ready to start in the fall. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Yes, I was satisfied with the entire process. I wish I knew how much reading was involved and more about the clinicals I'm doing now. But that's not about transferring. Yes, I think I got adequate support when I was transferring. I think I did get a lot of support. I still need all the support! (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

Personalized Attention.

Four of the five respondents noted the level of individual attention they received when transferring into WCU as an aspect that stands out about their transfer experiences. One respondent comment that illustrated this theme included:

[My academic advisor] always seemed to remember all of our conversations. [My academic advisor] never said 'Well, I don't know' and left it at that. [They] always had answers or would help me, tell me who to contact. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Connectedness.

Three of the five interview participants considered the connection they developed to their advisor and the University as a significant and positive attribute of the transfer phase. A few of the comments that highlight this theme include:

I was finally starting to feel like I was a university student. You know, even though we are in an online program, I felt like I was finally there. And that was great. (Interviewee #4, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 8, 2011).

I never had such good advising when I was working on my Associates. I think they just let you talk to whoever when you needed something. [At Western Carolina University], I know who [my academic advisor] [is] and I don't have to worry about wondering if [they] will have all of my information. It's crazy but things like that make me really excited and glad to be a Western student. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Greater Goals.

Four of the five participants were very fond of how the advising they received helped develop and expand their goals. Many of the goal-related comments focused on new plans for graduate school as a result of their advising. Several comments were related to personal goals while one comment was focused on the type of research they would do in the RN to BSN Program to help advance in their current place of employment. All professional goal setting comments were attributed to the advising the students received since enrolling in the RN to BSN Program. However, the comments were split evenly among the two advising groups. Therefore, a conclusion as to whether one advising style was more conducive to assisting students with setting new goals was possible.

> I never thought about getting my masters until [my academic advisor] started talking to me about it. Now I'm planning to take statistics next summer so I can apply. (Interviewee #4, Prescriptive Advising, personal communication, November 8, 2011).

> I remember when [my academic advisor] asked us to picture ourselves on the cover of a magazine in 5 years from now and what we hoped it would say about us. I thought about that for days. And I still do. One thing I put on my cover was 'Finish my BSN with a 4.0' and I think I'm halfway there! (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Lack of Information about Program Requirements.

All five of the interview participants expressed frustration with the transfer phase's lack of adequate program preparation. Specific details about not being sufficiently informed about the type of assignments, requirements and expectations in an online program were all cited as deficiencies in the transfer phase.

> I thought I felt like I knew what to expect [from the RN to BSN Program] but there was a lot more work and writing involved than I imagined. I just wish I knew more about like the volume of work to try and plan my work schedule better and my days better. I got used to it but at first it was really challenging.

(Interviewee #5, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 10, 2011).

Learning how to adjust to going to school entirely online took some time. I'm not the most computer savvy person so I had to work hard to catch up. Learning how to turn in assignments online and get your coursework and stuff online was different and new to me. It would have been nice to get some more help with all of that in the beginning. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

I got confused about where to go for what. I didn't know at first if I went into MyCat for something or Blackboard. And then about two or three months into the semester I found out I had to do a shadowing experience. I remember thinking 'How am I going to manage that?' I am not sure I would have started [the RN to BSN Program] if I knew there was that much involved. I'm mean, not all of it being online. I really was drawn to Western because I thought it was going to be just online coursework. (Interviewee #4, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 8, 2011).

Advisor Aided in Alleviating Anxiety.

All of the interview participants expressed having anxiety at some point during

the transfer phase. However, only three of the five participants attributed the quelling of

their anxieties to their academic advisor.

I did, I really did think about dropping. It was just so much and I didn't want to fail. I thought at the time that dropping out would have been a better option. But when I contacted [my advisor] to look into my options with financial aid and withdrawing so it wouldn't hurt my GPA. [My academic advisor] told me about the pros and cons and talked me into sticking it out for a little bit longer. I even told my boss that I was going to drop the program. She could tell that I was really maxed out but I adjusted and it got better. I've never failed in school and didn't want to start now. I had waited a while to go back to school to do this and didn't want to just quit but I wasn't wanting to stay in and feel like a failure either. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Oh yeah, I did think about withdrawing. Pretty early on, too. The program just wasn't what I expected. I guess I just wasn't expecting all of the rush of assignments and how many different requirements there were for everything. If I could have taken less hours, that would have maybe helped but I knew that wasn't possible. I had been looking into --- University's bridge program before I decided on Western. I looked into transferring to their program after I started here but I just took some deep breaths and worked it out. (Interviewee #4, Prescriptive Advising, personal communication, November 8, 2011).

The interview findings indicate that, of the six major themes that were identified, students held similar views regardless of the advising method they received.

Six Phases of Appreciative Advising

Twenty-one of the 40 satisfaction survey questions were developed to also assess the correlation between the six phases of Appreciative Advising and students' experiences. The questions were included to determine if certain phases of Appreciative Advising may have had a greater impact on students' experiences than others. In addition, many of the interview questions were not only developed to better understand students' experiences with the transfer phase but also to ascertain if certain phases of Appreciative Advising had a significant impact on those who received this method of advising.

While the student satisfaction survey analysis revealed there is no significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and student satisfaction with the transfer phase, upon closer analysis of individual questions, several more specific distinctions did emerge. The interview findings also indicate that specific components of the Appreciative Advising method resonated positively with the respondents.

Disarm.

The first phase of Appreciative Advising, Disarm, tasks the advisor with creating a welcoming environment, aesthetically, verbally and non-verbally, to encourage students to fully embrace and maximize the advising session. Table 4 lists the statements included in the survey to determine if the RN to BSN students who did receive Appreciative Advising responded well to this Disarm phase of the advising process. When asked if students often contacted their advisor prior to transferring into WCU, 100% of the

Appreciative Advising students reported doing so compared with only 67% of the

Prescriptive Advising students.

Table 4

Disarm Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
I often contacted my advisor for assistance prior to starting my classes.	8/0 100% Agree	8/4 67% Agree
My advisor was easy to approach when I needed assistance.	8/0 100% Agree	11/1 (92% Agree)
I was anxious about transferring to WCU.	4/4 50% Agree	6/6 (50% Agree)
My advisor helped me feel less anxious about transferring to WCU.	6/2 75% Agree	6/6 50% Agree

However, 100% of students who received Appreciative Advising and 92% of

students who received Prescriptive Advising reported that their advisor was easy to

approach. Creating a welcoming environment to not only foster open communication but

also mitigate unnecessary anxiety is inherent in the Disarm phase of Appreciative

Advising. Students were asked to report on their anxiety level when transferring into

WCU as well as if they felt their advisor helped alleviated any anxiety. In both groups,

50% of the respondents reported that they felt anxious about transferring to WCU.

However, 75% of the Appreciative Advising students agreed that their advisor helped

alleviated their transfer anxiety compared with only 50% of the Prescriptive Advising

students.

Interview participants were asked three questions related to the Disarm phase.

The questions pertained to the type of interactions they had with their academic advisor

and their anxieties during the transfer phase. The most commonly cited attributes

students noted about their academic advisor included the ease in which they were able to

contact their academic advisor for assistance, how easily their non-course related issues

were resolved and how their advisor helped to alleviate transfer anxieties.

Four of the five respondents felt their advisor as amiable and generally easy to contact. When asked to describe the interactions they had with their advisor, the respondents recalled their initial correspondences:

> I met with [my academic advisor] twice before the program started and then again on the first day. [My academic advisor] [was] always easy to reach. [My academic advisor] always called or emailed me back really fast. And I know I asked [my academic advisor] a lot of questions. I never felt like I couldn't send [my advisor] another question. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

> I don't remember having such a helpful advisor before. I remember calling late one day expecting to leave a message about a problem I was having about registering for my classes and [my academic advisor] [was] there and it was resolved the next day. (Interviewee #3, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 7, 2011).

The Disarm phase is intended to provide an advising environment, be it in an office, by phone or in a virtual setting, that is warm, welcoming and devoid of stressors. The purpose for creating such an environment is to encourage students to seek out their advisors if they need assistance, be more open and forthcoming in their dialogue with their advisors and to alleviate anxieties inherent in attending college. Three of the five respondents felt that their advisor did help to calm the anxieties they held about transferring into WCU.

> Yes, I was definitely anxious. I had been out of school for a while and so I knew going back was going to be a challenge. I was anxious about juggling work and school, my husband and my kids. They are both still at home, my husband works full-time too so we had to plan this out pretty carefully. I remember talking with [my academic advisor] about this though and yeah, it helped. Hearing it from [my advisor] that I could do it, that other people just like me had gone through the program with families like mine made me feel a lot better. (Interviewee #5, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 10, 2011).

> I was nervous about having to take 6 hours my first semester. I know other programs let you take less. I wasn't sure if I could, if I was ready for it. [My academic advisor] definitely gave me some great advice about preparing for the big leap and what life might be like. That did make me feel better. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

The Disarm phase is not only about making a student feel comfortable using verbal and non-verbal cues but also by creating a welcome advising environment. However, none of the participants mentioned the advising environments in which they met with their advisor when asked to describe their interactions.

Discover.

The Discover phase of Appreciative Advising entails asking questions to learn more about the students' strengths, interests and goals. The satisfaction survey included several questions intended to determine if the Appreciative Advising students agreed that their advisor was integral and successful in assessing their strengths, interests and goals compared to the Prescriptive Advising students. Statements identified in Table 5 reflect the questions asked to assess the Discover phase components of Appreciative Advising.

