UCLA
UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Latina Baccalaureate Attainment: A Mixed Methods Case Study of a TRIO Intervention

Permalink

Author

Perez, David Montiel

Publication Date

2017

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Latina Baccalaureate Attainment:

A Mixed Methods Case Study of a TRIO Intervention

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

David Perez

2017

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Latina Baccalaureate Attainment: A Mixed Methods Case Study of a TRIO Intervention

by

David Perez

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Diane Durkin, Co-chair

Professor Marjorie E. Orellana, Co-chair

For over a decade first-generation, low-income Latinas have been enrolling in colleges and universities in record numbers, yet they still graduate at the lowest rates of all women. This mixed methods case study examined the Institute of Student Academic Engagement (ISAE), a TRIO intervention at Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles, California. ISAE serves predominantly low-income, first-generation Latinas, the most at-risk female demographic in higher education.

This study examined the perspectives of ISAE students, peer-advisors, graduates and counselors on the ISAE intervention. In the first stage of this case study interviews were conducted with 15 ISAE students and all three ISAE counselors. One focus-group was conducted with all five ISAE peer-advisors. The findings of this first stage indicated that it was largely

invasive counseling and personal bonds between ISAE counselors and students that promoted retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. These findings were then used to create a survey that was disseminated to ISAE graduates of the previous five years. Survey respondents largely corroborated the perspectives of ISAE students, peer-advisors, and counselors.

The most salient finding was that ISAE counselors first develop close personal bonds with their advisees prior to developing and managing their education plans. This allows ISAE counselors to understand the unique stressors each of their advisees face. ISAE counselors, in contrast to departmental academic advisors, take these unique stressors into consideration when creating education plans for ISAE students. ISAE counselors also connect students to college resources outside their jurisdiction and use their professional status to advocate for students. As a result ISAE Latinas are brought further into the ISAE community and this counseling modality helps to retain and graduate these students.

The dissertation of David Perez has been approved.

Fernando Torres-Gil

Kevin Eagan

Diane Durkin, Committee Co-chair

Marjorie E. Orellana, Committee Co-chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

iv

DEDICATION

First is Dad. Could not have done this without you. To my mother, thank you. Thank you Margaret for your help throughout this process. Also, Rudy and Yvonne, thank you for your help and insight during my research and writing. And Melissa, my cousin, in the 11th hour, thanks for helping me with properly formatting my dissertation. Thank you all for your help.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would very much like to thank my entire dissertation committee. I would especially like to thank Dr. Diane Durkin, my co-chair. Throughout this entire process Dr. Durkin provided me with precise direction and insight to help me complete this project. She was always very patient with me and consistently helped me organize and present my research. I would also like to thank Dr. Orellana, my other co-chair, who pushed me to delve into my data in new and unorthodox ways. Dr. Orellana also gave me very valuable guidance on how to generate rich interview data by simply allowing participants to tell their stories. Dr. Orellana was critical in helping me recognize that the narrative is the province of the participants. I also want to thank Dr. Eagan and Dr. Torres-Gil. I am very thankful for Dr. Torres-Gil's public policy perspective and am grateful that he pushed me, early on, to consider the larger public policy implications of my work. Also, I am very grateful to Dr. Cindy Kratzer who always helped me untangle conceptual and theoretical issues regarding my study. I am also very thankful for all the ELP professors and my ELP classmates who each helped me think about my project in new ways to arrive at novel content.

VITA

Education

2001   Bachelor of Arts Political Science
                                    University of Arizona
                                    Tucson, Arizona

2003   Master of Arts English and American Literature
                                    Mills College
                                    Oakland, California

Professional Experience

2002-2007   Writing Coordinator and English Professor
                                    English Department
                                    National Hispanic University, San Jose, CA

2007-present   Writing Coordinator and English Professor
                                    English Department
                                    Mount Saint Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This project investigated how an existing TRIO support program for Latina 4-year college students, the Institute of Student Academic Engagement (ISAE), boosts their retention and graduation rates. TRIO programs help disadvantaged students persist toward bachelor's degree completion. This mixed methods case study investigated how the ISAE intervention at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU), a predominantly women's college, retains first-generation, low-income Latinas at rates that exceed California and national levels, MSMU students overall, and Latina non-ISAE students at MSMU. The study triangulated data gleaned from five sources: interviews of ISAE students and counselors; responses from one focus group of ISAE peer-advisors; ISAE exit documents drafted by graduates; and surveys of ISAE graduates. These data were further contextualized with data acquired from ISAE supports (Appendix A), curricula, ISAE students' intake documents, and MSMU reports and assessments of the ISAE program.

Except for Asian women, Latinas enroll in college at greater rates than any other female group. However, Latinas graduate with bachelor's degrees at the lowest level of all female groups (Fry, 2002; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009; Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010; Lopez & Fry, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015a; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b).

Between 2002 and 2012 Latinas between the ages of 18 and 24 in degree granting institutions grew from 24.4 percent to 42 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). This growth rate of 42 percent is the largest among all female demographics during this ten year period. However, U.S. Department of Education (2012) data show that among all female groups

in 2011, Hispanic women held the fewest number of bachelor's degrees. With enrollment rates for Latinas on the rise it should follow that their baccalaureate degree attainment rate should also be increasing. But it is not.

This mixed methods case study examined the federally funded TRIO program at MSMU, the ISAE program, which traditionally serves first-generation, low-income Latinas, the most at-risk female demographic in higher education. Latinas college students are predominantly low-income and first generation (Gandara, 1995; Ceja, 2001; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b; Brazil-Cruz & Martinez, 2016). And low-income, first-generation college students are the least likely to graduate college regardless of their racial and ethnic background (Condron, 2009; Rogers & Freelon, 2012; Cookson, 2013; Ravitch, 2013).

Nearly 3,000 TRIO interventions serve close to 1 million students in the US ("A Profile of the Federal TRIO Programs," 2008). In California 327 TRIO programs serve nearly 80,000 first-generation, disabled and/or low-income college students ("Summary of TRIO Projects in California," 2015). TRIO programs provide interventions for these at-risk college students to help them earn bachelor's degrees.

The ISAE TRIO program serves up to 225 students each year at MSMU, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with a high population of Hispanic students. Traditionally, 90 percent or more of the students in the ISAE program each year are Latina. For the past five years the retention rates for Latina ISAE students have been between 90 percent and 99.5 percent. The graduation rates for these same students have ranged between 75 percent and 91 percent (Lewis, 2015). The ISAE program provides participants supports such as academic advisement, and financial literacy and financial aid assistance. Each first-year ISAE participant, for instance,

meets with her ISAE counselor three times each semester to create and maintain a 4-year education plan that outlines a semester-by-semester itinerary of the required coursework needed to complete degree requirements. ISAE participants, given their first-generation, low-income status, are often not fully aware of their financial responsibilities and the financial aid options open to them. Thus, the ISAE program provides participants with a financial literacy component that teaches skills needed to navigate the financial component of college. The goal of this project was to discover the key elements of the ISAE program that promote retention of first-generation and/or low-income Latina college students.

Latina Baccalaureate Attainment: The Lowest Among All Female Groups

U.S. Census Bureau (2014) data show that Latinas are among the largest female minority groups in the U.S. and the largest female minority group in California. Despite their dominant presence in the U.S. and California, Latinas continue to be underrepresented in the way of baccalaureate attainment (Oseguera et al., 2009; Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). For instance, in 2014, nationally speaking, of women between the ages of 18 and 29, 30 percent of Asian women held bachelor's degrees; 20 percent of white women held a bachelor's degree; 11 percent of black women held a bachelor's degree; yet only 8.5 percent of Latinas held bachelor's degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Latinas' baccalaureate attainment is out of step with their college enrollment patterns which, among all female groups, ranks second. For instance, despite recent spikes in college enrollment, between 2008 and 2014 Latinas experienced the highest college drop-out rate of all female groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). The misalignment of enrollment patterns and conference of bachelor's degrees for Latinas within the California context signals a widening of the education and skills gap.

Current Interventions: TRIO/Student Support Services (SSS)

Among the most promising interventions for Latinas in higher education are the TRIO programs. TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program provides disadvantaged students with tutoring, counseling, remedial instruction, and financial literacy assistance to help them "persist in their studies, and, ultimately, earn bachelor's degrees" (The Pell Institute, 2009, p. 2). The TRIO programs were initiated in 1964 when Lyndon Johnson signed the Educational Opportunities Act into law (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). Between 1964 and 1968 the original three TRIO programs—Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services for Disabled Students—launched to form TRIO itself (Mitchem, 2016). Currently eight TRIO programs serve roughly 790,000 students across the nation (Roach, 2013). In the higher education environment, more than 945 TRIO Student Support Services programs serve nearly 200,000 first-generation, low-income, and/or disabled students; these programs collectively work to help these students graduate college (The Pell Institute, 2009). The ISAE intervention at MSMU is one of these SSS interventions.

Numerous studies have documented the academic and baccalaureate achievement gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students (Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Goldrick-Rab, Harris, & Trostel, 2009; Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011; Cookson, 2013). TRIO programs operate to narrow this gap. The TRIO SSS programs grant colleges and universities funding to provide supports for eligible students so they may persist in and graduate college (Zeiser, Chan, Heuer, & Cominole, 2015).

The Study

This mixed methods case study will identify those supports of the ISAE program at MSMU, a predominantly women's college, that promote graduation and retention rates for first-

generation, low-income Latina students. Traditionally, Latina ISAE retention rates have exceeded the university's Latina non-ISAE students, the college overall, and Latinas in California and nationally. This study sought to determine which factors contribute to these higher retention and comparable graduation rates and it will lead to recommendations and best practices. The following research questions drive this project.

1. What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

2. How do these ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention?:

    A. According to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

    B. According to ISAE Latinas' exit documents and evaluations of the ISAE program?

Case Study Research Design

A case study methodology is appropriate in this context given that ISAE is a bounded system within a larger entity, the university itself. Yin (2014) writes that case study research "has a distinct advantage" as a research method when a "how or why" question is propositioned regarding a "contemporary set of events" (p.14). In this proposed case study the broad overarching question is: How does the ISAE program retain Latina students at rates that exceed California's and the nation's?

Yin also explains that case study research is advantageous as a research method when the researcher "has little or no control" over the events under study. The primary "event" or "real life phenomenon" under study and which I as the researcher have little or no control over is the

retention of Latina ISAE students within the ISAE program. In fact, Franke (2015) claims that when managing data gleaned from human subjects, the researcher controls virtually nothing. Indeed this case study will collect data from numerous human subjects. Further, a case study of the ISAE program is a relevant research design because the case or "contemporary phenomenon," the ISAE program, will be investigated "within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16).

Other data such as interview responses of Latina ISAE students, and ISAE staff and survey responses of Latina ISAE graduates will provide data about how ISAE operates as a "bounded entity" within MSMU. Finally, because ISAE is a program nested within MSMU, its boundaries and the context within which it operates are not clearly demarcated. This quality is also why a case study method is appropriate for this project.

Description of the Site

Mount Saint Mary's University is a two-campus higher education Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The downtown Doheny Campus houses the non-traditional graduate programs and a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program. The Chalon Campus, the focus of this study, is located in Brentwood, California and houses traditional bachelor's degree programs. The most recent assessment shows that 62 percent of the student body at the Chalon campus is Hispanic. In 2013, 60 percent of the student body included first-generation students, and 58 percent were low-income (Lewis, 2015).

The Chalon campus of MSMU fits my study in that the campus' dominant demographic, low-income, first-generation Latinas, is representative of the larger body of Latina students in California and the nation who are retained in colleges and universities at the lowest levels among all female student groups. Research shows that college choice factors among first-generation,

low-income students are mainly effected by the ethnic composition of a campus and the campus climate (Cho, Hudley, Lee, & Barry, 2008); financial aid packages (Perna, 2006); and academic preparation (Hernandez, 2015).

Each of these factors help explain why MSMU attracts a critical mass of Latina undergraduates. The Latina population at the Chalon campus traditionally hovers at just above 60 percent and cost of attendance is often below other private and public institutions within the Southern California area (Siebert, 2012). In fact, in 2016 qualifying first-year students who were first-generation and/or low-income were awarded financial aid packages exceeding $35,000. And recent MSMU institutional data show an acceptance rate of 64 percent ("MSMU Fall 2016 Counselor Profile," 2016) which accommodates a wide range of academic levels among its first-year students.

Research also shows that Latinas are strongly influenced by their families when it comes to the college choice process (Sy, 2006; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2009; Hernandez, 2015). Latinas report that they want to live away from home during their college experience. However, they also report that being within the vicinity of their families is also important (Hernandez, 2015). Lewis (2015) reports that 95 percent of first-time MSMU students reside in the greater Los Angeles area, not further than 40 miles from away from the Chalon campus. This may also be a critical factor as to why the Chalon campus attracts such a large amount of Latina students.

Latina students at MSMU are reflective of those Latinas in California and the nation who enroll and drop-out of college at the highest rate among all female groups. The MSMU fall 2011 cohort of first-year students was 55 percent Hispanic, 56 percent low-income, and 40 percent first-generation (Siebert, 2012). However, over 90 percent of the five most recent cohorts of

ISAE students have been Latina, low-income, and first-generation (Lewis, 2014). These demographics of recent ISAE students align them with Latina students in California and the nation who exhibit the most difficulty being retained in college.

MSMU has an acceptance rate that ranges between 64 and 74 percent. First-generation, low-income Latinas at MSMU typically do not have the academic preparedness to compete or be accepted at top-tier colleges and universities. Female students such as these are the most likely among all female groups to drop-out of college (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Oseguera et al., 2009; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014; Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015). Yet these very same students, when enrolled in the ISAE program at MSMU, show retention rates over the past five years as high as 99.5 percent and graduation rates as high as 91 percent (Lewis, 2015). Stanford University, a highly selective college with an acceptance rate of less than 5 percent, graduates Latinas only slightly higher at 93 percent. In California only Pomona College graduates Latinas at a higher rate, 94 percent (Kelly et al., 2010). Given such data, this study asks how the ISAE program retains and graduates Latinas, the most at-risk female demographic, at rates just below the highest in California and the nation—at a school with an overall graduation rate of only 55 percent.

Description of the Population

Ninety-five percent of MSMU first-time freshwomen come from the Greater Los Angeles area, specifically East, Southeast, and Central Los Angeles and West San Fernando Valley. These regions experience unemployment rates as high as 15 percent (Compton), compared to 5.8 percent for California and 7.2 percent nationally (Employment Development Department, 2013). TRIO SSS eligible MSMU students do not receive the same college preparatory education as those from higher income neighborhoods. Still, nearly 100 percent of MSMU students report

aspirations of achieving at least a bachelor's degree (MSMU Office of Institutional Research, 2015). However, actual 4-year graduation rates average only 37 percent (WASC Retention, Graduation, Time-to-Degree Summary Report, 2011). But MSMU's Latina ISAE students are retained and graduate at more than twice this rate.

MSMU institutional data (2015) show that 62 percent of MSMU's student body is Latina. In 2013 institutional data showed that 60 percent of MSMU students were first-generation, and 58 percent were designated as low-income. MSMU Office of Institutional Research (2015), for instance, reports that the average taxable family income of TRIO SSS eligible students (i.e., ISAE eligible students) at MSMU for fall 2013 was $18,550. Further, 60 percent of MSMU students are first-generation (Lewis, 2015). These data show that each year over 50 percent of MSMU's student body is an at-risk population.

Public Engagement

The findings of this study will have widespread public engagement, particularly with higher education associations and MSMU. Findings will be presented at the annual meetings of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), the Council of Opportunity in Education, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). At the January 31, 2016 NAICU annual meeting the topic of the conference was: How independent colleges and universities can change to meet the needs of diverse students. The HACU national meeting in October, 2016, celebrates its 25th year anniversary and will highlight public and private colleges and universities that have succeeded in graduating more Latinos in higher education over the past 25 years.

There are 450 public and private universities in the U.S. that are designated as HSIs. In California, 29 of the 140 nonprofit private colleges and universities are designated as HSIs.

These 29 HSIs serve 25,000 Hispanic students out of a total private college enrollment of 87,600 (HACU California HSI Agenda, 2015). The Council of Opportunity in Education (COE) is the national association representing TRIO programs nationally. A presentation will be made at COE's annual conference as well.

Finally, the findings will be shared with MSMU. It will confirm what is working and what areas of improvement may be needed in the ISAE program and MSMU. The conversation will engage faculty, staff, students, administrators and the Mount community. In-house discussion about MSMU's retention and graduation rates have regularly been handled in focus group settings with Chairs and Deans, the Retention Committee, Enrollment Management, the President's Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees (Siebert, 2012). Retention and graduation discussions have yet to include a broad array of college actors and participants. The findings of this case study will be presented in a wider forum at MSMU to initiate this broader discussion.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Latinas are retained and graduate at the lowest rate among all female demographics within higher education (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Oseguera et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). Despite their low graduation and retention outcomes, Latinas' college enrollment has been increasing faster than any other female demographic for over a decade (U.S. Department of Education, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). In fact, Latinas' college enrollment rate is only surpassed by Asian women (Krogstad & Fry, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015a; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). And although among all female groups Latinas exhibit the greatest percentage increases in obtaining bachelor's degrees, less than 10 percent of Latinas between 18 and 29 years-old hold a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

This chapter reviews the literature on Latina college students and their enrollment and retention within higher education. These studies help to contextualize my case study of Latinas within the Institute of Student Achievement and Enrichment (ISAE) program. The ISAE intervention at Mount Saint Mary's University is a TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program which retains and graduates first-generation, low-income Latinas at rates that are comparable to or exceed national and California averages. This mixed methods case study examines those supports within the ISAE intervention that promote the retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income Latinas, the most at-risk female demographic within higher education.

This chapter begins with a presentation of the data that illustrate Latinas/os' lack of retention and baccalaureate degree attainment in higher education. This is followed by a

discussion of the reasons explaining Latina/o underachievement in higher education generally. The conversation then narrows to the reasons for the low retention and graduation rates of Latinas in higher education. I then investigate existing support programs which cater to first-generation, low-income Latinas. Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) offer an example of such support in that they accommodate underprepared minority students. However, data show that these colleges and universities graduate and retain Hispanics at the lowest rates in California and the nation. I then show that Latinas involved in TRIO SSS programs—which serve first-generation, low-income and/or disabled students—are retained and graduate at higher rates than students who qualify for but do not enroll in TRIO programs (The Pell Institute, 2009). In this section I investigate program elements likely to retain and graduate Latinas. Finally, I present the variety and achievement levels of Hispanic ethnicities within the higher education context.

High College Enrollment but Low BA Attainment of Latina/os

Though Hispanics are consistently underrepresented in the way of baccalaureate degree attainment (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Oseguera et al., 2009; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b; Gandara, 2015), their college enrollment patterns have been on the rise for the last two decades (Lopez & Fry, 2013; Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015a).

U.S. Census Bureau (2014) data show that from 1996 to 2012 Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 24 outpaced blacks and whites of this same age group in the way of college enrollment. During this 16 year period, college enrollment for Hispanics increased 240 percent; blacks saw a 72 percent rise in enrollment as compared to a rise of 12 percent for whites (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). And current data show that 49 percent of Hispanics between the ages of

18 and 24 are enrolled in college as compared to 47 percent of whites in this same age range (Lopez & Fry, 2013).

Between 1990 and 2013 Hispanic enrollment in college nearly quadrupled, growing from .7 million to 2.9 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2015a). Further, The Condition of Education (2015a) data also indicate that of high school seniors who graduated between 2004 and 2012 and who immediately enrolled in college, Hispanic students' enrollment percentages increased the most, 23 percent. However, despite the recent decline in the high school drop-out rate for Hispanics (Lopez & Fry, 2013) and their increased college enrollment patterns, Hispanics, in comparison to all other minority groups and whites, acquire baccalaureate degrees at the lowest rate, 9 percent (Krogstad & Fry, 2014).

In 2012, only 14.5 percent of Hispanics over the age of 25 held a baccalaureate degree. Yet whites and blacks, though exhibiting lower college enrollment rates than Hispanics, showed baccalaureate degree attainment rates of 34.5 percent and 21.2 percent, respectively. In contrast to all other groups, 51 percent of Asians in 2012 held bachelor's degrees (Lopez & Fry, 2013). The Digest of Education Statistics (2015b) data show that among adults between the ages of 25 and 29, 60 percent of Asians and 40 percent of whites hold bachelor's degrees. Nearly 21 percent (20.5 percent) of blacks between this age range carry bachelor's degrees. Yet despite higher education enrollment rates that are only exceeded by Asians, only 15.7 percent of Hispanics between 25 and 29 have bachelor's degrees.

Latinas in Higher Education: Low Graduation and Retention Rates

Latinas' low graduation and retention rates are part of the larger pattern of Hispanic low graduation and retention rates. While Latinos graduate with baccalaureate degrees at the lowest rates among all college graduates, Latinas graduate at the lowest rates in comparison to all other

female groups (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Vasquez, 2002; Sy, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). U.S. Census Bureau (2012a) data show that in the 2010-2011 school year 31 percent of Asian women held bachelor's degrees; 21.2 percent of white women and 12 percent of black women held baccalaureate degrees. And though Latinas constituted 13 percent of all women in the United States in 2011, only 10.8 percent of Latinas in 2011 held bachelor's degrees.

BA Attainment: Latina Increases yet Lack of Parity with Other Female Groups

Although Latinas' college graduation rates have been increasing faster than any other female group (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008), current data and extensive research show that Latinas' baccalaureate completion rate continues to be the lowest among all female groups (Fry, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Oseguera et al., 2009; Kelly, et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Digest of Education Statistics (2015b) data show that between 2002 and 2012, Latinas, in comparison to all other female demographics, exhibited the greatest percentage increase in the way of baccalaureate attainment. In this decade, baccalaureate attainment for Asian and black women grew 8 percent and 10 percent, respectively. White women saw a drop of 10 percent. Baccalaureate attainment growth for Latinas between 2002 and 2012 was most the most drastic at 32 percent. However, by 2014 only 8.5 percent of Latinas between the ages of 18 and 29 held bachelor's degrees. In contrast, 20 percent of white women and 11 percent of black women of this same age range held bachelor's degrees. Outpacing all other female groups, 30 percent of Asian women between 18 and 29 years old carried bachelor's degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Hence, while data show that Latinas exhibit the greatest percentage growth rate in bachelor's degrees attained (Gonzalez et al., 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), among all female

groups they continue to hold the fewest bachelor's degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b).

Latina College Students in California: High Enrollment and Low Degree Attainment

In California, like the nation, though Latina baccalaureate attainment is the lowest among all female groups, their college enrollment rate surpasses all female groups except for Asian women. Between 1994 and 2012 Latinas' college enrollment rate grew from 52 percent to 76 percent. For this same period black women saw a growth in enrollment from 48 percent to 69 percent. College enrollment for white women increased from 66 percent to 72 percent (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014).

Latinas' acquisition of bachelor's degrees in California reflects national numbers. In California, only 3.9 percent of Latinas between the ages 18 and 24 hold bachelor's degrees. Almost 10 percent (9.7 percent) of white women and 5.4 percent of black women in this same age group hold bachelor's degrees. Reflecting national trends, Asian women in California outpace all other female groups in baccalaureate degree attainment; 17.5 percent of Asian women in California between the ages of 18 and 24 hold bachelor's degrees. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

In 2008, 18.3 percent of Latinas were enrolled in college or graduate school in California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). However, by 2014 only 4 percent of all Latinas between 25 and 29 years old had earned a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). This 78 percent attrition rate was the highest among all female ethnic minorities and whites during this six year period.

This misalignment of enrollment patterns and conference of bachelor's degrees for Latinas within California signals a widening of the education and skills gap. This is especially an

issue within the California context where the greatest concentration of Latina/os resides (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). California's Latina/o population alone accounts for 39 percent of all Latina/os in the U.S (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Currently California faces a shortage of college graduates to fill skilled positions that demand "college-educated workers" (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). Johnson and Sengupta (2009) report that California public state institutions and private colleges and universities produce roughly 150,000 baccalaureate degree holders each year, but these numbers would have to increase by 40 percent to meet projected 2025 demands for college graduates.

Factors Impacting Low Retention and Graduation of Latina/os

The key reasons for low retention and graduation of Latino/a students are rooted in low SES and the lack of formal education among parents of first-generation, low-income Hispanic students. Citing over 40 years of research, Gandara and Contreras (2009) state that although there is no single factor that accounts for low graduation rates among low SES students, research shows a strong correlation between the "education and income [levels] of parents and the achievement outcomes of their children" (p.29). The literature indicates that across all racial and ethnic categories, the combination of the educational and professional measure of parents is the most influential factor to students' outcomes in education (Gandara, 1995).

Low SES Effects on Latina/o Preparation for College

Low-income, first-generation Hispanic college applicants have neither the social and cultural capital nor the academic preparation of their more financially advantaged peers (Gandara, 1995; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Gandara & Orfield, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Hernandez, 2015). College applicants of higher SES status regularly have parents who have graduated college and can offer insight to their children about properly navigating the college

and financial aid application processes (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Cookson, 2013). Not privy to such resources, first-generation, low-income Hispanics college students are less likely than their more financially advantaged peers to even apply for financial aid (Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2009). Castillo and Hill (2004) found that lack of financial assistance is a primary predictor of distress and one of the main reasons Hispanics drop-out of college. And Goldrick-Rab, Harris and Trostel's (2009) research on financial aid packages shows that students of low SES backgrounds, many among them Hispanics, are not offered the same amount of financial aid as their more financially advantaged peers.

Numerous studies show that low-income minority students come from secondary schools that have less qualified teachers, and inferior teaching materials and facilities than their more advantaged peers (Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2014). Also, first-generation, low-income Hispanic college students are more likely to attend 2-year rather than 4-year colleges which, statistically speaking, decreases the likelihood that they will achieve a bachelor's degree (Vasquez, 2002; Sy, 2006).

First-generation, Low-income Latina/o Students: Poor Academic Preparedness

First-generation, low-income Latina/o students are regularly not prepared to take on college level work (Castillo & Hill, 2004; Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010; Cookson, 2013). Years of research indicate that the schools and educational infrastructure in impoverished communities poorly prepare students for college level work (Gandara, 1995; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ravitch, 2013; Cookson, 2013). Adelman (2007) claims that the poor academic preparation low SES students receive in high school is the single factor that accounts for their inability to be retained in and graduate from higher education institutions.

Research consistently shows that nontraditional, high risk students—such as first-generation, low-income Hispanics—struggle with not only the academic, but social and financial preparedness necessary to initiate and complete a bachelor's degree (Hoyt, 1999; Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Cookson, 2013). Parents of these students have little to no formal education themselves and are of a low SES status, two factors which research has shown to portend lack of academic ability and poor chances of college graduation (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gandara & Orfield, 2010; Cookson, 2013). Further, research indicates that students whose parents have little to no formal education and are of low SES drop-out of college at the highest rates (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Cookson, 2013).

College Environments Antagonistic to Diversity

First-generation, low income minority students in general and Hispanic students in particular also face antagonistic college environments averse to cultural diversity (Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Chapman, 2013). Harper and Hurtado (2007), for instance, find that black and Hispanic students at public research universities are subject to antagonistic college climates more often than their white and Asian peers. This phenomenon becomes even more pronounced at selective institutions whose declining enrollment rates of Hispanic students issue the institutional cue that these students are neither qualified nor welcome at these colleges (Brown & Hirschman, 2006). Research shows that when minority students perceive that their college campuses are antagonistic toward their ethnic identity and cultural heritage, these perceptions can translate to low academic achievement, low self-esteem, and a sense of alienation on campus (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1996; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003; Nunez, 2009).

For instance, Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) found that Latina/o students at three different college campuses reported being subjected to a variety of racial micro-aggressions that left them "feeling like 'outsiders' within their own universities" (p. 680). These researchers also found—as other research has shown (i.e., Gonzalez et al., 2004; Zalaquett, 2005; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Ojeda, Castillo, Meza, & Pina-Watson, 2014; Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015; Gonzales, Brammer, & Sawilowsky, 2015)—that Latina/o students respond to such negative racial climates by forming their own campus communities wherein their cultural wealth and ethnic identities are aligned with their "home communities." Such ethnic and cultural enclaves on campuses have been shown to enhance retention of Latina/o students. Gonzales, Brammer, and Sawilowsky (2015), for instance, found that a learning community model intervention that predominantly served Latina/o students and which was culturally attuned to Latina/o students' needs, enhanced retention rates for these "at-risk" students.

