STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND ONLINE STUDENTS

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Definitions of Key Terms and Abbreviations

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity in the understanding of these terms throughout. The author developed all definitions related to the above that are not accompanied by a citation.

*Online Education/Learning:* are used interchangeably to describe a web based mode of learning.

*Online Student:* for the purposes of this study, will be defined as a student taking at least 50% of their courses via the web.

*Traditional Student/Face-to-Face:* are used to describe a student that is taking their courses on campus in the classroom.

*Student Development Theory:* is based here from Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development; Competence, Managing Emotions, Autonomy, Interpersonal Relationships, Identity, Purpose, and Integrity.

*Student Development:* refers to the process with which a student grows and gains knowledge during their time within the holistic college experience in higher education.

*Traditional Student:* A traditional student here is defined as a student age 24 or younger.

*Non-Traditional Student:* A non-traditional student here is defined as a student over the age of 24.

*Student Life Programming:* describes the extra-curricular programming outside of the classroom.

*Student Services/Support Services/Student Affairs:* are used interchangeably to describe services outside of the classroom.
Abstract

As online education continues to grow and become more diverse, institutions seek to adapt to the changing landscape. With retention challenges and increased pressure from state and federal agencies to perform at a high rate, higher education institutions are continuously looking for best practices. One of the major challenges with online education is creating a holistic college experience like a face-to-face student would have access to. As Student Affairs Practitioners continue to struggle with providing a holistic college experience, rich with those out of the classroom development opportunities, the need to understand the online population is important. As a result, the purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at Quinsigamond Community College (QCC). A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted development while at QCC. Data derived was intended to inform Student Affairs Practitioners about how to better support the needs of online students. Through the lens of Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors of Development (1993), using the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999) and a small focus group, this study compares the development of online and face-to-face students while at QCC. The findings revealed significant differences in development levels. Face-to-face students scored higher than online students on all three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Another major finding was that students involved in activities at QCC showed higher levels of development. As a result of this study, it is recommended that QCC Senior Administrators look to provide more programming for online students.

Keywords: online education, student development, student affairs
Online education “challenges our very assumptions about what a college education should be, with little provision for the rich out-of-class interaction that is essential to our current concept of a well-rounded, holistic education” (Dadabhoy, 2001, para. 16). A recent trend in higher education has increased attention to this issue and this traditional view of holism has been challenged. A 2011 survey of 2,500 colleges and universities revealed that 65% believed online education is a critical component of their strategic direction (Clark, 2012). O’Keefe & Newton (2011) reported that 29.3% of all college students are taking at least one course online. Additionally, Sheehy (2013) reported that online course enrollment has risen nationally across higher education for the last decade. More recently, Lederman (2018), from a report of federal statistics, showed that 31% of community college students are expected to be enrolled in at least one online course. The trend of online education is continuing to rise and more focus must be given to student development. The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at Quinsigamond Community College (QCC). A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. Data derived from this research was intended to inform Student Affairs Practitioners about how to better support the needs of online students. This study uses a non-experimental correlational quantitative design to explore the research problem, as well as qualitative data from a small focus group.

This chapter begins by briefly describing the online population to set the context and background. Next, the rationale and significance of this study is discussed and also potential
consequences if this problem is ignored. The problem statement and research questions are posed and finally, the theoretical framework guiding this study is explained.

**Context and Background**

**Describing the Online Population**

According to a 2017 report done on the online population, more students are selecting online education. Furthermore, this report shows that this population is starting to become very diverse. More traditional aged students are choosing to study online for their undergraduate degrees. Clinefelter and Aslanian (2017) found that 37% of the online undergraduate population was less than 30 years of age. The report also shows an interesting trend about the location of online learners. The study found that over three quarters of the students taking online courses are within 100 miles of the campus (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2017). This trend is of particular interest because it shows that although students have the option to go to campus, they are still choosing the online path. This brings increased attention to the issue of providing Student Life Programming at a distance. In an overview of the online population, this study also found that the top three majors for online learners were business, nursing, and computer science (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2017). Understanding these trends are important in helping Student Affairs Practitioners and the higher education community learn more about how to better serve and develop this population.

**Importance of Student Life Development**

As understanding the online student population is important, so too is understanding the importance of student life development during the college years. Many theorists and researchers have long discussed the importance of being engaged during college. Theories like Astin’s (1999) Student Involvement Theory and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of
Development have provided much support for the need of involvement outside of the classroom. Student Affairs Practitioners have long sought for the best connections between experiences in and out of the classroom. Student Life in particular plays a vital role in holistically developing college students through programming. Several studies have found that involvement in Student Life Programming has had a positive impact on development. For example, Derby (2006) found that students involved in clubs and organizations were better prepared and more likely to persist. Foubert and Grainger (2006) also found that involved students showed higher levels of development than those not involved. More literature discussing this is presented in chapter two. Although these findings present support for Student Affairs Practitioners, the concern from an online perspective is gaining an understanding of how to engage this population to ensure a holistic education. This concern presents a good transition into the rationale and significance for this study.