Table 5

Discover Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
My advisor helped me identify my academic and professional strengths.	7/1 88% Agree	8/4 67% Agree
I felt empowered to be successful in my classes as a result of the advising I received when transferring into WCU.	8/0 100% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
My advisor helped me feel more confident about my ability to succeed at WCU.	7/1 88% Agree	9/3 75% Agree
The interactions I have with my academic advisor are valuable to me.	6/2 75% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
I am more aware of my academic possibilities since transferring to WCU.	7/1 88% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
I am more aware of my professional possibilities since transferring to WCU	7/1 88% Agree	9/3 75% Agree

Most of the questions received similar response rates for each question. Both groups reported being in agreement with the statements 75% of the time or higher. However, two questions received noticeable response rates. The question that asked students if they felt their advisor helped them identify their academic and professional strengths received a 21% difference in response rates. Eighty-eight percent of the Appreciative Advising students agreed with that question compared with only 67% of Prescriptive Advising students.

When asked if the students agreed if they felt more empowered to be successful in their classes as a result of the advising they received, 100% of the Appreciative Advising students agreed with this statement compared to 83% of the Prescriptive Advising students.

The Discover phase involves asking opened-ended questions to identify students' strengths and boost self-confidence. Interview participants were asked four questions related to the Discover phase components to assess whether students who received Appreciative Advising found these characteristics to be of value. Four of the five respondents felt that their advisor did help them to recognize their strengths. Both students in the Appreciative Advising group and two of the three students in the Prescriptive Advising group also agreed the advising they received helped them feel more empowered to be successful at WCU.

> I did feel more confident you could say. I never would have expected to get that from my advisor but [my academic advisor] did make me realize that I more capable of doing this than I realized. (Interviewee #5, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 10, 2011).

> I did and still do feel empowered, more so than when I was at --- Community College. I know I might have setbacks. I know I might not make As on all of my papers but I still feel like I'm really achieving what I set out to do and hopefully more than that. (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011).

Dream.

The next phase in Appreciative Advising is the Dream phase. During this phase,

taking what strengths, interests and goals were identified during the Discover phase, the advisor and student begin to formulate more specific academic and professional goals. To determine if the students who received Appreciative Advising would be receptive to and perceive more favorably the Dream phase of their advising than those who received only Prescriptive Advising, the following three questions were asked: Statements identified in Table 6 reflect the questions asked to assess the Dream phase components of Appreciative Advising.

Table 6

Dream Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
My advisor helped me identify new academic goals.	7/1 88% Agree	6/6 50% Agree
My advisor helped me identify new professional goals.	6/2 75% Agree	6/6 50% Agree
My advisor helped me set new goals for myself since transferring into WCU.	6/2 75% Agree	7/5 58% Agree

For this set of questions, there was a marked difference in response rates for each question. Eight-eight percent of the students in the Appreciative Advising group agreed that their advisor helped them identify new academic goals compared with only 50% of the students in the Prescriptive Advising group. Seventy-five percent of the students in the Appreciative Advising group agreed that their advisor helped them identify new professional goals compared with only 50% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. And finally, 75% of the Appreciative Advising students agreed that their advisor helped them set new goals after transferring to WCU compared with only 58% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. The Dream phase involves using various

exercises to encourage students to envision new goals based on their previous assessment

of the students' strengths.   Interview participants were asked three questions related to

the Dream phase to assess whether students who received Appreciative Advising found

the goal-setting attribute to be of value. Four of the five respondents felt their advisor did

help them to set even higher goals for themselves than they had originally envisioned.

> I never would have thought about graduate school until I started talking about it with [my academic advisor]. (Interviewee #3, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 7, 2011).

> When I stop and think about it, it really blows me away. I will be graduating in May and hopefully starting graduate school next fall. And yes, this all began when I met with [my advisor] to talk about starting the [RN to BSN] program. I'll never forget it. Me in a master's program – the thought had never entered my mind. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011)

Design.

The Design phase of Appreciative Advising is the formalizing of plans for

students to reach the goals identified in the Dream phase. The satisfaction survey

included three questions designed to assess whether students who received Appreciative

Advising believe their advisor not only executed this phase but also believe the attribute

to be of value compared to students in the Prescriptive Advising group who did not

receive goal planning advisement. The three questions listed in Table 7 were included in

the survey to assess the Design phase.

Two of these statements received comparable response rates from both groups.

However, when asked if their advisor helped plan the steps needed to achieve the

students' overall goals, there was a marked difference in response rates. Seventy-five

percent of the Appreciative Advising students agreed with this statement compared to

only 67% of the Prescriptive Advising students.

Table 7

Design Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
My academic advisor helped me plan ways to reach my academic and/or professional goals	7/1 88% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
My academic advisor helped me plan the steps I must take to achieve my goals	6/2 75% Agree	8/4 67% Agree
I am aware of the various WCU resources that may help me achieve my goals.	6/2 75% Agree	10/2 83% Agree

The Design phase involves laying out plans for how students can meet the goals they set during the Dream phase. Interview participants were asked three questions related to the Design phase to assess whether students who received Appreciative Advising found the planning attribute to be of value. Both Appreciative Advising students and two of the three Prescriptive Advising students identified ways in which their advisor helped them plan for ways to reach their academic goals.

One student recalled receiving advice from their advisor about how to prepare for applying to graduate school, a goal they had identified during a prior advising session:

> I knew I would need to take statistics and the GRE to apply for graduate school. [My advisor] told me about the courses that would meet the requirement and where I could take it. [My academic advisor] also gave me some tips on who to prepare for the GRE. I plan to start studying for it in my last [RN to BSN] semester. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

Deliver.

The Deliver phase of Appreciative Advising is the time for students to execute and achieve their goals while periodically checking-in with their advisor to assess their progress. Because the data collection phase of this study was to just span a number of

months, it was not anticipated that many students who have had ample time to meet most of their goals. However, it was still necessary to analyze the impact of this attribute for students who received Appreciative Advising compared to those who received Prescriptive Advising. With that in mind, the questions listed in Table 8 were written in a way to both capture their progress but not insinuate that their goals should have been met at the time of receiving the satisfaction survey.

Table 8

Deliver Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
I have made progress toward achieving my goals.	8/0 100% Agree	11/1 92% Agree
I am confident that I will reach my goals.	7/1 88% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
My advisor has been instrumental in helping me achieve my goals.	6/2 75% Agree	7/5 58% Agree

Similar to the Design phase, two of the three statements received comparable response rates from both groups. The one exception for this group was noted for the statement that asked students if they agreed that their advisor had been instrumental in helping them achieve their goals. Seventy-five percent of the Appreciative Advising students agreed with the statement compared to only 58% of the Prescriptive Advising students.

The Deliver phase assesses students' progress toward meeting the goals they laid out in the Dream phase. Interview participants were asked four questions related to the Deliver phase to assess whether students who received Appreciative Advising found the goal attainment assessment to be of value. Because the assessments took place not long after the goals were originally set, and because the nature of most of the goals were mid-

to long-term in nature, it was understood that most students would not have yet met their goals. Four of the five respondents reported that while they have made progress toward their goals, they have not yet met or exceeded their goals. Both Appreciative Advising students and two of the three Prescriptive Advising students reported that their advisor was instrumental in helping them in their progress thus far.

> I think I will be applying to the RN to MS(N) Program next semester. I've already spoken to Dr. --- about my plans. [My academic advisor] helped me all along the way. When I wasn't sure I was on track and I called [my academic advisor], [they] reassured me that I was taking what I needed to and NOT taking what I didn't need. (Interviewee #4, Prescriptive Advising group, personal communication, November 8, 2011).

> [My academic advisor] said I could contact [them] when I'm ready to apply for graduate school. I already have been calling and I know I still will be! (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

Don't Settle.

The sixth phase of Appreciative Advising, which can be seen as either the terminal phase or the step before beginning the cycle anew, takes inventory of the student's progress and accomplishments and, in collaboration with the student, reassesses their goals. The outcome of the Don't Settle phase could be setting even great goals or realigning the initial goals. Again, because the timeline of the study compared to the practicality of students' ability to reach the Don't Settle phase before completing the satisfaction survey was recognized as insufficient, the questions were phrased to not insinuate that students should have necessarily yet reached that point. The questions developed to assess the Don't Settle phase are outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

Don't Settle Phase Survey Questions and Frequencies

Statement	Appreciative Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Agree/Disagree (n = 12)
I feel I can not only meet but exceed my goals.	7/1 88% Agree	10/2 83% Agree
My advisor helped me set higher goals for myself than I expected since enrolling in WCU.	4/4 50% Agree	6/6 50% Agree

The statement that asked students if they felt they could not only meet but exceed their goals received comparable response rates from both groups. More notably, 50% of students in both groups felt that their advisor helped set higher goals than expected since enrolling at WCU.

The Don't Settle phase encourages students to exceed their original plans and set new and higher goals for themselves. Interview participants were asked questions related to the Don't Settle phase to assess whether only students who received Appreciative Advising had reassessed their plans and set new goals for themselves. Of the five interview participants, none reported reassessing or setting new goals for themselves beyond what they had set at the onset of their transition into the program. As one student noted, they had not yet reached a point of reevaluation:

> I might wind up changing my plans but for now, I'm still planning to start graduate school next fall. I'm sure after that I might consider applying for a different position, taking on more or a new role but not right now. I've got enough going on right now. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

Attrition

To determine if Appreciative Advising had an impact on attrition, a statistical analysis was conducted comparing enrollment at the end of the first semester of the RN to BSN Program for the Prescriptive Advising cohort and the Appreciative Advising cohort (see Table 10). Enrollment data was gathered from the WCU School of Nursing's Office of Student Services.

Table 10

Attrition Rate by Advising Group

Advising			Attrition		
			Did Not Withdraw	Withdrew	Total
Prescriptive	Count		21 (70%)	9 (30%)	30
Appreciative	Count		19 (68%)	9 (32%)	28
Total		Count	40	18	58

Thirty students were accepted to begin the RN to BSN Program during the Fall 2010 semester. This cohort of students received Prescriptive Advising during their transition into WCU and during their first semester in the RN to BSN Program. At the end of their first semester, nine students had withdrawn from the program. Twenty-eight students were accepted to begin the RN to BSN Program during the Spring 2011 semester. This cohort of students received Appreciative Advising during their transition into WCU and their first semester in the RN to BSN Program. At the end of their first semester, nine students had also withdrawn from the program.

To determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and attrition, a chi-square analysis was conducted using SPSS. If a student remained enrolled in the program throughout their first semester, they were coded as a one. If a student withdrew during their first semester in the program they were coded as a two. Students were also coded according to their cohort. Students who received Prescriptive Advising were coded as a one and students who received Appreciative Advising were coded as a two. The chi-square analysis was then executed to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between advising mode and attrition distribution. According to the output, there is not a statistically significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and attrition, $\chi^2 = .03$, with $df = 1$, p = .86. Based on this data, students who received Appreciative Advising did not demonstrate a lower attrition rate than students who did not receive Appreciative Advising.

Grade Point Average

Academic achievement is another measure of transfer shock. To determine if Appreciative Advising had an impact on academic achievement, a comparison of change in grade point average (GPA) was conducted. The initial GPA was calculated based on each students' previous respective nursing course credits completed to satisfy the requirements for their Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN). The second GPA was based on the nursing credits earned at the end of the first semester in the RN to BSN Program. Students in both advising groups completed the same courses, taught by the same instructor, during their first semester in the RN to BSN program.

The ADN program GPA was then subtracted from the first semester RN to BSN program GPA for both the Appreciative Advising and Prescriptive Advising groups to

arrive at the change in GPA for each student. The change in GPAs for both groups were then inputted into SPSS and identified as being associated with either a Prescriptive Advising student or an Appreciative Advising student. An independent two sample t-test was then conducted to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between academic achievement during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program and Appreciative Advising.

The mean GPA scores are outlined in Table 11. The mean ADN GPA for the students who received Appreciative Advising was 2.88 (SD = .40). The lowest ADN GPA earned among the Appreciative Advising group was 2.15 and the highest GPA earned was 3.57. The mean first semester RN to BSN GPA for the students who received Appreciative Advising was 3.88 (SD = .24). The lowest RN to BSN GPA earned was 3.27 and the highest GPA earned was 4.0.

The mean ADN GPA for the students who received Prescriptive Advising was 2.91 (SD = .58). The lowest ADN GPA earned among the Prescriptive Advising group was 2.19 and the highest GPA earned was a 4.0. The mean first semester RN to BSN GPA for the students who received Prescriptive Advising was 3.92 (SD = .14). The lowest RN to BSN GPA earned among the students who received Prescriptive Advising was 3.60 and the highest GPA earned was a 4.0.

The mean change in GPA for students who received Appreciative Advising was 1.001 (SD = .38). The mean change in GPA for students who received Prescriptive Advising was 1.006 (SD = .57).

Table 11

GPA Statistics for Appreciative and Prescriptive Advising Groups

	ADN GPA M/SD	BSN GPA M/SD	CHANGE IN GPA M/SD	Lowest - Highest GPA
Appreciative Advising Group	2.88/.40	3.88/.24	1.001/.38	2.15 – 3.57
Prescriptive Advising Group	2.91/.58	3.92/.14	1.006/.57	2.19 – 4.00

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The results of the change in GPA comparison analysis concluded that there is not a statistically significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and academic achievement, $t(38)$, $p > .05$. Based on this data, RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising will not demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement as measured by a positive change in GPA compared to RN to BSN students who do not receive Appreciative Advising. The GPA analysis also indicated that no students in either advising group incurred a dip in their GPA, the standard indication of transfer shock.

An additional layer of analysis was to be conducted to further explore possible relationships between particular demographics and transfer shock. The purpose of these analyses was to determine if specific independent variables, such as age, gender and ethnicity, have an inherent tendency to predict satisfaction with the transfer phase attrition or academic achievement, exclusive of the advising method they received. However, due to the low number of participants in each demographic category, inadequate statistics would not yield valid comparisons.

Summary

As outlined in this chapter, the quantitative data analysis indicates that, while both

groups reported high levels of satisfaction with the transfer phase, there is no statistically significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and satisfaction with the transfer phase as compared to the Prescriptive Advising group. Furthermore, quantitative analyses indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between attrition or change in GPA and Appreciative Advising as compared to the Prescriptive Advising group. The qualitative data reported similar findings related to students' satisfaction with the transfer phase. The interview analysis found that nearly an equal number of students in both advising groups shared comparable experiences and viewpoints about their satisfaction the transfer phase. As a result, although the interview analysis displayed a high level of satisfaction with the transfer phase for both groups, a further conclusion was drawn that there is no correlation between Appreciative Advising and satisfaction with the transfer phase.

In the next chapter, a discussion of the results will be provided followed by the implications of the research. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because limited research exists on the impact of advising methods on students transferring from a community college into an RN to BSN Program, this research provided an opportunity to explore an area of advising in need of additional attention. In this chapter, a discussion of the findings will be provided followed by the implications of the research. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research and a summary of the study.

Transfer students face many challenges when transitioning from one institution to another (Laanan, 1998). Students who transfer from a community college to a university are prone to experiencing various transitional difficulties which may result in heightened anxiety, poor academic performance, and even withdrawing from the institution altogether (Laanan 1996). These consequences, often referred to as transfer shock (Hill, 1965; Porter, 1999; Rhine, Milligan and Nelson, 2000), are impediments that have the potential to negatively impact students' ability to thrive at the new institution. Anxiety and attrition are also prevalent in undergraduate nursing programs (Robertson, Canary, Orr and Rutledge, 2010; Sharif and Masoumi, 2005; Stephen, 1992; Beck and Srivastava, 1991). Academic advising, in its many iterations, has been shown to address and mitigate the vast issues college students face (Council on the Standards of Advancement in Higher Education, 2008). A relatively new concept in advising, Appreciative Advising, is a method for helping students maximize their academic and personal potential through the advising process (Bloom, Hutson and He, 2008). This study was conducted to see if Appreciative Advising would have an impact on the effects of transfer shock compared to Prescriptive Advising for nursing students transferring from a

community college Associates Degree in Nursing Program into a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program offered through a university.

The participants were comprised of two groups of nursing students enrolled in Western Carolina University's RN to BSN Program. The first group of students was comprised of 21 students who began the program during the Fall 2010 semester. This group received Prescriptive Advising, a form of advising that is more directive in nature and does not involve student development or advisor-student collaboration elements (Appleby, 2001). The second group was comprised of 19 students who began the program during the Spring 2011 semester. This group received Appreciative Advising, a student-centered "intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals and potentials" (What is Appreciative Advising, 2011). Three questions guided this research to determine the extent of the impact of Appreciative Advising on satisfaction with the transfer phase and transfer shock:

1. Is there a difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

2. Is there a difference in attrition during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

3. Is there a difference in change in grade point average during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not?

The combination of a student satisfaction survey, attrition and grade point average (GPA)

data analyses along with individual student interviews concluded that there is no significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and students' level of satisfaction with the transfer phase, improved attrition rates or academic achievement for students who transferred into WCU's RN to BSN program.

Findings

The findings for each of the satisfaction and transfer shock research questions are based on the quantitative analysis of the survey, attrition and GPA data. Additional themes observed during the interviews were identified to provide added insight to students' experiences and satisfaction with the transfer phase. Lastly, several trends were also identified through the correlation of certain survey and interview questions with their respective phase of Appreciate Advising.

Satisfaction with the Transfer Phase

The analysis of satisfaction with the transfer phase was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. For this study, the assumption was made that students who report higher levels of satisfaction with the transfer phase may be more likely to perform better academically and less likely to withdraw compared to students who were less satisfied with the transfer phase. A satisfaction survey was developed and administered to both RN to BSN groups to determine if there is a significant difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase between RN to BSN students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. Of the 19 students who received Appreciative Advising, 8 students completed the survey. Of the 21 students who received Prescriptive Advising, 12 students completed the survey. Interviews were also conducted to gain greater insight

into students' experiences during the transfer phase to better assess if a difference exists and what may or may not have occurred during that time to lead to their conclusions. Two students who received Appreciative Advising and three students who received Prescriptive Advising participated in the interview.

The findings from the satisfaction survey analysis indicated that there is not a statistically significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and student satisfaction with the transfer phase. As a result, the null hypothesis was accepted. RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising did not report a higher degree of satisfaction with the transfer phase than RN to BSN transfer students who did not receive Appreciative Advising. While Appreciative Advising offered more in-depth assistance during the transfer phase compared to Prescriptive Advising, the results indicate that Appreciative Advising did not have a statistically significant impact on students' satisfaction with the transfer process. Although most survey and interview respondents reported that they were satisfied with the transfer process (7 out of 8 Appreciative Advising group students and 11 out of 12 Prescriptive Advising group students), Appreciative Advising did not yield a higher percentage of students who favored their experiences compared to students in the Prescriptive Advising group. The majority of students in both groups agreed they were satisfied with the advising received and the various aspects and experiences related to the transfer phase.

Although the overall survey analysis did not find that Appreciative Advising significantly improves students' satisfaction with the transfer phase, a review of each survey item did reveal that areas within the transfer phase received a noticeable difference in response rates between advising groups. One hundred percent of

Appreciative Advising students reported feeling empowered to do well in their courses as a result of the advising they received during the transfer phase compared to only 83% of Prescriptive Advising students. Nearly 50% of Prescriptive Advising students were not satisfied with the level of information they received about financial aid, textbooks and navigating WebCat/Blackboard, WCU's online education forum compared to 88% of Appreciative Advising students. These notable differences in the various aspects of the transfer experience highlight strengths of Appreciative Advising as perceived by this population of students and also indicate pockets of weaknesses in the Prescriptive Advising approach.

A possible explanation for the overall satisfaction phase outcome is the various aspects and experiences of the Prescriptive Advising group students' transfer phase are adequate for this population and the additional components offered through Appreciative Advising, such as visualization exercises to facilitate goal setting are not necessary or valued by second-degree adult learners. Another possible explanation for this outcome is that although the standard advising approach for RN to BSN students prior to the Spring 2011 cohort was Prescriptive Advising. However, there is a possibility that the transfer advisor may have inadvertently deviated from this method and delivered a mixed approach to students. This outcome may also indicate that regardless of the type of advising received, students transferring into an RN to BSN Program require only the basic components of advising, such as registration details and deadlines, to be satisfied with the transfer process.