Quantitative research has also shown that when Hispanic students enroll in courses that focus on gender, ethnicity, and/or diversity, such instruction is associated with an enhanced sense of belonging on campus and a heightened sense of academic competency among Hispanic students (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Nunez, 2009). And Nunez's (2011) study of sophomore first-generation Hispanic students suggests that Chicano Studies coursework helps these students manage and deflect racism on campus and promotes the development of community among Hispanic students on their campuses. Further, Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) found that campus diversity and ethnic and gender diversity coursework promotes positive learning outcomes for all students. Hence, while research does show that Hispanic students often face antagonistic environments while at college, culturally relevant coursework and the development of community on campus help combat this reality.

Traditional Hispanic Culture as a Barrier to Degree Attainment

Phinney, Dennis, and Gutierrez (2005) find that cultural factors along with low SES exacerbate Latinos' ability to persist in and graduate from college. Low-income, first-generation Hispanic college students also contend with traditional Hispanic tropes and financial obligations to their families that conflict with their roles as students (Tseng, 2004; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005). Hispanic parents expect that their children will continue to fulfill their responsibilities to the maintenance of their family while enrolled in college. First-generation, low-income Latina/o students are often expected to work while they attend college in order to help their families financially (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Sy, 2006). Despite these factors which operate against Latina/o success in higher education, enrollment of Latina/os has been on the rise since 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Cultural Factors Impacting Latina Retention and Graduation

Close family ties within the Hispanic culture both aid and upset Latinas' pursuit of baccalaureate degree conference (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Alvarez, 2010; Hernandez, 2015). Research shows that the closely-knit structure of Hispanic families provides Latinas with a support structure to initiate and persist in college (Sy, 2006). However, Latinas' obligation to fulfill family and gender coded duties often works against their academic performance (Tseng, 2004). Studies focusing on Latina college students in particular find that their parents, especially their fathers, expect them to fulfill family obligations beyond the demands placed upon their male counterparts (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Sy & Romero, 2008).

Hispanic culture is patriarchal and Latinas are expected to fulfill domestic duties that their Latino counterparts are exonerated from such as child-rearing and domestic maintenance (Sy & Brittian, 2008). Such responsibilities demand more time of Latinas than their male

counterparts and place more stress upon them. As a result Latina college students experience poor mental health, high attrition, and low graduation rates (Sy & Brittian, 2008; Cates & Schaefle, 2011).

Latina Role Conflict: Gender-coded and Student Responsibilities

First-generation, low-income Latina students experience a conflict between fulfilling traditional female roles and pursuing the non-traditional role of achieving a college degree (Castillo & Hill, 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Phinney, Dennis, & Gutierrez, 2005). Latinas contend with gendered stereotypes of femininity that deem women are to become wives and mothers; the role of student, which demands focused attention upon study and independence from one's family, runs counter to traditional Hispanic gendered stereotypes (Gonzalez, et al., 2004). First-generation, low-income Latinas' families and parents place demands upon them that limit the amount of time Latina students can commit to their studies (Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008; Alvarez, 2010). The effect is poor academic performance in college which serves as an impetus for these students dropping out at the highest rates among all female students.

Research upon Latinas' experience in higher education shows that family ties and obligations, male privilege, and higher education institutional structures often act as barriers to Latinas enrolling in college and completing a baccalaureate degree (Gandara, 1982; Cuadraz, 1996; Delgado Bernal, 1998). Latina college students coming from traditional households are expected to fulfill familial obligations regardless of college demands (Young, 1992; Sy & Romero, 2008). The traditional Hispanic family structure makes it incumbent upon Latinas to provide childcare for younger family members and engage in household domestic errands that Hispanic men are exonerated from (Gandara, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999; Sy & Romero, 2008). Indeed, if men from traditional Hispanic families were to take on positions within the family that

21

women traditionally manage, their masculinity would be placed in jeopardy (Corby, Hodges, & Perry, 2007; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008).

Research shows that Hispanic parents encourage their daughters to attend college, yet expect them to maintain their domestic duties and responsibilities to their families as mandated by cultural norms that relegate domestic responsibilities to women (Fuligni et al., 2005; Gonzalez et. al, 2004; Sy, 2006). This demand, in turn, infringes upon Latinas' ability to succeed academically (Sy, 2006; Alvarez, 2010). Hence, parental encouragement drives Latinas to enroll in higher education, yet fulfilling familial demands can work against their retention and graduation. These obligations promote that Latina college students experience greater stress levels than their male counterparts (Gandara & Osugi, 1994; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Alvarez, 2010).

Male Dominance in Hispanic Culture and Effects on Latina Students

In their study of Latina college students and their parents' process of selecting a college, Gonzalez, Jovel, and Stoner (2004) found that both fathers and mothers subscribed to the "properness" of male dominance within traditional Hispanic culture. These researchers discovered that the parents of the Latina students in their study almost collectively held the belief that "women are unable to take care of themselves and can only be taken care of by parents, family, or a spouse" (p. 21). This sentiment is indicative of the Hispanic cultural norm of *marianismo*, the presumption that for sake of gender Latinas are less capable than their male counterparts (Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008).

Hispanic family values and obligations present Latinas with a "double-edged sword" with regard to their academic pursuits (Fuligni et al., 2005). On the one hand, strong familial relationships aid Latinas in their transition to college life and promote their persistence (Gandara,

22

1995; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Ceja, 2001; Sy & Romero, 2008). On the other hand, the time demands that family obligations place upon Latinas limit their ability to focus on their academic responsibilities (Cammarota, 2004; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Phinney et al., 2005; Sy & Brittian, 2008). Further, the cultural trope of *marianismo* brands Latinas as unable to be responsible and competent adults without the oversight of a man (Sy & Romero, 2008).

Effects of Family Obligations and Role Conflict for Latina Students

Sy and Romero (2008) write that Hispanic cultural values emphasize deference to family needs and that women fulfill a self-sacrificial role within the family. Such family and cultural contexts, they continue, present "a double whammy for Latina students who want to attend college" (p. 216). Latina students must contend with Hispanic cultural norms that dictate they are to place their own academic and life ambitions behind their family duties and their gendered role as a self-sacrificial care-giver.

This conflict is further complicated when Latinas, in pursuit of a college degree, place themselves beyond the locus of control of their family unit. Such behavior runs counter to traditional Hispanic cultural values which demand that Latinas place their own ambitions and goals behind their family obligations and their role as domesticated care-givers. When Latina college students move away from home to attend college they trespass upon the Hispanic cultural trope which mandates that only through marriage may a woman leave her nuclear family unit (Anzaldua, 1987; Bernal, 1998; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Sy, 2006).

Effects of *Familism* on Latina college students. The cultural value of *familism*, dedication and loyalty to one's family and family connectivity (Sy, 2006), is also extant within Hispanic culture. And given that traditional Hispanic culture is decidedly patriarchal, *familism* comes to demand more of women than men. Yet research shows that the support Latina students

receive from their families, a manifestation of *familism*, while in the first stages of their college

career helps them transition into college life (Gandara, 1995; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Gonzalez et

al., 2004; Zalaquett, 2005; Alvarez, 2010; Hernandez, 2015).

Gonzalez et al.'s (2004) research reveals one of the ironies of *familism*. Their case study

of just over 20 Latina college students found that while many immigrant families come to the

United States for the sole purpose of offering their children better opportunities, cultural bindings

often preclude parents from allowing their daughters from reaching their full academic potential.

One Latina respondent in the study articulates the dilemma when she said that her father "wanted

me to go to college, but he also wanted me to stay near by" (p. 20). A product then of *familism* is

a struggle of contradiction that many Latinas face.

Hispanic Cultural Norms that Promote Family Interdependence and Latina Success

Traditional Hispanic family structure highlights a family interdependence which is not

entirely amenable to the expectation that college students "begin to separate from family and

become self-reliant and independent" (Sy & Brittian, 2008). While both Latinos and Latinas are

expected to participate in maintaining this interdependent family structure within especially

traditional Hispanic households, adolescent Latinas are expected to fulfill a family caretaker and

domestic role (Cammarota, 2004). While this cultural value which ascribes Latinas to a

homemaking and caretaking role is not endemic to all Hispanic families, it operates consistently

within the traditional Hispanic family structure (Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008).

At its extreme, the domestic realm to which Latinas are relegated via cultural

expectations can direct adolescent Latinas to move directly from their own nuclear family into

another one once they marry. This pathway from one family to the next further emphasizes

traditional gender roles which promote that Latinas eschew professional roles to become *mujeres de hogar* (women of the home) (Cammarota, 2004).

While these gender roles are reflective of those within a larger societal context, the gender roles Latina adolescents from traditional families are often expected to fulfill promote that they not engage activities that may deliver them from the domestic realm. However, Escamilla and Trevino (2014) found that these cultural bindings which can place stress upon Latinas in particular can be destabilized once their families take an active role in the college going process. Alvarez (2010), for instance, has shown that when Latina/o parents and their daughters all participate in the process of selecting a college and navigating the path toward college enrollment, Latina students have smoother transitions from home to college. As a result, these Latinas, with the aid of their parents and despite traditional gender roles, perform better in college once enrolled. Hence, while traditional Hispanic culture may promote that Latinas fulfill certain gender coded roles, these cultural and gender tropes are neither monolithic nor immutable. Research shows that once parents, even those who maintain a traditional Hispanic sensibility, take an active role in their daughter's ambition to attend college, her likelihood of enrolling and graduating increases (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Alvarez, 2010; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Hernandez, 2015).

Latinas in Higher Education: Program Elements for Success

Not all family ties undermine Latina college graduation. For instance, of the eight factors Zalaquett (2005) identified as promoting Latina/o persistence in higher education, he writes that his subjects, 12 Hispanic students enrolled in an urban university, identified their respective families as maintaining "a central position" in their college education. Further, he found that his subjects repeatedly "reported that. . . strong family support helped them succeed in high school

and pursue a college education" (p. 40). This finding parallels years of research which identifies such supports as critical for college persistence to students in general (Kellaghan, Sloan, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Gandara, 1995; Henderson & Berla, 1996; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Yosso, 2006).

Other research has found that family connectivity and the loyalty within the traditional Hispanic family structure helps Latinas enroll in, navigate, and successfully graduate college (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Sy, 2006; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015). Further research shows that Hispanic students clearly obtain much of their most powerful support to attend college from their parents (Gandara, 1995; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Zalaquett, 2005). And family support and the support of mothers in particular are central factors which promote Latina college persistence (Gandara, 1995; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Zalaquett, 2005).

Family-like Programs Effect on Latina Retention and Graduation

Family-like programs on college campuses that promote social bonds among Latina students and between them and college faculty and staff have shown to enhance Latina persistence and graduation (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2015). Gonzalez et al., (2004) also found that parents of Latina students were more prone to encourage their daughters' college aspirations when support systems were available on campus and when there was a clear presence of other Hispanic students on campus.

Familism then, the cultural value of the importance of family unity and closeness (Vega, 1990), is pertinent to Hispanic college students in general and Latina students in particular. Further, when institutions make a concerted effort to incorporate *familism* within programs and

26

the college culture, Latina retention and graduation rates are shown to increase (Alvarez, 2010; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015).

The casa away from casa intervention. Gonzales et al.'s (2015) 9-year longitudinal research, for instance, found that a cohort learning community model—the casa away from casa—which served 320 first-generation, low-income students, helped increase retention rates. The casa away from casa was an access intervention directed toward first-year, first-generation, low-income students. During Gonzales et al.'s study the mean percentage of low-income, first-generation Latina/os in the program was 89 percent.

Between 2004 and 2007 the retention rates of the casa away from casa students, identified as Chicano-Boricua Studies (CBS) students, were consistently below non-CBS students of the same class ranking and academic aptitude. However, during this time CBS students' retention rates were always increasing. And from 2008 through to 2012, CBS students' retention rates ranged between 78 and 87 percent. The retention rates for non-CBS students of the same class ranking and academic ability were between 77 percent and 81 percent.

Between 2004 and 2007 the casa away from casa was simply a "1-year 'access' intervention" (Gonzales et al., 2015, p. 229). In its first three years the intervention had "no coherent or structured" academic itinerary. But by 2008 CBS staff enacted plans to ensure that CBS students would take courses taught by CBS faculty and get through the university's math and English requirement. The purpose of these added features was to stem the attrition rate of students who put off taking their math and English requirement, and to develop community between CBS students and CBS faculty.

An underlying assumption of Gonzales' et al.'s (2015) research was that retention of underrepresented Latina/o students could be boosted by developing cohort cohesion and

substantive relationships among CBS students and between them and CBS faculty. Another assumption was that requiring CBS students (from fall 2007 and beyond) to take math and English requirements up front could enhance retention.

Between 2004 and 2007 CBS students took coursework pell-mell, often putting off math and English requirements, and, subsequently, would drop out. Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley, and Carlstrom (2004) found that developing students' math and English competency enhances their "academic-related skills" which, in turn, enhances their retention rates. In fact, requiring CBS students to take their math requirement up front produced an unintended effect. Some CBS students who initially expressed trepidation at taking math in their first semester were so successful in mathematics that, subsequently, "many. . . sought out careers in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) fields" (Gonzalez et al., 2015, p. 230).

Beginning in 2007, with the math and English requirement in place and cohorting incoming CBS students, Gonzales et al. (2015) write that CBS students maintained "cohort cohesion and support while building . . . a very strong sense of collectivity, community, and *familia*" (p. 230). The casa away from casa, then, actively placed in order those supports that Latina/o students are familiar with: family cohesion and respect, and meaningful and supportive relationships.

This study demonstrates that *familism* and the "establishment of a strong sense of community" (p.230) on campus, more than students' GPAs upon college entry or standardized test scores, can predict retention of first-generation, low-income Latina/os. The authors conclude that because students enrolled in the casa away from casa program they "were able to build lasting bonds with students and faculty" (p. 236) and a sense of belonging and "familia" was

created. This surrogate on-campus family promoted the continued retention and academic progress of these students.

Emergence of Affirmative Action Programs

Through executive orders initiated by President Kennedy, and following the Brown v. Board of Education decision, educational institutions began implementing policy to reverse former constitutional violations that effectively kept students of color from achieving educational equality (Smallwood, 2015; M. Perez, personal communication, December, 2016). These policies prompted policy makers and education administrators to develop programs that intentionally sought to achieve a more racially diverse and equitable education system (Spann, 2000).

Equity in Education: The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was the impetus for a variety of EOP programs on colleges and universities throughout the United States. A report from the California State Assembly articulated the purpose of all EOP programs as a public policy venture whose objective was to eliminate the "economic, educational, geographic, and motivational barriers to higher education for low-income and minority students" (Hart, 2016, p. 111). The legacy of the EOP is extant in a variety of federally funded interventions, among them, for instance, the ISAE program, which operate to enroll, retain and graduate underrepresented students.

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs): Created to Support Latina/o Students

The passage of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 was the impetus to the creation of HSIs. The law was largely motivated by then President Johnson's experiences as a school teacher at Welhausen Mexican School in Cotulla, Texas (Valdez, 2015). The poverty of the students at Welhausen precluded their ability to attend college. Just prior to signing the HEA

Johnson remarked that "this nation could never rest while the door to knowledge remained closed to any American" (Humanities Texas, n.d.).

In the late 1960's through to the mid-1970s members from the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC), United Farmworkers (UFW), and Service, Employment, and Redevelopment (SER) presented testimony before Congress that illustrated the growing disparities of education and achievement between the Latino community and, especially, whites. These early testimonies set the stage for Hispanic educators to form the Hispanic Higher Education Coalition (HHEC). By late 1978, the HHEC sought to utilize Title III funds of the HEA of 1965, funds intended to strengthen "Developing Institutions," to obtain federal aid exactly for those "developing institutions" that maintained a critical mass of Hispanic students (Valdez, 2015).

In 1979 the HHEC brought 2 General Accounting Office (GAO) reports forward in Title III hearings. They showed that the Office of Education (OE) committed errors in the distribution of Title III funds to a variety of institutions, some getting more funds than were warranted by the grant application. This discrepancy led to a review of the declared purpose of Title III funds (Reauthorization of the HEA and Related Measures, 1979).

From 1984 to 1986 Title III hearings were held primarily to determine what percentage of Hispanic students within an institution would define it as one "with [a significant enrollment] of Hispanic students," for institutions that qualified as such were to be deemed HSIs (Hearings on the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, 1984, p. 808).

By 1992 the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), established in San Antonio, Texas in 1986 (HACU, 2011), engineered legislation that mandated an institution is deemed an HSI once its threshold of Hispanic students reaches 25 percent (Valdez, 2015). Currently though, HSI designation has only to do with Hispanic enrollment. Performance

30

outcomes such as retention and graduation rates are not factored into an institution's eligibility to compete for the federal Title V funds available to all HSIs (Kelly et al., 2010).

HSIs Graduating Hispanics at Rates Below Non-HSIs

While Hispanic baccalaureate attainment increases with more selective universities, Hispanic students, regardless of the selectivity of the colleges they attend, "graduate at lower rates than their white peers" (Kelly et al., 2010, p.1). And while the graduation gap between white and Hispanic students does shrink at Hispanic Serving Institutions, the tightening of this gap, according to Kelly et al. (2010), is due to the "the poor performance of white students at HSIs rather than the higher completion rates among Hispanic students" (p.11). In fact, HSIs graduate Hispanic students at rates comparable to or below non-HSIs.

Current Interventions: TRIO/Student Support Services (SSS)

Numerous studies have documented the baccalaureate achievement gap between disadvantaged students (i.e., first-generation, low-income, and/or disabled students) and non-disadvantaged students (Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Yosso, 2006; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2009; Knapp et al., 2011; Cookson, 2013; Ravitch, 2013). In an effort to narrow this gap the United States Department of Education created the Student Support Services (SSS) program in 1968, a federally funded TRIO program (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Across the nation some 2,800 TRIO programs operate in the high school, middle school, and college and university arenas. A battery of nearly 1,000 federally funded TRIO programs operates upon both 2- and 4- year colleges throughout the United States (The Pell Institute, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2015a).

The U.S. Department of Education provides colleges and universities funding to establish or maintain TRIO Student Support Services whose goal is to retain and graduate first-generation,

low income, and/or disabled students (Mahoney, 1998; Walsh, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Roach, 2013). TRIO program stipulations also indicate that at least two-thirds of the students in any SSS project must be "either disabled or first-generation college students from low-income families" (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 9).

Though criteria for TRIO program eligibility is not race-based (Mahoney, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2015a), the TRIO programs are especially beneficial to Hispanic and black students. Among all college students, Hispanic and black students are the most likely to be low-income and first-generation (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Oseguera et al., 2009; Cookson, 2013).

TRIO Programs Enhance Retention and Graduation of At-Risk Students

Nationally speaking, TRIO SSS programs appear to boost retention and graduation rates, and GPAs of students enrolled in SSS programs. For instance, a 2009 Pell Institute study compared two groups of similarly qualified TRIO SSS eligible students. Those students enrolled in a TRIO program were 12 percent more likely than non-TRIO students to enroll in college for a second year and 23 percent more likely to be retained in their third year. Also, over a three year period TRIO students' GPAs were 4 percent higher than similarly matched non-TRIO students.

A national U.S. Department of Education (2015c) study of TRIO programs found that 93 percent of low-income and first generation TRIO students who enrolled in 4-year institutions in the fall of 2007 persisted and enrolled in the fall of 2008. Comparatively, U.S. Department of Education (2015b) data show that the national rate of students enrolled in 4-year institutions remained relatively steady at 28 percent in the 2007-2008 school year. Completion rates for TRIO students also exceed national averages. U.S. Department of Education (2015c) data exhibit

that 48.3 percent of SSS students received a bachelor's degrees within six years as compared to 40 percent of a national sample of non-TRIO/SSS students.

Trio SSS: Program Services

Each TRIO program is representative of a unique contractual agreement between a college or university and the U.S. Department of Education. TRIO SSS programs provide students supports all throughout their college process in the way of counseling, mentoring, and introducing TRIO students into the social landscape and culture of any given campus.

TRIO SSS programs typically serve students who are not endowed with the cultural and social capital that promotes effective navigation of the college and university environment (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Jarsky, McDonough, & Nunez, 2009; Gandara & Orfield, 2010; Cookson, 2013). First generation, low-income students often participate less in class than their middle and upper-class peers, have reservations about attending their professors' office hours, and, in extreme cases, can even feel intimidated and unwelcome on their college campus (Yosso et al., 2009). First generation and low-income students can be confounded within such an environment and TRIO services such as tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction help enable these students to earn bachelor's degrees (Walsh, 2000; The Pell Institute, 2009).

SSS programs integrate students into the program itself and expose students to culturally enriching events, as well as to financial literacy and academic/tutorial workshops as a means to provide them the social and cultural capital beneficial in a college environment (Walsh, 2000). A Pell Institute (2009) study found that the positive effects (i.e., retention rates, increased GPAs and amount of college credits) of SSS programs "were found to be more profound as students' individual participation increased" (p. 1).

TRIO programs provide students with basic skills instruction, tutorial services, mentoring, financial aid assistance, specialized aid for students with limited English proficiency, among a variety of other services to ultimately increase "the college retention and graduation rates of its participants" and to provide students with the ability to transition to even higher levels of education attainment (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p.9).

<p style="text-align:center">Diversity within the Diversity: The Ethnic Variety of Latina/o Students</p>

Literature on Latinas/os within higher education often reports on them as a monolithic group (Cammarota, 2004; Phinney et al., 2005; Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008; Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009; Alon, Domina, & Tienda, 2010; Alvarez, 2010; Nunez, 2011; Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Wright & Levitt, 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2015). However, baccalaureate degree conference among members of specific Latina/o ethnicities 25 years and older ranges from a low of 8 percent (Salvadoran) to a high of 50 percent (Venezuelan) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). This range of achievement suggests that the needs of Hispanic students of varying ethnicities may be unique. This detail further implies that public policy solutions to close the education gap of Hispanic students may need to be as varied as those ethnicities they represent.

The Range of Baccalaureate Achievement Among Detailed Hispanic Groups

Following the highest graduating Latina/o group in the U.S., Venezuelan, is Argentinian, 39 percent; Chilean, 36 percent; Bolivian, 34 percent; and Panamanian and Columbian, 31 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b).

Peruvian and Spanish Latina/os in the U.S. each show baccalaureate attainment levels of 30 percent. Hispanics with ethnic ties to Costa Rica and Cuba have baccalaureate degree attainment of 25 percent; Hispanics with ethnic ties to Uruguay, Nicaragua, and Ecuador are at 20 percent, 19 percent, and 18 percent, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b).

Latinas/os in the U.S. achieving baccalaureate degrees at the lowest rates are largely of Caribbean, Central American, or Mexican descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Puerto Rican and Dominican baccalaureate attainment is 15 percent and 16 percent, respectively. U.S. bachelor's degree recipients of Honduran heritage is at 10 percent. Hispanics of Mexican and Guatemalan heritage have baccalaureate conference levels of 9 percent; and, lastly, Latina/os with ethnic ties to El Salvador report a baccalaureate attainment rate of 8 percent.

The numerical weight and cultural influence of Mexican Latinas/os in the U.S. promotes that, by default, other less dominant Latina/o groups become subsumed in the data representing the category identified as "Latino" (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). And, given that the Latinas/os of Mexican descent fare among the worst in the area of baccalaureate conference, much of the literature focuses on them. However, once data on all Latina/os are disaggregated, a need to better understand the experiences of each Hispanic ethnic group surfaces.

Chapter Three: Research and Methodology

Background and Research Questions

Since the early 1990's Latina enrollment in higher education institutions has been steadily growing (Gonzalez et al., 2004; NCES, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2015b; HACU, 2015). In fact, Latinas are now more populous than their Latino counterparts in the higher education environment (Gonzalez et al. 2004). Yet while Latinas' college enrollment rates have increased faster than any other female demographic, their graduation rates are still the lowest among all female groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b).

Numerous TRIO programs across the nation operate to mend education gaps between first-generation, low-income, and/or disabled students (many of them Latinas) and their more affluent counterparts. TRIO interventions provide underrepresented college students tutoring, access to TRIO counselors, and financial aid workshops and assistance; such supports have shown to enhance the retention and graduation of at-risk students (The Pell Institute, 2009; Graham, 2011; Roach, 2013; Zeiser & Chan, 2015).

This study examined the ISAE program at Mount Saint Mary's University, a TRIO program which retains and graduates first-generation and low-income Latinas at rates which exceed the college overall, California's, and the nation's. This study aimed to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

2. How do these ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention?:

A. According to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and
counselors?

B. According to ISAE Latina students' exit documents and evaluations of the
ISAE program?

Research Design

Case Study

Yin (2014) writes that when researchers need "to know 'how' or 'why' [a] program had worked (or not), you [the researcher] would lean toward either a case study or field experiment" (p.11). An experimental design is clearly inappropriate in this instance. Experimental design is to be used "when an investigator can manipulate behavior directly, precisely, and systematically" (p. 12). The ISAE program does not operate in a controlled setting. In fact, a case study of ISAE is the appropriate design in that the behaviors of ISAE participants "cannot be manipulated." Further, a case study fits the research project because ISAE, the very object and case under study, is a program operating within a clear set of boundaries (Smith, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 2009).

Yin (2014) also writes that case study design is advantageous over other research designs when a "how" question is posited regarding an on-going event over which the researcher has little control. The overarching research question of this study investigates how ISAE supports operate to retain and graduate ISAE Latinas. The contemporary event in this case study is the ISAE program itself. And I, the researcher, neither have control over the program nor its participants.

Case study design is further appropriate in this instance because the boundaries of the case (the ISAE program) and the context within which it operates (Mount Saint Mary's

University) are not firmly demarcated. The ISAE program is nested within the larger university. It serves a subset of the entire student population, but ISAE students and the ISAE program are not hermetically sealed off from the larger university. In this sense, the boundaries of the case and the context are not clear (Yin, 2014). Finally, case study design is appropriate because a variety of sources and pieces of evidence will be triangulated to answer the research questions. Data acquired through survey responses, a focus group, document analysis, and interview responses will converge through triangulation to answer the research questions.

Mixed Methods

The core premise of mixed methods research is that gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data provides a more complete picture and understanding of a research problem than can be provided by either form of data on its own (Creswell, 2014). This is the overarching rationale for using a mixed methods research design. This mixed methods case study triangulated both quantitative data (survey responses of ISAE graduates) and qualitative data (ISAE documents, and interview data of ISAE counselors, peer-advisors, and students). Triangulating these data enhanced the strength and promote the validity of conclusions of this project.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative data promotes better understanding of a phenomenon (or problem) than either type of data can provide singly (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Mixed methods research combines qualitative data and quantitative data to bear out understanding of a research problem. This "doubling-up" of methods allows for solving of a problem "using both numbers and words" (Creswell, 2007, p. 10). Further, mixed methods research combines induction and deduction to solve problems and assess a phenomenon. This is

one reason why "mixed methods research [is] the preferred mode of understanding the world" (Creswell, 2007, p. 10).

Sequential Data Collection

Sequential data collection incorporates two data collection stages. In between these two distinct stages is an interim stage where the first data set (in this case interview responses of ISAE juniors and seniors, and ISAE counselors; and focus-group responses of ISAE peer-advisors) is analyzed to discern "how the results will be used to influence the Stage 3 data collection and analysis" (Creswell & Plano, 2007, p. 121). In this mixed methods case study the initial qualitative data set informed the Stage 3 quantitative data collection, a quantitative data set of survey responses from ISAE graduates of the previous five years. The qualitative results were analyzed to help create the survey protocol for ISAE graduates. Hence, the later quantitative "data collection and results build on the initial [qualitative] Stage 1 results" (Creswell & Plano, 2007, p. 121).

Sequential data collection is relevant to a mixed methods design wherein one form of data (either qualitative or quantitative) is given priority as determined by the research question(s) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2014). The overarching research question here sought to identify what ISAE supports contribute to Latina ISAE students' retention and graduation. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to answer this question. However, the primary research question here sought to understand how the ISAE program promotes retention of Latinas. To answer this question a variety of perspectives (each qualitative) from a number of ISAE participants (and ISAE documents) were examined in order to understand exactly how ISAE supports operate to promote retention of ISAE Latinas.

