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A ROBUST DISCUSSION ABOUT DESIGNING ROBUST ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Jan Welker, SUNY Institute of Technology
Lisa Berardino, SUNY Institute of Technology

ABSTRACT

What are your expectations in online discussions? They vary greatly among faculty from informal chats to test level assignments. What is an effective discussion design?

The presenters have a combined experience of 25 years in the SUNY online learning system. The authors make recommendations about structuring quality discussions and rubrics for grading discussions.

Taking both graduate and undergraduate levels of comprehension into consideration, just how should online discussions be designed to advance learning? Consider the following list of questions.

Student Buy-in

- *How can trial discussions as part of an orientation module with a mock grade or even extra credit incent students to take discussions seriously in the remaining learning modules?*

How Much Student Participation

- *What is a good length for a discussion period to demonstrate learning?*
- *What are the minimum criteria for the frequency of participation in a discussion period?*
- *What volume of posts is considered minimum?*
- *Should discussions be set to post-first mode?*

Quality of Student Participation:

- *What about the features of an online discussion assignment can move the quality of participation beyond the chatty habits of social media to require more than surface level analysis of cases and questions in the course material?*
- *What represents a 'professional self' with something of substance to say versus posting for posting sake?*

Making Room for Critical Thinking

- *What about the features of the online discussion design can provoke critical thinking that actually applies the theories and principles in the course materials?*
- *How can students be moved beyond 'I think', 'I believe', 'I agree', 'I disagree' without stating 'why'?.*

Grading Criteria

- *What are the grading criteria?*
- *How should expectations within grading criteria be weighted?*
- *How can discussion assignment requirements provide a rubric for grading discussions?*

Weight in Course Grade

- *How do online discussion assignments rank in the grading scheme for the course?*
- *What weight do discussions carry when compared to writing or other types of assignments?*

Contribution of Discussions to Other Course Assignments

- *Does the placement of discussions in the course flow build knowledge usable in an upcoming writing assignment?*

Group Discussions

- *What are the criteria for group discussions leaders?*
- *How are group discussions graded (group versus individual grade)?*

***Keywords**: online teaching, online discussions*

HAVE 21st CENTURY SKILLS MADE THEIR WAY TO THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY TO EXAMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH 21ST CENTURY SKILLS ARE BEING INCORPORATED INTO THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AT A SMALL, PRIVATE, CHURCH-RELATED UNIVERSITY

Christopher S. Boe, Pfeiffer University

ABSTRACT

With the increased expectation of college or university attendance as a prerequisite for workforce entry, the criticism of business leaders and the general public, and the increasing cost of postsecondary education, it becomes critical for institutions of higher education to know what they are offering students and how well those offerings are being presented. Meaningful, engaged learning that prepares students for life and the ever-changing world of work is what these consumers are seeking. It becomes, then, the responsibility of the institution of higher education to evaluate its programs to determine what it is actually providing students in terms of these needs. Through the solicitation of student and faculty perceptions of practice, this study was designed to explore the extent to which 21st century skills were being incorporated into the academic programs of study at a small, private, church-related university.

The researcher administered a survey of 21st century practices developed by Ravitz, Hixson, English, and Mergendoller (2012) to 682 students and 76 faculty members at the institution where the study took place to gauge the levels of incorporation of eight 21st century practices (critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, self-direction, global connection, local connection, and use of technology as a tool). Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted for each participant group. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the two groups' responses.

Results of the various analyses of data showed that 21st century skills instruction was taking place in all eight domains. The levels of instruction or incorporation, though, varied between domains and between the specific practices listed within each domain. The greatest implementation was reported in the use of technology as a tool by both students and faculty. Critical thinking and self-direction proved to be areas with high reports of student engagement with many of the specific practices. The greatest room for improvement came in global connection as reported by both students and faculty. Collaboration, creativity and innovation skills, and local connections were other areas where the practices included on the survey were not being universally implemented.

An increased emphasis on unit evaluation and comprehensive planning initiatives were recommended by the researcher. Included in this might be advisory panels of workforce leaders, alumni, and community members who can assist in evaluating curricula to ensure that it remains current and future focused. Likewise, ongoing professional development to address each of the domains reviewed would be suggested.

TEACHING ACCOUNTING EFFECTIVELY: AN EXAMINATION OF ACCOUNTING STUDENTS AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS

Dana L. Hart, University of North Florida
Karl Wang, University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT

This study examines how accounting faculty and students, as compared to psychology students and general faculty, consider the question of what it takes to be a good teacher.We surveyed 310 students and 67 accounting instructors using the Teacher Behaviors (Buskist, et al. 2002) to identify teaching characteristics that are important to both groups. We found that accounting faculty and students' Top-10 lists have six overlapping items: (a) approachable, (b) creative/interesting, (c) encourages/cares for students, (d) knowledgeable about subject matter, (e) realistic expectations of students/fair testing and grading, and (f) respectful. These results suggest there are some unique agreements as well as disagreements between accounting faculty and students regarding what a good teacher should be or should do. In comparing responses within accounting to those within psychology, we find greater overall agreement among students of both disciplines and among faculty of both disciplines, than among faculty and students in either discipline. The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of effective teaching in accounting and help generate ideas for improvement of accounting education overall.

MEASURES OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education are challenged with continual change and the risk of uncertainty, making quality an essential characteristic (Liao, Chang & Wu, 2010). Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011), state that the definition of quality can be subjective. According to them, defining quality in the world of education never has had a clear-cut answer leaving the definition of quality in the "eye of the beholder."

Similar to businesses, institutions of higher education must be accountable for quality education to students (Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2014). Higher education institutions are concerned with issues of enrollment, cost, quality of classroom teaching, graduation rate and job placement. According to Zumeta, Breneman, Callan, and Finney (2015), the best approach to answering the quality question is to measure the quality of the output directly. Furthermore, this includes what students learned, applying their valuable lessons to future endeavors, the students' performance in the labor market or graduate school, and most importantly, how employers rate their abilities.

Institutions of higher education are supported by many diverse stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, government agencies, accreditors, parents, students, and employers. This paper looks at the how the various stakeholders in higher education define quality. It takes the viewpoint the quality in higher education is multidimensional. Student learning, its applicability and relevance to future endeavors, students' performance in the labor market or graduate school, quality of faculty and classroom experience, a safe campus, school's reputation, graduation rate within a reasonable time, debt burden of student loans, and most importantly, how employers rate their abilities are all relevant in defining and measuring quality. In addition, the student's engagement in their educational institutions, employers and the community, financial success and quality of life beyond graduation are also factors in defining and measuring quality.

INTRODUCTION

Faced by increasing competition for new students, constraints on financial resources and a desire for meeting students' expectations, institutions of higher education (HEd) have adopted quality as a strategic tool in meeting these challenges. Emerges of a market orientation in higher education has lead the institutions to improve quality while increasing efficiency in their operations. The concept of quality is not new. Its goal is to provide a product or service that meets a desired or specific standard (Lundquist, 1998). In its earlier year, it was rooted in the concept of quality control that utilized statistical quality control techniques. Its use was largely limited to production function. Starting in 1950s, quality was viewed as organization-wide responsibility. The concept expanded from a control function to a management system and was described as total quality management (Rehder and Ralston, 1984).

TQM is viewed variously as a philosophy; as a process for managing change; as a strategy to improve organizational competitiveness and effectiveness; as a value system that emphasizes quality in product and services; and as an approach to managing the whole organization (Soni, Chaubey & Ryan, 2000). It can be viewed as a management unification process emphasizing teamwork and employee empowerment (Stuelpnagel, 1989).

QUALITY FRAMEWORKS

The process of TQM has continuous improvement as its core. The essential elements of TQM are summarized by Hill and Taylor (2007) as following:

- Quality is conceptualized as customers' perception.
- Customer is defined as a person, inside or outside the organization, who receives a product or service.
- Its objective is to meet customers' requirements through processes that are error free, and that eliminate waste and reduce cost.
- The result of each process is evaluated immediately, either by the customer or the processor.
- It requires superior information system to provide timely measures of and feedback on performance.
- It requires the involvement and commitment of all organizational members in quality matters and continuous improvement.

Another popular framework of quality management is the ISO9000 series. This framework places a greater emphasis upon the organizational processes, decision making and organizational leadership. Similar to the TQM framework, it too is customer focused and emphasizes continuous improvement. In addition, it is founded on leadership, involvement of people, process management, systems approach to management, factual approach to decision making, and mutually beneficial supplier relationships (O'Mahony and Garavan, 2012).

The TQM approach does not set an absolute standard for quality but sets "improvement" as its goal. It utilizes three criteria of goal attainment, resource utilization, and adaptability to measure the organization's performance. Adaptability here stands for the organization's capacity to review its performance and match its actions to the changes in business environment through timely feedback and continuous improvement process. In this view, an organization is a learning organization.

QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

HEIs are service organizations. Their products are intangible, impermanent, "perishable" and often difficult to measure. In services, there always is customer involvement, at least temporarily, in the production and consumption of service. It is more difficult to set standards for service, since it often relies upon the attitude of individual customer in a situation. Often the delivery of service itself assumes more importance to the consumer than the service itself. Further, there is no universally accepted definition of quality in the HE sector. All this makes the task of defining quality in HE that much more difficult.

There have been many attempts to describe quality in services. One such measure, SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, et al., 1988) defines five dimensions for service quality: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance; and Empathy. From the HEI perspective, tangible refers to the campus facilities, the classrooms and laboratories, student support services departments and personnel. Reliability will refer to availability of classes, teaching and learning on schedule and consistent outcomes. HEI administration and faculty response to individual student or group situations on and off campus difficult situations indicate the degree of responsiveness. HEIs have aim to provide a safe and secure campus to earn students trust and confidence. HEIs also aim to be attentive to the needs of students. Moves towards creating and supporting multiculturalism and addressing the needs of minority, international students reflect on empathy dimension. HEIs, like most organizations, have multiple and distinct groups of customers or stakeholders. The institutions need to assess their service quality for each of these groups.

Quality management in an HEI has to address the question quality in academics and in the administration. On the teaching side, the customer is normally assumed to be the student. However, the parents, legislators and the regulators, accreditation agencies, donors, alumni, and the employers are all stakeholders. The academics is also concerned with research, knowledge creation and service to community and the profession. The faculty takes the major responsibility for fulfilling goals in these areas. The HEI administration's concerns are the enrollment, cost, resources and facilities, institution reputation, meeting accreditation standards and employment issues. A lapse in any one of these could create a perception of sub-standard performance.

In a research study of quality determinants for education institutions in Greece, Tsinidou, Gerogiannis and Fitsilis (2010) measured the relative importance of these factors. They used data from a random sample of students using a questionnaire to assess the relative importance the students place on seven factors defining quality. These factors were: Quality of Academic Staff; Quality of Academic Services; Library Services; Curriculum Structure; Location; HEI Infrastructure; and Career Prospects.

The above study was done in Greece but it can shed light on what students consider important in their colleges and universities. The HEIs can use the TQM techniques of system to make improvement on those factors. The students value the communication and interaction skills of faculty as well as their research and professional experience. Students also value timely and accurate information about academics as well as on academic and administrative policies and procedures. The students assess curriculum quality with their career prospects. They want the flexibility in curriculum to able to customize their studies and be able to specialize in their field of study. Availability of minors, track and electives can increase perception of quality. They place importance on cost and convenience of commute as well as their career prospects.

IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The choice of a method for implementation of quality management programs will depend upon the contextual factors such as size of institution, complexity of programs, institutional culture, and style of management. The most difficult problem in implementing quality management emerges from the fact that the HEIs are characterized by a split between academics and administration. The traditions and culture of HEIs differs from those of industry. The academics value scholarship innovation, creativity, and teaching. The administration on the other hand, focuses upon the customer and organizational efficiency. In many institutions, the quality movement has been applied only in the administrative areas. There is also some confusion on the performance feedback mechanism in the academics. Treating students as customer may be considered as crass commercialization of education, and the faculty would resist it.