The literature on transfer shock indicates that poor academic performance and high attrition rates during the first semester are often attributed to anxiety experienced

during the transfer process. To determine if there was a difference in anxiety experienced during the transfer phase between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not, several questions addressing this aspect were embedded in the satisfaction survey.

Students were asked if they experienced anxiety during the transfer phase. Fifty percent of each group reported that they experienced anxiety. However, when students were asked if their advisors helped them feel less anxious during the transfer phase, only 50% of the students who received Prescriptive Advising agreed compared to 75% of students who received Appreciative Advising. These percentages may indicate that although Appreciative Advising may not result in higher percentages of satisfaction over Prescriptive Advising, this method did decrease student anxiety during the transfer phase. If students experience less anxiety during the transfer phase, this may result in feeling more confident about their ability to succeed in the program and may lead to improved academic performance and decreased attrition rates.

The analyses conducted to determine if Appreciative Advising impacts attrition rates or GPA concluded that a significant relationship does not exist. However, that information was based on data representing all students in each advising groups, not just the students who completed the survey. Upon closer review of the survey respondents' GPA, the data further confirmed that there was no significant difference in academic performance between survey respondents who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not, $t(18)$, $p > .05$. Since all survey respondents completed their first semester in the RN to BSN Program, there was also no difference in attrition rates among the two advising groups.

While the students who received Appreciative Advising reported having felt decreased anxiety as a result of the advising they received during the transfer phase, this did not impact their GPA or attrition rates when compared to the students who received Prescriptive Advising. This outcome may indicate that Appreciative Advising might influence perceived anxiety levels but not the actual ability to impact academic performance. It is also important to note that the low number of survey respondents limited the ability to draw a more definitive conclusion on the difference in advising style impact on transfer shock.

Satisfaction with the Transfer Phase Interview Themes

The result of the interviews that were conducted to gain a greater understanding of the students' experiences during the transfer phase yielded the identification of six themes. Three Prescriptive Advising group students and two Appreciative Advising group students answered a series of questions on topics ranging from aspects of transfer process they like the most and least to personal goals they set as a result of the advising the received. The six themes that emerged included students' overall satisfaction with the transfer phase, an appreciation for the individual, personalized attention they received, a sense of connectedness to the university, the setting of greater goals, lack of information about the program requirements and how their advisor aided in alleviating their anxiety.

While each theme sheds additional insight into the attitudes and experiences shared by the RN to BSN students in both advising groups, no one category revealed a more significant number of occurrences or overwhelming attitudes, possibly due to the low number of interview participants. Although low, the nearly equal number of responses further supports the survey finding that there is not a significant difference in

satisfaction with the transfer phase between the advising groups. The interview findings

showed that regardless of the advising style, students in both groups were pleased overall

with the transfer phase. As one student in the Appreciative Advising group commented,

"I'm glad I went through with [enrolling in the RN to BSN Program]. Transferring to

Western was easy. I don't really remember anything about it being too difficult."

(Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2,

2011). A similar comment was made by a student in the Prescriptive Advising group. "I

think it may have been hard if I had to do it on my own. Having [my advisor] to help was

great. That meant I could just relax a little bit and not stress about 'What if I'm not doing

something right' since it was all so new to me." (Interviewee #5, Prescriptive Advising

group, personal communication, November 10, 2011).

While the six themes that emerged from the interviews are insightful, they do not

reveal how one advising method may be more appropriate for the RN to BSN Program's

transfer population. The feedback does bring to light that students who received both

advising methods would like more specific information about what the program entails

during the transfer phase. Students expressed frustrations with not having received more

details in the transfer phase about what would be required of them during the program.

For example, one student remarked that they "had no idea there were going to be so many

writing assignments the first semester. It was a lot of writing. It's not that I mind writing

so much, I think just wasn't ready for it. If I had been told more about it before the

semester started, I think that would have made it easier to adjust." (Interviewee #1,

Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011).

Both advising methods have prepared students transferring into the RN to BSN

Program with respect to meeting general university and program specific requirements such as submitting certain documents, understanding course registration information and accessing and navigating online resources. Both advising methods did not apprise students of what would be expected of them, either in terms of time or assignment commitments, during the transfer process. Relative to the RN to BSN Program, the Appreciative Advising process assists students with identifying their strengths and goals and as a result, maximizing their potential. This advising method does not outline a format for sharing program specific information during the transfer phase. While students in both groups noted a greater sense of connectedness and recognition of having set greater personal goals, what appeared to be of paramount concern from the interview feedback was resentment that more information was not provided during the transfer phase about the program's requirements and expectations.

Six Phases of Appreciative Advising

A select number of questions were embedded in the satisfaction survey and interview protocol to determine if certain phases of Appreciative Advising may have had a greater impact on students' experiences than others. In addition, many of the interview questions were not only developed to better understand students' experiences with the transfer phase but also to see if certain phases of Appreciative Advising had a significant impact on those who received this method of advising.

The six phases of Appreciative Advising were developed and ordered in a way to take the advisor and advisee from having open dialogue to identifying the student's strengths and goals, developing a plan to meet the goals and evaluating progress to potentially exceed the goals. Between two and four questions associated with each phase

were included in the survey and interview protocol to determine if certain aspects of this advising method proved to be especially valued by the students who received Appreciative Advising and if they recognized certain traits associated with this method versus the students who received Prescriptive Advising. Although the student satisfaction survey findings indicated that there is no difference in students' satisfaction with the transfer phase, several specific distinctions did emerge upon closer analysis of the questions associated with each phase of Appreciative Advising.

Not all phase-related questions indicated a particularly sound link between students who received Appreciative Advising and a preference or awareness of the aspect associated with a given phase, however the findings did denote a number of topics within certain phases that did suggest correlations between students who received Appreciative Advising and an acute awareness and/or an appreciation for the given attributes.

The first Appreciative Advising phase attribute denoted in the survey responses was associated with the Disarm Phase. One hundred percent of the survey respondents who received Appreciative Advising agreed that they contacted their advisor often during the transfer phase compared with only 67% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. Appreciative Advising conveys to advisors the importance of establishing a welcoming, non-threatening advising environment, be it in an office or online, to foster open communication and rapport with the advisee. This attribute was not incorporated into the Prescriptive Advising implemented in the RN to BSN Program. As one student noted, "I never felt like I couldn't send [my advisor] another question." (Interviewee #2, Appreciative Advising group, personal communication, November 2, 2011). This outcome indicates this aspect of Appreciative Advising was effective in assuring students

that their advisor was accessible and approachable during the transfer phase.

Another specific phase-related aspect of Appreciative Advising that emerged as unique to the students who received this form of advising was the help they received in recognizing their academic and professional strengths. During the Discover Phase, the advisor implements various exercises meant to assess the student's academic and professional strengths. This process is intended to facilitate the student's self-discovery and recognition of their strengths followed by, in the next phase, the listing goals to be achieved by capitalizing on their strengths. Of the six questions included in the survey to evaluate whether this facet of Appreciative Advising had a substantial effect on the students who received this method of advising versus those who did not, one question revealed a notable difference between the groups. Survey respondents were asked if their advisor helped them identify their academic and professional strengths and the findings showed that 88% of students in the Appreciative Advising group agreed with this statement compared to only 67% of students in the Prescriptive Advising group. This outcome indicates that although more than half of the respondents in the Prescriptive Advising group felt their advisor was instrumental in the identifying of their strengths, the Appreciative Advising exercises meant to facilitate the recognition of students' strengths was found to be more effective for RN to BSN transfer students who received Appreciative Advising. Although the remaining five questions developed to assess if Appreciative Advising students were receptive to Discover Phase elements resulted in comparable percentages among both advising groups, the findings from the one survey item indicates that the exercises used to facilitate the recognition of students' academic and professional strengths produce valuable and marked results.

In the Dream Phase, the advisor and student collaborate to set specific goals for the student to work toward during their tenure in college and possibly beyond. Three questions were embedded in the survey to assess if this aspect of Appreciative Advising made a marked impression on the students who received this advising. All questions showed that students in the Appreciative Advising group did agree more often with the statements that assessed this aspect than students in the Prescriptive Advising group. However, one question in particular showed a more noticeable difference in response rates.

Students were asked if their advisor helped them to identify new goals and 88% of students who received Appreciative Advising agreed to this statement compared to only 50% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. This outcome indicates that the process of working with students to identify their goals using the Appreciative Advising method does resonate with students.

Building on the goals established during the Dream Phase, the Design Phase is the process of mapping out the means by which to reach those goals. The advisor and student work together to develop a plan for how the student will meet the identified goals. The advisor offers guidance on how the student can meet the goals primarily by providing details about various university resources. In the survey, three questions were embedded to determine if this aspect of Appreciative Advising was particularly well received by the students who received this method of advising compared to those who did. Although there was no noticeable difference in percentage rates, both groups reported between 67-88% agreement for all Dream Phase questions. While this outcome does not indicate that the Appreciative Advising method of working with students to

develop specific guidelines for achieving their goals was more valued than the students

who received Prescriptive Advising, these findings reveal a notable distinction from the

findings in the subsequent phase. Although the survey findings show there was not a

marked difference in response rates between groups regarding advisors' assistance with

helping students during the Design Phase to plan the steps needed to meet their goals, the

survey findings do reveal a more discernible difference in response rates for one of the

three Deliver Phase-related questions.