Interviews of ISAE juniors and seniors, and ISAE counselors, and focus-group responses of ISAE peer-advisors in Stage 1 provided a qualitative understanding of what ISAE supports are critical to the retention and graduation of Latina ISAE students. The Stage 3 survey responses of Latina ISAE graduates of the previous five years provided quantitative perspective on the degree of importance graduates attribute to the supports identified in the qualitative data from Stage 1 of the study. Hence, in this mixed methods case study the qualitative data have priority in that they guided the development of the survey instrument used in Stage 3. Further, the quantitative data, obtained only after analysis of the Stage 1 qualitative data sets, served to substantiate or contrast qualitative findings regarding the degree of importance of a variety of ISAE supports.

Interviews of current and numerous ISAE participants in Stage 1 allowed for a descriptive narrative that 1) identified what ISAE supports promote Latina retention and graduation and 2) pinpointed exactly how such supports promote these retention and graduation rates. A survey of ISAE graduates in Stage 3 allowed for quantitative affirmation (or denial) of Stage 1 findings pertaining to what specific ISAE supports promote retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas.

The research questions sought for an interpretive and subjective response to be given by ISAE students, peer-advisors, and counselors. Initial qualitative data sets (interview data from ISAE students, counselors, and focus-group responses from ISAE peer-advisors) identified the ISAE supports that ISAE students, peer-advisors, and counselors felt are important for retaining Latina ISAE students. Further, these same data showed how these respondents feel that these supports work to bear out such retention rates. These data were used to develop the survey protocol for current ISAE graduates of the previous five years. This is critical, for the primary research question sought to know how, operationally, critical ISAE supports work to retain ISAE

students. And by ensuring that the initial qualitative data set was used to develop the survey

protocol for ISAE graduates it is assured that the "data collections are related to each other and

not independent" (Creswell & Plano, 2007, p. 121).

The experiences of the ISAE graduates, current ISAE juniors and seniors, ISAE peer-

advisors, and ISAE counselors are related to one another. Veteran ISAE graduates have the

hindsight to reflect on what ISAE supports were especially helpful toward their retention in

ISAE and graduation from MSMU. And current ISAE juniors and seniors, now actively living

through similar experiences as ISAE graduates, provided narratives that fully mete out exactly

how specific supports promote their retention and imminent graduation. ISAE peer-advisors, a

support in and of themselves, explained how they help new ISAE students (first and second year

students) navigate the higher education environment and direct them to utilize specific ISAE

supports. And, finally, ISAE counselors provided narratives that show not only what ISAE

supports are most often used but exactly how they are used to ensure the retention and graduation

of ISAE Latinas.

For sake that the quantitative data collected in Stage 3 were informed by an analysis of

the qualitative data obtained in Stage 1, two tenets of sequential data collection were fulfilled: 1)

the two data sets are "related to each other" and 2) the quantitative "Stage 3 data collection and

results build on the initial Stage 1 results" (Creswell, 2007, p. 121). In this mixed methods case

study the quantitative data played a supplemental role within the design. While data obtained

from survey responses of ISAE graduates in Stage 3 provided insight into, and, in some

instances, validated conclusions arrived at inductively from the qualitative data of Stage 1, the

qualitative data identified how these supports promote the retention and graduation of ISAE

Latinas.

Methods

Site Selection

This case study calls for a 4-year college or university which also has a TRIO program that retains and graduates low-income, first-generation Latinas at rates that exceed California and national levels. While TRIO programs are widespread throughout California and the nation, the ISAE TRIO program at the Chalon Campus of Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles is unique in that for over a decade 90 percent or more of its participants have been first-generation, low-income Latinas. Further, the retention and graduation rates of ISAE Latinas exceed California and national levels for Latinas in general.

While other 4-year colleges and universities in California do maintain TRIO programs which serve first-generation, low-income Latina/os, Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) predominantly serves Latinas. Further, the TRIO intervention at MSMU, the ISAE program, retains and graduates first-generation, low-income Latinas at rates comparable to highly selective colleges and universities within both California and the nation.

This case study took place on the Chalon campus at Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles where the ISAE intervention has been in place for nearly 30 years. Over half of the student body at Chalon are first-generation, low-income Latinas (MSMU Office of Institutional Research, 2015). The 1-year retention rate for Latinas overall at the Chalon campus is 84 percent; however, the 6-year graduation rate for Latinas is only 58 percent (Siebert, 2012). The 4-year graduation rate for this same demographic is slightly higher at 59 percent (Kelly et al., 2010). In contrast, Latinas enrolled in the ISAE program are retained at rates between 90 percent and 99.5 percent and graduate at rates between 75 percent and 91 percent (Lewis, 2015). These

graduation and retention rates for this at-risk demographic meet or exceed the retention and graduation rates of their peers who are not at-risk.

All students eligible to enroll in ISAE must be first-generation, low-income, and/or disabled. MSMU's student body and ISAE program is dominated by first-generation, low-income Latinas. Further, more than 90 percent of MSMU students who are eligible for Student Support Services (SSS)—such as the ISAE program—have family incomes that designate them as low-income. Hence, the ISAE program is made up of primarily first-generation and low-income Latinas, the very demographic that is the focus of this study.

These data imply that students enrolled in the ISAE intervention are representative of a clearly at-risk population. MSMU students in general and ISAE students in particular are regularly not prepared to engage college level work. Yet each year ISAE students are retained and graduate at rates that are comparable to or exceed the retention and graduation rates of students throughout California and the nation.

Siebert (2012), in a MSMU document drafted for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), identified 13 non-profit "peer" California colleges and universities whose respective student bodies were comparable to MSMU's. Among all these colleges and universities, MSMU enrolled the highest proportions of Pell recipients (i.e., low-income) and underrepresented minorities, 66 percent and 59 percent, respectively. Only one university had a lower estimated median SAT acceptance score than MSMU. Research repeatedly shows that such students are the least academically prepared for college level work (Yamamura et al., 2010; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jimenez, 2012; Parker, 2012) and drop-out at the highest rates (Condron, 2009; Oseguera et al., 2009; Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Rogers & Freelon, 2012; Cookson, 2013).

The ISAE program is composed largely of at-risk Latinas who are retained and graduate at rates that exceed those for California and the nation for this demographic. MSMU is a prime site for this case study which sought to identify intervention elements that promote retention and graduation rates of first-generation, low-income Latinas. The ISAE program is almost exclusively composed of such students. This site and the ISAE program in particular is appropriate for this study because the research question sought to shed light on the very demographic which is the dominant presence upon MSMU and within the ISAE intervention, first-generation, low-income Latinas.

Access

I am not directly affiliated with the ISAE program. However, as a member of the English faculty and as the Writing Coordinator for the Chalon campus, I have access to MSMU. I have the support of both the Director of the Office of Institutional Research and the Director of ISAE (who is also my direct supervisor) to initiate my project.

The Director of ISAE has expressed interest in this project and granted me permission to email ISAE graduates and ISAE juniors and seniors to take part in this study. She also granted me access to ISAE documents and institutional ISAE data. I was able to review ISAE student files and enrollment and retention data pertaining to the program.

In order to develop transparency and full disclosure I drafted and delivered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to my supervisor and MSMU's Office of Institutional Planning and Research. This MOU fully articulated my study, potential subjects, methods, and research question and goals

Participants

      ISAE graduates. ISAE Latina graduates provided survey response data for this research. In order to generate perspectives from recent graduates, only ISAE graduates of the previous five years were asked to participate in the survey. ISAE graduates of the past five years can provide a contemporary view of the program and its impact on their personal and professional life. There are roughly 200-250 ISAE graduates who have graduated in the past five years. I surveyed ISAE records and counseled with the Director of the ISAE program to identify ISAE Latinas who have graduated within the past five years and emailed these ISAE graduates a link to the survey instrument. In all, 55 ISAE graduates of the past five years responded to the survey. Most participants, 41, identified as Mexican. Seven participants (13 percent) identified as Guatemalan. Five participants identified as Salvadoran. Ecuadorian, Honduran, and Nicaraguan participants were the fewest; each of these ethnicities registered one participant. Finally, eight participants identified no Hispanic ethnicity. These participants selected the "other" category.

      ISAE juniors and seniors. In order to collect interview data from those students who have the most experience with the ISAE program, only junior and senior level Latina ISAE students were asked to participate in interviews. Interview data were collected in the spring 2017 semester. In spring 2017 there were roughly 50-65 Latina ISAE juniors and seniors. I sent the entire participant pool of 65 ISAE juniors and seniors an email inviting them to participate in an interview. The email stipulated that all students interested in participating in the study were to respond within a two week window. Exactly15 ISAE juniors and seniors responded. All 15 participated in interviews. Most student interviewees, 11, identified as Mexican. Two students identified as Salvadoran, and two identified as Guatemalan.

As motivation to encourage ISAE juniors and seniors to participate, each email respondent was enrolled in a lottery to win one of three gift cards not to exceed $25.00. Further, the email invitations to ISAE juniors and seniors stipulated that their participation is entirely voluntary and that if they chose not to participate their position and enrollment in the ISAE program would not at all be jeopardized.

ISAE peer-advisors. In the spring of 2017 there were only five ISAE peer-advisors. All five participated. Three peer-advisors identified as Mexican; one identified as Salvadoran, and one identified as Guatemalan. I sent each peer-advisor an email invitation from my MSMU email account asking them to participate in a single focus-group meeting. Within the email it was explicitly stated that participation in the focus-group meeting is entirely voluntary and that each ISAE peer-advisor's position within the ISAE program and as a peer-advisor would not be jeopardized should she choose not to participate. In order to encourage all peer-advisors to participate, each peer-advisor who attended the focus-group (all five chose to attend) received a gift card of $10.00.

ISAE counselors. All three professional ISAE counselors were interviewed. I sent a formal email invitation to each of the ISAE counselors requesting their participation in a single interview. The email explicitly stated that participation in an interview was entirely voluntary. Further, the email indicated that interview responses will be kept anonymous. Each ISAE counselor has been on staff for at least five years. The compounding of professional experience these staff members wield allowed for collection of rich data on the ISAE program and shed light on those supports they feel boost retention and graduation rates of ISAE Latinas.

In order to encourage professional ISAE counselors to participate in an interview, each counselor was, via a short document, informed of the purpose of the interviews. This brief

document explained that interview responses will only be used to gain insight into those supports that they (i.e., ISAE counselors) feel are especially helpful to the retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. The document made it entirely clear to professional ISAE counselors that their participation would be entirely voluntary and that they may decline to give an interview if they wished. Also, professional ISAE counselors were informed that their position within the ISAE program, of course, would not be jeopardized should they decline to participate in an interview.

Data Collection

I collected data through ISAE documents, interviews, one focus group, and surveys. These data were collected through a sequential data collection design.

ISAE exit documents. Once ISAE students exit the ISAE program—because they have graduated, elect to leave on their own, or are dismissed—they are asked to complete an exit document (Appendix B) and an evaluation of ISAE. All ISAE students participate in an exit interview with an ISAE counselor. At this time ISAE counselors also ask ISAE students to fill out a short ISAE exit document of four questions which ask students to evaluate the ISAE program.

A random selection of 25 exit documents of the past five years were brought into the pool of documents placed under document analysis. These data helped answer, in part, research question 1: What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, graduates, peer-advisors, and counselors?; and research question 2(B): How do ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE Latina students' exit documents and evaluations of the program?

ISAE intake documents. Prior to enrolling in the ISAE program, potential ISAE students must draft responses to three short-answer questions. These questions ask for broad

biographical information and ask students to explain why they are applying for admittance to the ISAE program. In these intake documents (Appendix C) potential ISAE students discuss topics such as academic and economic need and barriers they feel might hinder their retention and graduation. ISAE counselors then review these intake documents and make assessments of the various levels of need illustrated for each incoming cohort of new ISAE participants. Based upon a "needs assessment" ISAE counselors then select the new candidates for the incoming ISAE cohort.

In total 40 intake documents were analyzed: The 25 intake documents associated with the 25 randomly selected exit documents of ISAE graduates, and the 15 intake documents of all the ISAE juniors and seniors who participated in interviews. Each intake document was analyzed for relevant data pertaining to supports that these students sought from ISAE.

Because students drafted these documents prior to enrolling in ISAE, the contents of these documents were not used to answer either research question. However, the 40 intake documents helped to contextualize the study and allowed for identifying common themes among ISAE students prior to their enrollment in ISAE.

4-year education plan. The 4-year education plan (Appendix D), an institutional tool developed to systematically map out each student's itinerary for baccalaureate completion, was among the documents collected for document analysis. Each ISAE student, upon entry to ISAE, meets with her ISAE counselor to develop a 4-year education plan. This "ed-plan" maps out students' 4-year path to a baccalaureate degree. I reviewed and analyzed 40 4-year education plans. I reviewed and analyzed the 4-year education plans of two groups: The 25 intake documents associated with the 25 randomly selected exit documents of ISAE graduates, and the 15 intake documents of all the ISAE juniors and seniors who participated in interviews.

Document analysis of the 4-year education plans helped to answer, in part, research question, 2(A): How do ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

Interviews: ISAE students and counselors. Two interview protocols (Appendix E) were used. Only current ISAE juniors and seniors and professional ISAE counselors were interviewed. Each interview subject pool had its own interview protocol designation. The interviews were done one-on-one (between myself and the interviewee) in a private office on campus. Each interview was composed of 12 to 15 open-ended questions and each interview took 40 minutes to 1 hour to complete. Each interview was recorded with an iPad and an iPod.

Interview questions prompted interviewees to elaborate on those ISAE supports which they feel are instrumental in helping ISAE students to be retained in ISAE and, by extension, MSMU. ISAE junior and senior interviewees were asked to examine and articulate their position within ISAE and how their current position as either junior or senior level students is, if at all, attributable to their continued enrollment in ISAE. Student interviewees were asked to identify and discuss specific ISAE supports they feel helped them stay enrolled in college. Further, I asked ISAE juniors and seniors if there were times in their college career when they considered dropping out. If this was the case I asked them to identify any ISAE supports which they feel helped to keep them retained. Likewise, I asked ISAE counselors to identify those supports that they feel help retain ISAE students at risk of dropping out. Further, I asked ISAE counselors to identify what challenges they feel ISAE students face that may threaten their retention.

Interview responses were used to answer, in part, research question 1: What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?; and research question 2(A): How do

ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

Focus group: ISAE peer-advisors. The protocol for ISAE counselors was used as a model to create the protocol for the focus group session of five ISAE peer-advisors (Appendix F). The interview protocol was composed of approximately 12-15 open-ended questions that sought to understand focus-group members' perceptions of those supports they feel are critical to retaining ISAE students. The peer-advisors were also asked to elaborate on their role and responsibilities as peer-advisors and how they feel their position and duties promote retention of ISAE students. Further, peer-advisors were asked to describe the impact, if any, their respective peer-advisor had on them when they began in the ISAE program. Responses from ISAE peer-advisors in the focus group were used to answer, in part, research question 1: What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?; and research question 2(A): How do ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

Surveys: ISAE graduates. ISAE graduates of the past five years were emailed a link to a 30-question Likert-scale survey with one open-ended question (Appendix G). The survey asked graduates about their perceptions of ISAE. Survey questions asked respondents to comment on those supports which were most beneficial for their continued retention in ISAE. As motivation to complete and send back the survey, all email recipients were entered in a lottery to win one of five gift cards not to exceed $25.00. These data were used, in part, to answer research question 1: What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation Latinas' retention according to ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of data analysis is to identify data that speak to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Hence, the units of data in this study—collected and analyzed simultaneously—were mined for their ability to answer the research questions. Each incoming piece of data was compared to previously recorded data. Regularities and recurring themes that began to cut across the data and answered the research questions constituted the themes and potential findings. Each unit of data met Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for being identified as "purposeful." First, each unit of data had contents relevant to the study's research questions. And, second, each unit of data was able to "stand by itself" and constituted meaning independent of other data.

This mixed methods case study primarily focused on qualitative data. It sought to understand ISAE Latinas' collective experience in the ISAE program and how this program helped to keep them retained in ISAE and by extension MSMU. The quantitative survey data collected from ISAE graduates loaned perspective to the qualitative findings but served a secondary role in this study. And, because the survey protocol for ISAE graduates is contingent upon collection and analysis of the qualitative data, the interview and focus-group data were collected and analyzed prior to the survey instrument being developed.

An inductive and comparative method of data analysis was engaged from the outset of this research project. Further, the construction of categories was developed inductively from all the data gathered in this study. As data came in from various sources—interviews, focus-group responses, surveys, and pre-existing institutional data—they were compared to each other for continuity and recurring themes. Hence, data collection and analysis was done simultaneously. By constantly comparing new and previously recorded data, regularities that cut across the data

were identified. This exercise constituted the development of the themes and findings within the data. Themes and regularities found in the data were further explored in subsequent data collections (Merriam, 2009).

Mixed Methods Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis within a mixed methods research project is to use quantitative methods to analyze the quantitative data and qualitative methods to analyze the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Prior to comparing and triangulating quantitative and qualitative data, these data must be kept separate from each other and analyzed with an appropriate method germane to either species of data. Because this mixed methods research relied primarily on qualitative data collected in Stage 1, these data were collected and analyzed prior to the collection or analysis of any quantitative data. This step was imperative given that the developing findings discovered through analysis of data collected in Stage 1 were used to help develop the survey instrument that was used in the Stage 3 data collection. Further, Stage 1 data helped to contextualize the quantitative data collected in Stage 3.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Transcribing all interview and focus-group responses was the first step in analyzing the qualitative data. Once these data were transcribed I, the primary researcher, checked each transcription for accuracy. As indicated earlier, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. As data were collected they were compared to previously recorded and analyzed data to establish broad trends within the data. These initial observations and analyses—as well as trends identified in the literature review—served as means to develop a codebook. This codebook contained a registry "of the codes for [each] database" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and helped organize each database.

Phrases, sentences, and even full paragraphs of text delivered by participants were identified as specific units of data. Each unit of data was hand-coded and assigned a label which identified its thematic category. The hand-coding process was engaged directly on the transcripts of data. In the left margin of transcript pages each unit of data was assigned a code as dictated by previous analysis and inductive comparison of data; in the right margin broad themes were recorded (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Once all qualitative Stage 1 data were analyzed and mined for content that answered the research questions, these findings were used to help develop the quantitative survey instrument that was used in the Stage 3 data collection. The Stage 3 survey instrument was guided by findings discovered during the analysis of qualitative data in Stage 1. As ISAE graduates completed and returned survey responses, a descriptive analysis of these data ensued. The mean, standard deviation, and the variance per each item on the survey was continually updated to maintain a running log of the developing trends within the data. This record indicated whether the data were "normally or non-normally distributed" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 130). An understanding of the distribution of the data provided awareness of the proper statistical tests to apply to the quantitative data.

During Stage 1 data collection and analysis, participants were asked to identify the specific ISAE supports which they feel contribute to Latina ISAE students' retention and graduation. Their collective responses were used to generate a Likert-survey that asked Latina ISAE graduates to rate the level of importance these supports were to their retention and graduation. Hence, the primary purpose of the Stage 3 data was to identify if ISAE graduates corroborate the sensibilities of the Stage 1 respondents regarding the retention and graduation

capabilities of specific ISAE supports. Quantitative data were continually compared to qualitative data to identify trends in either database. As importantly, these data were compared to identify wherein they conflicted. This exercise helped to attenuate threats to validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Sequential data analysis. As indicated earlier, qualitative data were recorded and analyzed for trends and themes simultaneously. Themes that emerged from the qualitative data were used to develop the survey instrument used in Stage 3. Further, information obtained in the coding of qualitative data and participants' statements that speak to the research questions were used to inform the quantitative follow-up portion of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Data Analysis: Student Interviews, Focus-group, Counselors, Surveys, and Documents

ISAE Student Interview Data

Because this research sought to understand Latina ISAE students' perspective of the ISAE program, junior and senior ISAE Latinas were the first interview subjects. Their insights into the ISAE program offered a collective narrative that identified those specific ISAE supports they feel have been critical to their retention in ISAE and MSMU. Further, their interview responses created a narrative of just how these particular supports operate as tools to retain them as ISAE students.

In order to achieve sound analysis of these (or any) qualitative data, data analysis must occur alongside of data collection (Merriam, 2009). Hence, after each interview was completed it was transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed before the next interview was taken. After the first interview was transcribed tentative themes and potential subjects for future inquiry in following interviews and the single focus-group were noted. Once the second interview was taken, its contents was compared to the first interview. This comparison of the first two interviews

informed each subsequent interview and the focus-group data. This exercise was repeated with each interview and the focus-group responses. This process ensured the mandate that data analysis occurs simultaneously with the data collection (Merriam, 2009).

Interview data, like all data, were mined to answer the research questions and to discern themes and categories that develop out of the data themselves. Hence, from the outset data analysis was both comparative and inductive. Each interview (except the very first one) and the focus-group data were compared to all previous interview data. Further, each incoming interview and all focus-group data were contextualized with previously recorded qualitative data in order to code the data and create themes. This method ensured that each theme that developed was predicated upon an inductive and developmental analysis of the data. While the literature review in Chapter 2 informed data analysis, the voices of the interviewees, survey responses of ISAE graduates, and the pre-existing data guided the study. The triangulation of these data were effected to identify themes and constitute findings.

Focus-group Response Data

The ISAE peer-advisors who participated in a focus-group meeting were the second group of subjects whose responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The focus-group meeting of all five peer-advisors was conducted during the analysis of the ISAE junior and senior interview data. The response data of the focus-group meeting was transcribed and compared to the ISAE student interview data previously recorded. Focus-group responses were placed against previous interview data to 1) identify regularities among the two data sets and 2) code units of data within the focus-group responses. These coded units of data were then placed into thematic categories dictated by the previously reviewed and analyzed interview data.

ISAE Counselor Interview Data

As all other qualitative data in this study, the ISAE counselor interview data were analyzed in light of and in constant comparison to previously recorded data. The three ISAE counselors' responses were reviewed in a manner to identify themes that align not only with the responses of their colleagues but of the focus-group and ISAE junior and senior responses. The ISAE counselor interviews were reviewed to identify regularities and patterns that align with earlier recorded data. Identifying these patterns, when they arose, allowed me to create overarching themes and categories into which these responses were codified. This inductive process ensured that the themes were produced from the data themselves. Further, this method of data analysis promoted the development of categories that capture themes and identities that cut across each data set (Merriam, 2009).

Survey Responses: ISAE Graduates

The coding process of the surveys began by quantifying the response rates for each question on the survey. Survey questions asked ISAE graduates to rate their perceived importance of each ISAE support as it relates to their retention in ISAE. As I analyzed these responses I coded the data according to those responses (ranking from "very important" to "not important at all") that occurred most frequently for each survey question. I triangulated data obtained via all four data sources (surveys, interviews, one focus group, and documents) to validate the findings.

Document Analysis: 4-Year Education Plan and Intake and Exit Documents

4-Year Education Plan

I reviewed and analyzed the 4-year education plans of two groups: 1) The 4-year education plans of the 15 ISAE juniors and seniors whom I interviewed and 2) The 4-year

education plans of the 25 randomly selected ISAE graduates whose ISAE exit documents I analyzed. The 4-year education plans of these 40 subjects were analyzed to understand how this document was applied to retain these ISAE students. Analysis of these documents gave insight into how ISAE students and counselors created and managed ISAE students' 4-year education plans to ensure both retention and graduation

Intake Documents

A total of 40 intake documents were collected and analyzed: The 15 intake documents of all the ISAE juniors and seniors who participated in interviews, and the 25 intake documents associated with the 25 randomly selected exit documents of ISAE graduates. The insights drawn from intake documents provided an understanding of the collective sensibilities of the ISAE junior and senior interviewees in terms of why they applied to the ISAE program. This analysis then helped to construct the interview protocols for these very same subjects.

Exit Interviews

Exit document data of 25 randomly selected ISAE graduates were analyzed to identify which ISAE supports students indicated were most helpful in ensuring their retention in ISAE. Further, these responses were mined to identify if respondents offered any critiques of the ISAE program. The exit documents provided rich qualitative data that allowed insight into how students perceived the program helped them achieve a baccalaureate degree.

These student evaluations of the ISAE program provided further insight into students' perceptions of ISAE. The responses on exit documents are open-ended and request candid critiques of ISAE. These student evaluations of ISAE were analyzed to discover students' perceptions of the effectiveness of ISAE; the evaluations were also used to discover any criticisms students harbored.

The rich student narratives in exit document data were examined to see if their content aligned or contrasted with content found in other data sources. This process effected triangulation of all data sources. This allowed for large "big picture" themes to be identified and which cut across a variety of data sources and subject cohorts. Triangulation of these data, then, were engaged twice. First, responses within each specific group were coded and compared to one another for themes. And, second, responses for all groups were compared with each other. In-depth interviews allowed insight into terrain that statistical analysis is precluded from accessing, the understanding and meaning of processes humans attribute to phenomena (Seidman, 2012).

Role Management

I informed the Director of Office of Institutional Planning and Research and the Director of the ISAE program of my research project. Each of these administrators expressed interest in my project and granted me access to institutional data on the ISAE program. In order to maintain transparency, during the process of my research I frequently informed the Office of Institutional Planning and Research and my immediate supervisor, the Director of the ISAE program, of my on-going research and preliminary findings.

My presence as a researcher investigating the efficacy of the ISAE program generated a small degree of reactivity within the environment and interviewees. In order to mitigate any reactivity, prior to each interview I indicated that my primary objective is to identify each interviewee's perceptions of the ISAE program. I prefaced each interview by indicating that there are no "correct" answers or responses that I am "fishing" for. Rather, I expressed that I wanted to record each interviewee's singular impression of the ISAE program.

Ethical Concerns

Maintaining the anonymity of interviewees was the most salient ethical concern in this case study. In order to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable giving open and honest accounts of their perceptions of the ISAE program, I ensured them that their identities would be kept anonymous. All recordings and transcriptions of interview responses were kept password-protected. I was the only person to have access to this information. Further, at the beginning of each interview I indicated to each interviewee that her identity would be kept anonymous. This information was also clearly stipulated in an informed consent form (Appendix H) that each interviewee received and read prior to her interview.

The informed consent form included a presentation on the purpose of the case study and subjects' role in it, potential benefits for subjects, and an affirmation that their respective identities will be kept anonymous. Also, the informed consent clearly stipulated that interviewees' participation is entirely voluntary and that they may formally cease their participation at any time. Also, all interviewees were made aware that at the end of the case study all recordings would be effectively deleted from all devices.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to ensure the validity of this case study, data from each data source—surveys, interviews, a focus group, and ISAE documents—were triangulated. This process ensured the credibility of the conclusions drawn from the data. To ensure construct validity, clear definitions were articulated as to 1) what constitutes ISAE student supports that promote retention and graduation of ISAE students; 2) data that indicate the ISAE program boosts retention and graduation of students; and 3) how survey and interview responses articulate (or do not) positive perceptions of ISAE. Further, these concepts and specific measures are related to the declared

objectives as articulated by the research questions of this case study. The numerous sources of evidence, their triangulation, and the linking of these data which constitute a "chain of evidence" also promotes construct validity (Yin, 2014, p. 47).

When a case study posits inferential conclusions based on an effect (or a compounding of effects), internal validity must be established (Yin, 2014). To develop internal validity, rival explanations that run counter to my proposed conclusions were resigned, at the outset, to be made transparent and each confronted. It is not the final contention of this case study that its findings will be generalizable beyond the population it focuses on. Rather, the findings will, presumably, align with and support previously developed theories pertaining to those supports that have shown to enhance the retention and graduation rates of first-generation, low-income Latinas. In fact, were this case study to bear out "an extreme case or ideal type" its value may "depend on its *lack* of external generalizability" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 137, emphasis in original).

Lastly, in order to ensure the reliability of results, a specific and detailed catalogue of procedures was recorded throughout this entire case study. Field notes and memos were continuously recorded and organized so that this case study, procedure for procedure, may be repeated by another researcher. Recording the process of the case study was critical in developing reliability. Maxwell (2013), in fact, writes that not keeping memos "is the research equivalent of having Alzheimer's disease" (p. 20). It was through the recording of all procedures that will allow others to do this very case study again. Engaging this safeguard promotes the reliability of the study and mitigates against generating any errors or biases (Yin, 2014).