The organization part, the faculty too evaluates the clients, the students. This is a rarity in industry. The performance evaluation of the service provider, the faculty takes place much after the service is delivered and programs to improve it are not very common or specific to problems. In many research institutions the teaching could be considered secondary to scholarship and may not receive much attention. The tenure system may make the feedback even more distant from the time when service takes place.

HEIs are in the knowledge business. In the view of the faculty it requires autonomy and experimentation. Creativity may take time to appear. Knowledge and building with the faculty is equally, if not more, important that imparting knowledge to students, the customer. The level of cooperation needed between the academic and the administrative side is generally not there. In most situations, quality management remains becomes limited to the objective of cost reduction, focusing upon supplier relations and facility management. As a result the organization wide nature of TQM is hard to implement.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents the concept of quality management as it applies to higher education institutions. It presents two frameworks of quality-management, that of TQM and ISO900. Successful implementation of quality management will require modification in definition of quality and implementation strategy. The top management must create a unity of purpose, customer orientation and a culture of trust as a precondition for success. The top management must encourages the employees to participate in continuous improvement in product service. The effort should be directed towards the whole institution and focus upon the both the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution in providing services to all the stakeholders.

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THE ROLE-PLAY SIMULATION: METHOD, EXAMPLE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Role-play simulations are used an active learning method to engage students in the application of concepts to improve factual knowledge and procedural knowledge. The purpose of this paper is to generate interest in the method and generate some discussion on ways to improve use of the method. To this end, the role-play simulation method is described and differentiated from the traditional role-play. A role-play simulation is presented that was designed to teach concepts covered in a professional selling course. Evaluation of the method and recommendations for implementing the method are provided. Areas for future research are also recommended.

The role-play simulation used during a professional selling course is comprised of passive and active learning techniques that guide the student to learn concepts. They apply them during a capstone role-play representing a sales call made by a salesperson. The capstone role-play is formatted so that a salesperson meets with a business customer and completes the ADAPT questioning system, handles objectives made by the customer, and closes the sale.

INTRODUCTION

The role-play simulation (RPS) is an active learning method that achieves a deeper level of learning as compared to passive learning methods. Both active and passive learning are characterized by a continuum representing the degree of guidance and knowledge conveyed by an instructor. Active learning is located at one end; students take full responsibility for learning as they participate in activities requiring them to apply information to real world situations. In addition to role-play simulations, there are active learning methods such as debates, dramas, and peer teaching (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). At the other end of the continuum is passive learning that entails students learning about concepts but without their application. Active learning has gained favor because passive learning methods, such as lecturing, have been criticized. Some believe that students taking notes, or listening during lectures, are not thinking about the information being presented (DeNeve & Heppner, 1997). For the remainder of this paper, role-play simulations are referred to using the acronym RPS.

The RPS involves the student in the application of concepts in tandem with learning about them from the instructor. Unlike traditional role-plays, the RPS deals with more than one or two course concepts. It is implemented over several weeks so that students are able to learn concepts, practice applying them, and integrate the concepts into a capstone role-play. In contrast, the less traditional role-play may be conducted as a spontaneous event or completed after students have reviewed one or two concepts. Numerous RPS formats are likely to exist because learning objectives vary by subject and require different levels of instructor guidance. One area of future research is to categorize the different formats reported in the literature along the active-passive learning continuum. Broad objectives for completing the RPS may include increasing student interest in a subject, helping students understand and apply course concepts, and helping students understand how a group may handle the solving of problems (DeNeve & Heppner, 1997).

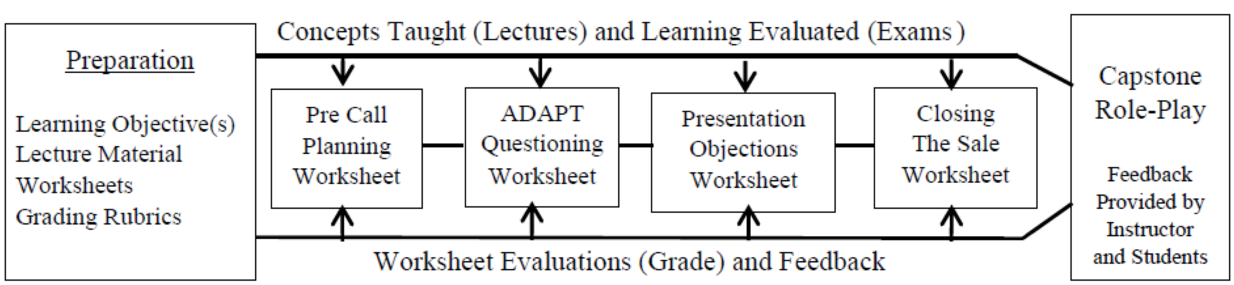
Smith and Boyer (1996) describe steps for designing and implementing a role-play simulation. The design begins with determination of learning objectives (i.e., teaching goals). The capstone role-play scenario, student roles, and ground rules for the students to follow are then defined. At the end of the role-play simulation, after the capstone role-play, a debriefing with students provides feedback and encourages them to reflect on their work.

EXAMPLE: PROFESSIONAL SALES CALL

A fundamental topic in a professional selling course is the nature of the selling process. More specifically, students learn how to interact with a customer during a meeting (i.e. the sales call). As noted, the traditional role-play method is more spontaneous and less complex than a RPS. An instructor may use traditional role-plays to cover one or two concepts as they are introduced through lectures. The role-play simulation, described in this paper, is similar but more structured and includes more concepts for students to learn. Figure 1 depicts the role-play simulation with its various components as a process completed during the professional selling course. The RPS features a mix of active learning (e.g., worksheets and capstone role-play) and passive learning activities (e.g., lectures).

As shown in Figure 1, an instructor prepares in advance by defining learning objective(s), developing lecture material, and producing worksheets that students complete and turn-in for evaluation during the course. Rubrics are developed to help guide these evaluations. A learning objective for the professional selling course is that students will be able to explain the principles of trust-based business-to-business relationship selling and demonstrate techniques to determine customers' needs, address their concerns, and close sales. The RPS designed to achieve this learning objective is organized with students at the beginning of the course. They are introduced to components of the RPS and student teams select a product to sell to a business customer.

Figure 1
Role Play Simulation Process



Although teams are formed at the beginning of the course, students do not know if they will play the role of salesperson or customer until 3-5 days ahead of the day scheduled for the capstone role-play. Taking this approach ensures that students focus on concepts from the perspective of both salesperson and customer. Concepts are taught using lectures and discussions with exams administered to assess student understanding. The lectures include four stages of the sales call and student teams complete a worksheet for each stage depicted in Figure 1: Pre Call Planning, the ADAPT Questioning System, Presentation and Handling Objections, and Closing the Sale.

Worksheets for each the four stages require students to demonstrate these concepts in written form. They develop dialogue between the salesperson and customer that reflects their understanding of a concept (e.g., the ADAPT questioning system). The worksheets are graded and returned with feedback and this is done before an exam is given that further assesses student knowledge of the concept. Students are required to complete worksheet revisions based on the feedback. The revised dialogue is used to practice for the capstone role-play at the end of the course. The "ground-rules" state that dialogue should not be memorized and students doing this, or reading too much from notes, during the capstone role-play will receive a "D" or "F" on that part of the role-play simulation. Drawings are held weeks before the capstone role-play to determine the day for each team to complete the activity. As noted, the roles to be played by each student are determined 3-5 days before a team's day to complete the capstone role-play. Students draw their roles from cards labeled as salesperson or customer.

As the capstone role-play is completed in front of the class, fellow students provide written feedback by following a rubric for evaluating the demonstration of techniques. The activity is taped and evaluated by the instructor. Feedback is given in written form with the recorded role-play and comments from the other students. Discussions are held with student teams to clarify written feedback and obtain students perceptions of the RPS.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the RPS considers the format, the extent to which students learned concepts, and opinions of students and the instructor. When developing a RPS format to achieve learning objectives, it is important to have a mix of passive and active learning activities. Specifically, there should be a balance between students taking full responsibility for learning and students receiving instructor guidance to ensure that they focus on appropriate material (Kozlowski & Salas, 2010). Research findings support this view by showing that active learning characterized as pure discovery, in which students develop knowledge on their own, is less effective for learning as compared to discovery-oriented learning that is guided by an instructor (Mayer, 2004). The RPS format used for the professional selling course achieves a balance between active and passive learning. The worksheets and capstone role-play are active learning methods supported by lectures that entail passive learning.

An assessment of student learning was completed using exam scores, worksheet scores, and instructor evaluations of the capstone role-play. These outcomes suggest the level of student learning within the factual knowledge and procedural knowledge domains (Krathwohl, 2002). Factual knowledge includes fundamental concepts that a student must know in order to understand and deal with problems in a discipline. Procedural knowledge is the understanding of how to do something. Multiple-choice exams included embedded questions related to the RPS concepts, thus assessing factual knowledge. Worksheet scores and the capstone role-play evaluation indicate the level of procedural knowledge.

Scores from the most recent professional selling course are presented in Table 1. A limited amount of data obtained from two classes during the same semester is available so the findings are tentative. Nevertheless, the percentage of questions answered correctly on exams range from 81% to 95%. The student teams performed between 75% and 88% on the RPS worksheets and the capstone role-play was evaluated at an average of 84%.

These outcomes indicate that students performed well with respect to the two knowledge domains. Research in this area could use different measures of students factual and procedural knowledge as others have done when researching the RPS (e.g., DeNeve & Heppner, 1997; Pettenger, West & Young, 2014). An area for future research is to explore the extent to which the RPS improves factual learning. Results associated with the factual knowledge domain may be compared to those achieved when a RPS is not part of the course design.

The reactions of students obtained during the debriefings were both positive and negative. Many students believed that it had a positive impact on their understanding of the selling process. However, they expressed difficulties with team members. The main problems were team members not communicating regularly, not returning e-mails, and not attending meetings to complete the worksheets.

Table 1

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS (1)

Concept	Assessment Method	Average Score: % Correct (2)	% of Students Scoring 70% and Higher
Pre Call Planning	Exam	83	85
	Worksheet	78	88
ADAPT Questioning System	Exam	81	73
	Worksheet	75	85
Presentation Skills How to Handle Objections	Exam (Presentation)	89	85
	Exam (Objections)	86	88
	Worksheet	79	91
Closing The Sale	Exam	95	85
	Worksheet	88	94
Capstone Role-Play	Instructor	84	97

(1) Scores for 72 students are reported. Three students on each team received the same grade on worksheets.

(2) Average score percentages for exams are based on correct answers to questions embedded in the exam.

The opinion of this author, representing an instructor's view, is a positive one. Students become more engaged in the course as the result of the RPS. Many of them transition from not believing they can perform well to knowing they can master the concepts. Although it is an effective teaching method, there are some challenges. Similar to other active learning methods, the RPS requires more time outside the classroom and during the class. Time has to be set aside in class for coaching students on how to ask questions, handle objections and complete closings. Therefore, the RPS reduces the amount of time available for teaching other concepts. Another challenge is that some students prefer passive learning methods. They are uncomfortable with developing and completing a capstone role-play. An area for future research is the analysis of learning styles to determine if the students are hesitant to participate because the RPS does not align with their style of learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The RPS format described in this paper has been developed over a 10-year period with numerous changes to fine-tune the method. Based on this experience, the following recommendations are advanced to help instructors considering use of the method.