**Rationale and Significance**

The significance and timeliness of this research can be attributed to the current literature and societal trends. Online education has increased access to higher education and institutions continue to reap the benefits. With the high growth of online students, an understanding from a Student Affairs perspective is important on many levels. This study could play a role in policy, practice, and research.

Higher education must respond to the growing population of online students. This means that Student Affairs Practitioners must understand the needs of this population to ensure they are serving them effectively. Currently, there is not enough research to determine the best policies and practices for online learners. Hassenburg (2009) stated, “although distance education has been praised for its growing population of off-campus students, its innovative pedagogy, and the
advantages of learning away from the classroom, very little is known about the effectiveness of these methods in the long run” (p. 7). This research is an attempt to determine if online development needs are being met. The findings of this study could have implications for Student Affairs Practitioners and how they differentiate programming for online students. Student Affairs Practitioners will need research like this to justify their role on college campuses. While budgets continue to decrease, the demands are increasing in higher education.

Colleges and Universities today are under siege, as accountability for higher graduation rates are at an all-time high. Retention is an area where a large pool of literature for online students lies. Many researchers have found that the lack of retention of online students can be attributed to the lack of support services (LaPadula, 2003; Nichols, 2010; & Street, 2010). As more states switch to a pay for performance scale, Colleges and Universities would be wise to have models in place to support online students. Retention does not only impact funding, but it also has an impact on the reputation of institutions. When an institution is struggling with its image, enrollment declines are a possibility, which could impact the livelihood of many. Retention is a key factor as this has historically fallen within the responsibilities of the student affairs area (O’Keefe & Newton, 2011).

Colleges and Universities are not just under siege for higher retention and graduation rates, but employers alike are continuously concerned with the skills gap. Fischer (2013) discussed findings from prominent employers and many agreed that recent college graduates do not know how to communicate effectively. Furthermore, according to a 2015 report done by Hart Research Associates, only “14% of employers think that most of today’s college students are prepared with the skills and knowledge needed to complete a significant applied learning project before graduation” (p. 6). Elizabeth Moje, a professor at the University of Michigan who has
studied online education, stated “the disadvantage (of online education) is that you may not learn to work with other people quite as well” (Glader, 2009, para. 6). Andrew Kelly, the Director of the Center for Higher Education Reform at the American Enterprise Institute, stated

“college has become formulaic and transactional. Students take a class, do the problem sets or papers, take the examinations, and then get a grade. When students receive A’s, they take it as a sign that they’re ready for what’s next, even though that may not be true” (Fabris, 2015, para. 25).

Finally, Henrich (2016), in a study with employers found that many of them questioned whether or not graduates are getting the proper skills from online programs. If this research determines that online students are not being holistically developed, it could play a major role in looking at this skills gap. It could also play a role in the organizational structure at many institutions.

O’Keefe and Newton (2011) noted that institutions should look to specific leadership positions to help the online population. For example, adding a position like an Online Student Engagement Specialist could provide positive benefits.

Institutional policy could also be impacted by this study as well. One policy it could impact would be fees. As O’Keefe and Newton (2011) point out, the majority of institutions have online students pay the same fees as face-to-face students. If an online student wants to know what they are getting for their student activity fee, it is the responsibility of Student Affairs Practitioners to have some answers. Additionally, if this study finds that online students are not being holistically developed, policy changes like requiring a pre-requisite for online students could be implemented. Institutional policy is just the local level of impact, state and perhaps federal policy could play a major role if persistence rates are not improved. State funding for community colleges has already been declining for years. For example, Massachusetts
Community Colleges get just 25% of all state appropriations. This 25% is to split amongst all Massachusetts Community Colleges. If the state does move towards a pay for performance scale, this could further impact QCC.

Finally, this study has implications for online students. Online students will benefit from increased exposure and understanding of their needs outside of the classroom. Daniels and Brooker (2014) argue that student identity development has largely been forgotten. Online education has heightened this concern. Many researchers, like Dare, Zapata, and Thomas (2005) agree that the weakest link with distance education is Student Affairs. As a result, most Student Affairs Practitioners lack the necessary information to best serve this population. Expanding on the literature base will only help serve the needs of online students and improve their overall experience with their institution.