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This mixed methods case study examined the Institute for Student Academic Enrichment (ISAE) intervention at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU), an institution that serves predominantly low income, first generation Latinas, the most at-risk female demographic in higher education. ISAE retains and graduates first-generation, low-income Latinas at greater rates than MSMU overall, California, and the nation. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention according to current ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

2. How do these ISAE supports contribute to first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention:

A. According to ISAE: juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, graduates, and counselors?

B. According to ISAE Latina students' intake and exit documents and evaluations of the ISAE program?

This chapter begins with a presentation of the goals of this mixed methods case study of the ISAE program and a broad presentation of the major findings. This is followed by a brief overview of the processes I underwent during this case study. I then present the key findings and discuss how they developed from the data. I then give a brief presentation of an overarching initial finding that helps to frame and contextualize the study. Lastly, I discuss the key findings in greater detail and identify the overarching themes within which they are contained.

The first goal of this study was to identify the ISAE supports that promote retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas from the perspective of study participants. By far the ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan were identified as the most critical supports for retention and graduation. But the key finding unique to this study was that the 103 participants cited intrusive counseling in conjunction with the 4-year education plan nearly twice as many times than all other supports combined as key to retention and graduation.

Participants described that ISAE counselors effect intrusive counseling methods that consider how students' life circumstances and stressors can interrupt their passage to baccalaureate attainment. ISAE counselors develop close social bonds with their ISAE advisees and re-engineer academic plans to accommodate unique stressors such as family and financial responsibilities, and familial concerns with immigration status that affect ISAE students' lives. Participants reported that ISAE counselors engage this exercise utilizing the 4-year education plan, a retention tool that maps ISAE students' coursework and passage to a bachelor's degree.

The secondary finding of the study was in-line with current research: Supports that develop social relationships are critical for the retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income Latinas. Both qualitative and quantitative findings from all 103 participants supported the above findings. Finally, ranking third as a critical support was the ISAE community; well over half of qualitative and quantitative data illustrated this finding.

While ISAE peer-advisors and the ISAE events were mentioned, they did not play a prominent role in ISAE Latinas' statements about retention and graduation. No participant group dismissed or disregarded either the peer-advisors or ISAE events as supports. However, participants collectively placed less emphasis on these ISAE supports as factors promoting retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. And though the utility of each of these ISAE supports

ranked lower than both the ISAE counselors and their acumen with the 4-year education plan,

ISAE events and peer-advisors culled largely positive commentaries from participants. The

following chart illustrates the number of times each participant group discussed the top five

ISAE supports.

Table 1

Total Number of Participants	Participant Group	ISAE Counselors	4-year education plan	ISAE Community	ISAE Events	Peer-Advisors
N=15	ISAE Junior and Senior Interviewees	500	63	71	29	22*
N=25	ISAE Graduate Exit Documents	23	20	7	14	4
N=5	ISAE Peer-Advisors (Focus Group)	27	6	17	2	14
N=3	ISAE Counselors	34	34	7	8	2
N=55	ISAE Graduates** (Survey Respondents)	55	55	41	21	19
N=103	**TOTAL**	639	178	143	74	61

* ISAE junior and senior interviewees indicated 5 negative remarks regarding the ISAE peer-advisors. These negative remarks are not accounted for in this chart.
**Weighted averages were calculated for the ISAE survey respondents.

Secondly, this research addressed *how* these supports work. The key finding here was

that ISAE counselors ensure that ISAE students are on track to graduation by teaching them how

to develop their own 4-year education plan, utilize campus resources, and navigate the higher

education system. Participants also cited ISAE students' close relationship with their ISAE

counselors as helping these students manage stress and solve problems within the higher

education context. All qualitative data and 97 percent of quantitative data pointed to these two findings. Finally, 13 out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that counselors encouraged students to be responsible for their own academic planning; 97 percent of the quantitative data supported this finding.

The Mixed Methods Process

This mixed methods case study gathered data sequentially; findings from each data set informed the collection of subsequent data sets. First, I collected and analyzed MSMU documents pertaining to the ISAE program; these informed the creation of interview protocols for ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors, and counselors. Likewise, findings from the interviews (15 one-on-one interviews with ISAE juniors and seniors; and three one-on-one interviews with ISAE counselors) and the single focus-group meeting (all 5 ISAE peer-advisors) informed the creation of a 30-questionairre survey sent out to ISAE graduates of the previous five years.

Key Findings of Study: ISAE Counselors and the 4-year Education Plan

The dominant finding was that the union of ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan promote retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. In fact, both qualitative and quantitative data pointed to the combination of the 4-year education plan and the ISAE counselors more than all other supports combined. The key finding unique to this study was that ISAE counselors teach students how to create their own 4-year academic plans, utilize campus resources, navigate the higher education system, and take responsibility for their academic planning. ISAE counselors, students, peer-advisors, and graduates reported these features as key to retention and graduation. Also, ISAE counselors and students reported a singular support especially critical to retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas: ISAE counselors utilize their professional contacts and

influence to advocate for ISAE students. ISAE counselors and students reported that ISAE counselors broker meetings and relationships with college professors, administrators, and offices for the benefit of ISAE students.

The secondary finding reflects prior research on Latinas in higher education: Close social bonds between ISAE Latinas and their ISAE counselors is a key support for retention and graduation. Finally, data also revealed that the ISAE community helps to ensure retention and graduation of students. The ISAE events and the peer-advisors were discussed as generating social bonds among ISAE students and counselors; however, they were not identified by any data source to be as significant in this regard as the previously mentioned supports.

Indeed, the ISAE events and peer-advisors did figure into the development of the social bonds among all ISAE members. But the level of importance and degree of these two supports in creating social ties ranked behind the social bonds between ISAE students and their counselors. For instance, 13 out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees discussed how the ISAE events and peer-advisors provided a means for ISAE members to develop and maintain social bonds. In fact, only two ISAE students reported peer-advisors as being unhelpful, and only one student considered the ISAE events as "a task" and not a very useful support.

The difference is that ISAE students and counselors shared that their personal relationships carried into a realm that exceeded the degree engendered by the ISAE events and peer-advisors. For example, most ISAE students reported that their ISAE counselors have helped them manage stress associated with family and academic issues. ISAE counselors and students expressed that the close personal relationships they share constitute a degree, depth, and sophistication that they do not find through any other support.

Describing her relationships with ISAE counselors, one ISAE student indicated that she relied on ISAE advisors for both academic and personal support. This student, indicating the perspective of many, remarked that her personal relationships with ISAE counselors are especially relevant for the fact that "they're Latinas and I am a Latina. It's very empowering. It provides me so much comfort and makes me feel safe. Especially because they have gone through things I'm experiencing. I look up to them. They're my role models." This perspective, indicative of most ISAE junior and senior interviewees, identifies the personal relationships between ISAE students and counselors as providing ISAE Latinas with academic, personal, and emotional support. This three-pronged support ISAE counselors provide was unique to their position and was largely why they overshadowed the efficacy of all other ISAE supports.

Qualitative and quantitative data clearly show the key finding of this study: The combination of the ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan is the most important ISAE support for retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. These two supports were cited more often than all other supports combined. The following chart identifies the raw number of times all 103 participants discussed the combination of the ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan in comparison to all other ISAE supports.

Table 2

Number of Participants	All Data	ISAE Counselors in conjunction with the 4-year education plan	All other ISAE supports	Total
N=55	Quantitative*	55	38	93
N=48	Qualitative	325	197	522

*Weighted averages were used for the quantitative data.

First-year ISAE Latinas Lack Knowledge of the Higher Education Environment

Qualitative and quantitative data showed that upon entry to college ISAE Latinas are unfamiliar with the college environment and infrastructure and apply to ISAE to access professional assistance in navigating higher education systems. This tendency spanned all qualitative and quantitative data and first developed from ISAE intake documents. It was this factor, early on in data analysis, that identified that ISAE students have a "need" that, they feel, can be supplied by the ISAE program: Guidance and support in learning about and navigating the college environment.

Prior to becoming an ISAE student, potential applicants must submit an ISAE intake document describing why they want to join ISAE. In total, 40 ISAE intake documents were analyzed: All 15 from the ISAE juniors and seniors whom I interviewed (five of whom were also peer-advisors), and the 25 intake documents associated with those ISAE graduates whose exit documents were analyzed.

In most of these intake documents, 34 out of 40, ISAE applicants discussed their desire to have professional assistance to help them navigate college. A subset of this group, four students, specifically mentioned that because of their first-generation status they do not have parental guidance to help them understand the university culture and infrastructure. One student, June, wrote in her ISAE intake document that her family cannot provide her "academic support because they never went to college." It was precisely this support, in the form of ISAE counselors using the 4-year education plan, which all ISAE junior and senior interviewees discussed experiencing in their first meetings with their ISAE counselors. In fact, 12 out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees and nearly 90 percent of survey respondents reported that

ISAE counselors provided them academic support, the very type of assistance that was repeatedly discussed and identified as a "need" in ISAE intake documents.

All five ISAE peer-advisors also indicated that as first generation students they joined ISAE to obtain expert help in navigating the higher education environment that their parents could not provide to them. One focus-group respondent presented this perspective succinctly: "All of us [focus group members] are first-generation. . . . My parents don't know anything about this [an academic plan]. I can't go to them and say, 'Mom, what [courses] do you think I need to take?' That's non-existent."

This perspective was raised by most ISAE junior and senior interviewees. As mentioned above, 12 out of 15 student interviewees said that they joined ISAE to access professional help to navigate the higher education system. Ariana, an ISAE senior, articulated a perspective indicative of many of these students when she explained that, "whenever I have any question that has to do with school or academics I come to ISAE when it comes to planning." Hence, the ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that ISAE counselors provided them with the very academic and navigational support discussed in ISAE intake documents.

The 55 survey respondents (ISAE graduates of the past five years) largely agreed with this perspective. For instance, 89 percent of survey respondents indicated that guidance from their ISAE counselor in navigating college was either "very important" (67 percent) or "important" (22 percent). And 70 percent of survey respondents—in an open-ended survey question—wrote that their ISAE counselor provided them an understanding of the college environment which taught them how to navigate a path to their bachelor's degree. Illustrating the perspective of many, one survey respondent wrote that she was grateful to ISAE counselors who provided her "answers and insight on how to navigate college."

Further, in 22 of the 25 randomly selected ISAE exit documents, students indicated that they relied on guidance from ISAE counselors to keep them on track toward graduation. These ISAE graduates wrote that ISAE counselors, in one way or another, helped them achieve their bachelor's degree by instructing them on how to navigate the higher education system. Articulating the perspective of many one ISAE graduate wrote that having her ISAE counselor to "guide me through the correct path has contributed most to my success."

Finally, all three ISAE counselors—all of whom were first-generation, low-income Latinas, ISAE students and MSMU graduates—shared that their advisees are not familiar with the higher education system. ISAE counselors also reported that they use the 4-year education plan and invasive counseling to educate ISAE Latinas on how to create their own academic plans and navigate the university infrastructure.

Analysis of Latinas' ISAE intake documents showed that students applied to ISAE to become informed and educated about the college environment and to acquire help understanding academic requirements. This was to be expected. Other qualitative data and ISAE graduates' responses to the open-ended survey question showed that ISAE counselors provided this support through invasive counseling and advocating for ISAE students. These findings are further elaborated in the following sections.

The Critical Union: ISAE Counselors and the 4-year Education Plan

All participants repeatedly pointed to the importance of ISAE counselors and their expertise in using the 4-year education plan to retain and graduate students. Outcomes showed that nearly all participants in the qualitative sample identified ISAE counselors' expertise with the 4-year education plan as critical to retention and graduation; 100 percent of the quantitative sample affirmed this key finding.

Nearly all student interviewees, 13 out of 15, specifically mentioned ISAE counselors' use of the 4-year education plan as a support. The two interviewees who did not specifically mention the 4-year education plan both implied ISAE counselors' use of it. Speaking for many, Ella, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, in identifying the ISAE supports that "have been particularly helpful in your ISAE experience," replied that "The majority [of supports] do, but I would say the 4-year education plan." [9] She explained that her first semester at MSMU Rachel, her ISAE counselor, "sat down with me and explained to me what a 4-year education plan was for . . . she went through it with me very slow and explained it to me . . . . She just provided so much support."

All five peer-advisors confirmed that ISAE counselors' expertise in creating a path to graduation by using the 4-year education plan has helped retain them. For instance, June, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, said that her ISAE counselor, and "the 4-year ed plan . . . are the most important [ISAE supports]."

ISAE counselors agree. All three counselors, each an ISAE and MSMU graduate herself, discussed how they guide their advisees through to graduation using the 4-year education plan to "map out" and show students their unique path to a baccalaureate degree. For instance, Francis, an ISAE counselor of nearly 20 years, said "we [counselors] start doing the academic planning [i.e., with the 4-year education plan] four years out, when students first come in." [9] In fact, six out of the 15 student interviewees discussed the 4-year education plan in a similar way. Cindy, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, described how her ISAE counselor used the 4-year education plan to "break down your classes for you and plan out your four years."

While only 11 out of 25 of ISAE exit documents specifically indicated that the combination of ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan was the most ISAE beneficial support, another 12 exit documents discussed these two supports independently of one another.

Quantitative survey data also supported this finding. Survey question number four asked ISAE graduates of the past five years to rate the "level of importance" they attributed to their ISAE counselor utilizing the 4-year education plan to help them "graduate in four years;" all 55 respondents answered either "important" or "very important." Given that ISAE junior and senior interviewees and other qualitative data championed the union of ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan, this perspective from ISAE graduates was to be expected. Over half of ISAE graduates who responded to the open-ended question, 27 out of 46 respondents, referred to ISAE counselors and/or the 4-year education program as the most beneficial for retention and graduation. In fact one respondent wrote that "The best tool ISAE provided was the 4-year education plan."

ISAE Counselors Teach

The key finding of this research was that ISAE counselors provide more than the traditional role of a counselor. Beyond simply placing students in classes, all three ISAE counselors discussed how they teach their advisees how to use the 4-year education plan, navigate the university infrastructure, and take responsibility for their college career. Illustrating this point Val, an ISAE counselor, reported that "I don't just tell students what classes they should take. I don't just tell them, 'These are the classes you should take,' and that's it. They have to know why they have to take them."

This purpose translates to students; 13 out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees indicated that ISAE counselors show students how to create their own academic plans using the

college catalogue in conjunction with the 4-year education plan. Further, these 13 interviewees articulated that ISAE counselors also teach them how to navigate the university infrastructure. The effect is that, little by little, ISAE students learn to manage their own academic affairs. For instance, Ariana, an ISAE senior, said that during her first year as an ISAE student Francis, her ISAE counselor, introduced her to the 4-year education plan. Ariana elaborated on how Francis taught her to use the college catalogue and recognize that certain courses can satisfy more than one requirement for a baccalaureate degree.

> She sat me down and taught me the ways of like, 'Oh you know, this is the catalogue, you can find it here. Some of these courses with stars or asterisks mean they have other rules you can say. Some of them can count for different areas, or they can inter-count with general studies courses. One class can count for two general studies courses.' She taught me things like that. Then she asked me what my major was. During that time I was a bio student. And then she planned out my four years, as a freshman.

Francis taught Ariana how to decipher the college catalogue and use the 4-year education plan early, as a first-year student. Ariana continued to explain that her ISAE counselor taught her how to fill out her Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). And, she continued, "after that I was able to answer my own questions about the FAFSA."

ISAE graduates of the previous five years (55 survey respondents) further corroborated that ISAE counselors not only take a role in helping students navigate a path to a bachelor's degree, but also teach them to understand and create viable academic plans that ensure graduation. Survey question number six, for instance, asked ISAE graduates to "rank the level of importance" they attributed to the help they received "from ISAE counselors to understand graduation requirements." Out of 55 respondents, 45 (82 percent) ranked this assistance as "very

important," and 8 (15 percent) ranked it as "important." And in an open-ended survey question five ISAE graduates wrote that the guidance they received from their ISAE counselors allowed them to graduate early. One of these early graduates wrote that "My ISAE counselor was actually the one who pointed out that I could graduate in 3 years instead of 4."

Further, 21 out of 25 randomly selected ISAE exit documents drafted by ISAE graduates of the last 10 years reported that the help ISAE counselors provide students to understand graduation requirements was a "service" that had "benefited you [i.e., ISAE graduates] the most." A subset of these exit documents, 14 out of 21, specifically indicated that ISAE counselors' guidance kept students "on track" toward graduation. One ISAE graduate, for instance, wrote in her exit document that the ISAE service that supported her the most was "advisement [i.e., ISAE counselors] because I am able to talk to them about my required courses and this keeps me on track to graduate."

Close Social Bond between Counselor and Student

Qualitative and quantitative data in this study align with a prominent finding about first-generation, low-income Latinas in higher education: Close social bonds between first-generation, low-income Latinas and college faculty and staff boost retention and graduation rates. Indeed, every ISAE student interviewee and all ISAE counselors and peer-advisors discussed their close relationship as a key support that retains ISAE Latinas. And again, 23 out of 25 of the ISAE exit documents drafted by ISAE graduates refer to ISAE counselors as a critical support which "contributed to [ISAE students'] overall success."

Quantitative data also pointed to the importance of ISAE students "personal relationship with ISAE counselors;" 50 out of 55 (92 percent) respondents regarded this "personal relationship" as either "very important" (36 out of 55) or "important" (14 out of 55). A key

finding unique to this study illustrates how the nature of these close social bonds between students and counselors helps to calm anxieties and resolve the stress that first-generation, low-income Latinas experience within the higher education context. Further, findings show that ISAE counselors help alleviate students' anxieties and stress by acting as advocates for them.

The prominence of this single support—close bonds between ISAE students and ISAE counselors—as a retention tool cuts across all qualitative and quantitative data. In fact, all 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees discussed their personal relationship with their ISAE advisor. Isabel, an ISAE senior, explained that she became involved in ISAE because Michele, an ISAE counselor, "reached out to me." And once an ISAE student Isabel explained that "I just stuck to ISAE because of Michele. I have such a deep love for Michele." All five peer-advisors also discussed the close social bonding and emotional support provided by ISAE counselors. Marlene, a senior peer-advisor, articulated that she finds comfort in "having the sense that the ISAE counselors are here for me."

Qualitative and quantitative data also explained that ISAE students rely on their ISAE counselors to help resolve personal issues and/or problems regarding graduation requirements. In fact, all three ISAE counselors, all 15 junior and senior interviewees, and all five peer-advisors articulated this perspective. Megan, an ISAE junior, illustrated the nature of her close bond with her ISAE counselor and what it provides her. During our interview she said,

> ISAE counselors ask you what's going on. They ask, 'how are you feeling? What can we do to help you?' They help you find tutoring if you have testing anxiety and other resources. They are just that extra person you could go and talk to.

The ISAE counselors each reported that they develop relationships in the manner Megan described. The two most senior ISAE counselors stated that they initiate each meeting with

advisees with the very questions Megan enlisted earlier. Rachel, the most senior ISAE advisor, for instance, explained that her primary goal—graduating her advisees—is established upon the personal bonds she makes with her advisees. Rachel stated that "the initial first question when the student comes in is 'How are you doing? How are things going?' College is a new experience for them so checking in with them . . . . That's the first step and we go forward from there." ISAE counselors, ISAE juniors and seniors, and ISAE peer-advisors described that these personal relationships promote a trusting and reliable bond that keep students retained in ISAE and on-track toward graduation.

Also, all ISAE counselors, seven out of 15 ISAE junior and interviewees, and all five peer-advisors reported that ISAE counselors not only provide constant insight on how to navigate a path to graduation, but they also repair errors in students' academic plans created by ISAE students' departmental academic advisors. All three ISAE counselors reported that they have caught errors in students' academic plans made by departmental advisors. ISAE counselors indicated that, if left undetected, some of these errors would mean that ISAE students would have to make up coursework which, in turn, would post-pone their graduation date.

Amy, an ISAE counselor, recounted an instance wherein she detected and corrected a departmental advisor's error who gave her advisee erroneous information about a required course. Amy further stated that if she had not recognized the error, her advisee "probably wouldn't have graduated on time." All ISAE counselors reported similar instances. All five peer-advisors also talked about the repeated blunders of their respective academic advisors. Marlene, a senior peer-advisor, provided the student view of the instance Amy earlier described. Marlene recalled a meeting with her

advisor in the Sociology department [and] she was telling me, 'Oh, you don't have to take these classes.' When I came here [ISAE], my ISAE counselor was like, 'Oh no, you need these classes.' Then I got it checked again with a different advisor and she was like, 'Oh yeah, you do need these classes to graduate in time.' ISAE gives that extra support that you are okay and just double checks everything. It gives you a peaceful state of mind. But it makes you wonder for the other students who aren't in ISAE.

Nearly half of the junior and senior interviewees (seven out of 15) recounted similar stories. Erin, an ISAE senior, for instance, said that

I never see my academic advisor . . . . I don't feel they're really that dedicated to helping you pick out your classes . . . and helping you graduate on time versus Francis [her ISAE counselor] . . . . Academic advisors are so involved with their work that they're kind of just like, 'Okay, here. Take these classes. Here's your academic plan.' And compared to students not in ISAE, a lot of them had to stay an extra semester because they were just going to their departmental advisor.

These two students, Marlene and Erin, illustrate the difference in not only concern but competence between their ISAE counselors and their departmental advisors. The import of this finding was further strengthened by quantitative data: 43 out of 55 survey respondents (78 percent) either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that "My ISAE counselor corrected errors in my academic plan that were made by my Departmental Academic Advisor."[1]

ISAE Community

The close relationships between ISAE students and their counselors helps establish the ISAE community. A survey of all qualitative and quantitative data shows that the ISAE

---

[1] Ten out of 55 survey respondents (18 percent) indicated a "not applicable" response to this survey question implying that these 10 respondents may have only ever sought guidance from their ISAE counselors. Only seven respondents, less than 15 percent, "disagreed" with this survey prompt.

community ranked as the third most cited ISAE support. Though the ISAE community was not reported as frequently as the top two ISAE supports—ISAE counselors and the 4-year education plan—its presence in the data was still significant.

Overall 96 percent of all data from the 15 one-on-one ISAE junior and senior interviewees, all three ISAE counselor interviews, and the five ISAE peer-advisors reported that the ISAE community boosts retention and graduation. Yet only seven out of 25 (28 percent) of the ISAE exit documents drafted by ISAE graduates specifically identifies the ISAE community as a support that promoted graduation.

Taken together these two percentage rankings mean that only 63 percent of all qualitative data identified the ISAE community as a beneficial support. However, it is important to note that except for one ISAE counselor, every single other interviewee (15 students and two counselors) and all five ISAE peer-advisors (focus group members) reported that the ISAE community specifically promotes retention. In fact, the single outlier, an ISAE counselor, said, "I would like to see more of a community with ISAE. It's a weight that keeps them here. It grounds them." Clearly these remarks champion an ISAE community as a retention tool. This is the very conclusion nearly all other interviewees and focus group members identified regarding the ISAE community. Hence, even the single outlier here perceives of the ISAE community as a retention tool.

While only seven out of 25 of ISAE exit documents promote the ISAE community as a support amplifying retention and graduation, it is important to recognize that nearly all other qualitative data sources point to the ISAE community as a support that boosts retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. Further, 86 percent of the quantitative data showed that ISAE

promotes a sense of community. This loans even more weight to the finding that this specific

support matters for retention and graduation.

ISAE Events and Peer-Advisors

All participants cited the ISAE events and peer-advisors fewer times than all other

supports. Though nearly all ISAE students, counselors, and peer-advisors did mention the ISAE

events and peer-advisors, these participants discussed the ISAE events and peer-advisors far

fewer times than all other ISAE supports. The 48 participants of the qualitative sample discussed

the ISAE events a total of 53 times. The only ISAE support that the qualitative sample (48

participants) mentioned fewer times was the ISAE peer-advisors. The qualitative sample

discussed the peer-advisors as a support 42 times.

The 55 survey respondents (ISAE graduates of the past 5 years) supplied the quantitative

data. These participants indicated that the ISAE events were either "important" or "very

important" 21 times. The quantitative sample only rated the ISAE peer-advisors lower. The 55

survey respondents indicated that the peer-advisors were either "important" or "very important"

only 19 times.

ISAE Events

ISAE juniors and seniors and peer-advisors described the ISAE events as "extra-

curricular activities" ancillary to the academic support that ISAE offers. While not one ISAE

interviewee (i.e., ISAE juniors and seniors, and counselors) or focus group member (i.e., ISAE

peer-advisors) dismissed the ISAE events, those that did mention the events spoke about them

less as a support for retention and graduation and more as a "way to de-stress" and as a "perk."

These perspectives were reiterated by two of the three the ISAE counselors who even brought up the ISAE events. These two counselors only mentioned the ISAE events a total of eight times, and their collective discussion took up fewer than three transcript lines. Francis, a veteran ISAE counselor of nearly 20 years, said that the "cultural ISAE events are a perk, but the academic planning keeps students retained." Also, only nine of the 25 randomly selected ISAE graduate exit documents mentioned the ISAE events as a support promoting retention and graduation. And though 78 percent of quantitative data identified the ISAE events as either "important" or "very important" to their ISAE experience, quantitative data ranked all other ISAE supports—except for peer-advisors—higher.

ISAE Peer-advisors

Only 21 out of the 48 participants within the qualitative sample, and 37 out of 55 participants within the quantitative sample (i.e., survey respondents), discussed the peer-advisors as promoting retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. However, disaggregating the qualitative data shows that 10 out of 15 ISAE juniors and seniors spoke of the peer-advisors as an important support that helped retain them in their first two years of college. These 10 junior and senior interviewees spoke about their peer-advisors in two distinct ways: 1) as providing insight about classes and professors and 2) as a close friend. Ariana, an ISAE senior, for instance, said that her peer-advisor provided her recommendations about which courses and professors to take; and Rene, also an ISAE senior, said of her peer-advisor that "I got really close with mine, and she graduated last year and we still keep in touch." Quantitative data supports the first assertion; 75 percent of quantitative data affirmed that peer-advisors are useful insofar as they "provide insight about professors and enrolling in classes." Less quantitative evidence supports the second

assertion. Only 60 percent of quantitative data identified peer-advisors as providing students support of a personal nature.

All five ISAE peer-advisors largely spoke about their role in the context of developing lasting friendships with their mentees. In the focus-group meeting peer-advisors focused on the social aspect of their role as a peer-advisor. Further, the peer-advisors explained that their own personal relationship with their ISAE peer-advisor during the first two years of college drew them to become peer-advisors. For instance, Cindy, a senior peer-advisor, said that she became a peer-advisor "because I liked my peer-advisor my freshman year." And Nadine, elaborating on the social connectivity she experienced with her own peer-advisor, explained that "when I was a freshman, I didn't have any friends [and] my peer-advisor would be the one to take me out. We became friends."

Hence, the reporting from the ISAE peer-advisors themselves and other data—both qualitative and quantitative—shows that peer-advisors are more important to some ISAE students than others. However, both the majority of the ISAE junior and senior interviewees (10 out of 15) and all five of the peer-advisors discussed the role of peer-advisors as an academic and personal support especially during the first two years of ISAE students' college experience. This gives credence to the beneficial purpose of peer-advisors within the ISAE intervention.

Enhanced Descriptive Findings: How ISAE Supports Retain and Graduate Students

While the previous section focused on identifying the ISAE supports that promote retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas, this section explains how these ISAE supports operate to do so. The ways ISAE counselors promote retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas are as follows: 1) ISAE counselors' personal relationships with students affect and inform the creation and management of 4-year education plans; 2) ISAE counselors advocate for students and bridge

them to campus resources; 3) ISAE counselors—in contrast to departmental academic advisors—intervene when students are at risk and ensure that they are on target to graduation each semester; and 4) ISAE counselors educate students about how to navigate the higher education environment and encourage them to take responsibility for their own academic career. I explicate these processes and illustrate how each operates to promote the retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income ISAE Latinas in the sections that follow.

Finding #1: ISAE Counselors Develop Personal Relationships with Students that Inform Education Planning

ISAE counselors go beyond the traditional role of a departmental academic advisor. All participants in the qualitative sample (ISAE students, peer-advisors, and counselors) reported that ISAE counselors develop a personal relationship with advisees before engineering a path to graduation with the 4-year education plan. Quantitative findings support the importance of ISAE students' relationship with their ISAE counselors; 92 percent of the survey respondents (ISAE graduates) reported that these relationships were either "important" or "very important." Through this relationship, which in fact seven out of 15 ISAE juniors and seniors referred to as either a "friendship" or "family relationship," ISAE counselors develop an understanding of students' family lives, cultural and familial responsibilities, academic limits and sensibilities, and work and financial responsibilities. ISAE counselors then take these factors into consideration when helping students engineer 4-year education plans.