1. It is best to explain RPS at the beginning of the course and show students a recorded capstone role-play completed by fellow students during a previous course. However, an instructor needs to reduce student anxiety by not overwhelming them with all the details at the beginning of the course. It is best to give the details shortly before the activity (e.g., drawings for roles, completion of a worksheet)
2. Students will be more motivated to participate when they form their own teams and determine the context for the RPS. The context includes the product to be sold, business customer that may purchase the product, and needs of the business customer. The instructor sets the ground rules for the context. For example, the instructor decides if the product should be a new one or one that is currently being sold.
3. Teams of two students are ideal because each adopts the salesperson or customer role. When using teams of three students, two are assigned the salesperson role and one student adopts the role of the customer. The salesperson's role is divided with each salesperson being responsible for role-playing a stage of the sales call. Typically, one completes the ADAPT questioning system and handles objections. The other salesperson does the presentation and completes the closing with the customer. Teams of three may be needed to accommodate higher enrollments.
4. Class time is needed for students to complete a draft of each worksheet. This allows the instructor to provide advice to individual teams on how to demonstrate a concept with dialogue.
5. Students not attending class can be a significant problem because team members may not understand the concept taught during a lecture. Therefore, an effective attendance policy is needed. One approach is to weight the days more when pertinent lectures are scheduled and when drafts of the worksheets will be completed. For example, missing one of these days may count as two absences instead of one.
6. Each student should complete a peer evaluation of team members after the fourth worksheet is submitted. A different one is then submitted after the capstone role-play to account for students' contributions for that activity.

In addition to these recommendations, three areas for future research were noted in the paper. Research could be completed to (1) categorize different RPS formats along the active-passive learning continuum, (2) examine the extent with which the RPS improves factual learning, and (3) analyze students' attitudes towards participating in relation to their learning styles to see if an alignment matters. It is hoped that this paper provides good support to instructors and prompts ideas that enhance the way a RPS is conducted. In addition, ideas have been included that may stimulate discussions to advance research activity in this area.

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ACCULTURATION AND SENSE OF BELONGING: ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS FOR INDIAN GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Graduate international students often experience cultural, academic, and social changes while transitioning to U.S. educational environments. How can college administrators better support and engage them for increased personal and professional success? Findings from this qualitative study on graduate students from India revealed key themes driving the engagement patterns of international students while navigating acculturation stressors and transition barriers. Data also showed the significance of how adjustment factors affect the nature of graduate international student engagement. Filling voids in relevant literature, acculturative factors that emerged in the study- including: linguistic, academic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and financial challenges- showed how cultural differences influenced the experiences of the studied population.

INTRODUCTION

Students from India have consistently ranked one of the top international college student populations in the United States. Driven by graduate enrollment growth, their numbers increased by over 29 percent in 2014/15 to reach 132,888 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2015). Despite the prevalence of Indian students at U.S. institutions, relatively little research exists on their adjustment experiences and the ways in which they engage on college campuses (Rahman & Rollock, 2004). While previous studies examined challenges of adjustment for international students (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006), a large number of these focused on international students in general and grouped students by region, overlooking potential cultural differences that exist within each region (Mukminin & McMahon, 2013; Trice, 2004). Furthermore, literature on the relationship between acculturation and student engagement is largely limited (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Resulting in a lack of qualitative research on graduate international students, most studies use large-scale, quantitative surveys that do not differentiate between the experiences of undergraduate and graduate international students (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Existing studies on graduate international students largely include students at institutions outside the U.S. (Coles & Swami, 2012; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Hence, current data does not adequately represent the lived experiences of these students on U.S. campuses. Therefore, this study aimed to explore key factors influencing the adjustment and engagement experiences of Indian graduate students at a Midwestern U.S. university through three main perspectives: mentoring relationships, socialization, and factors of perception. Specifically, the study aimed to explore answers to the following research questions: 1) What factors influence graduate international student adjustment?, and 2) How do these factors impact interactions with peers and faculty, participation in campus social and educational initiatives, and sense of belonging?

METHODS

The study was conducted at a private, religiously-affiliated university situated in the Midwest with a predominantly white student population. The university grants bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in several disciplines. With a total student population around 10,000, international students make up slightly over 30 percent of the graduate student population, among which students from India are the second-largest subpopulation. The study involved 16 Indian graduate students (4 female; 12 male); 13 master's students, and three doctoral students. All participants were pursuing degrees in computer science or engineering with varying durations of stay in the U.S. from a few months to four years.

FINDINGS

Three key themes influencing the adjustment and engagement of graduate Indian students are presented in this section: mentoring relationships, socialization, and factors of perception.

Mentoring Relationships

Interviewed students who expressed a sense of belonging and perceived themselves to be academically and socially adjusted to the university identified significant individuals such as faculty, coworkers, and staff who served as mentors and sources of academic or cultural knowledge, challenged students to grow, and supported them in their adjustment process. Most students who indicated that they felt well-adjusted to their academic program mentioned faculty members who were supportive through new academic experiences. All of the students interviewed were employed part-time on campus, and a few described seeing supervisors or co-workers as parental figures or mentors who helped them through homesickness and cultural adjustment, and increased their feelings of belonging on campus. Moreover, students participated in a program hosted by the international student services office that paired incoming students with staff and their families. They met regularly with students and invited them to their homes during holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving. Students described how his assigned family taught them how to behave according to U.S. cultural values and developed a very close relationship with their assigned families.

Socialization

Social ties were both an advancing factor and a product of students' engagement and involvement on campus. Different types of interactions influenced the social, cultural, and academic adjustment of students in varying ways. Friendships with U.S. students increased students' cultural adjustment and opened up access to academic and social opportunities, while interactions with other international students influenced participants' global knowledge and provided a sense of social support. Relationships based on shared cultural values, such as co-national friendships, tended to be formed first and served as sources of support prior to and after students arrived on campus. Among the three types of social ties identified by participants, friendships based on shared cultural values were predominant, followed by friendships with other international students and friendships with Americans.

Perceived self-efficacy

Factors influencing perceived self-efficacy, such as fear and language-related challenges, also affected the engagement levels of students and their willingness to be involved on campus. Students who shared that they had very few to no interactions with U.S. students talked about fear being a major barrier in preventing them from participating in activities on campus or stepping out of their comfort zone. This fear presented itself in different forms, such as uncertainty regarding how to navigate social and cultural norms, fear of being discriminated against or being ostracized, and an aversion to discomfort. Language was another particular barrier to communication that lowered students' perceived self-efficacy and subsequent willingness to engage in interaction with others. Though students studied English in their education in India, they struggled with the pace of conversation and slang that their American peers used. As English in India was British-influenced, students had to adjust from terms that they were accustomed to using to words and phrases that their peers used.

Perception of engagement

As graduate students, most students perceived academic achievement and completing their degree to be their first priority, expressing that they had chosen the U.S. based on positive perspectives of the education system and the career benefits such an education would afford them. This emphasis on fulfilling academic needs often took precedence over social involvement. In particular, the three doctoral students interviewed were very engaged academically due to strong relationships with their advisors that increased their interest and commitment to research. They were also highly involved in academic-related opportunities such as joining and volunteering with professional organizations, presenting at conferences, and teaching undergraduate students.

DISCUSSION

In examining the adjustment and engagement of Indian students, high-quality relationships were found instrumental to facilitating transition and positively influencing academic and social engagement on campus. As Indian students considered academics and completing their degree to be their main priority in being in the U.S., the relationships they had with faculty members were crucial to their university experience. Interviewed students who indicated close personal and professional relationships with their faculty members also expressed higher levels of satisfaction with their overall experience in the U.S., reinforcing the significance of faculty as a form of social support for international students (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992).

Students also mentioned ethnicity and perceived cultural similarities as factors in gravitating toward certain faculty members. Findings also revealed that some Indian students reported the role of parental figures in their workplace and on-campus pairing programs hosted by the international office. Such relationships with university staff were significant for several reasons: they provided students with useful cultural knowledge on how to adjust to cultural and social norms, and also buffered acculturative stress, reducing homesickness among students and increasing their sense of belonging.

Essential to the findings was Bhugra's argument (2004) that cultural identity consists of several aspects including language and rituals, and adhering to these cultural markers assists individuals in feeling part of their culture during acculturation. Low ethnic density or the size of an ethnic group compared to the overall population in a location, and the dissonance that occurs when an individual's cultural characteristics varies from their surrounding population, can lead to feelings of isolation (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Though many participants expressed a willingness to be involved on campus and to engage in more interactions with U.S. students, they encountered varying factors that affected their ability to be engaged on campus, including: fear, language-related difficulties, conflicting class and work schedules, academic priorities, financial pressures, and dietary restrictions. Results also revealed the role of student organizations in international student adjustment. While all students mentioned one form or other of acculturative stress that corresponded with existing literature (e.g. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006), students who contacted the Indian student organization on campus encountered less stress in their initial transition to the U.S.

Students also identified relationships with faculty, staff, and peers as sources of support that buffered adjustment stress, though different types of connections had varying implications on how they engaged on campus. Students who developed strong relationships with professors were more academically engaged, but this focus on academic engagement also correlated with lower social involvement and fewer interactions with peers, though it did not seem to affect the sense of belonging to the institution.

When it came to making friendships, frequency of contact was instrumental to deepened relationships, which acted as an incentive for students to be more involved and also increased perceived social support. Social ties that students formed with American and other international students also increased their motivation to participate in social initiatives on campus, and which further expanded the opportunities they had to interact with others, increasing their social circles.

Overall, this study found that the adjustment process of Indian students impacted how they engaged academically and socially on campus. Additionally, an interdependent relationship was further found between academic and social engagement, with an increase in academic engagement corresponding with a decrease in social involvement, and vice versa. In particular, social interactions and social support in the adjustment process were crucial to buffering acculturative stress and influencing student engagement. Students who described themselves to be better adjusted were more likely to feel a sense of belonging to the campus community, though higher cultural adjustment did not necessarily predict their level of participation in social or academic activities. However, high student involvement in academic and social activities reinforced students' cultural and academic adjustment through increased interactions and feelings of social support.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Few limitations surrounded the nature of this study. As the sample was limited to a specific population of international students within an institution, the findings from this study are not necessarily generalizable to all Indian student populations at other institutions. Additionally, since the study focused on Indian graduate student adjustment and engagement, where master's students were focused on completing their program within two years and doctoral students were involved in research, it would be interesting to see if this emphasis on academic achievement over social involvement remained the same for Indian undergraduate students in the U.S.

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A COMMENTARY REGARDING CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

During recent years, a variety of noteworthy incidents and campus calamities have affected higher education settings. Catastrophes may arise from both human and natural origins. Any perusal of news items ranges from periodic instances of campus violence to natural disasters. Academic institutions must acknowledge their susceptibilities to such incidents. This paper examines strategic considerations whereby institutions of higher education may address such issues within the context of the emergency management cycle.

INTRODUCTION

During modern times, institutions of higher education often possess residential campus police forces (McElreath, et al., 2013). Despite their best efforts, campus law enforcement organizations cannot quash all incidents and calamities. Instead, they represent entities whose publically observable actions occur after incidents occur. Essentially, they represent after-the-fact entities whose missions contribute toward the deterring of criminality and the maintaining of order societally (Doss, 2011). Regardless, their activities permeate the entirety of the emergency management cycle (EMC) whereby efforts exist toward preparing for, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from adverse incidents.

Despite the presence of a police force, higher education administrators must be mindful of the types, scopes, and magnitudes of incidents that have the potential of adversely affecting campuses and their residents. Calamities may arise from natural origins, such as tornadoes and hurricanes, or they may arise from human catalysts, such as muggings or incidents of domestic violence. When crafting strategy and deriving strategic plans, administrators must identify and incorporate both categories of incidents within their long-term perspectives and endeavors. In order to enhance strategic activities, the potentials of adverse incidents and their corresponding endeavors may also be considered within the EMC context.