In the Deliver Phase, the advisor and student meet to evaluate their progress

toward achieving their goals. Three questions were embedded in the survey to determine

if this aspect of Appreciative Advising left a noticeable impression on students who

received this method of advising compared to students who received Prescriptive

Advising. When asked if students felt their advisor had been instrumental in helping

them achieve their goals, 75% of the students who received Appreciative Advising

agreed compared to only 58% of students who received Prescriptive Advising. Similarly,

one students in the Appreciative Advising group commented in an interview that they

"never would have applied for the position at ---" had it not been for the advising and

guidance they received during the transfer phase. (Interviewee #1, Appreciative

Advising group, personal communication, October 31, 2011). This finding indicates that,

although a similar percentage of students in both groups felt their advisor aided in

designing their goal attainment plans, students who received Appreciative Advising

recognized that their advisor played a more dominate role in helping to achieve their

goals than students who received Prescriptive Advising.

The final phase, Don't Settle, urges students to push even farther beyond their

initial goals and set new and higher goals than originally envisioned. Due to the

timeframe of this study, not enough time had elapsed for most students to have met most

or all of their goals that would warrant entering into the Don't Settle Phase. The findings

indicated that only 50% of students in both groups felt their advisor helped them exceed

their original goals. Had more time elapsed and this phase had been fully implemented,

different findings may have resulted.

While the results did not indicate that all phases of Appreciative Advising

resonated strongly with the RN to BSN transfer students, several components did. The

Disarm, Discover, Dream and Deliver phases of Appreciative Advising revealed that

delivery of the respective aspects left a notable impression on the students who received

this method of advising. Furthermore, though the findings show there is no statistically

significant relationship between Appreciative Advising and satisfaction with the transfer

phase, the results of the phase-related survey and interview questions do indicate that

various features of this advising method leave definite impressions on students, their

ability to connect with their advisor, their goal setting and goal attainment.

Attrition

To determine if Appreciative Advising had an impact on attrition during the first

semester in the RN to BSN Program, an analysis was conducted using the enrollment

data for students who received Appreciative Advising and those who received

Prescriptive Advising. The results show that Appreciative Advising did not improve

attrition rates during the first semester for students transferring into the RN to BSN

Program compared to students who received Prescriptive Advising. This outcome

indicates that the methods used in Appreciative Advising to connect with students and

cultivate a welcoming environment, to identify their personal strengths and goals and to assist them on how to achieve those goals was ultimately not effective in preventing students from withdrawing. The enrollment data confirms that nearly an equal number of students withdrew from the RN to BSN Program during the first semester regardless of the style of advising they received.

The research question intended to explore the possibility of the Appreciative Advising method's ability to prevent students from withdrawing during the first semester in the RN to BSN Program. The results indicate there was no significant difference in withdrawal rates between the two advising groups. This outcome signifies that even though the Appreciative Advising method emphasizes connecting with students to establish welcoming environments that will foster student success, these elements may not possess qualities that will prevent withdrawing from the program any more than the basic advising attributes found in Prescriptive Advising. It is important to note that the small sample size limits the ability to conclusively determine whether Appreciative Advising can significantly impact attrition.

Grade Point Average

To determine if Appreciative Advising had an impact on academic achievement during the first semester in the RN to BSN Program, an analysis was conducted using students' Associate Degree nursing courses only to calculate the initial GPA. This score was then subtracted from the students' first semester RN to BSN Program GPA to find the change in GPA. The results were analyzed to compare changes in GPA for students who received Appreciative Advising group and students who received Prescriptive Advising.

The research question intended to explore the possibility of the Appreciative Advising method's ability to improve students' academic achievement during the first semester. However, the results indicate that there was no significant difference in the change in GPA between the two advising groups. This outcome illustrates that although the Appreciative Advising method infuses unique exercises and techniques to promote student success, the approach may not possess attributes that further stimulate or excel student learning in the RN to BSN Program's first block of courses when compared to students who received Prescriptive Advising. The GPA analysis also indicated that no students in either advising group experienced a dip in their GPA, the primary indicator of transfer shock. It is important to note that the small sample size limits the ability to conclusively determine whether Appreciative Advising can significantly impact GPA.

Conclusions

Advising is a method for equipping students with the information and resources they need to excel personally and academically (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2008). Advising can range from a one-time, one-way directional guidance meeting between the advisor and student to an integrated, multi-faceted process that transpires over the duration of a student's college career (Appleby, 2001). Building on the principles of positive psychology and appreciative inquiry, Appreciative Advising incorporates collaborative dialogue and advisor-guided exercises into this method of student support and, using open-ended questions to gain a better sense of the one's strength and goals, develops plans to maximize students' potential for success (Bloom, Hutson and He, 2008). Conversely, Prescriptive Advising, considered to be "the oldest and most basic approach to academic advising" (Church, 2005), does not

provide such a personalized approach. Unlike Appreciative Advising, Prescriptive Advising typically assesses only a student's immediate and essential needs followed by providing information to address and satisfy those needs (i.e., course registration information, graduation requirements).

Transfer shock is the well-documented phenomenon that results when a student encounters various personal or academic difficulties when transferring from one institution to another. The outcome of transfer shock most commonly manifests in a dip in academic performance or withdrawing from the institution, particularly for students who transfer from a community college to a university (Eggleston and Laanan, 2001). Undergraduate nursing programs tend to struggle with high attrition rates and academic achievement issues as well (Robertson, Canary, Orr, Herberg, and Rutledge, 2010; Williams, 2010; Deary, Watson, and Hogston, 2003). The curriculum content, simulation lab requirements and clinical rotation schedules are often considered to be particularly rigorous which can lead to lack of program satisfaction, poor academic performance and even withdrawal (Galbraith and Brown, 2010; Sharif and Masoumi, 2005). Western Carolina University offers an online RN to BSN Program for students who earned their Associates Degree in Nursing (ADN) at a community college a program and wish to return to school to complete a bachelor's degree.

With these striking differences in advising approaches in mind, this study was developed to see if Appreciative Advising, a student-focused collaborate approach to advising would have a greater impact on students satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition rates and academic achievement compared to Prescriptive Advising for students enrolling in Western Carolina University's RN to BSN Program. Since no previous

studies had been conducted to determine if the Appreciative Advising method could influence students satisfaction, attrition and grade point average for students transferring into an online RN to BSN Program, the outcomes of this research will add to the body of knowledge about best practices for advising nursing students transferring from community colleges to universities and how certain advising methods may or may not prevent transfer shock.

While the findings did illustrate that certain aspects of Appreciative Advising did resonate with students, the overall experience of Appreciative Advising did not result in a higher level of satisfaction with the transfer phase, a lower attrition rate or improved academic performance when compared to students who received Prescriptive Advising. There are many factors that may account for why this method of advising did not have a more significant impact on these components of transfer shock.

This population of students is rather unique when compared to typical undergraduate transfer students. According to the National Council for Education Statistics, in 2008 36% of undergraduate students enrolled in a four-year university worked full-time while attending school (2010). Over 80% of students in Western Carolina University's RN to BSN Program are employed full-time as practicing Registered Nurses (RN) and remain as such throughout the duration of their enrollment in the RN to BSN Program. According to Compton, Cox and Laanan (2006), adult learners "consider themselves primarily workers and not students" and "are seeking education that can fit into their busy lives" (p. 74). Adult learners' busy lives pose added challenges for advisors and administrators to address. Marriage, work, family and other obligations may impede students' ability or interest in assessing advising services. Adult learners

"are less tolerant of work that does not have immediate and direct application to their objectives" (ASSET, n.d.). Advising may be seen by adult learners as having less importance in achieving their academic goals than other components of the college experience. In a study conducted by Fielstein, Scoles and Webb (1992) to examine advising preferences and perceptions of advising services between traditional and non-traditional students, the researchers found that "non-traditional students rated developmental items significantly lower in importance than did the traditional students" (p. 10). The literature reports that non-traditional adult students tend to be more autonomous and self-directed in nature (Knowles, 1984; Cercone, 2008) and rely on student support services, such as advising, career services and counseling, less frequently than traditional, undergraduate transfer students (Fielstein, Scoles & Webb, 1992). This implies that although the advising support and encouragement students received during the transfer phase may have been of value to the student, ultimately the realities of being a full-time working student with autonomous tendencies dictates students' behaviors in the program regardless of the advising style. The combination of a work-focused attitude, multiple personal responsibilities and a reluctance to pursue support services may diminish the ability of an advising method to significantly impact transfer shock.

Another possible explanation for why there was no statistically significant difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition or academic achievement between the two advising styles is that a majority of students in both groups have either attended more than one institution prior to transferring to Western Carolina University and/or they have already earned a bachelor's degree in another discipline. Of the 19 students enrolled in the Appreciative Advising group, 18 students attended more than one

higher education institution prior to transferring into the RN to BSN Program. Of the 21

students enrolled in the Prescriptive Advising group, 17 attended more than one higher

education institution prior to transferring into the RN to BSN Program. This would

imply that the population of students included in this study has become more accustomed

to the transfer process and the propensity for their personal and academic behaviors to be

influenced through advising sessions has diminished regardless of the advising style.

Students who vacillate between multiple higher education institutions are referred to as

"swirlers" (Thurmond, K., Taylor, T., Foster, M., & Williams, J., 2008). Swirlers may

transfer just between community colleges or just between universities, or between both,

but as the number of transfers increases, it is suggested that the degree to which students

may be affected by transfer shock would decrease with each new transfer. However, this

has not yet been substantiated in the literature and would be grounds for further research.

Challenges inherent in an online learning environment may also explain why

there was no significant difference in satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and

GPA between students who received Appreciative Advising and those who did not. The

online RN to BSN Program at Western Carolina University has designed with the

working RN in mind. The ability to fit in school around busy personal schedules is

considered to be a primary reason for pursuing the RN to BSN Program. Because this

program is online, students, faculty and staff connect by telephone or virtually through

email or online web sessions to facilitate advising and program requirements. With the

exception of the initial Appreciative Advising appointment, all other Appreciative

Advising sessions were conducted by phone and email. This method was adapted from

the format outlined in *The Appreciative Advising Revolution* for students who are

frequently on campus and available for face-to-face sessions. Because the subsequent Appreciative Advising sessions for all 19 students were completed by phone, the essence of an authentic Appreciative Advising experience may have been diminished. Students may have been less likely to fully engage in open dialogue and collaborative goal planning during a telephone advising session. According to Varney, a sense of connection to the institution is important and often accomplished "in face-to-face advising…through interpersonal communication" (2009). The author goes on to note that a sense of connection is "more difficult to convey from a distance". As a result, the potential for the interactive Appreciative Advising method to be executed to the fullest extent may have been hindered.