Well over half of survey respondents (ISAE graduates) who answered the open-ended survey question, 30 out of 46, wrote that their personal relationship with their ISAE counselors was key in retention and graduation. Representing the position of many ISAE graduates and all 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees on this point, one survey respondent wrote that "having

my ISAE counselor checking in on me and being able to express my feelings and myself and having her [i.e., her ISAE counselor] validate my feelings was the best." This perspective explains a point that also appeared prominently in data gathered from ISAE juniors and seniors, peer-advisors and counselors: ISAE counselors develop personal and close relationships with their advisees which provide a working ground of trust and friendship.

All 15 junior and senior ISAE interviewees remarked that their meetings with their ISAE counselors are more personal and substantive than those with their departmental academic advisors. All 15 junior and senior ISAE interviewees agreed that their ISAE counselors develop personal relationships with them and schedule more time to meet than do departmental advisors. And, because it is common for ISAE students to be assigned a new departmental academic advisor from semester to semester, this inconsistency delimits personal relationships from forming. Sara, an ISAE senior, discussed this point:

> With my ISAE counselor, she's gotten to know me, not just as a student but as a person, and with my regular departmental advisor, well, I haven't had a consistent advisor. I feel like there's an issue there about opening up so much about myself.

In contrast to the weak if not non-existent relationship ISAE students have with their departmental advisors, ISAE juniors and seniors expressed that they look to their ISAE counselors to help them manage not only academic but personal challenges. For instance, Ella, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, described that as a sophomore she experienced depression as a result of personal issues regarding financial and familial strains "and my ISAE counselors were there to support me and guide me. They were the first people that I was able to count on here at the Mount."

During this time Ella confided in her ISAE counselor about her desire to study abroad, but her family responsibilities and the potential financial strain of studying abroad added to her depression. Ella confided in her ISAE counselor, Francis, because she "knew my whole experience from my freshman year. I've always gone to my ISAE counselors for personal and academic advice, and they have always encouraged me to do greater things for myself." Ella shared that her ISAE counselor helped her look at the "pros and cons" and told her,

> 'You need it for your psychological well-being. You need time away because you have so many rules at home, so you need that. You deserve that.' Francis has really opened my eyes to the woman that I'm becoming, and what I deserve and what I should strive for in my future. Really, she has really impacted my self-care and has really encouraged me to do things for myself and love myself first. She has definitely has been one of the most wonderful people in my whole ISAE experience. If I could say one person or one thing in ISAE was the most important, it would be Francis.

Herein Ella illustrates how ISAE counselors register not only the academic side of what ISAE students must manage but their psychological health as well. Each of the 15 ISAE juniors and seniors and all five peer advisors recounted similar narratives wherein, because their ISAE counselors reached out to them and worked to create and maintain personal relationships they, students, perceived of ISAE counselors as "more than a counselor."

Indeed, June, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, illustrated how her ISAE counselor, Michele, was "more than a counselor." When June studied in New York for a semester, Michele, her ISAE counselor, connected her to MSMU graduates on the east coast and regularly called to check up on her, and on one occasion asked: 'Do you need anything? Do you need some snow boots? I will buy them for you.' Michele's actions, indicative of other ISAE counselors, effect a

counseling method which treats the entire student. June reported that the attention, support, and care makes her "feel like you're worth something." June expressed that ISAE supports, her counselor among them, "are the roots and I'm the tree growing."

ISAE students repeatedly cited such care and attention as the factor which bound them to ISAE and, by extension, MSMU. Isabel, a senior ISAE student, elicited a point indicative of the entire group of ISAE interviewees and peer-advisors regarding her ISAE counselor (who was also Michele) saying, "It was more than a job for her." Isabel went on to say that Michele "would always drop everything for me. She would always tell me, 'Hey, you're my little special kid.' "

Upon these substantive and close personal relationships ISAE counselors help their advisees design and manage their education plans. For instance, each of the 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees, all five peer-advisors, and all three ISAE counselors reported that, unlike departmental academic advisors, ISAE counselors engineer 4-year education plans considering how students' academic histories will affect their future academic plans. From this point ISAE counselors then create tailor-made education plans that accommodate their advisees. For instance, Abbie, an ISAE junior, remarked that as a first-year student she had ambitions of studying abroad. Her ISAE counselor, thinking ahead, "saved a few general ed courses for me to take while abroad [which] was really helpful because if I wouldn't have thought of that beforehand, I definitely would've taken all my general ed courses already."

All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees indicated that ISAE counselors listen to their ambitions and educational goals and consider how their unique personal situations, family obligations, level of college preparedness, cultural backgrounds and emotional temperament will affect their college experience. For instance, ISAE juniors and seniors discussed "personal struggles" such as experiencing parental conflict for switching from a science to social science

major; difficulty communicating with academic departments; and anxiety and depression related to family members' lack of U.S. citizenship. ISAE students, peer-advisors, counselors, and graduates reported that ISAE counselors help students manage personal circumstances that upset students' education and re-engineer 4-year education plans to accommodate these conditions.

ISAE counselors aid students in switching from a science to social science major. Over half, eight out of 15, ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that they began college as science majors. All eight students submitted that their ISAE counselors provided them support when they experienced uncertainty switching from a science major to a social science major. These students expressed worry that they may not be able to graduate within four years for sake that their first year (and sometimes second year) in college was done as a science major.

ISAE senior, Erin, claimed that Hispanic parents want their daughters to choose a major that will allow them to "Get a job that's going to make money, like science to be a doctor." Only Erin and two other interviewees indicated that this was a circumstance that pertained to them; the five others simply reported facing some anxiety when they switched from being science to social science majors.

These eight students felt that they may have inadvertently delayed their graduation date by one (or two) years. And, given that these students were low-income, this could place them and their families under financial duress. As a result, they each expressed some level of stress as a result of switching majors. Yet, they all reported that their ISAE counselors took aggressive and immediate action to manage new 4-year education plans to triage the switch. ISAE counselors' intervention also helped resolve these students' stress. Erin, mentioned above, illustrated the collective feelings of this group of eight students explaining that she felt "hopeless" when she switched her major from biology to criminology.

Erin explained that she felt the two majors were "just two very, very different things [and that] I didn't think I was going to graduate on time. I thought I would've had to stay here for another two years because the subjects were just very different." During this time Erin and her ISAE counselor had discussions that were similar to other juniors and seniors who experienced anxiety and worry after switching from a science to social science major. And, like other interviewees, Erin indicated that her ISAE counselor worked to find a solution.

Erin explained that Francis, her ISAE counselor, "kept me in check with the reality" of the situation. In the midst of considering switching her major, Francis presented her with an education plan required for a biology major and a number of career opportunities connected to a baccalaureate degree in biology. Further, Francis asked her simply, "Is that really what you want to do?" The discussion prompted Erin to realize "I don't want to do that."

Though the situation did cause Erin some anxiety about potentially having to extend her college career by a year or more, or worse, the thought of having to drop-out, she said Francis "sat down with me and she's like, 'No, you can do it. You've got this.' " At this critical time Erin reported that Francis showed her a variety of options and told her,

> 'You can do it. You can stay here even if you're broke. You can get a job. You can do this. I know people. I have Mount Careers on the [phone] line.' Francis was literally scrolling the computer with me to find jobs.

Herein Erin's ISAE counselor, Francis, first talked to her about what she wanted as opposed to fulfilling the directives of her parents regarding a science major. Francis also posed questions to Erin about professional and career options which prompted Erin to resolve down to her own solution. Finally, she immediately reached out to her various contacts on campus to bridge Erin to them. In this way Francis went beyond the role of a traditional academic advisor.

Hence, at recognizing student crisis, and potentially drop-out, ISAE counselors operate immediately to resolve students' anxiety by creating a game plan of options to keep them enrolled. Erin recalled that the advisement and help her ISAE counselor provided her "actually did keep me enrolled." Erin's switch of majors did upset her parents. She explained that Francis, her ISAE counselor, was "one of the only people not angry with me for switching my major."

ISAE counselors advocate for students and help them solve issues with academic departments. Most ISAE junior and senior interviewees, nine out of 15, recalled instances when ISAE counselors spoke on their behalf to any number of college officials to ensure their fair treatment. And Rachel and Francis, the two most senior ISAE counselors, reported that they regularly speak up for and represent their advisees when they face difficulty communicating their needs to professors or getting fair treatment from academic and financial departments on campus. For instance, Alicia, an ISAE junior, enrolled in MSMU with the ambition of majoring in biology and minoring in child development; she is planning a career as a pediatrician.

From the beginning of initiating her coursework Alicia submitted that her departmental academic advisor "wasn't very supportive." In fact, after she missed one class—as a freshwoman—in the sequence for biology majors her departmental academic advisor told her "you're going to fall behind [and] I don't think biology is for you. You should change your major." Further discouraging Alicia, her departmental academic advisor remarked that biology and child development could not be coupled because they "are just two completely opposite things."

After this session Alicia reported feeling "devastated" for fact that, not yet a college student for even one year, her departmental academic advisor suggested that she rethink her college and career options. Resilient though discouraged, Alicia went to her ISAE counselor who

told her, "If you want to do a child development minor with a biology major, we can do it." Alicia explained that her ISAE counselor brought out the college catalogue and re-engineered a 4-year education plan that accommodated her ambition.

Francis, her ISAE counselor, factored in a summer school element to Alicia's 4-year education plan wherein lower division general education courses (such as history and political science) could be taken over a variety of summer school semesters (at the point in question Alicia still had three more years of college, equating to six semesters).

This newly conceptualized academic plan freed up space in all of Alicia's upcoming spring and fall semesters. Francis scheduled for Alicia to take core biology coursework each term plus one child development course each semester for the next six semesters. The six courses in child development fulfill the required course load for a minor in child development. Herein is an example of an ISAE counselor simply listening to the education ambitions of her student and re-engineering (and re-conceptualizing) her course loads to fit her life as opposed to prescribing her to academic schedules that reflect the orthodoxy of an academic department.

ISAE counselors help students manage family stressors and connect students to appropriate campus services to ensure continued enrollment. Exactly 50 percent of survey respondents (ISAE graduates) who answered the open-ended question, 23 out of 46, wrote that ISAE counselors provided them support in managing not only academic but personal issues throughout their undergraduate career. ISAE junior and senior interviewees further elaborated upon this point. Most ISAE junior and senior interviewees, 12 out of 15 discussed being "family oriented" and that "being in college for the first time was really scary." As a "family oriented" group some of these students reported feelings of homesickness and that ISAE counselors provided them a sense of family on campus. Students shared that they confided in their

counselors to help manage the emotional stress of being away from their own family. Nadine, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, expressed the overall sentiment of these students explaining that other ISAE students "become kind of like your sisters" and that ISAE counselors and students "become like another family in college."

This connectivity to an extended college family allowed students to relieve stress and prompted nearly half of all interviewees, seven out of 15, to remark that within the ISAE counselors they "had someone who understood me." Given that all three ISAE counselors were first-generation, low-income Latinas and ISAE and MSMU graduates themselves, the ISAE junior and senior interviewees further expressed that they feel empowered by their ISAE counselors because they are "Women that look like you; they have the same skin color and background as you. You can see yourself through them." All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees expressed similar sentiments. For instance, Rene, an ISAE senior, said that "I feel like I have a place here. I feel welcomed. Everyone here has similar stories to me. We're all first-gen. We're all women."

Further, these students discussed how ISAE counselors promoted their mental and psycho-emotive health and supported them during crises often unique to this particular demographic. Megan, for instance, an ISAE junior, submitted that as a first-year student she and her family faced strain in the face of her brother's immigration case. Megan explained that because her brother was at risk for deportation, this caused her anxiety and stress atypical to college students in general but common to first-generation, low-income Latinas. In distress, Megan turned to her ISAE counselor who "helped me vent and [was someone] I could talk to about my brother's court case." Megan also indicated that her ISAE counselor not only directed

her to other services on campus, but personally ensured that she received the support she needed from other offices.

All three ISAE counselors explained that their first-generation, low-income Latina students often share many of the same characteristics that can potentially cause poor academic performance. These include widely common bouts with homesickness to more acute issues that include familial problems of legal residency status.

ISAE counselors, each in their own way, intimated that these symptoms must be managed early on to reduce the risk of drop-out for this population. ISAE counselor Rachel, for instance, remarked that these areas of Latina student need must be addressed early otherwise the anxiety and stress associated with these factors "will take over everything, including their focus."

Francis, a veteran ISAE of 20 years, recalled instances wherein students experienced distress over immigration issues that involve family members. She regularly sees that students' ability to concentrate on schoolwork is greatly mitigated in these cases. When Francis recognizes that her students are experiencing anxiety and depression as a result of personal issues, she places academic guidance in abeyance and helps students manage their stress and anxiety.

In one recent instance indicative of others, Francis recalled a student experiencing stress because her mother, in the country illegally, stopped going to work for fear of being deported. This in turn placed more financial stress and family responsibility on the student. And because this student was the only one in her household who drove, she also had to take her siblings to and from school and drive her mother to appointments. As a result, this left little time for her to engage school work, let alone make her mandatory meetings with Francis, her ISAE counselor.

Francis recognized that her advisee "had the weight of the world on her shoulders." Indeed, in a particular scheduled meeting Francis and her advisee were to update her advisees'

90

education plan; however, Francis, like her other ISAE colleagues, counsel and "treat" the entire student. All three ISAE counselors reported that when their advisees are suffering from anxiety connected to family safety, this precludes students' ability to perform well academically. All ISAE counselors reported that when they recognize that their advisees are in such distress, helping them manage their psychological well-being takes precedent over education planning. Hence, Francis used the hour appointment to provide the student with a safe space to talk about her family concerns. Most troubling was this student's concern over the fear her mother has of being deported. The student explained to Francis that her mother had

> locked herself in her own apartment, because she's fearful she's going to get picked up, or that while her siblings are at school and she's at school, that her mother will get picked up, that's the mother's fear. We just talked about that the whole hour, and I listened. Just being there to listen to her, as she cried. Often, students come into my office so they can cry. I had a student come and cry in my office while I worked, and they just cry because they don't have time to cry, or they don't have an opportunity to cry.

Such support, simply listening to students articulate family stressors of this nature and providing them a safe and comfortable space, is an unorthodox however quite necessary support system that ISAE counselors provide for their ISAE students. The expressing of these concerns and expelling of the stress and anxiety that is connected to them in the private office of an ISAE counselor whom advisees trust provides them a means to re-establish a healthy emotional state.

As the meeting continued this student discussed her inability to meet financial obligations on numerous fronts because her mother stopped working. As a result the student had to take on much more financial responsibility in the home to the point that "she made up the difference with

the mortgage [and] there was no money for food anymore. She was giving her money and food to her younger siblings so often that she didn't have food herself."

In reaction to the situation Francis reported that "right away, I gave her my ATM card . . . so she could eat something while she was here." Aware that this plan of action could only provide a temporary solution to a potentially long-term problem, Francis then connected the student to an on-campus program that provides students with "meal vouchers" that are only supposed to be granted to students once a semester.

This student indicated to Francis that in fact she had used this service once already in the current semester. However, advocating for her student, Francis personally contacted the office that grants these vouchers and managed to help her student receive this voucher once again. In this instance, an ISAE counselor not only acted as a bridge to services for her student, she advocated for her and used her professional contacts and influence to provide her student with a resource that, technically, she ought not to have been able to access.

Each ISAE counselor indicated that helping students manage external stressors in order that they may achieve academically is imperative for retention and graduation of ISAE Latinas. Nearly 60 percent of ISAE students and graduates corroborate this purpose. ISAE counselors recognized that the personal element of their position wherein they help students manage external personal factors exceeds their job description. However, ISAE counselors also claimed that they must consider these external factors when creating and managing their advisees' education plans in order to ensure graduation.

In helping to maintain the psychological health of their advisees and "bridging" them to other campus services, ISAE counselors provide students with a unique support system and service. ISAE counselors, critically attuned to the needs and competencies of their students,

recognize that they need a support system that will not only direct them to other services on campus but that will manufacture a clear path to that next support. ISAE counselors provide that support. In fact, veteran ISAE counselor Rachel indicated that "our service is different than other offices and departments" which only help students insofar as they are obligated.

The difference with ISAE is that counselors engineer a pathway for students so that the next office and support system is prepared and expecting the student. Rachel commented that she regularly meets with ISAE students who are entirely unaware of how to engage services on campus. Instead of simply sending students to other departments and offices, she meets her student and places a conference call to the office, department, or person with whom her student needs to meet and "we will talk to whoever it is together." The students' needs are then discussed by two offices and the student herself and, Rachel continued,

> That way we're both hearing the information . . . . Other offices and departments will often be like, 'Oh, you need to go to so and so.' And then it's kind of like, 'Okay, good luck.' But we start at point 'A' and take you to point 'B' together; we go there together.

Within such a design and process ISAE counselors provide students a unique service which has the effect of developing a trusting and, according to most ISAE students and graduates, "family like" union. Further, nearly 100 percent of data from ISAE counselors, students, peer-advisors and graduates attest that the interest and attention ISAE counselors take in developing personal relationships that exceed an academic nature promotes both retention and graduation of ISAE first-generation, low-income Latinas.

Finding #2: ISAE Counselors Advocate for Students and "Bridge" Them to Campus Resources

Data revealed that when ISAE counselors discover that an ISAE student is in need of services that extend beyond their expertise or jurisdiction, they do more than simply refer the student to another campus service. ISAE counselors use their influence and contacts on campus to personally connect the student to the proper campus resource.

For instance, Rachel, the most senior ISAE counselor, indicated that she seeks to understand how, specifically, she can help her advisees, even if the assistance falls outside her office and realm. Rachel remarked that in the cases wherein she cannot directly help the student "it's my job to make sure I am connecting them and *bridging* the next service." In other words, ISAE counselors do not simply refer students to other campus resources. They keep hold of the student until the proper conversations and connections have been made with other college employees and offices. Only then do ISAE counselors send students to the next service. This service creates a pathway for the student to follow and helps to ensure that the students' needs will indeed be met. Rachel, an ISAE counselor of 20 years, has developed and nurtured many professional relationships on campus such that, she said,

> I have a financial aid contact. I have a learning center contact. I work with the dean's office . . . . I'm making sure that in all the departments and offices I have someone to refer students to. And when I have a student in need I can call my contacts and say 'I'm sending you my ISAE student. This is what they need.' I work closely with CPS [Counseling and Psychological Services], and if the counseling that the student needs goes above and beyond what we're providing, I make sure she gets CPS support. So it's helping students get to that next place instead of kind of sending them on their own.

All three ISAE counselors reported this same type of invasive counseling wherein students are not simply "handed of" or referred to other offices. This method of counseling, in fact, was corroborated by nine out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees. (Interestingly, three of the five ISAE peer-advisors, perhaps influenced by their own ISAE counselors' method of counseling, reported "bridging" their mentees to campus services and making sure that they received the support they needed). The nine participants above indicated that during emotionally stressful times their ISAE counselors "bridged" them to the proper campus resources. Ella, an ISAE senior, is representative of this group.

During her sophomore year Ella reported that family concerns regarding legal residency and financial issues caused her depression to the point that she had to withdraw from a course. In turn, this meant that going into her next semester she was "behind on credits." Ella reported that at this time "my only support system was ISAE."

Ella received no emotional support at home and turned to her ISAE counselor, Francis, who contacted the university's office of Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) on Ella's behalf. In other words, Francis developed or "bridged" a pathway to CPS for Ella. Hence, Ella not only had the emotional support of her ISAE counselor, but the added support of CPS which specializes in helping students cope with depression.

During this time Ella met with her primary ISAE counselor, Francis, three times in less than a month period. In these sessions Francis helped her recuperate emotionally by simply providing her a safe space (Francis' office) where she could talk about her anxiety and stress. Once this service and support was provided the two of them re-imagined her semester in order to salvage it as best possible.

Clearly her mathematics course was in an unsupportable position. Her ISAE counselor suggested she withdraw from the course and receive a recorded grade of "unsatisfactory," a "U." In fact, this suggestion surprised and brightened Ella who thought she was resigned to receive an "F." Next, Francis told Ella that she must reach out to three of her other professors and request that they assign her interim grades of "incomplete." Ella, at this time a sophomore, was unaware of these options.

Francis offered to go with Ella (i.e., "bridge") to make these requests to the three professors in question. However, by this time, after three meetings with her ISAE counselor and numerous appointments with CPS, Ella felt comfortable managing this task on her own. As Ella recounted the incident she recalled that in fact Rachel, another ISAE counselor, came aboard to help Ella manage her depression. Hence, she had the assistance of two ISAE counselors working to help her manage both emotionally and educationally. Ella recalled that

They [her ISAE counselors] spoke to the dean, to the registrar's office and to CPS to figure out what I could do. They helped me stay on track and I took my classes in order to recuperate those classes I lost. That was a big part of keeping me enrolled because they did their best, and I saw that, and I was like, 'I'm going to do whatever it takes,' because they were helping me. They really encouraged me to not give up and to continue trying and keep going forward.

Ella articulates ISAE counselors' method of, as ISAE counselor Rachel placed it, "first checking in with students. That's the first step, 'How are you doing?' and we kind of go from there. The second part is the academic piece." ISAE counselors place the psycho-emotive health of the student as priority and operate outwards from that point to help them academically. Hence, ISAE counselors provide "wrap around services" to ISAE Latinas and recognize that they must

manage emotional stressors and life circumstances which challenge academic priorities. Further, the three ISAE counselors—all of whom are prior ISAE students and MSMU graduates—have an extensive collective history helping first-generation, low-income Latinas manage a path toward a baccalaureate degree whilst keeping focus on the mental health of their advisees. Indeed, each ISAE counselor indicated that their advisees' ability to achieve academically is predicated upon their mental health.

Finding #3: ISAE Counselors Engage Students at a Deeper and More Substantive Level than Departmental Academic Advisors

ISAE counselors' method of scheduling for graduation four years out distinguishes them from departmental academic advisors. All three ISAE counselors reported that departmental academic advisors only regard the current academic dossier of their students without regard for their academic history and how it might affect students' current or upcoming terms. Francis, a veteran ISAE counselor of 20 years, submitted that "academic advisors are in the present." This is in great contrast to ISAE counselors who, Francis continued, track the academic histories of students and analyze how these histories "play into the bigger picture and if their requirements fall into place." This is a critical detail that departmental academic advisors regularly miss.

Francis reported that if a student fails a course that is connected to a series of courses that must be taken in seriatim "it doesn't matter to their advisors." Francis explained that in instances such as these academic advisors, who are not as familiar with graduation requirements as ISAE counselors, tell students that they will be able to take the course "before they graduate." The great contrast on this point between ISAE counselors and academic departmental advisors is that "we [ISAE advisors] take the time to plan out students' education plan and make sure that they'll

get their requirements to graduate . . . . We start doing academic planning four years out, when they first come in."

ISAE counselors and all 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees discussed that this model is effected when ISAE counselors, upon their first or second meeting with advisees, ask their students the college major they are interested in. ISAE counselors and students engage this "mapping" with the 4-year education plan, a single sheet of paper positioned horizontally that has five columns; each column represents an entire year's worth of college semesters (i.e., a fall term, spring term, and summer term). The 4-year education plan has a fifth column to allow for one extra year in case students, as they matriculate through to their baccalaureate, need to take on an extra term or year in order to graduate.

Once students intimate to ISAE counselors their educational interests and/or intended major, ISAE counselors use the college catalogue to inform students of those courses that they must take which are associated with their chosen major or educational interest. ISAE counselors, for instance, list each general education and core upper and lower division course students will be required to take. Then ISAE counselors and students begin to "fill in" the empty columns of the 4-year education plan with these courses.

ISAE counselors, students, peer advisors, and graduates alike reported that ISAE counselors take care to "spread out" upper division course work over ISAE students' junior and senior years. Further, ISAE junior and senior interviewees remarked that in developing 4-year education plans ISAE counselors "try to fit in the majority of your general education classes in your first two years, and then whatever is left [i.e., upper and lower division core courses] ISAE counselors add those classes in your junior and senior semesters, but they make sure that you

don't have any heavy loads." However, ISAE counselors also are keen to, in some cases, "save" some general education courses in the cases wherein students plan to study abroad.

Amy, the most junior ISAE counselor, indicated that she asks students, early on, if they plan, even tentatively, to study abroad. If this is a potentiality, she reserves a space in the junior or senior column of the 4-year-education plan for students to take a term of only general education courses abroad.

The reasoning here is that general education courses are more easily articulated between MSMU and universities in other countries than are upper division courses. Abbie, an ISAE senior, indicated that her ISAE counselor, in fact, had this foresight which made her study abroad experience "easier to manage."

Over half of ISAE junior and senior interviewees, eight out of 15, reported that ISAE counselors' process of presenting students with a four year (or sometimes five year) "road map" to their baccalaureate in their first semester as college students gave them relief and confidence that they would be able to accomplish their baccalaureate degree. Erin, an ISAE senior, articulated the sentiment of this group of students. As a freshwoman and only a student for "probably two or three days," her ISAE counselor

> put 136 credits on that paper [i.e., the 4-year education plan] in the span of four years, including upper division and general education classes and the classes you need for your major to graduate. Literally from your first semester to your last semester as a senior, everything's planned out right there. It provided a sense of, like, the biggest relief.

Some ISAE junior and senior interviewees, and nearly half of ISAE graduates (18 out of 47) said that this "map" provided them a "vision" and a tangible document that demystified the pathway to their baccalaureate degree.

Each term ISAE students meet with their ISAE counselors and literally cross off the courses students have taken. This further de-escalates the abstractedness of achieving a baccalaureate degree. In fact, this process prompted June, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, to comment that, "It made four years seem so short. It made it feel like it was tomorrow that I was going to accomplish all this."

In creating 4-year education plans with students, ISAE counselors also consider the internships that ISAE students are obligated to take as a function of majors such as social work, education, psychology, and business. And, early on in their first meetings with students, ISAE counselors, in engineering education plans, "leave space in the junior or senior semesters of 4-year education plans" to accommodate any necessary internships.

Once ISAE students arrive at their junior and senior years and must consider their internships, ISAE counselors engage discussions to promote that their students consider how they are to factor this component into their education plan. For instance, ISAE counselor Francis discussed an instance when a senior ISAE Latina majoring in child development needed to factor in time to schedule her internship but did not fully think out a sound plan.

This ISAE student, not realizing that internships in child development necessarily must occur before 10 AM, "scheduled to take classes the whole week and she would only be free after 1PM." Francis remarked that this student's "planning" was indicative of other students who "are not thinking of the future." In these cases Francis indicated that she poses questions to her advisees to bring them to the realization that they have not considered a viable schedule.

Further complicating this particular student's schedule was that she did not drive and would have to take buses to her internship. Finally, through discussion and Francis' posing of

questions she and her student "flipped some of her classes to the afternoon, so she'd have her mornings free in order to reserve the morning hours for her internship."

This method is in contrast to departmental academic advisors who—according to ISAE counselors, students, and graduates—do not award the time and attention necessary to ensure that students are creating sound academic plans each term. Also, departmental academic advisors can and do change from semester to semester. This inconsistency upsets departmental academic advisors ability to establish intention and purpose regarding their advisees' academic planning.

All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that their ISAE counselors give them much more attention and time in regards to creating an education plan than their departmental advisors. Every one of these students reported that they prefer and "trust" their ISAE counselor with their academic plans more than their departmental academic advisors. This very point was echoed by all five ISAE peer-advisors. Encapsulating ISAE students' collective consensus on this point Sara, an ISAE senior, said

> The departmental advisors' time is always limited. Usually when I meet them, the longest has been 30 minutes. Usually it's shorter. And it's usually just to talk about, 'Oh, what classes are you taking this semester? What are you missing? What do you need?' That stuff. And after that it's just like, 'Goodbye.'

In contrast two of the three ISAE counselors first register their students' emotional health; Amy, the most junior ISAE counselor, reported that she leads meetings with an academic thrust, but always asks students to update her on their emotional health. ISAE counselors each reported that they pull the entire dossier of all ISAE students whom they counsel and seek information about how they are currently performing academically and how they performed in previous terms. If ISAE counselors identify any emotional or academic issues, they, once again, provide as much

support as they can and "bridge" students to support services outside the realm of their office such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) or academic tutoring.