DISCUSSION

Threats affecting communities, such as higher education settings, may arise from both man-made and natural origins (McElreath, et al., 2014b). The topic of safety and security is a paramount concern for parents, students, and university administrators as academic settings are not invulnerable to acts of violence (Troxel & Doss, 2010). Therefore, higher education settings must acknowledge the reality of numerous endangerments affecting academic settings, ranging from campus violence to adverse weather conditions. Processes and procedures are essential when considering the responses of law enforcement organizations to various incidents (Doss, 2014). Given these notions, modern higher education institutions must envision strategies whereby the risks of such events are identified and incorporated within strategic planning processes. Such endeavors must acknowledge both controllable and uncontrollable risks (Doss, Guo, & Lee, 2012). Hence, emergency plans must exist to accommodate the potentials of both man-made events and natural calamities (McElreath, 2014a).

The preceding notions are applicable for both physical and virtual environments. The motivations for crime and acts of criminality that occur within the physical world may often be mimicked within virtual environments (Doss, Henley, & McElreath, 2013). Essentially, crime that occurs physically may also occur virtually among academic and residential settings within higher education institutions. Examples include violence that is associated with instances of cyber-harassment, cyber-stalking, and cyber-bullying (Patton, et al., 2014). Corresponding disputes within virtual settings may quickly exacerbate, and private matters may speedily become common knowledge (Melander, 2010). In other words, events that transpire among virtual domains may eventually have repercussions in the physical world.

The rising threat of violence on college campuses is a prevalent topic in media today and causes great strife when selecting a place to live. By their natures, university settings are open and available to students, employees, and the general public. Maintaining societal order and deterring criminality are often accomplished through compliance and influence instead of outright and overt enforcement. However, according to Jenson (2007), violence at institutions of higher education has increased noticeably in the last few decades. While Jenson (2007) primarily alludes to campus shootings and homicides, there are many forms of violence that can occur on a college campus. These include: stalking, assault, sexual violence, robbery, arson, and hate crimes to name only a few. Similarly, acts of terrorism, such as the destruction of research laboratories by eco-terrorists, are also concerns of modern institutions of higher education (Doss, Jones, & Sumrall, 2010). Thus, accommodations must be made to provide emergency communication systems to disseminate information among mass audiences (Doss, Glover, Goza, & Wigginton, 2015). Because university settings may contain thousands of residents, their police forces may benefit from crowd control training. Such training is not uncommon among law enforcement organizations (Jensen, et al., 2015).

The city of Livingston, which is the home of the University of West Alabama, boasts exceedingly above average statistics for campus safety. However, even in a small, rural, area of Alabama, violence is still quite possible. On January 20, 2010 a high school teacher, Starrick Morgan-Gray, was shot and killed by her husband immediately before school ended for the day (Bond Doubled, 2010). This act of violence occurred just on the outskirts of the UWA campus and rocked both the local and on campus community (Doss, Troxel, Sumrall, & Jones, 2010). This malicious event demonstrates that rural higher education settings are not immune from acts of criminal violence despite any appearances of innocuousness.

CONTEXTS OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CYCLE

Within higher education, strategic planning endeavors must incorporate public safety and law enforcement attributes throughout each EMC phase. The EMC represents a cyclical process for addressing the risks and potentials of incidents that arise from both human and natural catalysts. Below are itemized EMC considerations for higher education settings with respect to crafting strategy and strategic plans:

Preparedness – Performing threat assessment and risk analysis for identified endangerments; conducting training for incidents; planning evacuation routes and activities; conducting periodic incident exercises incorporating realism and performing after-action reviews.
Mitigation – Enacting planned methods of diminishing the negative effects of calamities and disseminating warning information in advance of known events (e.g., hurricanes, etc.).
Response – Executing specific plans with respect to the type of incident that occurs.
Recovery -- Attempts to achieve a state of normalcy (as best as is possible) during the aftermath of an incident. Recovery must adhere to recovery plans. During recovery, lessons learned from the incident experience may be incorporated within strategic plans and endeavors to bolster the ability of the organization to experience similar events. Lessons learned may also be fruitful for avoiding another incident of like fashion (if possible).

The use of the EMC provides a basis for addressing a variety of endangerments, ranging from terrorism to natural incidents. Administrators must identify potential threats, assign risks, and categorically order their perceived endangerments with respect to the most likely to the least likely. This information contributes toward the crafting of strategy institutionally and for the developing of actions plans among departments regarding processes and procedures that must be performed when incidents occur. Institutions and their respective departments must be prepared for acknowledged events, must respond to incidents while attempting to mitigate their negative effects, and responses must occur toward the goal of achieving a state of normalcy afterward.

No panacea exists for perfectly handing any incident. It is unsurprising if plans are thwarted immediately upon their invoking for a variety of reasons. For instance, resources may be destroyed or unavailable; communication may be impaired; humans may be injured or dead; roadways may be impassible; and so forth. Thus, organizations must also incorporate some aspects of contingency planning when incorporating the EMC within strategic planning efforts. Regardless the EMC is a relevant tool for enhancing the strategic endeavors of institutions when crafting strategy and expressing strategic plans.

Any number of incidents may impact academic institutions and their respective locales. For instance, the potential of terrorism cannot be ignored, especially among heavily-populated areas (Wigginton, et al, 2015). During 2015, a murder-suicide incident occurred at Delta State University that gained national attention (Apel, 2015). In Oregon, during 2015, a bomb threat necessitated the evacuating of college campuses (Bella, 2015). During 2015, flooding necessitated the closure of the University of South Carolina (Reed, 2015). Although such events are tragic, they represent the seriousness of incidents that may occur among higher education settings. Certainly, these brief examples are indicative of endangerments that involve both human and natural catalysts. Thus, when crafting strategy and strategic plans, institutions must consider the potential of such events occurring with respect to each separate EMC phase.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The realities of campus tragedies are unignorable. Some may represent acts of moral turpitude whereas others may represent natural catastrophes. Regardless, higher education administrators must be cognizant of endangerments when crafting strategy and expressing specific plans. Similarly, such notions must permeate departments within the institution. Certainly, no plan is perfect, and the efficacy of plans may be diminished given the dynamics of reality. In any case, the EMC represents a resource through which strategic efforts may be bolstered.

Higher education institutions may craft some form of homeland security or public safety education and training (Allen, McElreath, Henley, & Doss, 2014). Training programs may be offered as part of degree curriculums, as individual courses, or as programs for specific groups (e.g., law enforcement and other emergency responders) (Doss, et al., 2011). Such training may incorporate virtual learning or it may occur physically. The valuation may be addressed via capital budgeting methods to determine their viability and worthiness (Doss, et al, 2015). Both students and employees may benefit from such training. Regardless of the modality, personnel should have some familiarity with the types of events that may impact the academic setting, and understand the activities that must occur when incidents happen. Such training may address issues that are relevant for each separate EMC phase.

Campuses often possess some type of residential housing for students. It is recommended that student housing also ensure that residents are aware of potential endangerments, behavioral expectations when incidents occur, and appropriate actions throughout the EMC phases. It is also recommended that housing areas periodically perform some type of drill scenario wherein residents experience some type of emergency training and gain some perspective regarding the operational aspects of managing emergency incidents.

Campuses are often reflective of their respective cities or rural settings. Thus, there is the potential for urban or rural incidents to affect higher education settings. For instance, in Memphis, a faculty member was mugged while walking home from campus (UofM, 2013). Given the potential of such events, administrators must also acknowledge the possibility of external factors that may pose endangerments for their respective academic communities. Therefore, campus strategic planning must also incorporate some considerations of events that may occur within their respective localities.

No guarantees exist that adverse incidents will never occur or occur only infrequently among campus settings. However, campuses must acknowledge the potentials of such endangerments, and prepare themselves accordingly. Through considerations of the EMC, administrators may improve their strategic endeavors whereby calamities may either be avoided or have their negative effects mitigated. In any case, the EMC represents a valid resource for supporting the long-term, strategic endeavors of campuses when crafting strategies and corresponding actions.

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A COMMENTARY REGARDING THE RENOVATION OF SELDEN HALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST ALABAMA

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the University of West Alabama (UWA) explored options to increase the number of on campus residence hall beds. One option is the renovation of an existing residence hall, Selden Hall. The objective of this study was to quantify the costs associated with the decision to renovate Selden Hall weighed against the projected positive academic, social, and monetary benefits to UWA. After the values were computed and analyzed, it was found that the monetary values of renovating Selden Hall did not exceed the cost, with a Profitability Index (PI) of 0.703 and 0.867 using total net operating income and total revenue, respectively.

INTRODUCTION

The University of West Alabama (UWA) is situated in the geographic center of the Black Belt and serves as one of the primary institutions of higher education for the area. Many students who attend UWA come from disenfranchised backgrounds and socioeconomic disparity in the Black Belt region. With the continued rising costs of higher education, many potential students in the area are simply unable to burden the financial commitment. Those who are able to bear the financial commitment and decide to attend UWA soon discover that there are many other monetary commitments that they must make besides paying tuition. Along with the fixed rising cost of tuition, the cost of living on campus has continued to climb at a steady rate. While there are many benefits to living on campus (higher GPA, increased retention and graduation rates, etc.), many students choose to live off campus as soon as possible in order to save funds for other expenses. This paper examines the possibility of renovating an existing residence hall on the UWA campus to offer affordable, quality, on campus housing.

At the conclusion of the spring 2012 semester, Selden Hall, which was used as a traditional hall for women since 1968, was taken offline as a residence hall facility. This action was a response to the construction of a new 459 bed residence hall, Gilbert Hall, which opened at the beginning of the fall, 2012 semester. However, because of an increase in the number of upperclassman applying to live on campus, and an increase in the size of the entering freshman class, Selden Hall has continued to be used as an overflow residence hall. At the start of the fall, 2015 semester over eighty-five residents were temporary housed in Selden Hall. After room consolidations and a vacancy assessment approximately sixty residents were permanently assigned to Selden Hall. With a projected increase in enrollment, and more and more upperclassman choosing to return to on campus housing, it is now necessary to increase the total number of permanent beds on campus. During the spring, 2015 semester this researcher identified this problem and began research. The overall purpose of this study was to determine the cost versus benefit of renovating Selden Hall in order to increase the total number of available beds on campus. This was accomplished through surveying current UWA students, interviewing key stakeholders, and completing a peer institution analysis.

DISCUSSION

The cost of higher education has been steadily rising throughout the country, and UWA is no exception. Over the last 45 years, college tuition and fees prices increased approximately twice as fast as the rate of inflation, as measured by the consumer price index (*Trends in Higher Education*). At UWA, and numerous other institutions of higher education, along with the rising costs of tuition, the costs of living on campus have continued to increase at a steady rate. Four-year public universities across the nation have increased charges for room and board by an average of 9% above inflation in the past five years. Not factoring in adjustment for inflation, fees for room and board at public higher education institutions have climbed sharply by more than 20% since 2009 (Immerwahl & Johnson, 2007). As prices rise, students begin to pursue any way possible to decrease the costs of their education. Among institutions of higher education, financial analysis may be used to examine their levels of competitiveness (Doss, et al., 2015; Doss, Troxel, & Sumrall, 2010). Cost-benefit analysis is an approach suitable for such tasks (Doss, Sumrall, & Jones, 2012 ; Doss, Sumrall, McElreath, & Jones, 2013).

One of the main ways UWA students seek to decrease costs is by moving off campus. However, by moving off campus students sacrifice countless benefits. This is a serious issue that UWA currently faces. Many students do not realize the hidden costs of living in an off campus facility, nor do they realize the potential negative consequences. While there are many benefits to living on campus, such as a higher than average GPA, proximity to professors, and easier access to campus resources, many students choose to live off campus as soon as they can in order to save funds for other collegiate expenses. As UWA loses on campus students, statistically the graduation rate deteriorates, the retention rate lowers, and UWA loses potential revenue. Students living in a residence hall have consistently shown higher levels of persistence and degree attainment compared to those who live off campus (Chickering, 1974). Even when factors such as socioeconomic status and past academic achievement are controlled for, students who live in on campus residence halls exhibit considerably higher rates of persistence and graduation than students who have never had the experience of living on campus (Astin, 1984). On campus residential living has long been documented as a significant positive factor for college students' persistence as well as other notable gains related to academic and social development. Living on campus encourages students to become involved on the campus, integrate into the social and academic systems, and develop personally as an individual.