Advisors working with the Prescriptive Advising students were trained to advise using the prescriptive advising style however, the advisors were not surveyed or closely monitored as a part of the research study to ensure they were strictly adhering to this method. As a result, there was a potential for the Prescriptive Advising advisors to mix prescriptive and developmental advising methods and skew the outcomes.

Although the overall findings for satisfaction with the transfer phase, attrition and GPA were similar, several key observations were made. Students who receive Appreciative Advising are receptive to certain attributes of this method, such as having the advisor establish themself as welcoming and approachable, helping the student identify academic and professional strengths, setting goals and ultimately helping students to achieve those goals. For a population of students who have already developed personal and academic behaviors that will likely dictate their success in a program regardless of advising style, exercises to promote maximizing their potential may be a

welcome bonus, but not necessarily essential to their academic success.

The study also found that, regardless of advising style, this population of students prefer to receive more specific details about program requirements during the transfer phase. Interview respondents were more likely to express their dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the actual RN to BSN Program than about their experiences during the transfer phase. Only basic information such as number of hours required per semester, tuition fees, course delivery method (online) and elective information, has historically been provided during the transfer phase. Traditionally, program-specific information discussed during advising sessions focused primarily on transfer credits. This finding indicates that students did not recognize the need to ask these questions during the transfer phase nor did advisors know to voluntarily provide them with such information.

In a study conducted on improving retention rates of adult learners in a high-stress online graduate program, the authors noted the importance of providing ample program details and expectations prior to matriculation (Akridge, DeMay, Braunlich, Collura, and Sheahan, 2002). Because "some students have unrealistic expectations," the authors recommend "clearly presenting the nature of the program and the time commitment required" prior to matriculation (p. 69). This allows time for the student to prepare and make any needed adjustments before beginning the program. The need to include more program specific details during the transfer phase is paramount and may result in greater satisfaction with the transfer process, lower attrition and better academic performance for future cohorts. Akridge et al. also suggest connecting incoming students with current students to foster a peer-mentoring environment (2002). Incoming RN to BSN students could take advantage of reaching out to current students and ask candid questions and

gain an even greater sense of the level of commitment mandated by the online program.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study that affect the internal and external validity and generalizability of the findings. First, the timing that had elapsed between when the two advising groups completed the transfer phase and subsequent satisfaction with the transfer phase survey was lengthy for the Prescriptive Advising group. Nearly eight months passed between when these students completed the transfer phase and the survey. Only three months passed between when the Appreciative Advising group completed the transfer phase and the survey.

In future studies, it is recommended that, when possible, the control and experimental groups be advised concurrently to equalize elapsed time and prevent a gap of time from potentially impacting participants' ability to provide accurate and comprehensive feedback.

Another limitation that affects the internal validity of the study is the researcher's role as both advisor and examiner. This aspect could not be prevented however, the researcher employed triangulation of data methods to mitigate the possibility of participants providing preferential responses rather than candid, earnest answers due to the dual advisor/researcher role.

The limited number of subjects available to examine in this study was also a limitation to the internal and external generalizability of the findings. Only 19 students in the Appreciative Advising group and 21 students in the Prescriptive Advising group completed the transfer phase and eligible for inclusion in the study. Only half of the overall population completed the survey and even fewer still participated in the

interviews. As a result, the data from which to base a generalization is based on a small number of subjects. Furthermore, only five students in total, two Appreciative Advising students and three Prescriptive Advising students, participated in the interviews. It is recommended that subsequent studies of a similar nature be conducted on larger cohorts and if possible, across multiple institutions.

The inability to ensure that students in the Prescriptive Advising group received purely prescriptive-style advising is another limitation to this study. As a result, students may have received a mixed advising approach that could have skewed outcomes and resulted in the rather comparable impacts on transfer shock.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study intended to examine the impact of a relatively new method in advising on student satisfaction with the transfer phase and transfer shock, an established phenomenon that has proven for decades to be an indiscriminant impediment for transfer students. While this study found that Appreciative Advising does not have a significant impact on satisfaction with the transfer phase and transfer shock for a very specific type of students entering one specific program due to the small sample size, further research on other populations is recommended.

A revised replication of this study is recommended to address the noted limitations and draw more definitive conclusions about advising methods and transfer shock for this specific population of students. Because of the parameters in which this study was executed, more thorough and robust conclusions cannot be made. Should the study be replicated, it is recommended that several modifications be made to improve the researcher's ability to draw more comprehensive and generalizable conclusions.

First, a survey should be developed and distributed to students who withdraw during the first semester to more fully understand their experiences during the transfer phase and what led to their decision to withdraw. A comparison of their satisfaction with the transfer phase to students who did not withdraw during the first semester may reveal unique characteristics about the students and their advising experiences. Gathering longitudinal data on larger cohorts of RN to BSN transfer students is also paramount. Lower sample sizes typically cannot fully represent populations which results in inclusive outcomes. Following cohorts that enter the program during the same semester is recommended as opposed to comparing cohorts that enter at different times of the academic year, i.e. fall to fall or spring to spring versus fall to spring. This may minimize the potential for comparing students with greater demographics differences or sample sizes.

A replicated study would also need to implement measures to document any deviations in advising methods. Having the advisors complete a survey to better understand their training and conduct observations to assess their advising style will allow the researcher to evaluate more definitively the differences in transfer shock between students who receive Appreciative Advising and those who do not. It is also recommended that the revised study include analyzing the advisors' logs to measure the length and quality of the advising sessions to further identify and explain potential differences in outcomes.

Early research indicates that Appreciative Advising has the ability to improve outcomes for many populations such as first generation, student athletes, honors, international and at-risk students. Because students in the RN to BSN Program are

primarily full-time working professionals, they do not represent the typical undergraduate transfer student. It is recommended that future research be conducted on swirlers and first-time transfer students to see how Appreciative Advising affects their transition. A study that compares the execution of Appreciative Advising for traditional face-to-face students with fully online students is also recommended to determine what aspects of each approach work best and how various components of the campus version can be converted to "replicate the intimacy of a face-to-face advisor-student relationship from a distance" (Varney).

Summary

The intent of this mixed-methods study was to explore the potential for a new advising concept mitigating the effects of transfer shock, a long-documented phenomenon that continues to afflict college students' satisfaction with the transfer process, drop-out rates and academic achievement. The findings indicate that, in a comparison study of advising methods, Appreciative Advising did not have a statistically significant impact on transfer shock compared to Prescriptive Advising. However, it is essential to note that the low sample size limited the ability to draw a more definitive conclusion on the difference in advising style impact on transfer shock. Closer analysis of the survey results and interview responses did reveal that certain aspects of Appreciative Advising phases resonated more so than others but not to an extent that led to greater satisfaction, improved attrition rates or better academic performance during the first semester of the RN to BSN Program. While the outcomes did not indicate that this method of advising can improve transfer shock, it did reveal deficiencies in the transfer phase that need to be addressed. Specifically, transfer students need to be provided with

more information about program requirements such as approximate time to allot weekly for reading and writing, computer efficiency expectations and on-site clinical requirements. Providing these types of details along with transfer and general program information will better equip students not only to succeed academically but also to be more satisfied with the experience of transferring to a university.

Advising is the opportunity to inform, engage and challenge students to embrace academia and exceed expectations. Students and programs are as unique as fingerprints and there is unfortunately no one-size-fits-all advising method. Administrators and advisors should collaboratively evaluate advising methods and student needs to determine which format is optimal for a specific program. Regardless of the approach, "good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (Light, 2001, p. 81 as cited in Bloom, Hutson and He, 2008).

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Appendix A

Appreciative Advising Inventory

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am committed to being a life-long learner.	□	□	□	□	□
2. I am committed to earning a degree.	□	□	□	□	□
3. I attend all my classes.	□	□	□	□	□
4. College is preparing me for a better job.	□	□	□	□	□
5. I have a commitment to self-development and personal growth.	□	□	□	□	□
6. I have a strong desire to get good grades.	□	□	□	□	□
7. At the present time, I am actively pursuing my academic goals.	□	□	□	□	□
8. It is important to help others and I do so on a regular basis.	□	□	□	□	□
9. When challenged, I stand up for my beliefs and convictions.	□	□	□	□	□
10. I take personal responsibility for my actions and decisions.	□	□	□	□	□
11. I have a strong desire to make something of my life.	□	□	□	□	□
12. I'm good at planning ahead and making decisions.	□	□	□	□	□
13. I know and feel comfortable around people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds.	□	□	□	□	□
14. I believe in myself and my abilities.	□	□	□	□	□
15. I have built positive relationships with my friends.	□	□	□	□	□
16. I feel that I have control over many things that happen to me.	□	□	□	□	□

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. I feel good about being a college student.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I feel positive about my future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Right now I see myself as being pretty successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. At this time, I am meeting the goals I have set for myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. If I should find myself in a difficult situation, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I feel that my family supports my educational pursuits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. I feel loved by my family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. I value my parents' advice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. I know at least 3 people who work at my university that I can go to for advice and support.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. It is important that I not let my professors or teachers down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. I participate in community activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Someone outside my family supports my educational pursuits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. My parents support my educational pursuits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. My close friends support my educational pursuits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. My university is a caring, encouraging place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. I feel valued and appreciated by my fellow students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. I have at least 2 adults in my life that model positive, responsible behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. My best friends model responsible behavior. They are a good influence on me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. I participate in activities on campus.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
37. It is important for me to consider social expectations while making decisions.	□	□	□	□	□
38. I seek the opinions of my family when faced with major decisions.	□	□	□	□	□
39. I seek the opinions of my friends when faced with major decisions.	□	□	□	□	□
40. The values of my institution are consistent with my own.	□	□	□	□	□
41. I am working hard to be successful.	□	□	□	□	□
42. I have good time management skills.	□	□	□	□	□
43. I turn in all my assignments on time.	□	□	□	□	□
44. I successfully balance my academic pursuits with my personal life.	□	□	□	□	□

Note: Adapted from *The Appreciative Advising Revolution,* Bloom, J.L., Hutson, B.L., & He, Y. (2008).