All 15 ISAE interviewees and the five peer-advisors discussed at length the lack of substantial time and depth their departmental academic advisors spend with them in developing an education plan. Each of these 20 participants were fully vested in relying on their ISAE counselor as their "go to person" for understanding their graduation requirements and ensuring that their academic schedules were sound each semester. Quantitative data further substantiated this point. All 55 survey respondents (ISAE graduates of the previous five years) indicated that they preferred help and guidance from their ISAE counselor as compared to their departmental academic advisor when it came to 1) understanding graduation requirements and 2) creating an education plan to graduate in four years.

While all students eventually must report to their departmental academic advisor to register for classes, 100 percent of ISAE junior and senior interviewees, peer-advisors, and graduates (survey respondents) reported a preference for working with their ISAE counselor over their departmental academic advisor. Erin, an ISAE senior, said that aside from actually registering for classes, "I only see my departmental advisor to take a hold off of my account."

All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported favoring their ISAE counselor to their departmental academic advisor. Further, four out of 15 interviewees said that their departmental academic advisors expected them to have a completed academic schedule prior to meeting them. This academic schedule, in fact, is the very purpose for students meeting with their departmental academic advisor in the first place. One interviewee, Nadine, a senior and peer-advisor, went so far as to say that

I always go to my ISAE counselor first [i.e., before her departmental academic advisor]

because my regular advisors didn't help me at all with classes. They just expected me to

take my classes already scheduled in to them and then they would just put it in their

systems. The ISAE counselor does more than the advisor because they actually go

through the catalogue and see what classes you need, and if you have finished your

general eds. They also look at what classes can be offered next semester so maybe you

can schedule electives. And with my departmental academic advisor, I would just go in

and they would want just a little recap of how I'm doing.

All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees and all five peer-advisors reported that their

departmental academic advisor spends less time helping them create, track, and understand their

four year path to graduation than ISAE counselors. Also, ISAE graduates (survey respondents)

clearly showed that they relied on guidance from their ISAE counselor more than their

departmental advisor. An analysis of those questions that pit ISAE counselors' expertise against

that of departmental academic advisors shows that ISAE graduates always preferred ISAE

counselors over departmental academic advisors.

The ISAE junior and senior interviewees and peer-advisors repeatedly discussed the

attention their ISAE counselors give their academic plans and that ISAE counselors teach them,

little by little, to take up the responsibility of creating their own education plans. All three ISAE

counselors also reported a constant attention to detail regarding their advisees' academic

schedules and their passage to their bachelor's degree. This constant vetting of students'

academic plans practically guarantees that they graduate in a four to five year period. Once

again, Rachel, the most senior ISAE counselor, explained the process and purpose of ISAE

counselors' consistent vetting of students' academic plans. She reported that every time she meets with students

> We update the input, which is usually every semester. I'm doing a grad check every semester. Instead of waiting every year or second year [ISAE counselors] do a grad check every semester. Every semester we look at the classes the student registered in [to see] if something was changed . . . . We make sure every time; 'Okay, are we still on track? Was there anything left out?' We'll go to the catalogue. I call [this] a grad check, because that's what it is, just to make sure the 4-year education plan still reflects everything that we still need to get done to graduate.

Herein Rachel illustrates the vetting process ISAE counselors engage "every semester" that leaves little room for error. In fact, this attention to detail is what ISAE junior and senior interviewees, peer-advisors, and graduates pointed to as the single ISAE support that has promoted their retention and, for current students, imminent graduation. One survey respondent speaks for this entire group: "Having my 4-year education plan since freshman year really took the stress off college because my road map was planned out. I just had to focus on getting good grades to move on to the next class."

Finally, four out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees emphasized that, in fact, their departmental academic advisors appreciate the work ISAE counselors do preparing students' academic plans. These four interviewees shared that their ISAE counselors' attention to detail in helping them create an academic plan lightens departmental academic advisors' workload.

Ariana, for instance, an ISAE senior, reported that each semester after she creates her academic plan she brings "it to Francis [her ISAE counselor] to make sure I'm on track." Ariana explained that once her ISAE counselor reviews and verifies her education plan she meets her

departmental advisor to officially register. Because of the preparation Ariana does on her own

and with her ISAE counselor, she meets her departmental advisor for not "more than five

minutes." This saves her departmental advisor work and time which has prompted her

department advisor to say: "Good for ISAE. They know what they're doing." Another student,

June, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, said that when she meets with her departmental academic

advisor after meeting with her ISAE advisor, her departmental academic advisor has said:

"Perfect. My life is so easy with you."

Hence, the utility of ISAE counselors' expertise and transference of knowledge to their

advisees matriculates through to departmental advisors. This is critical for ISAE students given

that departmental advisors—according to ISAE students, counselors and graduates—often have

neither the time to meet students for more than 30 minutes nor the acumen to create sound

education plans.

ISAE junior and senior advisees, peer-advisors and graduates raised the issue that without

the guidance and transference of knowledge from their ISAE counselors they would be at the

mercy of their departmental academic advisors who, they reported, often bungle academic

schedules. Marlene, a senior and ISAE peer-advisor, accordingly raised the issue that "it makes

you wonder about other students not enrolled in ISAE."

ISAE counselors intervene when students are at-risk. ISAE counselors reported that

they take action when students are at risk for dropping out. Rachel, a senior ISAE counselor,

indicated that when she recognizes that an ISAE student is at-risk she calls the student into her

office and devises a plan of action. For instance, Rachel intimated that a major issue for her

advisees is the aspect of time management and taking advantage of meeting professors during

office hours. She especially focused on the latter explaining that visiting professors during office

hours is a new phenomenon for first-generation, low-income Latinas. Regularly Rachel finds that without her prompting and bridging that action, ISAE students are resistant to visiting their professors. But she explains to them that visiting professors to discuss academic difficulty is a "critical piece to helping students get some individualized attention."

Francis, another senior ISAE counselor, also reported that her advisees are often "intimidated" by the prospect of visiting their professors during office hours to discuss and triage academic difficulty. Manifesting the earlier finding of "bridging" services, Francis discussed a recent case wherein her student, in danger of failing a course, was resistant to visiting her professor. Francis' ISAE advisee explained her concerns, and Francis offered to go with her student to visit the professor to discuss potential solutions.

Bridging a path to the professor, the ISAE student and Francis then visited the professor and Francis explained that "I was just there to be support for her to share her story with the professor." [5] As Francis sat with her student who explained her situation the professor "didn't want to hear it . . . and then she [the student] just shut down" and was ready to leave. It was only at this point that Francis stepped in and actually explained to the professor the personal circumstances of the student who was having family issues but who was also a "bright intelligent student with a 3.8 GPA."

Francis explained that from a counseling perspective her ISAE student simply was not used to a context wherein she, a student, was obligated to explain extenuating circumstances to an authority figure such as a professor. The context, Francis explained, was one reason why the student was "shut down" so quickly and wanted to leave. However, acting as an advocate, Francis fully explained her advisee's situation and "when he [the professor] heard it from me it was different." It was only after Francis, an authority and professional figure as well, explained

106

the situation that the professor was more receptive to helping the student. Francis, hence, explained not only the "bridging" support that they offer students, but also an advocacy role that ISAE counselors take on.

Just over one-third of ISAE junior and senior interviewees, six out of 15, and 30 percent of ISAE graduates, indicated that ISAE counselors intervene when students are at-risk. These students reported that ISAE counselors will go so far as to "track them down" and nearly enforce that students arrange appointments with ISAE counselors to discuss and address root causes.

These students appreciated the stern matter-of-fact approach their ISAE counselors take with them when academic difficulty arises. In fact, Megan, an ISAE senior, recalled that such intentional and invasive counseling was one reason why she enrolled in MSMU instead of a community college. She explained that ISAE counselors "want to see me succeed academically and call me into their office if I have academic difficulty to help me make a plan."

Such a plan of action was recalled by two ISAE junior and senior interviewees. These students both mentioned the prospect of dropping out to their ISAE counselors, but their ISAE counselors refused to consider this as an option. Alicia, for instance, an ISAE junior, recounted that in her sophomore year she failed a course offered only in sequence; she thought she would have to wait an entire year to retake the course. And, as a result, she expressed to her ISAE counselor that "I can't continue now; I'm going to have to drop-out." Francis, Alicia's ISAE counselor, re-engineered her academic plan to include summer coursework at a community college. Francis helped Alicia identify and fill out the proper inter-collegiate forms and ensured that the course would transfer seamlessly to MSMU. Francis' action restored Alicia's 4-year path to her bachelor's degree. Alicia also indicated that her ISAE counselor told her

'There's no more messing around,' and that I 'need to focus.' Then I remember,

afterwards my ISAE counselor said, 'I didn't mean to scold you.' But I told her, 'No. I'm

glad. You were being real with me; that's what I needed.'

Alicia conceded her poor academic performance. She explained that her close relationship with

her ISAE counselor is what allowed her to discuss the issues with her. Finally, Alicia said that

she appreciated her ISAE counselor's frankness explaining, "If you mess up you don't want

somebody that's going to say, 'Oh, that's okay. You can mess up again.' When you really can't."

Isabel, an ISAE senior, shared a similar story. When she faced academic difficulty she

reported that "I wanted to quit." In response Michele, her ISAE counselor, encouraged Isabel to

"choose another major" telling her "no you can't drop-out." Further, Michele prompted Isabel to

think about life consequences should she drop-out. Michele discussed with Isabel the aspect of

narrowed career options that she would face without a college degree. In effect, Isabel was

retained and changed majors. Isabel appreciated the attention she received from Michele and

claimed that "now I love school. ISAE, to me, is Michele. That empowering person." Finally,

Isabel, like Ariana before, said that Michele, her ISAE counselor, was frank and "stern with me.

She kept it real."

In these cases ISAE students articulated that they were retained not only because their

ISAE counselors took an interest reversing their academic difficulty, but also because this

interest was predicated on a personal relationship and close bond. Again, data bear out the

finding that from personal connectivity to their students, ISAE counselors help to retain their

students and ensure their graduation.

ISAE counselors correct errors in student academic plans made by departmental

academic advisors. A minority of ISAE junior and senior interviewees, four out of 15, said they

have faced situations wherein departmental academic advisors made errors on their education plans that had to be corrected by ISAE counselors. Further, they pointed to the expertise of their ISAE advisors as the critical factor which saved them from having to take extra coursework and time to achieve their undergraduate degree.

The five ISAE peer-advisors participated in a discussion on this point as well. June, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, reported that due to her departmental academic advisor's incompetence and the fact that he forgot to "double count" certain courses for two specific majors (June was a double major), she faced the prospect of an extra semester of college. With this information June met with her ISAE counselor, Amy, who reviewed her entire academic plan (at this point a document with a four year history). Amy registered that the departmental academic advisor failed to "double count" approximately three courses. Once this error was identified and repaired by June's ISAE counselor, her four year graduation plan was restored. However, the incident caused June a week of emotional trauma.

Though the lack of expertise of departmental academic advisors to manage academic plans was not a robust finding from ISAE juniors and seniors and peer-advisors; 78 percent of quantitative data (ISAE graduates) reported that "My ISAE counselor corrected errors in my academic plan that were made by my Departmental Academic Advisor." One survey respondent in fact wrote in the open-ended response that

> My regular academic advisor wasn't well informed and did not want to plan ahead for fear of messing up my education plans. I often had to take my schedule to my ISAE advisor after seeing my academic advisor so that she could fix my schedule and make sure I graduated on time.

Though only few current ISAE students raised the issue of departmental academic advisors' lack of ability in developing and properly managing education plans (a vital part of their assigned professional role), ISAE graduates give a fuller context to this problem. Also shedding light on this issue were ISAE counselors.

All three ISAE counselors reported they have caught errors in students' academic plans made by departmental academic advisors. Francis, an ISAE counselor of nearly 20 years, explained that ISAE students' departmental academic advisors "always" give ISAE students erroneous information regarding general education requirements. Then, when these very students bring their tentative and faulty semester course programs to Francis, she takes these times as opportunities to teach her ISAE students that 1) they must be responsible for understanding their academic schedules and 2) that they must question the purpose, intent, and competence of their departmental academic advisors. She poses questions to her ISAE students that challenge them to explain why they selected particular courses.

Francis explained that after meeting with their academic advisors, her ISAE students might come to her, for instance, having selected art courses that academic advisors erroneously believe count for general education credit. Academic advisors, Francis continued, allow ISAE students to choose "photography or painting or ceramics" as a general education course. However, Francis continued, in order for an art class to count as general education credit it must be an "art history, an art technical course or art appreciation course." Instead of simply changing the error on the tentative academic plan, Francis challenges her ISAE students by asking them, " 'Why are you taking this course [i.e., photography, painting, or ceramics]?' And then my student tells me, 'For art.' I'm like, 'Great, but why are you taking this course specifically when you need to take an art course for a GE?' "

Herein Francis uses questions to instigate that her students take responsibility for the erroneous information provided to them by their departmental advisors. Francis explained that when ISAE students are made aware of departmental academic advisors' tendency to provide students fatuous information regarding which courses count toward a bachelor's degree, this further prompts them to take responsibility for their academic planning and college careers.

Finding #4: ISAE Counselors Create a Culture of Accountability and Educate Advisees

Qualitative and quantitative data show that ISAE counselors working in conjunction with the 4-year education plan help educate ISAE students about the university infrastructure. Interview data from ISAE students, peer-advisors, and counselors explain how ISAE counselors' guidance informs students on how to navigate college systems on their own. Finally, qualitative data show that ISAE counselors make it incumbent upon their advisees to take responsibility for their college careers. ISAE counselors, in fact, discussed their collective purpose promoting this initiative.

Nearly all the ISAE student interviewees, 13 out of 15, expressed that their ISAE counselors continually educate them so they may understand their graduation requirements and learn to navigate the higher education system. All three ISAE counselors corroborated this perspective. ISAE counselors reported that they educate students about how to navigate the university system and hold them responsible for their academic careers.

Quantitative data supported these findings. Nearly 100 percent of survey respondents, 53 out of 55, reported that the help they received from their ISAE counselor about understanding graduation requirements was either "very important" or "important." And 48 of the 55 survey respondents claimed that the 4-year education plan was "very important;" six indicated it was "important." The majority of survey respondents, 47 out of 55, drafted responses to an open-

ended question on the survey and expressed that the guidance they received from their ISAE counselor was largely if not entirely responsible for their retention and graduation. One respondent wrote that her ISAE counselor "helped me navigate the university system and helped make it manageable by breaking it down in a 4-year plan."

ISAE counselors promote student accountability and understanding of the higher education system. All three ISAE counselors commented that they ensure that advisees hold themselves accountable for their college careers. ISAE counselors also indicated that they encourage their advisees to understand their academic plans and create a viable path toward graduation. Francis, an ISAE counselor, commented that her advisees are accustomed to having relationships with their high school counselors that were "very one-directional." In other words, ISAE students are used to a counseling dynamic wherein counselors direct students to enroll in courses without engaging them in dialogue about their academic plans. ISAE counselors make intentional efforts to change that paradigm. ISAE counselors engage students in discussions about upper-division and lower-division coursework and the array of classes that need to be taken to fulfill a variety of baccalaureate degree requirements. ISAE counselors begin educating their advisees about the nature of academic plans and how to engineer a four year path to a degree when they are first-year students.

Amy, the most junior ISAE counselor, articulated that she not only shows ISAE students what courses to take, but teaches them why they must take them. The purpose behind this goal, she continued, is to ensure that,

> in the end students are responsible for everything they have to do here. If they forget to
> take a class, they could blame their academic advisor or whomever. But by them

understanding what they need to do, they're held responsible for their own academic

success.

Amy develops a culture of academic accountability within her advisees. She teaches them that they are ultimately responsible for understanding how their academic plan operates. Survey responses of ISAE graduates resonate with Amy's purpose; 81 percent of ISAE graduates reported that the help they received from their ISAE counselor in understanding their graduation requirements was "very important;" and 15 percent of respondents claimed that this help was "important."

All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees echoed this perspective. Each ISAE junior and senior interviewee, in one way or another, remarked that her ISAE counselor took the time to "help you plan out your classes throughout the four years" and "present a clear plan of what I need to graduate."

Upperclasswomen ISAE students manage their academic schedules. All 15 junior and senior interviewees reported that their ISAE counselor used the 4-year education plan to teach them how to create their own academic schedules. Further, they all reported that their ISAE counselors taught them how to answer their own questions about navigating college and utilizing campus resources. As a result these ISAE students have become more independent by their junior and senior years and rely less and less on ISAE supports as upperclasswomen.

Julie, an ISAE senior, is representative of the entire group of ISAE juniors and seniors on this point. As a sophomore Julie ISAE counselor asked her to attempt creating her own academic schedule using the college catalogue and the 4-year education plan. Julie then successfully created an academic plan that her ISAE counselor later vetted and approved. After this experience, Julie reported, "I've learned how to make my own academic schedules." She went as

far as to say that without the knowledge her ISAE counselor transmitted to her, "I don't think I'd be enrolled. I wouldn't know what I'm doing wrong."

This process begins to illustrate ISAE counselors' heuristic method. Julie's ISAE counselor, after providing her one year of counseling services, prompted her to create her own schedule. Julie further indicated that that the knowledge she obtained from her ISAE counselor finds outlet when other younger students ask her for help. As a senior Julie feels that her ISAE counselor "provided me with so much knowledge of this school" that she now helps underclasswomen who are struggling to understand the college infrastructure and availability of campus resources. That Julie extends her knowledge to help upperclasswomen aligns with a principle that Rachel, an ISAE counselor, raised. She expressed that "the beauty of ISAE is . . . . passing on the experience and having others benefit from it." [12]

Hence, the instruction ISAE counselors invest in their ISAE students has opportunity to be passed on to new generations of students. As evidence of her ever increasing understanding of the college infrastructure, Julie explained that she is less and less reliant on ISAE services. She explained the concept through metaphor:

> ISAE gives you the steps so that way you don't have to rely on them. They slowly start teaching you . . . . There's that expression where you teach someone how to fish. It's kind of like that. Like they kind of give you the fish, but slowly they say 'Here's the rod. How about you try fishing?' They continue that until finally you can manage and fish your own waters and achieve catching your own fish.

Herein Julie explains ISAE counselors' clearly heuristic method. ISAE counselors operate to ensure their advisees' retention and graduation, but they also encourage their advisees to venture into the college environment and advocate for themselves. Julie explains that this counseling

method promotes not only competence in navigating the university infrastructure, but also the initiative to do so.

Camille, another ISAE senior, agrees with Julie. Camille also claimed that as a first and second-year student her ISAE counselor educated her as to how the university infrastructure worked. For instance, having taken AP courses in high school which carry college credit, Camille's ISAE counselor directed her to the registrar and told her to ask the registrar "if certain AP classes will transfer." Camille also reported that she relies on ISAE support and guidance less and less now that she is an upperclasswoman. Camille explained that this is built into ISAE so that students can "see [their] growth." Contextualizing the perspective of all 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees, Camille commented that "as a freshman you don't know anything . . . . and as a junior or senior you know what's going on."

In fact, 14 out of 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that they applied to ISAE because wanted professional help understanding and navigating the university infrastructure. These 14 student interviewees indicated that they joined ISAE because they each had little to no knowledge of the higher education system and saw ISAE as a means to fill that vacuum. These students joined ISAE because "I was a nervous freshman" and "my parents didn't go to college, and I was really lost my first semester." However, as ISAE upperclasswomen, nine out of 15 interviewees reported that they have learned from ISAE counselors not only how to engineer sound decision making strategies on their own, but also how to navigate the university infrastructure. Quantitative data align with these concerns; 89 percent of survey respondents reported that the help they received from ISAE counselors in "navigating college" was either "very important" (67 percent) or "important" (22 percent).

ISAE counselors promote ISAE students' independence. ISAE counselors front load the first two years' worth of meetings with their advisees with lessons that focus on establishing an independent and assertive mindset and developing an understanding of the college system and how to navigate it. In fact, all 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees reported that these lessons about how to create education plans; confront academic departments to resolve conflict; articulate academic concerns to professors; and advocate for themselves, helped them achieve greater independence as college students. For instance, Ella, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, explained that ISAE

> . . . has definitely encouraged me to take the initiation to figure out things for myself. Another part that helped me take on that initiation—to figure out classes and everything—is because I'm also a student ambassador. Those roles have been built inside me to take that initiation to figure out everything, and ISAE definitely gave me that confidence and that build-up.

The self-sufficiency and eagerness "to take the initiation" that Ella reports here, as a senior, contrasts with the uncertainty and lack of understanding of college systems she felt as a first-year student. This lack of understanding is the very impetus which impelled nearly all ISAE junior and senior interviewees to enroll in ISAE.

Nadine, an ISAE senior and peer-advisor, reported that her ISAE counselors have always told her that she has to make her "own decisions" and that she must "learn how to be more assertive." From these lessons Nadine claims that she is now "stronger in terms of decision making." And Erin, an ISAE senior, illustrating the growth in knowledge and assertiveness she has ascertained from her ISAE counselor, explained that through her sophomore year she was very reliant on her ISAE counselor to provide her answers about which courses carry credit

toward a bachelor's degree. She needed this direction because, she explained, "I didn't know how to do it myself." However, Erin, as a sophomore, then asked her ISAE counselor for "more responsibility." She wanted to figure out how to create her own program evaluation, a document that needs to be completed prior to meeting with departmental academic advisors.

With this as a flash-point Erin explained that her ISAE counselor "taught me how to read my program evaluation." Erin explained the full passage of what her ISAE counselor taught her and concluded by commenting: "It's growing up in college, obviously. You get the sense of independence that you want. That's what I learned. Now I'm like, 'Okay, I can read this. I know how to do it.' " Herein Nadine and Erin describe the range of lessons that all 15 interviewees at least alluded to and which nine discussed explicitly: ISAE counselors encourage their advisees to advocate for themselves and teach them how to engage campus resources.

Nadine and Erin illustrate that these lessons come to fruition as ISAE students matriculate to upperclasswoman status. Quantitative data further illustrate the potential utility of such lessons in a graduate school context; 87 percent (27 out of 31 survey respondents) of ISAE graduate survey respondents who have received a graduate degree or are enrolled in graduate school either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that "my ISAE experience helped me navigate graduate school."

ISAE junior and senior interviewees indicated that through the knowledge ISAE counselors impart to them they become largely capable of navigating the college system on their own. The understanding ISAE students wield as a result of their ISAE counselor's instruction promotes their own academic independence. ISAE counselors further agreed that it is incumbent upon them to teach their ISAE advisees how to understand and navigate these systems and take responsibility of their academic choices. As a result ISAE students become increasingly

competent in navigating the higher education environment with less and less support. This purpose seems inherent in ISAE's design. Francis, a senior ISAE counselor, explained that by the time ISAE students reach junior and senior status, "we [ISAE counselors] have done our job. We've set the foundation so we don't need to meet with them so much."

Conclusion: ISAE Counselors Invite, Educate, and Liberate

All 15 junior and senior ISAE interviewees, all five peer-advisors, and 34 out of 40 ISAE intake documents showed that the ISAE Latinas who participated in this study approached the college environment unaware of how to navigate a route to graduation. These participants also agreed that as first-generation students they applied to ISAE for professional guidance in navigating the college environment that they could not receive at home. As a first-generation and low-income group, ISAE students do not have parents who can guide them through the higher education environment.

ISAE graduates who drafted responses to the open-ended survey question also raised the aspect of being a first-generation college students. Nine out of the 43 survey respondents wrote in the open-ended survey question that as first-generation students they did not know how to manage a path to graduation. One survey respondent articulated this perspective writing that "I was first generation and knew I had to do well in college, but didn't know how to do that. It was like a whole new world and no one in my family had experienced it and knew how to help me. It was great to have that support through ISAE."

ISAE counselors recognize this deficit and use the 4-year education plan to educate and show first-generation, low-income ISAE students how to navigate the university infrastructure and graduate with a baccalaureate degree. Each ISAE counselor commented that as early as their first meeting with their advisees they begin teaching them how to understand the college

catalogue and create viable academic plans to ensure graduation. Further, ISAE counselors all reported that they make it incumbent upon their advisees to take responsibility of their college careers.

From experience, ISAE counselors recognized that Latina students are faced with stressors unique to their demographic that include lack of academic preparedness, family responsibilities, financial stressors, and familial issues regarding citizenship. Further, these stressors upset not only Latinas' ability to do well academically, but also their path to a baccalaureate degree. Hence, for ISAE counselors, the 4-year education plan (and baccalaureate attainment) becomes a function of ISAE Latinas' lives, not the other way around. In other words, Latinas' life circumstances is the tail that wags the dog. While data did reveal that ISAE counselors in conjunction with the 4-year education plan was cited more often than any other support, deeper analysis reveals that the single and most critical ISAE support was how ISAE counselors develop and maintain sound relationships with their advisees in a manner to ensure their psychological well-being. This, in turn, according to both ISAE counselors and students, was the most robust element of the ISAE program which retains and graduates ISAE Latinas.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Key Finding: Close Social Bonds Promote Retention and Graduation

The key finding of this study is that ISAE counselors' holistic method of helping students create, understand and maintain individual education plans was largely responsible for Latina ISAE students' retention and graduation. These findings align with research that shows first-generation, low-income Latinas' retention and graduation rates rise when they have substantive and close relationships with college staff (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Kuh et al., 2013; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2015). In this case these relationships are those Latina ISAE students have with their ISAE counselors. My findings expand on this area of current research. My findings illustrate that close relationships between counselors and first-generation, low-income Latinas is only the starting point. My study has shown that when counselors effect advocacy roles and teach students to navigate the college system, retention and graduation rates increase.

ISAE counselors take time to understand their advisees' cultural pressures and familial responsibilities. From this vantage point ISAE counselors create and manage education plans as a function of their advisees' life circumstances. ISAE counselors use their campus contacts to "bridge" advisees to other campus services. ISAE counselors also wield their professional influence to advocate for their ISAE advisees. Finally, my findings show that ISAE counselors teach advisees to manage and take ownership of their college careers. In these ways, the findings illustrate that ISAE counselors provide supports to students that eclipse those provided by traditional departmental academic advisors. While current literature on first-generation, low-income Latinas emphasizes the importance of close social bonds between this demographic and college faculty and staff, my study has exhibited specific actions that higher education professionals can take to increase retention and graduation.

ISAE counselors do not simply arrange for their advisees to take courses each term and then send them on their way. They initiate meetings always asking how advisees are managing in their college career. ISAE counselors, in this way, effect counseling that treats the entire student and establish "wrap around services." ISAE counselors first ensure that their advisees' psycho-emotive health is established and only then move to creating academic plans. Further, ISAE counselors took time to understand how their Latina advisees' cultural and family circumstances affected their academic performance. With this understanding ISAE counselors helped advisees manage and alter academic plans to accommodate circumstances unique to the first-generation, low-income Latina experience. This finding is new to current literature and contributes to our understanding of how to retain and graduate the most at-risk female demographic in higher education, first-generation, low-income Latinas.

In the following sections I highlight how these findings are significant and the ways they add to current literature on first-generation, low-income Latinas. I then discuss the limitations of the study and present suggestions for further research. Finally, I deliver my reflections on my research and how my findings can be used to inform and influence higher education public policy.

Significant Findings: Social Bonds, Bridging Services, and Academic Accountability

The significant findings of this study are connected to the close personal relationships ISAE counselors and students reported having with each other. These findings are significant in that they expand on current literature that has found substantive relationships between college faculty and staff promote retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income Latinas (Gonzalez, et al., 2004; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015). My research also adds to the literature in that it provides insight into counseling methods wherein counselors use

their professional clout and contacts to "bridge" students to other supports in the college community. Finally, it informs research by showing that first-generation, low-income Latinas become more self-sufficient when counselors promote that students take responsibility for their academic careers.