The overall purpose of this study was to answer a number of important questions that are necessary for UWA to continue to grow and develop as a regional leader in higher education, and for the Office of Housing and Residence Life to meet the developing demands of the modern student. This was accomplished by surveying and analyzing the quality of life of current UWA students, assessing the need of additional upperclassman beds on campus, and determining the cost versus benefit of renovating Selden Hall.

FINDINGS OF PERCEIVED QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

This quantitative and qualitative study explored the relationship of student satisfaction and perceived financial burden between on and off campus students at UWA. Secondary data was gathered with the assistance of the UWA Housing and Residence Life department, as well as the UWA Office on Institutional Effectiveness. Approval for research from the UWA Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought prior to conducting research and approval was granted on March 18, 2015. The survey was administered during the spring 2015 semester from March 19th – April 15th. In all, a total of 520 participants completed the survey, which represents almost 31% of the entire target population. 16 responses were eliminated due to being incomplete. Participation was limited to only current full-time UWA freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate students. Approximately 57% of respondents identified as female, while 43% identified as male. Almost two-thirds (61%) of respondents indicated that they were between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age. Approximately 30% were between the ages of 22-24. Approximately 8% indicated that they were over the age of 24, and only 1% was under the age of 18. For classification, the results were mostly evenly spread out. Approximately 22% identified as freshman, 20% sophomore, 24% junior, 26% senior, and 8% graduate student. Approximately 249 respondents (48%) currently live off campus while 271 respondents (52%) live on campus.

The goal of this study is primarily to determine if off campus students are satisfied with their decision of living off campus and if more affordable options are available on campus would he or she move back. The participants of this study (N = 520) were surveyed to gather the needed data. Four questions were asked to gauge the respondents' quality of life. These questions are used in the UWA Department of Housing and Residence Life's annual assessment of on campus living to determine resident satisfaction and happiness.

- I feel safe where I live
- Things that were broken were fixed in a responsible amount of time
- The atmosphere where I live is conducive to studying
- I feel that my belongings are secure when I leave

The question outcomes are presented within the following tables.

Table 1
STUDENT RESIDENTIAL SURVEY
I feel safe where I live.

Level of Agreement	Off-Campus Student Responses	On-Campus Student Responses
Strongly Agree	43%	64%
Agree	26%	30%
Neutral	9%	6%
Disagree	18%	No Response
Strongly Disagree	4%	No Response

Table 2
STUDENT RESIDENTIAL SURVEY
Things that were broken were fixed in a responsible amount of time.

Level of Agreement	Off-Campus Student Responses	On-Campus Student Responses
Strongly Agree	28%	44%
Agree	19%	32%
Neutral	14%	11%
Disagree	30%	7%
Strongly Disagree	18%	5%

Table 3
STUDENT RESIDENTIAL SURVEY
The atmosphere where I live is conducive to studying.

Level of Agreement	Off-Campus Student Responses	On-Campus Student Responses
Strongly Agree	29%	37%
Agree	29%	34%
Neutral	14%	14%
Disagree	20%	12%
Strongly Disagree	8%	3%

Table 4
STUDENT RESIDENTIAL SURVEY
I feel that my belongings are secure when I leave.

Level of Agreement	Off-Campus Student Responses	On-Campus Student Responses
Strongly Agree	35%	54%
Agree	23%	32%
Neutral	11%	10%
Disagree	23%	4%
Strongly Disagree	8%	No Response

Based on the gathered data, off campus UWA students overall are dissatisfied with the quality of housing services that are available. Responses indicate that off campus students have lower rates of satisfaction compared to on campus students. Substantially more off campus students indicate that they somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree than on campus students on all four quality of life questions.

Based on the 249 off campus respondents, 177 indicated that they would move back to campus if more affordable and higher quality upperclassman halls were made available. This quantity represents approximately 71% of the total number of off campus survey respondents. Based on capacity, and application numbers, in order to accommodate an increase in total on campus residents additional upperclassman beds would need to be created. This research shows that there is indeed a significant demand for more upperclassman beds on campus.

FINDINGS OF COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

After the values were computed and analyzed it was found that the monetary values of renovating Selden Hall did not exceed the cost, with a Profitability Index (PI) of 0.703 and 0.867 using total net operating income and total revenue, respectively. A PI of less than 1.0 means the monetary benefit is less than its cost. However, unlike firms, universities do not make decisions on residential structures based only on the profitability of rental revenue. Universities will reap other intangible benefits such as increased enrollment numbers, persistence rates, and graduation percentages. The renovation of Selden Hall provides a key service to the current, and future, students at UWA and affords the institution numerous benefits. Affordable, and quality, on campus housing is necessary for UWA to continue to be a competitive regional institution of higher education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of this research showed an increased perceived quality of life for current UWA on campus students compared to current students living off campus. However, the research failed to show a positive monetary gain for the renovation of Selden Hall for UWA. However, the addition of more affordable and quality upperclassman beds on campus will contribute to an increase in overall academic performance, and social integration. These intangible benefits will strengthen UWA's mission to serve and meet the needs of the West Alabama area. Given UWA's continued efforts to be a leading regional institution that is known for its high-quality programs and student-centered atmosphere, the new leadership of the UWA President and other high level administrators, and the rising costs of higher education, it is appropriate to study the on campus housing market at this time. Based on the assumptions made in the modeling of the costs, and the final results, it is evident that there is a high level of uncertainty associated with the estimation of costs and projected monetary benefits. Though a high level of uncertainty also exists in the quantification of the benefits, under all years of the pro-forma analysis the net present benefit value was positive, which generated revenue. It is concluded that the project would be a success for UWA.

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A COMMENTARY REGARDING CAMPUS HOUSING

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ABSTRACT

Campus housing exists among many American institutions of higher education. Its presence provides residences that contribute positively and meaningfully toward student success, learning, socialization, and safety. Campus housing is not only a residential aspect of modern institutions of higher education, but is also a resource whereby academic institutions may enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness for potential students. This paper examines various facets of housing history and modern housing among American higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The University of West Alabama (UWA) serves a unique area of the state of Alabama and the surrounding region. This constituency is frequently referred to as the Black Belt, and it stretches across multiple states from Texas to Maryland. However, the vast majority of the region is focused in the deep southern states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. UWA is situated in the geographic center of the Black Belt, and serves as one of the primary institutions of higher education for the area. Many students who attend UWA come from disenfranchised backgrounds and socioeconomic disparity in the Black Belt region. With the continued rising costs of higher education, many potential students in the area surrounding UWA are simply financially unable to attain a higher education solely due to the cost. Those who are able to bear the financial commitment and decide to attend UWA soon discover that there are many other monetary commitments that they must make besides paying tuition. Along with the fixed rising cost of tuition, the cost of living on campus has continued to climb at a steady rate. While there are many benefits to living on campus, such as a higher than average GPA, proximity to professors, and easier access to campus resources, many students choose to live off campus as soon as they can in order to save funds for other collegiate expenses. As UWA loses on campus students, statistically the graduation rate deteriorates, the retention rate lowers, and UWA loses potential revenue. Such situations are not uncommon; they are a reality of many higher education institutions nationally.

Campus housing acts not only as a meaningful contributor toward learning and success academically, but also is a competitive resource for attracting and retaining students. Campus housing provides a means of not only housing students, but enhancing the overall collegiate experience for students. Living within campus housing often improves levels of engagement among students. In some cases, campus housing may be the only living option that is realistically feasible for some students whereas others may opt to commute to school. Regardless, for a variety of different reasons, campus housing is an essential aspect of modern higher education institutions. Through campus housing, academic institutions may slow attrition rates of students via some levels of retention among on campus students. Given these notions, this paper presents a brief overview of perspectives regarding campus housing.

CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

The college experience for many students is an exhilarating, rousing, and sometimes awe-inspiring journey. Living on campus has long been an integral part of many student's collegiate experience. For the first time numerous students find themselves responsible for significant choices that will determine the course of their lives for years to come. Living on campus is a significant period for any student in building a solid foundation for success in college and beyond. More than convenience, living on campus is about making connections, building community, and finding one's place, both academically and socially, at an institution of higher education. Students who live on campus are more invested and involved in campus life. They are more likely to be satisfied with their university experience, develop a strong affinity to the institution, and persist and progress at a higher rate than those who have never lived on campus (Astin, 1977).

Student housing has existed, in one form or another, throughout the history of higher education in the United States. Originally referred to as dormitories, now known as residence halls, institutional housing developed from modeling English universities (Winston & Anchors, 1993). The crowded and frequently meagerly furnished American dormitories offered by universities and colleges in the 19th century provided students with a sense of shared experience while also providing a practical way for meeting the housing needs of students (Rudolph, 1990). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, on campus housing at colleges and universities grew at an increased rate primarily in response to the passage of the G.I. Bill. Furthermore, the passage and enactment of Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950 provided federal monies for the building of collegiate housing which helped fuel the considerable growth of dormitories across the United States. The primary objective of Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950 was to give institutions the ability to take full advantage of the number of students who could be housed for the least cost (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). Consequently, it was during this era which many multistoried, compact, and congested facilities were built on many college campuses. At this point in higher education, very little thought was given to the educational potential of the on campus living experience.

As on campus student housing became more prevalent on university campuses, their function began to shift from just simply housing students to creating an all-encompassing educational environment. By the 1970s a significant change occurred in the staffing of dormitories at many institutions. Housemothers, who had primarily served in a parent role enforcing curfews, bed checks, and so forth, were replaced with student affairs professionals. An emphasis was placed on advising students, providing social and educational programming, self-governance, and coordinating services for students in order for superior academic achievement (Fredriksen, 1993). By this time the overall focus from merely constructing additional spaces and housing more students receded and the nature of the dormitory began to transform. University staff members referred to these buildings as residence halls in an effort to swing the focus from solely providing students a place to sleep and eat to a focus on providing an educationally rich living environment (Fredriksen, 1993). The innovative and revolutionary change in the atmosphere of the dormitory initiated change and encouraged further research. With residence hall staff members now coming from a background in education, research began to be conducted in the residence hall environment to discover what benefits students might reap by living in this type of environment.

Researchers began to look at the abundant potential positive effects of students residing in on campus housing facilities and ascertained that the experience can have a positive impact on personal development and overall academic performance (Fredriksen, 1993). Many of the studies, conducted during the 1970s and 1980s, reported of an assortment of benefits of living on campus compared to living off campus. The most constant benefits found in these studies were an increase in retention and graduation rates as well as an increase of involvement in university life. Researchers, such as Alexander Astin and Arthur Chickering, were two of the most noteworthy and published researchers from this time period to investigate and publish the benefits of on campus living. Astin (1977) indicates that living in a residence hall may add as much as a 12% advantage to a student's chances of persisting and attaining a degree. Chickering (1974) established that students residing in private off campus housing were less satisfied, not as fulfilled with their college experience, and not as likely to return to school the following term when compared to students who were living in on campus housing.

Students living in a residence hall have consistently shown higher levels of persistence and degree attainment compared to those who live off campus (Astin, 1973). Even when factors such as socioeconomic status and past academic achievement are controlled for, students who live in on campus residence halls exhibit considerably higher rates of persistence and graduation than students who have never had the experience of living on campus (Blimling, 1989). Correspondingly, students living on campus traditionally have shown higher levels of participation in college activities and engagement in university life than students living off campus (Pascarella, 1984). The importance of involvement in activities was researched and reported by Astin (1984) who indicated that students who are more involved with their college or university are more likely to be retained. Increased participation in organizational decisions contributes toward greater levels of organizational commitment (Sumrall, Cox, Doss, & Jones, 2008; Sumrall, Cox, & Doss, 2007; Sumrall, 2006). Thus, engaging on campus students in the decisions of housing communities may enhance their level of commitment to the community or academic institution. On campus students are traditionally more involved than off campus students in many ways, including a greater likelihood of being a member of student government, interacting with faculty and staff outside of the classroom, and by participating in other extracurricular activities (Astin, 1984).