Appendix B

Appreciative Advising Operational Outline

To accurately implement Appreciative Advising with incoming RN to BSN students, the following Appreciative Advising Operational Outline was developed to ensure accuracy in the delivery of this advising model.

Phase One: Disarm

Admitted students will be introduced to the advisor via email during the Fall 2010 semester. An email will be constructed that includes the advisor's brief bio and advising philosophy. The email's tone will be positive, welcoming and provide details about forthcoming advising interaction to promote advisor accessibility throughout the transitional phase and beyond. To begin building a trusting relationship between the advisor and advisees, the email will also include the Appreciative Advising Inventory (AAI). Students will be asked to complete and return the AAI by a set deadline (prior to Orientation, January 2011).

Example of the Disarming Phase Email:

Hello RN to BSN Student!

Welcome to Western! Congratulations on getting one step closer to earning your BSN and achieving your academic and professional goals! To assist you in the transition into WCU's RN to BSN Program, I will be working with you to maximize your success in the program and beyond.

I have been with the School of Nursing for nearly five years and enjoy assisting students in the pursuit of their academic endeavors. My advising philosophy is guided by student-centered advising principles and incorporates a comprehensive, holistic approach to identifying and maximizing students' strengths and aspirations.

To learn more about you, please take a few minutes to complete the attached Appreciative Advising Inventory and return to me by --- . This will help me tailor our future advising sessions in a way that will help you achieve your full potential in this program and after graduation.

In early January, you will begin the online University Experience Course (UE). During this time, I will be learning even more about you and we will discuss your strengths and aspirations as we begin to construct a plan for achieving your goals. You will receive additional information about how to begin the UE course and attending Orientation by early December.

If you have any questions prior to that time, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with you.

Welcome to Western!

The Disarm phase will also be implemented during the week-long online UE course and during Orientation. The first communication students will receive in the UE course will be a statement that welcomes them to Western Carolina University, to the RN to BSN Program and to the online UE course. Students will also be reminded that they can contact the advisor for any reason. The UE aesthetics will also be warm and inviting. Lively icons and colors will also be used throughout the course to reinforce the Disarm phase and to help students adjust and feel welcome.

At the beginning of the Orientation session, students will be greeted by the advisors and escorted to their appropriate classrooms. The advisors will welcome the students will a warm reception and the classrooms will be outfitted with thoughtful posters of images and quotes that evoke a calm yet stimulating environment.

Phase Two: Discover

During the week-long online UE course that takes place prior to the Spring 2011 semester, the advisor will begin implementing the Discover phase of Appreciative Advising. Students will be asked to post pictures of themselves to the course website. Students will also provide a brief biography, list their current job position and talk about what they are hoping to achieve by earning their BSN. The advisor will interact with the students by replying to their posts and asking open-ended follow-up questions. Students will also be asked to respond to other non-program related questions that are intended to further explore and identify their strengths and aspirations.

Discover question examples (Bloom, Huston & He, 2008):

1. Describe a peak experience when you felt really good about yourself or what you accomplished.

2. Who are your two biggest role models? Why are they role models to you and what about them do you hope to emulate?

3. Who had the biggest impact on your decision to come to this institution? How did they impact you?

Responses will be archived and assessed using the following Appreciative Advising Discover guidelines (p. 52) for use during the Dream phase:

Guideline for Appreciative Advisor Session Notes (Discover Phase)

Discovery Aspects	Questions to Consider	Comments
Sources of Motivation	What motivates the student in academic pursuits	
Assets Highlighted or Overlooked	In describing the student's academic success, he/she specifically mentioned… I noticed that the students has academic potential because…	
Resources	Based on what I know about the campus, the majors, and the student's interest, I think…	

Note: Adapted from Table 5-1. Guideline of Appreciative Advisor session notes (Discover), p. 52. Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008. *The Appreciative Advising Revolution*. Stripes Publishing: Champaign, IL.

During Orientation, the required face-to-face first day of class, students will participate in group appreciative advising sessions. The newly accepted RN to BSN students will engage in the same advising activities. During the group advising session, students will be involved in both Discover and Dream activities. The Discover activities will include:

1.   Individual introductions

2.   In groups of 3-4 students, students will be asked to describe a time when they positively impacted a person's life. After a few minutes, the advisor will ask for volunteers to share their partner's story.

3.   While still in their small groups, students will be asked to share with each other what their expectations are for the program as well as their expectations for their advisor. Students will be asked to write their expectations on post-it notes and post to the whiteboard. The advisor will track the responses and cluster according to similarities.

4.   The small groups will be asked to draft a class mission statement. The advisor will then prompt the group to share their responses. The advisor will then compile the responses into a single class mission statement. The mission statement will be posted in the online RN to BSN forum and revisited during future individual and group advising sessions.

Phase Three: Dream

Before concluding the advising session, each student will be asked to draw or write a description of their personal and professional goals. This information will be collected by the advisor and assessed for use during the Design phase.

Prior to the Orientation advising session, students will be asked to post their responses in the UE course to the following Dream questions (p. 56).

1.   Imagine that you are on the front cover of a magazine 20 years from now. The article details your latest and most impressive list of accomplishments. What is the magazine? Why have you been selected to appear on the cover? What accomplishments are highlighted in the article?

2.   When you were approximately 9 years old and someone asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?", what was your answer? What is your answer to that question now?

The advisor will post replies to the responses in the form of follow-up questions designed to further explore students' aspirations. Individual responses will be assessed for use during the Design phase.

Phase Four: Design

During the Spring 2011 semester, the advisor will schedule a telephone advising

appointment with each student to execute the Design phase of Appreciative Advising. During the advising session, the advisor will summarize the student's strengths and goals gathered from previous advising sessions. Following the Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2001) backward design model identified by Bloom, Hutson and He as the preferred method for creating a student's Design plan, the advisor will ask the student to identify ways in which they can help themselves reach their goals (2008, p. 74).

The advisor will then offer feedback and assistance in constructing their individual Design plan, keeping the following Appreciative Advising Design phase assessment questions in mind (2008, p. 76):

1.   What academic experiences and learning activities would benefit the student?

2.   Where can the student find these beneficial experiences and activities?

3.   What resources are required for meeting [the student's] goals?

The advisor will provide the student with referrals for "campus, community, and other resources" (2008, p. 85), and then assist the student in developing a goal attainment plan which will "clearly identify the logical steps to achieve the goal" (2008, p. 76). To complement the telephone advising session, the advisor will then follow-up via email with a chart that details the student's Design phase goal attainment plans.

Example of a Goal Attainment Plan (Design Phase)

Long-term goal: To become a physician
Short-term goal: To go to medical school

Requirement	Strengths	Action
Leadership skills	Team work and leadership experiences	Join the pre-med club and seek leadership opportunities in related area
Related experiences	Volunteer experiences at a local hospital	Seek volunteer opportunities at the university hospital
High GPA and MCAT scores	3.4 GPA Taking initiative to contact professor and start the study group in Chemistry 101	Read before class Spend less time with social activities Identify and take initiative
Good recommendations	Good experiences with the professor in Chemistry 101	Browse faculty website Contact faculty to discuss research interests

Note: Adapted from Table 7-1. Graphic representation of Appreciative Advising session: Jenny and Monica, p. 77. Bloom, Hutson & He, (2008). *The Appreciative Advising Revolution.* Stripes Publishing: Champaign, IL.

Phase Five: Deliver

During the first semester and throughout the duration of the program, the advisor will conduct follow-up advising sessions focusing on encouragement and offer additional assessments to gauge progress for further advisement. The advisor will intersperse encouraging statements to reinforce confidence in the student. Such statements may include:

1.   So, it's been a while since we last met. I know you have achieved great things in that time. Tell me all about what you've accomplished since our last meeting.

2.   You are on an excellent course for success. I am certain that you are going to meet and even exceed your goals.

Questions that may be asked by the advisor to assess and gauge student progress include:

1.   Do you have any questions for me?

2.   What will you do if you run into roadblocks?

3.   What will you do if you think your goals may be changing?

Phase Six: Don't Settle

At the end of the first semester in the RN to BSN Program (or beginning of the second semester), the advisor will meet with each student to assess the student's progress according to their goal attainment plan. During this session, the advisor will "support and challenge" to help students achieve and exceed their goals, (2008, p. 98).

Appendix C

Student Satisfaction Survey Consent Form and Instrument

[Content of Email]

Dear Student,

A study is being conducted to investigate transfer students' success and satisfaction after transferring to WCU. Please take a few minutes to complete a brief survey about your experiences as a WCU transfer student. Your feedback is appreciated and will remain confidential.

The survey should take fewer than 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary. By clicking on the survey link, you are providing consent to use your feedback in the study. You may access the survey by clicking on the link below: [Qualtrics Survey Link]

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, you may contact the WCU Institutional Review Board in the Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212 or by email at irb@wcu.edu. Thank you for taking a few moments of your time to provide feedback about your experiences as a Western Carolina University transfer student.

Your participation is appreciated!

Appreciative Advising Survey

Thank you for taking a few moments of your time to provide feedback about your experiences as a Western Carolina University transfer student. Your participation in this brief survey is appreciated and your responses will remain confidential.