Social Bonds

At a general level current literature indicates that community and close relationships with college faculty and staff promote retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income students (Zalaquett, 2005; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Cole, 2008; Parker, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2015). However, little research has examined the mechanics of these social connections. In fact, Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) refer to relationships between Hispanic students and college faculty and staff as "the 'X' factor" in enhancing retention and graduation of Hispanic college students. Findings in my mixed methods case study of the ISAE program begin to de-mystify this 'X' factor, especially in regard to Latina students. My findings are significant in that they illustrate *how* ISAE counselors engage close personal relationships to boost retention and graduation of first-generation, low-income Latinas. Further, my study provides examples of how ISAE counselors provide support which exceeds that provided by departmental academic advisors. This finding harkens back to Freire's (1970) claim that educators must seek ways to "reinvent" themselves and broker substantive and close bonds with their students.

All study participant groups discussed how personal relationships between ISAE students and counselors develop trust and friendship. Further, ISAE counselors reported that their personal relationships with advisees allowed them to recognize how ISAE Latinas' life circumstances and stressors affected their ability to achieve academically. Again, all participant groups further elaborated that ISAE counselors helped students create and manage education

122

plans that worked around their unique life circumstances and stressors. This ability promoted the near unanimous claim of all participants that ISAE counselors were more competent (and caring) than departmental academic advisors in the creation and management of ISAE Latinas' education plans.

In fact, over half of ISAE student interviewees reported confiding in their ISAE counselors when they faced emotional stress that challenged their ability to do well academically. Camille, an ISAE senior, is representative of numerous ISAE Latinas who discussed how ISAE counselors helped her manage academic responsibilities during emotionally stressful times. Her experience shows the lengths to which ISAE counselors go in helping their advisees manage academic responsibilities.

Camille reported that in her sophomore year her father died during finals week. Camille faced not only family stress but also academic difficulty that was further upset because she had to travel to Mexico to help arrange services for her father. Camille reported that her ISAE counselor, Veronica, acted as proxy for her and communicated with her professors to ensure that she would be able to take her final exams. But Veronica, her ISAE counselor, did not stop there. Camille reported that Veronica "was always very concerned for my well-being, my family. . . . I also received a card with best wishes . . . they [ISAE counselors] were very concerned. They told me, 'we're here for you. We have you in our thoughts and prayers.' That was very nice." Findings such as these expand upon current research that shows drop-out rates can be reduced when college staff, faculty, and mentors help Latinas manage academic responsibilities in consideration of cultural values and family relationships (Tierney, 2000; Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008; Alvarez, 2010; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2015).

Research shows that when Latina college students are accepted into and bind to a college culture, they are retained and graduate at higher rates than their peers who are disenfranchised by their college communities (Tinto, 1987; Gloria et al., 2005; Jean, 2010; Ojeda et al., 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015). The findings in my study expand this literature in that they identify the critical and key role college counselors, in this case ISAE counselors, have in ensuring retention and graduation and dis-allowing drop-out for first-generation, low-income Latinas.

My findings offer a method for how college counselors may engage Latina students specifically. For instance, first-generation, low-income Latina retention is enhanced when college counselors consider how stressors unique to this demographic affect academic performance. This single finding adds a new perspective to the current literature. It draws on the point that first-generation, low-income Latina students face cultural, gender, and financial stressors unique to their demographic. Current literature illustrates this (Sy, 2006; Alvarez, 2010; Storlie, Mostade, & Duenyas, 2016). My findings expand on this point by showing that counselors can mitigate Latinas' drop-out rates by helping them create education plans that operate as a function of these stressors.

Bridging and Wrap-around Services

Latina ISAE students reported facing stress ranging from financial and supervisorial responsibilities in their households to emotional strain associated with familial issues of citizenship. ISAE counselors and students alike reported that counselors factored in these life circumstances in the management and maintenance of academic plans. ISAE counselors and students discussed how this holistic considers how students' personal and life circumstances affect their academic performance. ISAE counselors consider the "whole" student and engage "wrap around services" to retain students. And, in so doing, ISAE counselors use their college

contacts and professional status to connect—or "bridge"—their students to other college faculty, staff, and offices to retain ISAE students at risk of dropping out. This type of invasive counseling adds to the research on specific counseling methods to retain first-generation, low-income Latinas.

ISAE counselors' method of "bridging services" is a unique finding that promoted retention of ISAE Latinas. ISAE counselors recognized that ISAE students are often apprehensive about engaging their professors and campus offices to discuss academic need and difficulty. Hence, ISAE counselors "bridged" their students to campus resources outside of their jurisdiction and advocate for first-generation, low-income Latina students.

The concept of "bridging services" for students is vacant in the current literature regarding Latina college students. Yet this very activity is what both ISAE students and counselors reported as being a critical support in ensuring retention and graduation of this at-risk demographic.

Indeed, current literature has identified that first-generation, low-income Latinas are unfamiliar with the college environment and lack skill in navigating its infrastructure (Alvarez, 2010; Jean, 2010; Yamamura et al., 2010; Gonzales et al., 2015). However, current literature offers little to no insight on how to manage and mitigate this reality. The concept of "bridging services" helps to close this gap.

Academic Accountability

Finally, this research found that when ISAE counselors provide students with the tools and insight to create and manage their own education plans, students take ownership and accountability of their college career. Indeed, the literature shows that providing counseling support for first-generation, low-income students is critical, especially in the first year (Gonzalez

et al., 2004; Oseguera et al., 2009; Walsh et al., 2009; Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2015). My findings complement and expand this well-established fiat.

ISAE counselors do more than place students in courses that count toward baccalaureate degree completion. ISAE counselors begin teaching ISAE students how to decipher and use the course catalogue to create and manage their own education plans in their first year. This finding is significant in that it introduces to the literature important instructional methods that counselors can take during the first year of counseling services.

ISAE counselors teach their advisees how to navigate the college environment and utilize campus resources. As a result, ISAE students develop confidence and independence. In turn, they become less reliant upon their counselors and take ownership of their college experience. These findings help to inform the current research which finds counseling services for first-year, low-income Latinas is critical. My findings on this point show that when counselors place more responsibility upon their advisees, they become more capable in navigating the college system in their junior and senior years.

Broad Contribution of Research to the Field

The findings of this case offer a blueprint regarding how counselors at private 4-year universities can engage their first-generation, low-income Latina students to boost their retention and graduation. In this way these findings add to the body of knowledge regarding retention and graduation of this demographic.

The findings herein are especially pertinent and timely given that Latinas are enrolling in colleges and universities in record numbers, yet among all women they are the least likely to

graduate. That Latinas are dropping out at the highest rate of all female demographics, the findings in this study might be considered in order to narrow these high rates of attrition.

It adds to previous research that shows intensive personal counseling in combination with educational planning that provides students with the tools to manage their own educational experience leads to higher baccalaureate completion for first-generation, low-income Latinas (Zalaquett, 2005; Garcia, 2012; Parker, 2012; Escamilla & Trevino, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2015). My study illustrates that first-generation, low-income Latinas become empowered when they have mentors who teach and expect them to take responsibility for their college careers. Such a finding has not been established prior to this study.

My findings expand the literature by showing that bridging services for first-generation, low-income Latinas has the potential to retain them. Current literature shows that retention and graduation of Latinas is boosted when counselors understand and consider the cultural and family pressures of Latinas (Gonzalez et al., 2004; Sy, 2006; Gonzales et al., 2015; Hernandez, 2015). My research expands these findings by illustrating that it is incumbent upon counselors to take these circumstances into consideration when planning and mapping Latinas' education plans.

This case study demonstrates that it is not just culture or family differences that prevent Latinas' success nor is it the lack of a welcoming college environment. This research shows that tutoring and other academic support services do not adequately address Latina achievement in higher education. Finally, it illustrates that traditional academic advisement is inadequate to guide first-generation, low-income Latina students toward an education plan that ultimately leads toward baccalaureate degree completion.

Limitations of the Study

This study took place at a 4-year private nonprofit university in an urban setting and which is primarily a women's university. And though the university is in a high income community, most of its students are middle to low-income. It is primarily a commuter university and not a residential facility. It is a Hispanic Serving Institution whose student body is primarily composed of first-generation, low-income Latinas. The findings of this study are not generalizable far outside this institution and like institutions which have a similar make-up of first-generation, low-income Latinas and acceptance rates that hover at 70 percent.

The findings are further limited because of the selection process I engaged when soliciting participants, especially the ISAE junior and senior participants. I selected the first (and only) ISAE juniors and seniors who responded to my email solicitation for participants. Because this group of 15 ISAE junior and seniors were the only group to agree to interviews, they may have harbored an implicit bias highly regarding the ISAE program. Indeed, few criticisms of the ISAE program, and none regarding ISAE counselors, developed during the student interview process. As such, there were no critical commentaries to which the positive reviews of the ISAE program could be measured against.

Also, despite the fact that I interviewed all three ISAE counselors, this was a very small sample size not appropriate for generalizability outside this single group. Further, all three ISAE counselors were former first-generation, low-income Latinas, and ISAE and MSMU graduates. Their dedication to the ISAE program, ISAE students, and MSMU is a factor unique to these counselors and not likely characteristic of other counselors in similar institutions. Their familiarity with MSMU, the ISAE program, and ISAE students was, in a sense, "home grown," a characteristic which may be entirely unique to their collective circumstance. Hence, their

dedication to the ISAE program and students is likely more robust than other counselors managing TRIO programs similar to ISAE at other colleges and universities.

Unique factors add to the limitations. All 15 ISAE junior and senior interviewees find a rich and heightened sense of cultural congruity the three ISAE counselors, and their unique personalities, beyond counseling strategies, likely adds to these students' persistence.

Finally, I only interviewed ISAE counselors, students, and peer-advisors. These interviewees discussed departmental academic advisors' lack of ability in developing and managing education plans. Because departmental academic advisors did not have the opportunity to provide their perspective on this matter, the findings breach another limitation. Veronica, the most senior ISAE counselor, remarked that students can visit their departmental academic advisor anytime to manage and track education plans. She surmised that if students visited their departmental advisors more often, issues regarding academic planning could be earlier stemmed and managed.

Of course, the findings of this study are germane to the ISAE intervention at MSMU and are not widely generalizable. However, the findings may offer insight to other 4-year HSIs struggling to find solutions to stem the drop-out rate of their first-generation, low-income Latina students. The findings of this study are most relevant to HSIs, for it is these institutions that enroll the most and graduate the fewest first-generation, low-income Latinas.

Suggestions for Further Research

More research is needed on the best practices of intensive counseling and education planning modalities. The research should focus on the holistic and case management aspects of counseling; best practices related to advocacy for student engagement of the college; bridging services to ensure students get the support services necessary for educational and personal

129

development; and training students to utilize tools and college resources to be accountable for their educational progress in the academy.

Focused research on the effects of invasive counseling and its varying methodologies at HSIs is critical. Further, research on how counselors help Latina students manage cultural and familial stress to ensure retention needs to be investigated.

Reflection and Call to Action

I reflect on the Latina students who come to my office for writing assistance and whom I teach at Mount Saint Mary's University. These students are pensive, hopeful, and proud. They exude a sagacity and determination unique to their demographic. I have a newfound and deeper respect for them. They have so much to offer but face a great deal of uncertainty. They come from largely low-income families and are first-generation. They are family oriented and care about their parents and siblings. They have family responsibilities that tax their time and energy levels beyond that experienced by middle to high income college students whose family legacies include scores of college graduates. Further, they often have family members who face challenges regarding immigration and legal citizenship. This too places stress upon them that is unique to their demographic. However, they are determined because they have a dream to achieve their baccalaureate degree and engage a career that will benefit them and their families.

I see their drive and ambition, but I also see the roadblocks to their success. The major roadblock identified in this study is their lack of knowledge of how to navigate higher education and the insufficient counseling support most of them encounter. It takes a comprehensive program such as ISAE to provide the intensive counseling, educational planning, and holistic support services to increase their chances to obtain their bachelor's degree.

They are not the obstacle to their success. The institution is the obstacle. The institution must provide effective supports to ensure their success. After all, these students are taking huge student loans to pay for an education. Institutional resources must match students' commitment to take such loans and provide them more effective supports known to date. The call to action is for Institutions of Higher Education and in particular private 4-year nonprofit degree-granting HSIs to prioritize their institutional budgets so that more counselors can provide intensive counseling, education planning and holistic support services to Latina students.

Appendix A: ISAE Supports

ISAE Services and Objectives

1. Structured First Year (FY) Programming: All incoming ISAE participants are assigned a Peer Advisor (PA) who is a "veteran" ISAE student (either a junior or a senior). Each PA serves a "big sister" role and meets with her assigned mentee over the course of the first year. First year participants are also required to meet at least three times per semester with their SSS/ISAE counselor. In these meetings SSS staff provide first year ISAE students structured academic coaching to plan out a 4-year education plan that guides participants to graduation. First-year students are also asked to participate in at least two cultural, leadership, and/or educational opportunities per semester. This commitment to participate in ISAE events is incorporated into an agreement that is signed by the ISAE student and her ISAE counselor.

2. Tutoring/Academic Skill Development: Each term academic skills workshops provide academic guidance and support to ISAE students. ISAE staff closely monitor ISAE students' academic performance. If and when students are placed on academic probation (AP) or receive an academic difficulty notice from a professor, SSS staff guide these students to peer and professional tutoring staff.

3. Academic Advisement: The SSS director, associate director, and counselor provide academic and graduate school/career counseling to all program participants on a regular basis. First-year students meet with their SSS counselor three times each semester. SSS counselors work closely with all participants to create an education action plan which outlines a "road map" to earning a bachelor's degree. Sophomores meet with their counselor twice each semester; juniors and seniors meet with their counselors at least once a semester. During advisement meetings counselors ensure that participants are taking the correct courses to fulfill graduation

requirements and making the required academic progress to maintain full financial aid eligibility each year. Especially in their junior and senior years participants discuss career and graduate school options with their SSS counselor.

4. Graduate School/Career Counseling: Workshops focusing on how to apply to graduate school and how to prepare for graduate education are provided to all ISAE students. The university hosts two Graduate School Fairs and several Grad School panels each year. The ISAE program also arranges campus visits to local graduate school campuses each semester, providing students a means to explore graduate school options.

5. Financial Literacy/Financial Aid Assistance: All first-year participants are required to complete an on-line financial literacy component in their Introduction to College Studies class. The goal of the financial literacy component is to teach decision making skills needed to manage the financial responsibilities of college. Topics include: creating a budget, avoidance of credit debt, understanding credit reports and scores, and a host of other financial topics germane to the college context. SSS staff also regularly offer participants opportunities to initiate and update their financial aid dossier.

6. Leadership and Pre-professional and Cultural Development: SSS encourages students to participate in leadership activities and opportunities both on-and off-campus. In addition to visiting graduate schools each semester, participants are given the opportunity to attend at least one pre-professional conference each year. These opportunities provide participants with access to scholarships, internships, networking opportunities, and future professional prospects. Since program participants' low-income background often precludes their attendance to cultural venues, the ISAE program offers field trips to museums, plays, musical productions, and other cultural outings.

7. Computer Loan Program: MSMU and the ISAE program use email as the official mode of communication. The ISAE program also maintains social media accounts. Many ISAE participants do not own personal computers. Given the program's reliance on technology as a means of communication, the ISAE program provides a Laptop Loan Program to all ISAE students. Through this program students can check out a computer for a three-day period.

8. Personal Counseling and Peer Advisors: The SSS/ISAE staff provides all participants with individual counseling. When students face academic and/or financial difficulties, program counselors help students identify the issues they are facing and develop solutions to address these problems. Counselors guide participants to focus on their ability to progress toward a degree. For problems that prove to be intensive and long-term, counselors refer participants to on-campus counseling services and established local sources. Peer Advisors (PAs), supervised by program counseling staff, perform the following five specific duties: 1) inform participants about and encourage their use of program services; 2) motivate and coach participants to excel academically in order to graduate; 3) facilitate participants' adjustment to college; 4) inform participants about institutional resources; 5) communicate participants needs to ISAE staff.

Appendix B: ISAE Exit Document
Mount Saint Mary's University
Student Support Services/ Institute for Student Academic Enrichment
(ISAE)
Exit Interview

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Student ID #:_____
Address:_____City:_____ST:_____Zip:_____
Home Phone Number:_____**Cell Phone Number:** _____
Email (other than MSMU):_____ **MSMU Email:** _____
Reason(s) for exiting the program: _____ **Graduation** (Degree _____)
_____ **Academic Dismissal** _____ **Career Change** _____ **Health**
_____ **Employment** _____ **Leave of Absence** _____ **Financial Difficulty**
_____ **Personal Reasons** _____ **Other (specify)** _____

What service has benefited you the most from ISAE?

Has ISAE contributed to your overall success? If yes, how?

What are you future educational plans upon leaving MSMU?

What suggestions do you have to improve the program?

_____
For Staff Use Only
1. Class Standing:_____ **2. Campus:** ____ **3. Credits Earned:**_____ **4. Current**
GPA:__5. Cum. GPA:____ **6. Prog. Entry Date:**_____ **7. Prog. Exit Date:**_____**8. Last**
Service Date:_____
ISAE Staff Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Student Signature _____ **Date** ___ **ISAE Staff Signature** _____**Date** _____

This application helps determine your eligibility for ISAE services. All information submitted to ISAE will be kept in strict confidence.

General Information

1. Name _____   2. SS# _____

3. Which campus do you plan to attend or currently attend? _____

4. Do You Plan to live: ☐ On Campus   ☐ With Parents ☐ Off Campus Housing

5. Permanent Address   City _____State/Zip _____

6. Telephone: Home (   ) _____ Campus (   ) _____ Cell (   )_____

7. Email Account: Campus _____ Other (Yahoo, MSN, etc.)_____

8. Birthdate ____/____/_____   9. Birthplace _____   10. Gender: ☐M   ☐F

11. Marital Status: ☐Single ☐Single with Children #_____ ☐Married ☐Married with Children

#_____

12. U.S. Citizen: ☐Yes   ☐No……If NO, are you Permanent Resident? ☐Yes   ☐No

   Permanent Residence Document # _____

13. Ethnicity (Select One Only):   14. First Language spoken _____

      ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native

      ☐ Asian

      ☐ Black or African American

      ☐ Hispanic or Latino

      ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

⬜ White

15. Has either of your parents completed a four-year degree from a college or university?

⬜Yes   ⬜No

If yes, was their degree granted in the United States? ⬜Yes   ⬜No

16. Do you have a disability? ⬜Yes   ⬜No   If yes, please identify:

_____

* Documentation must be submitted with application materials or currently be on file in the

Learning Center.

17. Have you ever been a participant in any of the following TRIO programs?

⬜Upward Bound   ⬜Talent Search   ⬜Student Support Services (SSS)   ⬜EOC

Please mail your completed ISAE Application to:

MSMU-ISAE/SSS

12001 Chalon Road, Box #88

Los Angeles, CA 90049

Educational Information

18. Using the most recently attended institutions, list last high school and all postsecondary

institutions attended, prior to MSMU.

Institution	Location	Dates Attended	Major	Degree

_____

_____

_____

19. Intended/Current Major: _____   20. High School/Current GPA _____

I hereby certify that the above information is correct.

I agree to provide documentation for verification purposes as required.

I permit ISAE staff to access my MSMU application and MSMU academic/educational records

and financial records.

          Student Signature _____   Date _____

For Staff Use Only

STID#:_____

1. Preliminary eligibility based on application: ☐ FL   ☐ L only   ☐ F only   ☐ D   ☐ DL

 2. Current College Grade Level: ☐Fr.   ☐So. ☐Jr.   ☐Sr.   ☐5th year/other

 3. Academic Need: SAT WR _____ SAT M _____   SAT CR_____ / ACT_____

 4. Placement Scores: ENG _____ MTH _____ OTHER _____ OTHER _____

   ☐ Low high school grades (1)   ☐ Low admission test scores/placement (2)

   ☐ Predictive Indicator (5) ☐ Low College Grades (7) ☐ GED (8) ☐ Re-Entry Student (10)

   ☐ Limited English Proficiency (12)   ☐ Lack of educational and/or career goals

 (13) ☐ Need for academic support to raise grades required in academic major (15)

4.   Financial Aid: AGI _____   # of Dependents _____ Taxable Income _____

 5. Admission Status: ☐Admitted   ☐Denied   ☐Wait List ☐Pending_____

 6. Counselor Assigned _____   PA Assigned _____

Director/Staff _____ Date _____

Write a paragraph answering each of the following questions:

1. Describe a person or event that has had a major impact on your life?

2. What are your short-term and long-term goals?

3. As you will be required to be an active member of the ISAE Program, in what specific ways do you think the ISAE program can assist you (e.g. in academic support, counseling, career planning, cultural enrichment, etc.)?

Appendix D: 4-Year Education Plan

Mount Saint Mary's University
Student Support Services/ Institute for Student Academic Enrichment
(ISAE)
Educational Plan

Name:_____ Major(s)/Minor(s):_____

Year:__Fall Semester	Year:__Fall Semester	Year:__Fall Semester	Year:__Fall Semester
Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
Year:__Spring Sem.	Year:__Spring Sem.	Year:__Spring Sem.	Year:__ Spring Sem.
Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
Year:__ Summer Sem.	Year:__ Summer Sem.	Year:__ Summer Sem.	Year:__ Summer Sem.
Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units	Classes Units
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
_____			

I understand that this is just a DRAFT that can assist me in planning my semester schedules and keep track of my units/requirements. Any and all paperwork and final schedules must be reviewed and approved by my Faculty Advisor or the Academic Advisement Office.
Signature: _____Dates Reviewed: _____

Mount Saint Mary's University

Appendix E: Interview Protocols, Students and Counselors

ISAE Student Interview Protocol

My name is David Perez. I am a doctoral student at UCLA and I am working on a project which focuses on the ISAE program here at Mount Saint Mary's University. I am conducting interviews with ISAE students to gain their unique perspectives on the ISAE program and the supports it offers to ISAE students. When I say ISAE supports I mean such things as academic guidance and other guidance and direction you might receive from the ISAE counselors; also the 4-year education plan; the ISAE peer-advisors; the cultural events that ISAE offers such as the musicals, plays, and museum visits that ISAE sponsors; and the social events that ISAE sponsors like the Spring Fling and the "movie nights," and any other feature of the ISAE program that you feel has acted as a support during your time in ISAE. Ultimately, though, I really would like to have your honest opinions and insight on ISAE. And, of course, our discussion here is entirely confidential. Your name and responses will be kept anonymous. In our interview I will ask you to indicate your name, but this will only be for my exclusive record keeping regarding this project; your name will not be used anywhere in my actual research project. Your identity will be kept entirely anonymous.

1. Please tell me your name and your class standing at Mount Saint Mary's University (i.e.,

senior, junior, etc.).

2. How long have you been enrolled in the ISAE program at MSMU?

3. What was your goal (or goals) for enrolling in college?

4. What was your goal (or goals) for enrolling in ISAE?

5. How has the ISAE program helped you in achieving that goal (or those goals)?

6. Can you tell me about your ISAE experience?

(*Potential follow-up questions include asking interviewee to discuss: friendships, community,*

social cohesion. Asking interviewee to talk about what she enjoyed most about the ISAE events

she has attended).

7. What has ISAE's role been, if any at all, in helping you stay enrolled at MSMU?

8. Can you talk about those ISAE supports—for instance, the 4-year ed-plan, your ISAE

counselor, ISAE peer-advisors, and even the ISAE social events like the Fall Fling or cultural

events like museum visits or attending the opera—that you feel have been especially helpful to you?

(Potential follow-up questions: How have each of these specific supports worked for you in helping you to achieve your college goals? How do these supports work together to help you in college?).

9. Alternately, can you talk about any ISAE supports that are not so helpful to you?

10. Can you tell me about your relationship with your ISAE counselor?

11. And how about your previous relationship with your ISAE peer-advisor?

12. Without divulging information that you'd like to keep private, can you tell me if your ISAE counselor has ever provided you assistance with a personal matter?

13. Along the same lines, and of course without divulging information you'd like to keep private, can you tell me if your ISAE peer-advisor has ever provided you assistance with a personal matter?

14. Would you recommend new incoming Mount students to enroll in the ISAE program? What might you tell them?

15. Is there anything I missed and that you feel is important regarding your experience ISAE?

16. This is a study of the "Latina" experience within the ISAE program. And, in order to really show the diversity of Latinas represented here, could you provide to me your cultural and ethnic heritage? For instance, Mexican, Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, or some other Hispanic ethnic background.

ISAE Counselor Interview Protocol

1. Please state your name and the length of time you have been an ISAE counselor.

2. What do you focus on achieving, day-to-day, as an ISAE counselor?

3. What do you feel is the ultimate goal of the ISAE program?

4. How does ISAE achieve this goal (or goals)?

5. What is your goal (or goals) for the ISAE students you counsel?

6. How do you achieve this goal (or these goals)?

7. What do you think attracts students to the ISAE program?

8. How does the ISAE program retain ISAE students?

9. Also, how does ISAE graduate its students?

10. From your perspective, what is the goal for ISAE students enrolling in college?

11. Can you give me some examples of supports you provide to ISAE students?

12. Which of these supports, do you feel, are especially helpful to ISAE students?

13. From your perspective, why are these particular supports especially helpful to students?

14. What is a "typical" counseling session with an ISAE student like?

15. Can you talk about an instance when you worked with an ISAE student who seemed at risk of dropping out of college and how you helped that student stay enrolled?

16. Can you talk about the social events ISAE provides its students? (Follow up question: From your perspective how do these events support ISAE students?)

17. Similarly, can you tell me about the cultural events ISAE provides its students? (Follow up question: And again, from your perspective, how do these events support ISAE students?).

18. Can you talk about any counseling sessions you've had when a student becomes emotional or has sought your guidance regarding with personal issues?

19. What other details about ISAE supports do you feel are important to discuss?

Appendix F: Focus-Group Protocol

1. One at a time can each of you state your name, the length of time you have been enrolled in ISAE, and the length of time you have been an ISAE peer-advisor?

2. Why did each of you want to be an ISAE peer-advisor?

3. Can you tell me about your experiences as ISAE peer-advisors?

4. What is your role as an ISAE peer-advisor?

5. Can you talk about the support you provide to your ISAE advisees?

6. How do you feel this support helps them?

7. What are some challenges you face in working with your ISAE advisees?

8. Can any of you talk about how you provide support to students who, you feel, may be at risk of dropping out of college?

9. What ISAE supports do you feel are especially critical?

10. Why is it that you would say these ISAE supports are the most critical?

11. Alternately, are there any ISAE supports you feel are not so helpful?

12. When you were first and second year ISAE students what was the role of your own ISAE peer-advisor?

13. Can you please share any other insights you have about being an ISAE peer-advisor?

14. Would each of you please take just a few minutes to jot down on these sheets of paper any last thoughts or ideas you might have about your role as an ISAE peer-counselor.

Appendix G: ISAE Graduate Survey

Survey Questions: ISAE Graduates

Below you will see prompts primarily discussing Institute of Student Academic Enrichment (ISAE) supports. Considering your time as an undergraduate at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU), please rate how important each item was in **keeping you enrolled** in MSMU and **graduating** with your bachelor's degree.

5 = Very Important; 4 = Important; 3 = Not Very Important; 2 = Not Important at All;
1 = Not Applicable (N/A)

1. The 4-year education plan (i.e., the "ed-plan")

2. Your personal relationship with your ISAE counselor.

3. Help from your ISAE counselor in creating a 4-year education plan to graduate.

4. Help from your ISAE counselor in creating a 4-year education plan to graduate within 4 years.

5. Guidance from your ISAE counselor in navigating college.

6. Receiving help from your ISAE counselor to understand your graduation requirements.

7. Help from your Departmental Academic Advisor to graduate within 4 years.

8. Guidance from your Departmental Academic Advisor in creating an education plan.

9. Receiving help from your Departmental Advisor to understand your graduation requirements.

10. Receiving insight from your ISAE peer-advisor about professors and enrolling in classes.

11. Support from your ISAE peer-advisor discussing personal issues.

12. ISAE cultural events such as plays, musicals, and museum visits.

13. ISAE social events such as the Fall Fling and the Spring Fling.

14. The personal relationships and community you experienced with ISAE students and staff.

15. Please use the space below to discuss how ISAE helped you stay enrolled and graduate from

MSMU:

Please rate your level of agreement with the following prompts.

5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Somewhat Disagree;

2 = Strongly Disagree; 1 = Not Applicable (N/A)

1. My ISAE experience helped my professional career development.

2. My ISAE experience helped me navigate graduate school.

3. I would recommend new incoming Mount students to enroll in ISAE.

4. My ISAE counselor corrected errors in my academic plan that were made by my Departmental

   Academic Advisor.