CONCLUSION

Modern residence hall environments have dramatically changed since the late 1970s and 1980s. Colleges and universities are building and renovating existing residence halls in order to accommodate record numbers. Furthermore, the student's expectations for residence halls have changed. Students are wanting a greater level of privacy and improved amenities in residence halls. Institutions are developing in order to meet the new demands of the modern student. Very few institutions are constructing the typical residence halls of the past that included community-style bathrooms and long hallways. Modern residence halls represent an apartment style which typically offers single bedrooms, shared living rooms, full kitchens, and bathrooms. This style has emerged from new student demand, as well as from newly increased competition from off campus apartment complexes (Banning, McGuire, & Stegman, 1995).

During modern times, higher education institutions must satisfy unique niches to enhance their competitiveness and to attract students (Doss, et al., 2015). Regardless of the institution, some effort must be made to ensure quality experiences academically and socially for students and the personnel with whom they interact. However, any perception of quality is unique for the individual that experiences an event (Doss, Guo, & Lee, 2012). Thus, it is impossible to satisfy the expectations of quality for all students whom reside on campus. In any instance, modern housing must provide competitive amenities whereby most student expectations of quality are satisfied. As a result, student retention may occur thereby abating student attrition rates.

Any capital investment toward campus housing necessitates a long-term commitment of resources financially and economically. Analytical methods, such as internal rate of return or net present worth, are deemed appropriate for examining endeavors among higher education institutions (Doss, Troxel, & Sumrall, 2010; Doss, et al., 2015). Other methods may include cost-benefit analysis, break-even analysis, profitability index, and other forms of capital budgeting (Doss, Sumrall, McElreath, & Jones, 2013; Doss, Sumrall, & Jones, 2012). Any consideration of campus housing must not be viewed solely as a financial cost, but also as a commitment toward enhancing the betterment of campus life, student retention, and student success through time.

Modern times are tumultuous both domestically and internationally. Campus housing may exhibit a mix of difference ethnicities, nationalities, and backgrounds among residents. Safety becomes a critical factor of any modern higher education institution regarding the housing of students. Although police forces may be available, they represent after-the-fact entities whose response activities generally occur after an incident occurs (Doss, 2011; McElreath, et al., 2013). Any number of incidents may occur that affect the safety of campus residents, ranging from natural disasters to man-made events (McElreath, et al., 2014a; McElreath, et al., 2014b). Certainly, the dangers of terrorism cannot be ignored when considering the potential of both domestic and overseas groups to target U.S. interests and residents (Doss, Jones, & Sumrall, 2010; Wigginton, et al., 2015). Thus, college campuses may become the targets of terrorist events. Campus housing should also accommodate the ability to summon assistance quickly if emergencies occur. Any number of resources exist to satisfy this requirement, such as the Internet, emergency call boxes, 911 awareness, and so forth (Doss, Glover, Goza, & Wigginton, 2015). Given these notions, when crafting policies that affect campus housing, higher education administrators must acknowledge and accommodate the potentials of such endangerments when designing and erecting campus housing.

Modern campus housing exhibits designs and amenities that were unimaginable during the formative years of American higher education. Students live in relative comfort and safety while studying and living away from their respective homes. Although modern campus housing seems capacious and satisfactory, it will evolve continuously to satisfy the expectations of future generations. In due time, as generations pass and academic institutions respond to their respective needs and wants, the characteristics of future campus housing will emerge as reflections of societal and academic expectations within the higher education domain. Throughout such change, higher education institutions must address the same question that was pondered by preceding generations of administrators: how does the institution retain students and lower student attrition within the campus? Given the arguments of Astin (1973, 1977, 1984), Banning, McGuire, and Stegman (1995), Blimling (1989), Chickering (1974), Schroeder and Mable (1994), and Winston and Anchors (1993), campus housing represents a resource through which this question may be addressed among future generations.

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HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The history of on campus residential living in the United States has exemplified how residential life has evolved to meet the growing needs and demands of collegiate students. From meager rooms that solely provided shelter to various multifaceted structures with a multitude of amenities, university housing has changed significantly over time. Historically, the advancement of American student housing can be organized into three separate phases; the Colonial period, the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. This paper provides a historical synopsis of American housing communities.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions must enhance their competitiveness via satisfying some type of unique niche to attract students (Doss, et al., 2015). Although many argue that academic programs, geographic locations, academic reputations, and social opportunities are competitive resources, student housing is often a resource for enhancing competitiveness. From the earliest days of education to modern times, all students have shared the need for a place to sleep, eat, bathe, socialize, and study. Thus, student housing is a primary concern of all traditional academic institutions. Future generations will share similar challenges. Given these notions, excerpted from the author's graduate thesis, this paper provides an overview of the history of American campus housing among traditional academic institutions.

BRIEF HISTORY OF CAMPUS HOUSING

The first era began with the establishment of Harvard College in 1636 and lasted until the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. This phase is classified as a separate era because of the significant amount of influence of universities in England on the American system (Frederiksen, 1993). The colleges established during the colonial period were founded with the intent to serve the local community. However, as time passed, more and more students from outside the community were admitted into the colleges (Leonard, 1956). The small communities in which colleges were located did not have enough housing to meet the needs of incoming students. Therefore, the lack of housing forced the Colonial colleges to build dormitories. Early dormitories were usually crude log houses with two to three students assigned to each room. Unlike today, dormitories in the Colonial colleges did not provide amenities, such as furniture, bedding, or candles (Leonard, 1956).

From the very beginning, American higher education was modeled after the renowned and established English universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. In England, residential communities were erected to accommodate students who regularly had to travel long distances from home to campus. Professors were responsible for teaching while other staff focused on discipline and supervision of the students. At the forefront of the English model, the main focus involved faculty forging meaningful relationships with students without the responsibility of monitoring behavior or discipline. Administrators of U.S. colleges and universities strived to replicate the English model of residential communities with an overall goal of building positive relationships between faculty and students. However, numerous factors made this a challenge. Like England, in the United States, students often traveled great distances to receive a formal education. Parents of students sending their children far from home expected an institution to deliver an adequate living and learning environment (Henry, 2003). Unlike England, because of a lack of funding, faculty were charged with both the responsibility of formal educational instruction, and the discipline of students (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). Administrators assumed the role of teacher, parent, and disciplinarian. The approach to teaching became commonly known as *in loco parentis,* meaning in place of the parent (Willoughby, Carroll, Marshall, & Clark, 2009).

Early Colonial colleges and universities were significantly hampered financially compared to their English counterparts. Henry (2003) stated that instead of blending the academic and social lives of students, the root of the English system of residential facilities, few meaningful relationships between students and faculty were formed in the American models. As a consequence, questionable conduct and unruliness, traits often stereotypically associated with the characteristics of a dormitory, emerged. Poor living conditions, disciplinary issues, and adversarial relationships between faculty and students did not mirror the facilities in England as was originally intended. The English model continued to influence functions of American colleges and universities until the time of the Civil War (Fredericksen, 1993).

The second phase of American higher education occurred during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and was influenced by the German education system. Following the Civil War, numerous Americans ventured to Germany to supplement their education. German education primarily focused on research, and paid very little attention to the students' development (Veysey, 1965). Graduates of the German institutions brought back this new concept to American institutions that resulted in a widening of the gap between the classroom and the experiences outside of the classroom (Shroeder, 1994). Many top-level college administrators promoted the German model belief that the focus on institutions should be on research and instruction. Institutions began to devalue the importance of student housing and the many benefits of education outside of the classroom (Rudolph, 1990). During this period, several university presidents from major American colleges actually criticized residence halls as a waste of university funds and deemed any construction and upkeep as wasteful spending (Frederiksen, 1993). Because of the negative perception of residence halls, very few campuses constructed new student housing. This era saw the largest decline of student housing in American history because of the influence of the educational model practiced in Germany (Vevsey, 1965).

By the early start of the new century, top-level university administrators began to support the concept of on campus student housing. Cowley (1934) indicated that construction of residence halls at this time was occurring at a quicker pace than any prior time in the history of American higher education. This significant expansion of student housing defined the third stage of American student housing. Since funds were limited, many university construction projects were supported through private gifts. The restricted financial support for student housing construction continued until the involvement of the federal government in the 1930s. In 1933, with the establishment of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the federal government reduced unemployment through construction and other public works (Frederiksen, 1993). The division of housing, under the umbrella of the Public Works Administration, endorsed programs that encouraged construction of low-cost general housing. Several American universities qualified for funding through this initiative, and were able to expand their student residential housing (Frederiksen, 1993). Following the initiatives of the Public Works Administration, the next significant growth of collegiate student housing came after World War II. A constant, rapid growth of enrollment among American institutions of higher education occurred because of the introduction of The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (i.e., G.I. Bill) (Lucas, 1994). The G.I. Bill provided opportunities to over 16 million veterans returning home from World War II and was signed into law by President Roosevelt on June 22, 1944. This act delivered federal aid to assist veterans in readjusting to life as a civilian. Monetary assistance was given for the purchase of homes, businesses, and to seek higher education. By 1947, over two million veterans of World War II were enrolled in colleges and universities (Lucas, 1994). The G.I. Bill almost doubled the number of students enrolled in the American higher education system within the first year. The effect of this enlarged enrollment created an overcrowded environment at almost all institutions (Frederiksen, 1993). Current housing facilities were outdated and inadequate which prompted the building of new residential facilities to accommodate veterans.

Frederiksen (1993) stated that the federal government predicted that an increase of college enrollment would continue throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1950, Title IV of the Housing Act was passed by congress in order to create a more stable solution for the collegiate housing shortage (Frederiksen, 1993). Title IV provided loans for educational institutions to begin building new facilities and for making repairs to existing structures. These loans came with low interest rates over many years that attracted both public and private universities. Construction for student housing flourished across the nation during the 1950s and 1960s primarily due to the funding provided by Title IV. However, many of these facilities were not designed for the quality of the students' educational experience. Instead, these facilities were built to accommodate many students, serving as a fast solution to the collegiate housing shortage.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the most used model of student housing consisted of high-rise towers with traditional hallway designs and shared bathrooms. They were designed to include central elevators, anchored furniture, and shared bathrooms. The long hallways of rooms were designed to achieve the maximum capacity of residents. These designs are deemed as traditional hallway designed residence halls. During the 1970s, many institutions changed their policies, and required students to reside on campus. This policy change occurred because of the increasing indebtedness of universities and the inability to maximize the capacity of residence halls (Henry, 2003). Upcraft and Pilato (1982) indicate that the concept of *in loco parentis* was abandoned and replaced with rules, regulations, and endeavors that contributed toward developing students. Other facilities changes occurred that encouraged student development. Anchored furniture was replaced with movable furniture, residents were encouraged to decorate their rooms, and many institutions remodeled older hallway designs into two double bedroom apartment style residence halls in an effort to meet the students' desire for flexibility, space, and privacy. Renovation included bathrooms for each apartment. The majority of traditional residence halls built throughout the 1980s included bathrooms between rooms, creating the adjoined suite style room (Upcraft & Pilato, 1982). Because of these many modifications to both facilities and policies collegiate housing occupancy stabilized.