The first series of questions focus on your experiences during the process of transferring into Western Carolina University. Thinking back to the period when you were transferring into WCU, please rate your level of satisfaction by indicating that you Agree or Disagree to each of the following statements:

I was satisfied with the advising I received when transferring into WCU
I often contacted my advisor for assistance prior to starting my classes – [Disarm]
My advisor was easy to approach when I needed assistance – [Disarm]
I felt empowered to be successful in my classes as a result of the advising I received when transferring into WCU
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to register for my first semester of courses at WCU
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to find answers about tuition and/or financial aid
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to find answers about purchasing my textbooks
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to find answers about navigating WebCat
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to find answers about navigating MyCat
I was satisfied with how easy I was able to find answers about navigating the Library
Overall, I am satisfied with the process of transferring into WCU
I would make the following suggestions to make the transition into WCU easier:

The next set of questions focuses on your experiences after transferring into Western Carolina University. Please rate your level of satisfaction by indicating that you Agree or Disagree to each of the following statements:

I feel satisfied with the quality of my coursework since enrolling at WCU
I am having trouble with time management since transferring to WCU
I have had to spend more time studying since transferring to WCU
I feel behind my classmates in my courses
I am more interested in my coursework since transferring to WCU
I am more challenged academically in my courses
I have made new connections with classmates outside of class
I feel confident about my ability to succeed at WCU
My advisor helped me better recognize my strengths – [Discover]

The rapport I had with my advisor was valuable to me – [Discover]
I have set new goals for myself since transferring into WCU – [Dream]
I am more aware of my professional possibilities since transferring to WCU – [Dream]
I am aware of the steps I need to achieve to reach my goals – [Design]
I am aware of various WCU resources that my help me achieve my goals – [Design]
I have made progress toward achieving my goals – [Deliver]
I am confident that I will reach my goals – [Deliver]
I have set higher goals for myself than I expected since enrolling at WCU – [Don't Settle]
I feel I can not only meet but exceed my goals – [Don't Settle]
I have a positive attitude toward learning
My stress level has increased since starting at WCU
I have considered withdrawing from WCU
I am satisfied with my overall experiences at WCU
I would recommend WCU to someone else
My first semester at WCU would have been better if:

In the final set of questions, please tell us a little bit more about yourself.

What is your gender?

Male
Female

What is your age?

21-25
26-30
31-40
41-50
51-60
61 or older

What is your race?

African American/Black
Asian/Pacific Islander
Hispanic/Latino
Native American/American Indian
White/Caucasian
Multiracial
Other

In addition to having your Associates Degree in Nursing, have you also completed a bachelor's degree in another discipline?

Yes
 No

How many children 18 years old or younger currently lived in your household?

None
One
Two
Three
Four or more

How many hours per week do you work?

None
20 hours or fewer per week
21-40 hours per week
41 or more hours per week

Are you attending school full-time or part-time

Full-time (12 hours or more per semester)
Part-time (11 hours or less per semester)

Appendix D

Transfer Experiences Interview Consent Form and Questions

Interview Consent Form and Instrument

[Content of Interview Invitation Email]

Research is being conducted on the perspectives of the transfer process for incoming RN to BSN students. As a participant in this study, we ask that you participate in a brief, recorded telephone interview that intends to document your perspectives and experiences as a recent RN to BSN transfer student. Your feedback will be used for the purposes of graduate dissertation research with the possibility of implementation to improve student services for future transfer students.

Your identity will remain confidential and will only be disclosed as initials; subsequently, there is no foreseeable risk associated with your participation in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may elect to discontinue participation in this study at any time and your information will not be included in the research.

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, please contact me know or contact the WCU Institutional Review Board in the Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212 or by email at irb@wcu.edu. You can also contact me to request a summary of the study.

Providing Your Consent

I, a WCU RN to BSN student, understand the information described above and acknowledge that my participation in this recorded telephone interview is completely voluntary. Additionally, I understand that my identity will remain confidential and my survey responses will be used only for the purpose of this research study. I also understand that I can contact the researcher to request a summary of the study.

By responding to this email stating my willingness to participate and providing my contact information, I confirm that I have received and read a copy of the consent form provided to me and acknowledge the statements therein.

Appreciative Advising Research Interview Questions

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to answer a few questions about your experiences as a WCU transfer student. Please remember that your feedback is confidential. Your participation is appreciated.

Let's begin by thinking back to the time when you were getting ready to transfer into WCU, back when you were applying for admission, when you learned that you were accepted, when you were registering for classes, etc.

Walk me through this time period. Can you tell me in as much detail as possible what the process of transferring into WCU was like for you?

What aspects about the transfer process would you say you were most satisfied with?

What aspects about the transfer process would you say were the most difficult for you?

Can you give me specific examples of what you found to be difficult about transferring into WCU?

What was your impression of the advising you received during this time?

Was the advising sufficient for your needs?

Did you feel you were prepared to do well at WCU or did you have doubts about how you would do?

Were you at all anxious about transferring to into WCU?

What are some things you wish were different that would have possibly improved your experience of transferring into WCU.

Now let's shift our focus to your first semester at WCU.

Take me through your first semester. Tell me what it was like being a new student at WCU.

What were your primary concerns during your first semester?

What was it like adjusting to the academic standards at WCU?

How would you describe your stress level during your first semester?

Tell me about the academic advising you received during your first semester. Did you feel like the advising you received helped you adjust in your first semester?

Did you ever consider dropping your classes or withdrawing from WCU?

If so, what convinced you not to drop your classes or withdraw?

What is the likelihood that you might drop your current classes or withdraw from WCU before graduating?

Ok, final question. What do you wish was different that would have possibly improved your first semester at WCU?

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to answer these questions. Please remember that your feedback is confidential. Your participation is appreciated.

Appendix E

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents Table

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Respondents

Demographic	Appreciative Advising Group (n = 8)	Prescriptive Advising Group (n = 12)
Gender		
Male	0 (0%)	2 (17%)
Female	8 (100%)	10 (83%)
Age		
21-25	1 (12%)	1 (8%)
26-30	1 (12%)	0 (0%)
31-40	5 (64%)	3 (25%)
41-50	0 (0%)	5 (42%)
51-60	0 (0%)	3 (25%)
61 or older	1 (12%)	0 (0%)
Race		
Black/African American	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Hispanic/Latino	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Native American/American Indian	0 (0%)	1(8%)
White/Caucasian	7 (88%)	9 (76%)
Multiracial	1 (12%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
Previous Bachelor's Degree		
Yes	3 (37%)	3 (27%)
No	5 (63%)	8 (73%)
Number of Children Under 18 Currently Living at Home		
None	3 (38%)	6 (50%)
One	2 (24%)	2 (17%)
Two	3 (38%)	2 (17%)
Three	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
Four or more	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
Average Hours Worked Per Week		
None	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
20 hours or fewer per week	1 (13%)	0 (0%)
21 – 40 hours per week	6 (74%)	4 (33%)
41 or more hours per week	1 (13%)	8 (67%)
Enrollment		
Part-time (11 hours or less)	8 (100%)	8 (67%)

Appendix F

Frequency of Responses by Survey Question Table

Frequency of Responses by Survey Question

Question	Agree AA/PA	Disagree AA/PA
1. I was satisfied with the advising I received when transferring into WCU	7/11	1/1
2. I often contacted my advisor for assistance prior to starting my classes	8/8	0/4
3. My advisor was easy to approach when I needed assistance	8/11	0/1
4. My advisor helped me identify my academic and professional strengths	7/8	1/4
5. My advisor helped me identify my academic goals	7/6	1/6
6. My advisor helped me identify new professional goals	6/6	2/6
7. My advisor helped me plan ways to reach my academic and/or professional goals	7/10	1/2
8. I was anxious about transferring to WCU	4/6	4/6
9. My advisor helped me feel less anxious about transferring to WCU	6/6	2/6
10. I felt empowered to be successful in my classes as a result of the advising I received when transferring into WCU	8/10	0/2
11. Overall, I am satisfied with the process of transferring into WCU	8/12	0/0
I was satisfied with how my advisor helped me find answers about:		
12. Registering for my first semester of coursers at WCU	8/11	0/1
13. Tuition	8/8	0/3
14. Financial aid	7/6	1/6
15. Purchasing my textbooks	7/6	1/6
16. Navigating WebCat/Blackboard	7/6	1/6
17. I felt satisfied with the quality of my coursework since enrolling at WCU	8/10	0/2
18. I am having trouble with time management since transferring to WCU	1/4	7/8
19. I have had to spend more time studying since transferring to WCU	5/8	3/4
20. I feel behind my classmates in my courses	1/5	7/7
21. I am more interested in my coursework since transferring to WCU	6/8	2/4
22. I am more challenged academically in my courses	8/10	0/2
23. I have made new connections with classmates outside of class	4/6	4/6
24. My advisor helped me feel more confident about my ability to succeed at WCU	7/9	1/3
25. The interactions I have with my academic advisor are valuable to me	6/10	2/2
26. I am more aware of my academic possibilities since transferring to WCU	7/10	1/2
27. I am more aware of my professional possibilities since transferring to WCU	7/9	1/3
28. My advisor helped me set new goals for myself since transferring to WCU	6/7	2/5
29. My advisor helped me plan the steps I must take to achieve my goals	6/8	2/4
30. I am aware of various WCU resources that may help me achieve my goals	6/10	2/2
31. I have made progress toward achieving my goals	8/11	0/1
32. I am confident I will reach my goals	7/10	1/2
33. My advisor has been instrumental in helping me achieve my goals	6/7	2/5
34. I feel I can not only meet but exceed my goals	7/10	1/2
35. My advisor helped me set higher goals for myself than I expected since enrolling at WCU	4/6	4/6
36/5. I have a positive attitude toward learning	8/12	0/0
37. My stress level has increased since starting at WCU	7/7	1/5
38. I have considered withdrawing from WCU	3/2	5/10
39. I am satisfied with my overall experiences at WCU	8/11	0/1
40. I would recommend WCU to someone else	8/11	0/1

Note: Frequencies are reported as Appreciative Advising/Prescriptive Advising. AA = Appreciative Advising; PA = Prescriptive Advising.