5. ISAE helped me graduate with my bachelor's degree.

6. ISAE developed a sense of community.

7. ISAE promoted diversity.

Please answer the following questions (YES/NO):

1. Are you currently enrolled in a master's degree program?

2. Are you currently enrolled in a doctoral degree program?

3. Are you planning to enroll in a graduate program?

4. Have you obtained a master's degree?

5. Have you obtained a doctoral degree?

6. Are you currently working full-time in a position related to your academic major?

7. Are you currently working part-time in a position related to your academic major?

Final Question

Please select the Hispanic ethnicity you identify with: Argentinian, Belizean,

Bolivian, Chilean, Columbian, Costa Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan,

Honduran, Mexican, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Salvadoran, Uruguayan,

Venezuelan, Other, or Prefer not to answer. Thank you for taking part in this survey. If you have

any question regarding this study or the survey itself please feel free to contact me at

dperez@msmu.edu or 818-738-8482.

Appendix H: Informed Consent, ISAE Students, Peer-Advisors, Counselors

ISAE Students

      The research project herein is a mixed methods case study of the Institute of Student Academic Engagement (ISAE) at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) in Los Angeles, California. This research project seeks you participation in a single one-on-one interview regarding your experience in the ISAE program. This interview is to be conducted on the Chalon campus of MSMU and would last 45 minutes to 1 hour. You are under no obligation to participate in this research; participation is entirely voluntary and you face absolutely no consequences should you choose not to participate. If you choose not to participate in this study your position within the ISAE program will absolutely not be jeopardized. Participation is voluntary not mandatory. Further, if you choose to participate you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

      The purposes of this research are the following: 1) To identify the insight of current ISAE students' perceptions of ISAE and to understand which ISAE supports are especially purposeful and helpful in retaining and graduating ISAE students; 2) To understand how these specific supports operate to retain and graduate ISAE students; and 3) To record ISAE students' narratives which articulate their perceptions of the ISAE program and their experiences as an ISAE student. This Informed Consent asks for your participation in a single one-on-one interview. This interview will be conducted in a private office on the Chalon campus and will last between 45-minutes to one hour. The interview will be composed of 10-15 open-ended questions. The questions will focus on obtaining your insight of those ISAE supports which you feel have been especially helpful to your retention in ISAE and imminent graduation from MSMU. Further, the

interview questions seek for you to articulate your own specific narrative and experience as member of the ISAE program within the context of MSMU.

Your insight and participation in this research has potential to bear out numerous benefits. Within the higher education context Hispanic women are a critical mass. There are many Hispanic women enrolling in college. However, data show that they are graduating at rates that are not commensurate with their enrollment patterns. The research project herein seeks to identify specific college supports that could be institutionalized not only at this college but colleges across the nation to boost the retention and graduation rates of all Hispanic women. Your insight on the ISAE program could serve to promote this cause. The questions asked of you will be trained specifically to your experience in the ISAE program and there is minimal to no risk if you should choose to participate in an interview.

If you should choose to participate, your identity and all materials obtained during the process of the study will be kept confidential. During your interview, your responses will be recorded on an iPod and an IPad and will later be transcribed on paper. During this project this recording will be password protected and only I, the principal investigator, will have access to the recording. At the completion of this project the recording will be permanently deleted from the devices it was recorded on. If you should have any questions or concerns about this project and your potential participation in it you may contact David Perez, the principle investigator, via email at dperez@msmu.edu or via telephone at 310. 954. 4147. Further, you may also contact the MSMU Human Subjects Committee located on the Doheny Campus at 10 Chester place, Los Angeles, California, 90007.

Thank you,
David Perez
UCLA, Doctoral of Education candidate

ISAE Peer-advisors

The research project herein is a mixed methods case study of the Institute of Student

Academic Engagement (ISAE) at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) in Los Angeles,

California. This research project seeks you participation in a single focus-group session with

other peer-advisors. During this focus-group the discussion will focus on your role as an ISAE

peer-advisor and your experience as such within the ISAE program. This focus-group session

will be conducted on the Chalon campus of MSMU and will likely last 45 minutes to 1 hour.

You are under no obligation to participate in this research; participation is entirely voluntary and

you face absolutely no consequences should you choose not to participate. If you choose not to

participate in this study your position within the ISAE program will absolutely not be

jeopardized. Participation is voluntary not mandatory. Further, if you choose to participate you

may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

The purposes of this research are the following: 1) To identify the insight of current ISAE

students' perceptions of ISAE and to understand which ISAE supports are especially purposeful

and helpful in retaining and graduating ISAE students; 2) To understand how these specific

supports operate to retain and graduate ISAE students; and 3) To record ISAE students'

narratives which articulate their perceptions of the ISAE program and their experiences as an

ISAE student.

This Informed Consent asks for your participation in a single focus-group session with

other peer-advisors and myself, David Perez, the principle investigator of the study. This focus-

group session will be conducted in a private office on the Chalon campus and will last between

45-minutes to one hour. The focus-group session will be initiated by 10-15 open-ended

questions. The questions will focus on obtaining your insight of the ISAE program and your role

as a peer-advisor. Further, the Focus-group questions seek for you to articulate your own specific

narrative and experience as member of the ISAE program within the context of MSMU.

Your insight and participation in this research has potential to bear out numerous benefits.

Within the higher education context Hispanic women are a critical mass. There are many

Hispanic women enrolling in college. However, data show that they are graduating at rates that

are not commensurate with their enrollment patterns. The research project herein seeks to

identify specific college supports that could be institutionalized not only at this college but

colleges across the nation to boost the retention and graduation rates of all Hispanic women.

Your insight on the ISAE program could serve to promote this cause. The questions asked of you

will be trained specifically to your experience in the ISAE program and there is minimal to no

risk if you should choose to participate in an interview.

If you should choose to participate, your identity and all materials obtained during the

process of the study will be kept confidential. During your interview, your responses will be

recorded on an iPod and an iPad and will later be transcribed on paper. During this project this

recording will be password protected and only I, the principal investigator, will have access to

the recording. At the completion of this project the recording will be permanently deleted from

the devices it was recorded on. If you should have any questions or concerns about this project

and your potential participation in it you may contact David Perez, the principle investigator, via

email at dperez@msmu.edu or via telephone at 310. 954. 4147. Further, you may also contact the

MSMU Human Subjects Committee located on the Doheny Campus at 10 Chester place, Los

Angeles, California, 90007.

Thank you,
David Perez
UCLA, Doctoral of Education candidate

ISAE Counselors

The research project herein is a mixed methods case study of the Institute of Student Academic Engagement (ISAE) at Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) in Los Angeles, California. This research project seeks you participation in a single one-on-one interview regarding your experience as a professional ISAE counselor within the ISAE program. This interview is to be conducted on the Chalon campus of MSMU and would last 45 minutes to 1 hour. You are under no obligation to participate in this research; participation is entirely voluntary and you face absolutely no consequences should you choose not to participate. If you choose not to participate in this study your position as an ISAE counselor within the ISAE program will absolutely not be jeopardized. Participation is voluntary not mandatory. Further, if you choose to participate you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. The purposes of this research are the following: 1) To identify the insight of current ISAE students' perceptions of ISAE and to understand which ISAE supports are especially purposeful and helpful in retaining and graduating ISAE students; 2) To understand how these specific supports operate to retain and graduate ISAE students; and 3) To record ISAE students' narratives which articulate their perceptions of the ISAE program and their experiences as an ISAE student.

This Informed Consent asks for your participation in a single one-on-one interview. This interview will be conducted in a private office on the Chalon campus and will last between 45-minutes to one hour. The interview will be composed of 10-15 open-ended questions. The questions will focus on obtaining your insight of those ISAE supports which you feel are especially helpful to the retention and imminent graduation of Latina ISAE students at MSMU.

Further, the interview questions seek for you to articulate your own specific narrative and experience as member of the ISAE program within the context of MSMU.

Your insight and participation in this research has potential to bear out numerous benefits. Within the higher education context Hispanic women are a critical mass. There are many Hispanic women enrolling in college. However, data show that they are graduating at rates that are not commensurate with their enrollment patterns. The research project herein seeks to identify specific college supports that could be institutionalized not only at this college but colleges across the nation to boost the retention and graduation rates of all Hispanic women. Your insight on the ISAE program could serve to promote this cause. The questions asked of you will be trained specifically to your experience in the ISAE program and there is minimal to no risk if you should choose to participate in an interview.

If you should choose to participate, your identity and all materials obtained during the process of the study will be kept confidential. During your interview, your responses will be recorded on an iPod and an IPad and will later be transcribed on paper. During this project this recording will be password protected and only I, the principal investigator, will have access to the recording. At the completion of this project the recording will be permanently deleted from the devices it was recorded on. If you should have any questions or concerns about this project and your potential participation in it you may contact David Perez, the principle investigator, via email at dperez@msmu.edu or via telephone at 310. 954. 4147. Further, you may also contact the MSMU Human Subjects Committee located on the Doheny Campus at 10 Chester place, Los Angeles, California, 90007.

Thank you,
David Perez
UCLA, Doctoral of Education candidate

Work Cited

Adelman, C. (2007). Do we really have a college access problem? *Change*, July/August, 48.

Aguinaga, A., & Gloria, A. M. (2014). The effects of generational status and university environment on Latina/o undergraduates' persistence decisions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 15-29.

Alon, S., Domina, T., & Tienda, M. (2010). Stymied mobility or temporary lull? The puzzle of lagging Hispanic college degree attainment. *Social Forces*, *88*, 1807-1832.

Alvarez, C.L. (2010). Family negotiation of the Latina choice process: An exploration of how parents and their daughters obtain and utilize information to navigate the process. *Enrollment Management Journal*, *4*(4), 57-78.

Anzaldua, G. (1987). *Borderlands, la frontera: The new mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Arbona, C., & Nora, A. (2007). The influence of academic and environmental factors on Hispanic college degree attainment. *The Review of Higher Education*, *30*, 247-269.

Bernal, D.D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555-582.

Bordes, V. & Arredondo, P. (2005). Mentoring and 1st – year Latino/a college students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *4*(2), 114-133.

Brown, S. K., & Hirschman, C. (2006). The end of affirmative action in Washington state and its impact on the transition from high school to college. *Sociology of Education*, *79*(2), 106-130.

Byrd, K.L., & MacDonald, G. (2005). Defining college readiness from the inside out: First-generation college student perspectives. *Community College Review*, *33*(1). 22—36.

Cammarota, J. (2004). The gendered and racialized pathways of Latina and Latino youth: Different struggles, different resistances in the urban context. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *35*(1), 53-74.

Cardoza, D. (1991). College attendance and persistence among Hispanic women: An examination of some contributing factors. *Sex Roles*, *24*(3/4), 133-147.

Castillo, L. G., & Hill, R. D. (2004). Predictors of distress in Chicana college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *32*, 234-248.

Cates, J.T., & Schaefle, S.E. (2011). The relationship between a college preparation program and at-risk students' college readiness. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *10*(4), 320-334.

Ceja, M. (2001). *Applying, choosing, and enrolling in higher education: Understanding the college choice process of first-generation Chicana students* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Cerezo, A., & Chang, T. (2013). Latina/o achievement at predominantly white universities: The importance of culture and ethnic community. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *12*(1), 72-85.

Chapman, T. K. (2013). You can't erase race! Using CRT to explain the presence of race and racism in majority white suburban schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *34*(4), 611–627.

Cho, S., Hudley, C., Lee, S., & Barry, L. (2008). Roles of gender, race, and SES in the college choice process among first-generation and nonfirst-generation students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *1*(2), 95-107.

Cole, D. G. (2008). Constructive criticism: The role of student-faculty interactions on African-American and Hispanic students' educational gains. *Journal of College Development*, *49*, 587-605.

Condron, D. J. (2009). Social class, school and non-school environments, black/white inequities in children's learning. *American Sociological Review*, *74*(5), 683-708.

Consoli, M. L., & Llamas, J. D. (2013). The relationship between Mexican American cultural values and resilience among Mexican American college students: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *60*, 617-624.

Contreras, F., & Contreras, G. J. (2015). Raising the bar for Hispanic Serving Institutions: An analysis of college completion and success rates. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *14*(2), 151-170.

Corby, B. C., Hodges, E. V. E., & Perry, D. G. (2007). Gender identity and adjustment in black, Hispanic, and white preadolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, *43*(1), 261-266.

Cookson, P. W. (2013). *Class Rules: Exposing inequality in American high schools*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 4ᵗʰ ed*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Cuadraz, G. (1996). Experiences of multiple marginality: A case study of "Chicana scholarship women." In C. Turner, M. Garcia, A. Nora, & L. Rendon (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic diversity in higher education* (pp. 210-222). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Securing the right to learn: Policy and practice for powerful teaching and learning. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 13-24.

Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555-582.

Employment Development Department. (2013). California taxable income statistics: Urban communities and areas. Retrieved from: http: www.edd.ca.gov

Escamilla, A., & Trevino, N.G. (2014). An investigation of the factors contributing to successful completion of undergraduate degrees by students enrolled in the college assistant migrant program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *13*(3), 158-176.

Franke, T. M. (2015). Course lecture at University of California, Los Angeles. Education 230: Statistics for Education.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder & Herder.

Fry, R. (2002). Latinos in higher education: Many enroll, too few graduate. Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C.

Fuligni, A. J., & Pedersen, S. (2002). Family obligation and the transition to young adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, *38*(5), 856-868.

Fuligni, A. J., Witkow, M. R., & Garcia, C. (2005). Ethnic identity and academic motivation among adolescents from immigrant families. Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, Atlanta, GA.

Gandara, P. (1982). Passing through the eye of the needle: High-achieving Chicanas. *Hispanic Behavioral Sciences*, *4*, 167-179.

Gandara, P. (1995). *Over the ivory walls: The educational mobility of low-income Chicanos*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gandara, P. (2015). Fulfilling America's Future: Latinas in the U.S., 2015. The UCLA Civil Rights Project and The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Gandara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

Gandara, P., & Osugi, L. (1994). Educationally ambitious Chicanas. *Thought & Action*, *10*, 7-35.

Gandara, P., & Orfield, G. (2010). A return to the "Mexican room": The segregation of Arizona's English Learners. K-12 Language Minority Students, The Civil Rights Project/ Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.

Garcia, G. A. (2012). Does the percentage of Latinas/os affect graduation rates at 4-year Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs? *Journal of Hispanic Education*, *12*(3), 256-268.

Ginorio, A., & Huston, M. (2001). Yes we can: Latinas in school. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.

Gloria, A.M., Castellanos, J., & Orozco, V. (2005). Perceived educational barriers, cultural fit, coping responses, and psychological well-being of Latina undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *27*, 161.

Gloria, A.M., & Rodriguez, E.R. (2000). Counseling Latino university students: Psychosociocultural issues for consideration. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *78*, 145-154.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Harris, D.N., & Trostel, P.A. (2009). Why financial aid matters (or does not) for college success: Toward a new interdisciplinary perspective. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 1-45.

Gonzales, S.M., Brammer, E.C., & Sawilowsky, S. (2015). Belonging in the academy: Building

    A "casa away from casa" for Latino/a undergraduate students. *Journal of Higher*

    Education, *14*(3), 223-239.

Gonzalez, K.P., Jovel, J.E., &, Stoner, C. (2004). Latinas: The new Latino majority in college.

    New Directions for Student Services, *105*, 17-27.

Graham, L. (2012). Learning a new world: Reflections on being a first-generation college student

    and the influence of TRIO programs. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *127*,

    33-38.

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and

    impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(3), 330-366.

Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for

    institutional transformation. In S.R. Harper & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the*

    realities of race on campus, New Directions for Student Services, Vol. 120 (pp. 7-24).

    San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hart, M. (2016). *Educating the excluded: What led to the mandate for educational opportunity at*

    California State University. California State University, Los Angeles.

Hearings on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act: Hearings before the subcommittee

    on postsecondary education of the committee on education and labor, House of

    Representatives, 98th Cong. 1 (1984) (testimony of Rafael Magallan).

Henderson, A. T. & Berla, N. (1996). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to

    student achievement. Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Education.

Hernandez, E. (2015). Balancing dreams and realities: The college choice process for high-

    achieving Latinas. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *14*(3), 202-219.

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). (2011). About HACU/HACU 101. Retrieved from http:www.hacu.net/hacu/HACU_101.asp

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). (2015). HACU 2015 Legislative Agenda Background Information. Retrieved from http:www.hacu.net_2015_Data_on_Hispanics

Hoyt, J.E. (1999). Remedial education and student attrition. *Community College Review*, *27*(2), 51-73.

Humanities Texas (n.d.). President Lyndon B. Johnson greets citizens of Cotulla, 1966. Retrieved from http://www.humanitiestexas.org/archives/digital-repository/president-lyndon-b-johnson-greets-citizens-cotulla-1966

Hungerford-Kresser, H., & Amaro-Jimenez, C. (2012). Urban-schooled Latina/os, Academic Literacies, and identities: (Re)conceptualizing college readiness. *Urban Education Journal*, *9*(2), 1-14.

Hurtado, A., & Sinha, M. (2008). More than men: Latino Feminist masculinities and intersectionality. *Sex Roles*, *59*, 337-349.

Hurtado, S., Carter, D.F., & Spuler, A. (1996). Latino students' transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education*, *37*(2), 135-157.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pederson, A., & Allen, W. A. (1996). *Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education* (AHSE-ERIC Series). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hurtado, S. & Ponjuan, L. (2005). Latina/o educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. *1*(4), 204-221.

Jackson, J. & Kurlaender, M. (2014). College readiness and college completion at broad access 4-year institutions. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *58*(8), 947-971.

Jarsky, K.M., McDonough, P.M., & Nunez, A. (2009). Establishing a college culture in secondary schools through P-20 collaboration: A case study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(4), 357-373.

Jean, D. (2010). *The academic and social adjustment of first-generation college students* (Doctoral dissertation). Seton Hall University. Paper 1490.

Johnson, H., & Sengupta, R. (2009). Closing the gap: Meeting California's need for college graduates. Public Policy Institute of California. San Francisco, CA.

Jordan, W.J. & Cooper, R. (2003). High school reform and Black male students: Limits and possibilities of policy and practice. *Urban Education*, *38*(2), 196-216.

Kellaghan, T., Sloan, K., Alvarez, B., & Bloom, B.S. (1993). The home environment & school learning. San Francisco: Jossy-Bass.

Kelly, A.P., Schneider, M., & Carey, K. (2010). Rising to the Challenge: Hispanic college graduation rates as a national priority. The American Enterprise Institute.

Kimura-Walsh, E., Yamamura, E.K., Griffin, K.A., & Allen, W.R. (2014). Achieving the college dream? Examining disparities in access to college information among high achieving and non-high achieving Latina students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(3), 298-315.

Knapp, L.G., Kelly-Reid, J.E., & Ginder, S.A. (2011). Enrollment in post-secondary institutions. U.S. Department of Education. Washington D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Krogstad, J.M. & Fry, R. (2014). More Hispanics, blacks enrolling in college, but lag in

    bachelor's degrees. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from:

    http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/24

Kuh, G.D., O'Donnell, K., & Reed, S. (2013). *Ensuring quality & taking high-impact practices*

    to scale. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Lareau, A. & Weininger, E.B. (2003). Cultural capital in educational research: A critical

    assessment. *Theory and Society*, *32*(5/6), 567-606.

Lewis, M. (2015). ISAE Annual Report, 2015. Report drafted for the U.S. Department of

    Education. Mount Saint Mary's College, Department of Student Affairs.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.

Logan, J. R., Minca, E., & Adar, S. (2012). The geography of inequality: Why separate means

    unequal in American public schools. *Sociology of Education*, *85*(3), 287-301.

Lopez, M.H., & Fry, R. (2013). Among recent high school grads, Hispanic college enrollment

    rate surpass that of whites. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from:

    http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/09/04

Lopez, M.H. & Gonzalez-Barrera, A. (2014). Women's college enrollment gains leave men

    behind. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: http: www.pewresearch.org/fact-

    tank/2014/03/06

Mahoney, R.G. (1998). Components of TRIO's success: How one student support services

    program achieved success. *Journal of Negro Education*, *67*(4), 381-388.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach 3rd ed*. Sage

    Publishing: Thousand Oaks, CA.

McElroy, E. J., & Armesto, M. (1998). TRIO and Upward Bound: History, programs and

    issues—past, present and future. *Journal of Negro Education*, *67*(4), 373-380.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*.

    Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*.

    Sage Publishing: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Mount Saint Mary's Office of Institutional Research. (2015). Retention and graduation rates:

    First-year students. Department of Institutional Research.

Mount Saint Mary's University. (2016). Fall 2016 counselor profile. Office of Undergraduate

    Admission.

Musoba, G. D., & Krichevskiy, D. (2014). Early coursework and college experience predictors

    of persistence at Hispanic Serving Institutions. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*,

    13(1), 48-62.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *The condition of education 2004*. U.S.

    Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2008). *The condition of education 2008*. U.S.

    Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

Nuñez, A-M. (2009). Latino students' college transitions: A social and intercultural capital

    perspective. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(1), 22-48.

Nunez, A-M. (2011). Counterspaces and connections in college transitions: First-generation

    Latino students' perspectives on Chicano studies. *Journal of College Development*, *52*(6),

    639-655.

Ojeda, L., Castillo, L.G., Meza, R. R., & Pina-Watson, B. (2014). Mexican Americans in higher education: Cultural adaptation and marginalization as predictors of college persistence intentions and life satisfaction. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *13*(1), 3-14.

Oseguera, L., Locks, A.M., & Vega, I.I. (2009). Increasing Latina/o students' baccalaureate attainment: A focus on retention. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(1), 23-53.

Parker, T. (2012). The role of minority-serving institutions in redefining and improving developmental education. A report published by the Southern Education Foundation.

Pascarella, E.T., Pierson, C.T., Wolniak, G.C., & Terenzini, P.T. (2004). First generation college students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, *75*.

The Pell Institute. (2009). National studies find TRIO programs effective at increasing college enrollment and graduation. The Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Washington, DC.

Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J.C. Smart (Ed.). *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (99-157). New York, NY: Agathon Press.

Phinney, J. S., Dennis, J. M., & Gutierrez, D. M. (2005). College orientation profiles of Latino students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: A cluster analytic approach. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *27*(4), 387-408.

Porter, A.C., & Polikoff, M.S. (2012). Measuring academic readiness for college. *Education Policy*, *26*(3), 394-417.

Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and Related Measure, Part 1: Hearings before the
Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education of the Committee on Education and Labor,
House of Representatives, 96th Cong. 1 (1979) (testimony of Joseph Califano).

Reid, L. D., & Radhakrishnan, P. (2003). Race matters: The relationship between race and
general campus climate. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *9*, 263-275.

Roach, R. (2013). The people's advocate: Dr. Arnold Mitchem offers a pragmatic vision to
protect TRIO programs. *Diverse*, November 2013, 12-13.

Robbins, S.B., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., & Carlstrom, A. (2004). Do
psychological and study skills factors predict college outcomes? A meta-analysis.
Psychological Bulletin, *130*, 261-288. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.130.2.261

Rodriguez, L. F. (2005). Yo, mister! An alternative urban high school offers lessons on respect.
Educational Leadership, *62*(7), 78-80.

Rodriguez, L. F., & Oseguera, L. (2015). Our deliberate success: Recognizing what works for
Latina/o students across the educational pipeline. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*,
14(2), 128-150.

Rogers, J. & Freelon, R. (2012). Unequal experiences and outcomes for black and Latino males
in California's public education system. *Pathways to Postsecondary success*, *5*, 1-10.

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education
and the social sciences 4th ed*. Teachers College Press: New York: NY.

Siebert, E. (2012). Student success at Mount St. Mary's College: Retention, graduation, and
time-to-degree in context. Submitted to Western Association of Schools and Colleges,
August 30, 2012.

Smallwood, S.R. (2015). Affirmative action programs: Is the "sun setting" on racial preferences? *The Vermont Connection*, *35*(14), 113-121.

Smith, L.M. (1978). An evolving logic of participant observation, educational ethnography and other case studies. In L. Shulman (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (pp. 316-377). Itasca, IL: Peacock.

Spann, G.A. (2000). *The law of affirmative action*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Storlie, C. A., Mostade, J., & Duenyas, D. (2016). Cultural Trailblazers: Exploring the career development of Latina first-generation college students. *The Career Development Quarterly*, *64*, 304-317.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, *62*(4), 271-286.

Sy, S.R. (2006). Family and work influences on the transition to college among Latina adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *28*(3), 368-386.

Sy, S.R., & Brittian, A. (2008). The impact of family obligations on young women's decisions during the transition to college: A comparison of Latina, European American, Asian American Students. *Sex Roles*, *58*, 729-737.

Sy, S.R., & Romero, J. (2008). Family responsibilities among Latina college students from immigrant families. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *7*(3), 212-227.

Tierney, W. G. (2000). Models of minority college-going and retention: Cultural integrity versus cultural suicide. *Journal of Negro Education*, *68*(1), 80-91.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college: *Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

TRIO Projects by district. (2015). Summary of TRIO Projects by district: California. TRIO

>Fiscal Year Account, 2014.

Tseng, V. (2004). Family interdependence and academic adjustment in college: Youth from

>immigrant families and U.S. families. *Child Development*, *75*(3), 966-983.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012a). Current population survey, annual social and economic

>supplement. Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington DC.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012b). The population with a bachelor's degree or higher by race and

>Hispanic origin: 2006-2010. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics

>Administration.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). Educational attainment of the population 18 years and over, by age,

>sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 2014. Retrieved from http:

>www.census.gov_data_quickfacts_raceandhispanicorigin

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). California Quick Facts, population estimates: Race and Hispanic

>origin, table PST045215. Retrieved from http:www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2008). A profile of the federal TRIO programs and child care

>access means parents in school program. Office of Postsecondary education, Federal

>TRIO programs.

U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *The condition of education 2012*. National Center for

>Education Statistics.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015a) *The condition of education 2015*. National Center for

>Education Statistics.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015b). *Digest of education statistics 2013*. National Center for

>Education Statistics.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015c). Persistence and completion in postsecondary education of participants in the TRIO student support services program. U.S. Department of Education: Office of Postsecondary Education. Retrieved from: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/resources.html.

Valdez, P.L. (2015). Anatomy of the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Designation: An overview of HSI Policy Formation. A discussion paper prepared for "Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the 21st Century: A Convening" The University of Texas at El Paso.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). Gender roles and settlement activities among children and their immigrant families. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *42*(4), 720-742.

Vasquez, M.J.T. (2002). Complexities of the Latina experience: A tribute to Martha Bernal. *American Psychologist*, *57*(11), 880-888.

Vega, W. A. (1990). Hispanic families in the 1980's: A decade of research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *52*, 1015-1024.

Venezia, A. & Kirst, M.W. (2005). Inequitable opportunities: How current education systems and policies undermine chances for student persistence and success in college. *Educational Policy*, *19*, 283-307.

Walsh, J. (2000). Unique and effective practices for TRIO Student Support Services programs. Report: Kankakee Community College, Illinois.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges, WASC. (2011). WASC retention, graduation, time-to-degree summary report. Fall 2009-2011, Mount St. Mary's College.

White, J. W., & Ali-Khan, C. (2013). The role of academic discourse in minority students' assimilation. *American Secondary Education*, *42*(1), 24-42.

Wright, C.L., & Levitt, M.J. (2014). Parental absence, academic competence, and expectations in Latino immigrant youth. *Journal of Family Issues*, *35*(13), 1754-1779.

Yamamura, E. K., Martinez, M. A., & Saenz, V. B. (2010). Moving beyond high school expectations: Examining stakeholders' responsibility for increasing Latino/a students' college readiness. *High School Journal*, *93*(3), 126-148.

Yin, R.K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Young, G. (1992). Chicana college students on the Texas-Mexico border: Tradition and transformation. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *14*(3), 341-352.

Yosso, T. (2006). *Critical race counterstories along the Chicano/Chicana educational pipeline*. New York: Routledge.

Yosso, T.J., Smith, W.A., Ceja. M., & Solorzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial micro aggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 659-690.

Zalaquett, C.P. (2005). Study of successful Latina/o students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *5*, 35-47.

Zeiser, K.L., Chan, T., Heuer, R. Cominole, M. (2015) Persistence and completion in post-secondary education of participants in the TRIO Student Support Services program. U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C.