Nationally, during the 1980s, colleges and universities experienced increases in the numbers of students desiring to live on campus in residence halls because of a variety of reasons. These reasons included an increase in females attending college, an increase in African-American students, and an overall increase in males (Frederiksen, 1993). With around a 50% projected enrollment increase throughout the 1980s, many campuses exhibited insufficient bed space for incoming students. Henry (2003) indicated that erecting dorms was the primary method of addressing issues of increased enrollments. During the 1990s, many institutions constructed apartment-style residence halls using suite-style rooms that contained two double rooms, a living room, and bathroom. They emphasized amenities, such as air conditioning, full kitchens, and private bathrooms. Renovations of older residence halls continued as campuses attempted to provide more amenities to pre-existing structures. As the new millennium emerged, American higher education experienced its largest growth in enrollment in history. Howe and Strauss (2000) indicate that the arrival of the first 100-million-person-generation, or the millennials, instigated campus expansion to accommodate its needs.

CONCLUSION

Student housing is a concern of academic institutions for a variety of reasons ranging from institutional competitiveness to ensuring the safety of the study body. In any case, traditional academic institutions possess some type of residences for housing students. Over the years, much change occurred regarding the types of housing that accommodated students. The Colonial period commenced with Spartan housing, and change eventually produced the modern comforts of apartment-style residences that exist within contemporary higher education environments. As times changed, so did the influences that affected student housing. The English and German education systems influenced the maturing of American housing among higher education settings. Government legislation also impacted the quality and availability of housing, such as the G.I. Bill and the 1964 Housing Act. Essentially, the history of campus housing reflects changes of societal and governmental attitudes regarding the accommodating of students.

The history of campus housing is permeated with change. Certainly, future generations of college students will share the needs of their predecessors regarding housing. During modern times, students live in relative comfort and safety. However, academic institutions must consider the future of campus housing. New technologies, housing codes, construction materials, campus safety, social constructs, and academics are examples of issues that will affect future housing designs and erections. Given the combination of students from different nations that exist among American universities, the effects of surrounding communities, and the volatility of campuses, the reality of violence and crime must be addressed. Foreign and domestic groups exist that may endanger lives, ranging from terrorists to criminal organizations (McElreath, et al., 2013; McElreath, et al., 2014a; McElreath et al., 2014b; Wigginton, et al., 2015). Future housing must accommodate social expectations, facilitate communication, exhibit some reasonable amount of security, incorporate concerns for possible endangerments, contribute toward the academic success of students, exhibit some types of amenities, and foster a sense of community.

A central theme of economics involves the basic question of how to allocate scarce resources to satisfy the unlimited wants and needs of humans (Doss, Sumrall, McElreath, & Jones, 2013; Doss, Sumrall, & Jones, 2012). Future campus housing is susceptible to this economic tenet given the impossibility of satisfying completely the needs and wants of all students, especially as times and technologies change in conjunction with aging building construction. Administrators will continuously evaluate capital projects via some form of capital budgeting, such as the internal rate of return, cost-benefit analysis, or net present value methods (Doss, Troxel, & Sumrall, 2010; Lasher, 2005).

Campus housing is now an expected aspect of the American educational experience among traditional institutions of higher education. The existence of modern campus housing exhibits a rich history of change that commenced with the most basic of accommodations and that culminated in contemporary apartment-style residences. Modern students experience the comforts of home while studying and living away from home. Given the expectations of society, institutions, and students, housing will experience change to satisfy the dynamics of future generations. Through time, the unceasing evolution of campus housing will affect future generations just as it did preceding generations.

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STATISTICAL INNUMERACY: USING NUMBERS TO EXPLAIN NOTHING

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ABSTRACT

Lacking statistical acumen is known as innumeracy, that is, the inability to understand numbers. Innumeracy was first coined by Hofstadter in 1982 but it was Paulos (1988) who popularized the term. The innumerate person is someone who is "marked by an ignorance of mathematics and the scientific approach (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 10th ed.). Innumeracy is typically the result of sloppy language and/or failure to account for baseline differences. An example of sloppy language would occur if one reported the murder rate doubled every year since 1950. A simple calculation would tell you that, starting from a single homicide, there would be trillions of fatalities at present. The use of ill-advised language to report results typically creates outcomes that can readily be questioned.

Perhaps more disconcerting is the failure to account for baseline differences. For example, it might be reported that the number of people successfully completing a marathon race under 4 hours doubled from 100 to 200 without also reporting that the number of competitors increased from 1,000 to 10,000.

Data reporting of this nature can be far more problematic. Typically statistical mayhem occurs when a report makes it difficult or impossible to determine the difference in baseline populations that are being compared. Alternatively, there are also instances where baseline differences can be accounted for in a straightforward fashion but the report fails to do so. As a result, a lay person reading the report may reach a conclusion that simply is not supported by the actual data. When this occurs, the statistically innumerate person will not realize that what is reported is in fact meaningless.

The full paper examines specific instances of educational statistics being reported without accounting for baseline differences and discusses the marked differences in conclusions that have been reached versus conclusions that should have been reached. Additionally, the full paper looks at the implications of these reporting errors and suggests appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy of the statistics being offered.

MOTIVE NEEDS AND LEADERSHIP: ASSESSING THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE "ACTUALIZED LEADER PROFILE" ASSESSMENT SCALE

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ABSTRACT

The Actualized Leader Profile (ALP) is a 57-item self-report survey that measures an individual's dominant motive need, corresponding leadership style, and leadership "shadow." In addition, the ALP measures nine (9) attributes of self-actualized leaders in three domains: Cognitive (how Actualized Leaders think), Emotion (how Actualized Leaders feel), and Behavior (what Actualized Leaders do.) The ALP is based on the seminal work in human motivation of Harvard psychologist David McClelland, who identified three motive needs or "drivers" that propel an individual's behavior: Achievement, Affiliation, and Power. Although every individual is a unique combination of all three, McClelland (1987) found that usually one motive need is dominant, particularly under stress. In addition to McClelland's research, the ALP framework includes Abraham Maslow's (1954) concept of "self-actualization" as a modifier of the three motive needs. The more self-actualized an individual is, the less reactive and more resilient he or she is under stressful conditions (Sparks, in press.) This finding is crucial because a reactive or "shadow" side is associated with each motive need (see Figure 1.) Under stress, when an individual is lower in self-actualization, they are more likely to engage in negative, "shadow" behaviors.

Figure 1

Motive Need	Leadership Style	Leadership Shadow	Shadow Behaviors
Achievement	Achiever	Fear of Failure	Micromanaging
Affiliation	Affirmer	Fear of Rejection	Avoiding Conflict
Power	Asserter	Fear of Betrayal	Controlling and manipulating

The reliability for the ALP was estimated using a two-step process: the use of Subject-Matter-Experts (SMEs) who rated the consistency of the survey items for each of the four scales (i.e., Achievement, Affiliation, Power, and Self-Actualization), which was then followed by calculating Cronbach's alpha for each scale with a sample size of 611 participants (n=611). The standardized item Cronbach's alpha for the four scales ranged from .781 - .857.

calculating Cronbach's alpha for each scale with a sample size of 611 participants (n=611). The standardized item Cronbach's alpha for the four scales ranged from .781 - .857.

Validity for the ALP was established using a Principal Components Factor Analysis (PCFA) to ascertain both the number of factors and the factor loadings for each of the four scale items. A four-factor model with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 was generated, and survey items were reduced from 40 to 20 (from 10 per scale to five (5) per scale) based on the factor loading scores. Eigenvalues ranged from 14.13 – 1.91, and accounted for 44% of the observed variance among the 611 participants (n=611.)

A detailed analysis is presented in the paper after the ALP framework is presented, along with conclusions and recommendations for further study.

METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS AND CLASS PERFORMANCE AMONG BUSINESS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Metacognition is defined as "thinking about thinking". It leads students more conscious of what they are learning and more strategic in their learning process. Among many studies in metacognition, metacognitive awareness has been identified as an important factor in student academic success. This study examines the impact of metacognitive awareness on student performance in various accounting classes. Metacognitive awareness is repeatedly measured by a survey question which must be answered before students answer each assignment question, and class performance is measured by the average of exam grades across the entire semester. The preliminary results indicate that metacognitive awareness is positively associated with class performance, which suggests that students with higher metacognitive awareness perform better than those who are unaware. Implications of these findings for research and practice are discussed.

IMPACT OF AN INSTITUTIONAL MERGER ON FOUR INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS OF A COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of a merger of two regional campuses in a statewide university system on its students, faculty, administrative, and professional support staff. Specifically, it looks at stakeholder impacts of the merger of the two Colleges of Business on these regional campuses into one entity.

The first year of a two year study has been completed and the paper reports the results of the first year's study. This first year study is the pre-merger survey of attitudes and issues regarding the merger. The post-merger survey will be completed at the start of next year for comparison purposes. The research is ongoing and will be fully completed next year. The results in this paper are the pre-merger survey of the stakeholder groups.

INTRODUCTION

Mergers or unifications are the formal union of two or more organizations into a single organization usually designed to deliver a more effective operation to meet external challenges and opportunities. (Harmon and Harmon, 2008). Corporate and higher education mergers are very similar if not the same. In the case of higher education, strategic mergers are described as strategies of 'merging colleges for mutual growth' (Martin and Samels, 1994; Harman and Harman, 2008). Unifications and mergers have become a serious alternative for the survival for some higher education institution due to recent funding cutbacks and rising competition from profit institutions. Merging and closing smaller campuses are methods being employed by university systems, as the competition for resources becomes more challenging. In the era of global competition merged institutions can be more efficient and economical but this is not guaranteed, and complications such as the loss of jobs and merging existing institutional cultures must be considered in the merger (Portnoi & Bagley, 2015).

The opportunity to examine the effect on stakeholders in a requisite merger is the topic of this paper. The subjects are two regional campuses in a Midwestern state university system specifically the merger of the two Colleges of Business. Both institutions are teaching undergraduate and graduate business programs. The Colleges of Business are both accredited but by different accrediting bodies.

While inside the same university system, there are significant differences in the culture and size of the two institutions. One is a large urban campus with approximately 9,000 students serving a very diverse student body that includes a significant international student population. The other is a smaller campus of approximately 3,000 students in a rural setting with less diversity in the student body.

The decision to merge these two institutions has generated substantial concerns and some resistance among the stakeholders. These institutions have existed separately for decades despite their close proximity of 30 miles in the region. The differences in size and location have created two very different campus cultures. The colleges approach course scheduling and curriculum from different perspectives and each campus has developed their own student clubs and athletics system. There are many challenges in trying to unify them into one new institution. Each College of Business has its own Dean and faculty structures with similar but not identical policy and procedures for academic matters. The plan to merge them has presented a unique opportunity to examine thoughts and concerns pre and post-merger and examine what thoughts and attitudes change over the two year time period for the merger. This paper reports the results from the first year pre-merger survey.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study poses a research question regarding the merger and four hypotheses for evaluation. The stakeholders defined as the population for the study are students, faculty, staff, and administrators in college of business at both campuses. Mergers can produce the touted cost reduction and efficiencies; mergers can alternatively create significant governance problems due to differing academic cultures, and conflicting models of faculty rights or rules of progression for rank and seniority which can bog down a merger process (Martin & Samels, 2002).

The research question resulting from the merger described in the introduction is “Are there a positive impacts from the merger of two regional campuses Colleges of Business on their stakeholders?” The four hypotheses from this question tested in the study are:

H_1: *The merger will have a positive effect on administrators in the College of Business.*

H_2: *The merger will have a positive effect on professional staff in the College of Business.*

H_3: *The merger will have a positive effect on faculty in the College of Business.*

H_4: *The merger will have a positive effect on students in the College of Business.*

This opportunity, at the start of a merger process, allows the research to study multiple stakeholder groups at both institutions over a two year period of time. The four hypotheses allow for different reactions in the respective stakeholder groups.

The administrative stakeholder group is defined as all academic administrators in the two respective Colleges of Business. This group includes deans, associate deans, and department heads. The professional staff is defined as administrative support personnel and included academic advisors, lab managers, administrative assistants, and placement staff. The faculty group was defined as full time faculty including tenured, tenure track, and full time lecturers. For the purposes of this study adjunct faculty were excluded. The student group included all registered students, both undergraduate and graduate, coded with College of Business majors.

The four hypotheses are directly related to the four stakeholder groups and determining their outlook on the merger. The following section describes the research design and methods.

METHODOLOGY

The research design is for a two-year study of pre-merger and post-merger opinions of stakeholder groups on the merger of these two Colleges of Business. The study uses surveys designed to measure core issues and issues specific to each stakeholder group. The institutional review board for the university system reviewed and approved the research design and methods.

Four different surveys were developed - one for each of the stakeholder groups. There are 20 core questions that were included in the survey for each group and 10 questions in each survey that were specific only to that stakeholder group. The surveys were administered via Qualtrics. Each group was sent a link to access their survey. The surveys were open from January 15 to March 1, 2016. This year's survey was the pre-merger survey. The surveys will be repeated in the same time period after the merger to measure what attitudinal changes occur in each group. The questions in the survey did not ask for any identifying information. The responses were completely anonymous and kept confidential.

RESULTS

The sample size of stakeholders at both campuses surveyed was 7 administrators, 13 professional staff, 50 faculty, and 1959 students. Response rates for each stakeholder group were 71.4%, 53.8%, 40%, and 11.6% respectively.

The results reported in this paper are from the first year pre-merger survey completed in January and February 2016. The results reported for the core questions are the combined responses of all stakeholder groups. The specific questions for each stakeholder group are reported separately in Tables 2-5. In Table 1 results, core questions 13 and 14 results have been omitted as these questions had open ended responses. There are numerous responses to those questions that are still being compiled at this time.

The 20 core questions in each of the four surveys and results are listed in Table 1. The core questions are intended to provide an overview of attitudes toward the merger across all groups and the specific stakeholder group questions provide insights to the unique perspectives of these groups. The cultures and composition of the groups on both campuses are taken into consideration in the questions. These questions are common issues to both campuses involved in the merger. All of the questions use a 5 or 4 point scale for responses or yes and no answers. In addition, there was one open ended question regarding what would you like to keep about the current status and one open ended question about what would you like to see changed. Respondents were able to compose any answer they desired to those questions. Those results are not reported in this paper.

Table 1
CORE QUESTION RESULTS

	Strongly disapprove	**Disapprove**	**Indifferent**	**Approve**	**Strongly approve**
1. What is your attitude about the merger?	10%	14%	42%	23%	11%
	very poorly	**poorly**	**indifferent**	**well**	**very well**
2. How do you feel the process of merging has been handled?	11%	18%	39%	27%	4%
	no input	**little input**	**chose not to give input**	**some input**	**ample input**
3. Did you have adequate input to the process?	40%	24%	18%	13%	5%
	not considered	**little consideration**	**do not know**	**some consideration**	**seriously considered**
4. Do you believe your input was considered in the process?	33%	12%	41%	12%	2%

Table 1
CORE QUESTION RESULTS

	Yes	No			
	not considered	**little consideration**	**do not know**	**some consideration**	**seriously considered**
5. Do you believe the merger will create changes in your environment at the university?	78%	22%			
6. Have you considered leaving the university due to the merger?	17%	83%			
	very poor	**Poor**	**no opinion**	**good**	**very good**
7. How do you rate the merger leadership?	10%	16%	44%	20%	10%
	Yes	No			
8. Do you believe trying to merge the two campus cultures will create value for the College of Business?	63%	37%			
	Not At All	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**		
9. How much do you currently interact with your counterpart/s at the other campus?	71%	22%	7%		
	Yes	No			
10. Do you believe you will have a new supervisor/advisor as a result of the merger?	38%	62%			
11. Do you think you will have to travel to the other campus?	34%	66%			
12 Do you believe the merger will create more diversity for the university?	59%	41%			
15. Do you think you have adequate knowledge about how the merger is implemented?	32%	68%			
16. Has information about the merger been clearly communicated to you	39%	61%			
17. Do you believe there is friction between the two campus cultures that will create problems for the new merged institution?	53%	47%			
18. Will the larger new institution be a stronger institution?	66%	34%			
19. Would you like to be more involved in helping with the transition?	38%	62%			
20. Will you feel the same loyalty to Purdue Northwest as you do to your original campus?	64%	36%			

The next tables show the specific group responses to questions developed for that group only. Table 2 shows the results for the administrative questions answered only by the College of Businesses administrators on both campuses. These ten questions were intended to gauge the concerns of managing units across both campuses as managers will have to oversee their units at both locations.

Table 2
ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTION RESULTS

	not confident	**somewhat confident**	**hopeful**	**confident**	**very confident**
1. How confident are you in your ability to manage across campuses	20%	20%	0%	40%	20%
2. How confident are you that the unification will not create silos?	20%	20%	60%	0%	0%

	not confident	somewhat confident	hopeful	confident	very confident
3. How confident are you about your role in creating one new culture for the new university?	40%	20%	0%	0%	40%
	strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
4. Do you think the combined budgets will benefit the College of Business?	20%	0%	40%	40%	0%
5. Do you believe there is equal weight in decision making given to both sites?	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
	Weakening	**Somewhat weakening**	**no impact**	**Somewhat Strengthening**	**Strengthening**
6. Is the unification strengthening or weakening the quality of the academic programs?	20%	20%	20%	40%	0%
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
7. Do you believe the combined Colleges of Businesses will be able to better distribute staff resources?	20%	0%	20%	40%	20%
8. Do you believe the salary inequality issues are solved by the unification?	20%	0%	60%	0%	20%
	Yes	**No**			
9. Do you believe the administrative duties are changing?	80%	20%			
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
10. Do you believe the new organizational structure best serves the College of Business?	20%	0%	0%	60%	20%

Table 3 has the professional staff results for the unique staff survey questions.

Table 3
PROFESSIONAL STAFF QUESTION RESULTS

	None	Little	Some	A Lot	
1. How confident are you in your ability to work within the new structure?	0%	14%	29%	57%	
2. How confident are you that the unification will provide proper representation for staff	0%	43%	43%	14%	
	None	**Little**	**Some**	**A Lot**	
3. How confident are you about your role in the new culture for the merged institution?	0%	57%	43%	0%	
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
4. Do you think the combined staffs will benefit the College of Business?	0%	29%	43%	29%	0%
	Far too Little	**Too Little**	**About Right**	**Too Much**	**Far too Much**
5. Do you believe there is adequate communication about staff issues?	29%	71%	0%	0%	0%

	Much Weaker	Weaker	No Change	Stronger	Much Stronger
6. Is the unification strengthening or weakening the delivery of services to the College of Business?	0%	14%	71%	14%	0%
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
7. Do you believe the combined Colleges of Businesses will be able to better distribute staff resources?	0%	43%	43%	14%	0%
	Much Worse	**Worse**	**About the Same**	**Better**	**Much Better**
8. Do you think the merger would be better if someone would just take charge and tell everyone what to do?	0%	71%	29%	0%	0%
	Yes	**No**			
9. Do you believe the staff duties are changing?	86%	14%			
10. Do you believe the new organizational structure best serves the College of Business?	43%	57%			

Table 4 reports the results for the unique faculty survey questions.

Table 4
FACULTY QUESTION RESULTS

	Much Worse	Worse	Somewhat Worse	About the Same	Better
1. How do you rate your chances for advancement under new merger?	10%	10%	15%	60%	5%
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
2. There will be more opportunities for professional development under new merger?	5%	45%	35%	15%	0%
3. The route to promotion and tenure under the new merger is clear.	20%	35%	40%	5%	0%
	Very unclear	**Unclear**	**unknown**	**Clear**	**Very Clear**
4. How clear is the mission, vision and goals for the new merged College of Business?	10%	35%	35%	20%	0%
	Very Bad	**Bad**	**Neither Good nor Bad**	**Good**	**Very Good**
5. Over the past 18 months of the unification process, what effect has it had on faculty classroom performance?	10%	10%	80%	0%	0%
6. The unification will enhance faculty chances for scholarship.	15%	20%	45%	20%	0%
7. The unification process has had a positive effect on faculty relations across both campuses	10%	45%	35%	10%	0%
8. Do you think the merger would be better if someone would just take charge and tell everyone what to do?	15%	30%	25%	20%	10%
	Yes	**No**			
9. Is there a possibility that some faculty may be placed in other departments?	90%	10%			
10. Is there a possibility that either campus may lose degrees or programs?	80%	20%			

Table 5 is the final table and contains the results from the unique student survey questions.

Table 5
STUDENT QUESTION RESULTS

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Not at all Important
1. How important is it that unification provides short term and long term benefits for the students?	48%	32%	17%	1%	1%
	None	**Little**	**Some**	**A Lot**	
2. Are you concerned about the necessity to travel to take required courses?	23%	21%	21%	35%	
3. Are you concerned about taking online courses to meet degree requirements?	44%	21%	24%	11%	
4. Are you concerned about course transferable regardless of when I started?	33%	24%	22%	20%	
5. Are you concerned if there will be master's degree programs available on both campuses in their current time slots?	37%	25%	21%	18%	
6. Are you concerned with the possible effects unification might have on cost (tuition)?	11%	19%	30%	40%	
7. How important is it that current university employment opportunities for students?	10%	18%	31%	41%	
8. How important is it that student clubs exist on both campuses?	33%	38%	23%	3%	3%
9. How important is it that athletic teams are at both campuses?	22%	31%	33%	4%	9%
10. How important is it that student government has Representation from both campuses?	38%	32%	23%	3%	4%

The trends for the pre-merger survey are discussed below for both the overall core questions and the specific responses from the stakeholder groups. Some trends and highlights stand out in the data. After the post-merger survey next year, comparison data will be available. The results from the core questions were the combined answers from all the stakeholder groups. Lack of adequate communication was a theme with 68% indicating they did not have enough knowledge about the implementation of the merger and 61% believing that information is not being clearly communicated to the stakeholders. One of the positive aspects is that 83% responded they would not leave the university due to the merger and 64% expected to have the same loyalty to the merged College of Business as they had for their current campus College of Business. One of the merger challenges will be uniting when 71% indicate they have no current interaction with their counterparts at the other campus.

The administrators indicated positive factors with 80% expecting to retain AACSB accreditation and 60% feeling confident they could manage across both campuses. Challenges for this group include 80% indicating they did not think there was equality in decision making across the campuses and 80% believing that their administrative duties would change after the merger.

The professional staff echoed the concern about communication with 71% indicating lack of adequate communication on the merger. Similarly to the administrators, 86% of the professional staff believed their duties would be changing with the merger. On a positive note, 57% confirmed they could work in a new structure.

The faculty results were less optimistic with 50% believing the merger is not having a positive effect on the College of Business and 50% not believing that there will be opportunities for professional development. This group also indicated 90% expected faculty to be moving departments in the merger and 80% believe there will be a loss of degrees or programs.

The student results show two issues that are of major concern to this stakeholder group. 71% indicated that retaining student clubs on both campuses was an important issue and 70% were concerned that student government representation should be from both campuses. Other apprehensions included 40% being concerned about a tuition increase and 35% being concerned that the merger would require them to travel to another campus for class.

In summary, based on the data, $H_{1,}$ H_2 and H_4 are supported by the findings. However, H_3 is less hopeful and does not reflect a positive effect by far. It appears that there is much more work to be done with the faculty where acceptance may be more challenging.

CONCLUSIONS

These are preliminary results from the first survey in a two year study. The data suggest that there are many challenges for the new leadership team to unite the merged College of Business into a cohesive well-functioning whole. Those challenges include the merging of cultures, effectively educating students and managing programs across two campuses, and leading staff and faculty. It is clear that communication will be more critical than usual in this process of helping stakeholders move from confusion and frustration to acceptance and unity. It is interesting to note that more faculty than staff "think the merger would be better if someone would just take charge and tell everyone what to do?" This first year pre-merger study establishes the baseline for comparison to next year's post-merger survey.

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