Research Problem and Questions

Statement of Problem

The increasing number of students pursuing online degrees makes this an important area for research in higher education. The ability to determine the needs of this population will be a key to the future success of institutions. Thus, the specific problem to be analyzed is the impact of equitable programming and the impact on online students. O’Keefe and Newton (2011) state Student Affairs “Professionals are now faced with the dilemma of providing a comparable level of support and connection with the less visible online student populations at their institutions” (para. 3). Literature shows support for the need of a holistic educational experience. Furthermore, there is an abundance of research that shows what online students are lacking in services (Pullan, 2009 & Buchanan, 2000). A key piece that is missing from the literature of online students is the experience outside of the classroom and its impact on development. In fact,
according to Yorke (2004), “success in distance learning and higher education concludes with the view that it is the student experience which needs to be understood and got right in any mote to enhance persistence and progression” (White, 2005, p. 175). As a Student Life Professional for over a decade, this researcher has also seen the lack of a student experience for online students first hand. If the holistic educational experience is crucial to the development of students, it is also imperative that Student Life Professionals determine how to best serve online students.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at QCC. The secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. Data derived from this research was intended to inform Student Affairs Practitioners about how to best support the needs of online students. This study will be done using the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA) (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999), as well as conducting a small focus group. More detail about the site of this study is described in chapter three.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed based on Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development and the (SDTLA) (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). The developmental tasks and subtasks within this instrument were developed based on Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). This study sought to address the following research questions quantitatively:
Quantitative Research Questions

1. What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC (Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships)?

2. To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? (This question will break participation into three categories: strong participation is at least one event per week, average participation is at least one event per month and no participation in Student Life Programming).

The first research question attempts to determine whether differences exist among online students taking 50% or more of their courses online versus students on campus for all courses at QCC. The second question attempts to determine the impact of involvement on development while at QCC. The dependent variables in this study are the three developmental tasks as outlined above. The independent variables for these two questions are online and face-to-face students and level of participation in Student Life Programming. Furthermore, this study will look at additional variables like credits earned, GPA, age, and gender.

Qualitative Research Questions

This study also sought to address the following questions through a focus group:

1. How do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC?

2. How do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC?
The interview protocol for the focus group was completed following the analyzing of the quantitative data in hopes to gain a deeper understanding of online needs and overall development.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Historical Overview and Outline of the Theory**

This study utilizes Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors of Student Development (1993). Below offers a quick overview of each vector. This theory began with the seminal work of Chickering (1969). It was later expanded by Chickering and Reisser (1993). This theory has been well documented in research on student development. According to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) this theory has good application to student affairs and specifically in the area of programming. Furthermore, it was selected based on its applicability and relation to the SDTLA instrument. The theory consists of seven vectors, which are outlined below.

**Developing Competence:**

“Chickering and Reisser (1993) likened competence to a three-tined pitchfork, with the tines being intellectual competence, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 67). A student would develop competence in college from gaining knowledge and participating in recreational and artistic events (Evans, et al., 2010).

**Managing Emotions:**

“In this vector, students develop the ability to recognize and accept emotions, as well as to appropriately express and control them. In addition, students learn to act on feelings in a responsible manner” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 67). A student would learn how to manage emotions by learning how to cope with stress, anxiety, etc. (Evans, et al., 2010). For example, a freshman
in college may stress about a final exam, but they develop coping mechanisms throughout their academic years.

Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence:

“This aspect of development results in increased emotional interdependence” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 68). As a college student this could be anything from should I take this class or should I go to this party. Typically a student will enter college and be reliant on an academic advisor to make their decisions and will develop by learning to make these decisions on their own throughout their academic journey.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships:

“The tasks associated with this vector include development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance and appreciation of differences, as well as the capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships with partners and close friends” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 68). Learning how to interact and work as a team with a diverse group of people is a large aspect of what a student would receive from being involved during their college years.

Establishing Identity:

“Identity includes comfort with body and appearance, comfort with gender and sexual orientation, a sense of one’s social and cultural heritage, a clear self-concept and comfort with one’s roles and lifestyle, a secure sense of self in light of feedback from significant others, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and personal stability and integration” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 68). In many ways, this is connected to developing autonomy as a college student. You begin to make your own decisions and not conform to a person or group.
Developing Purpose:

“This vector consists of developing clear vocational goals, making meaningful commitments to specific personal interests and activities, and establishing strong interpersonal commitments.” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 69). This is arguably the most important vector to develop in relation to persistence. A college student can develop purpose through many activities outside the classroom like clubs, internships, and leadership programming.

Developing Integrity:

“This vector includes three stages: humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 69). Integrity is very similar to competence and autonomy. A student typically comes in with values influenced by someone. Development occurs when they start to build their own values system. Being involved in activities like leadership style exploration would help a college student develop integrity.

Critics of the Theory

This theory does not come without its critics. Evans, et al., (2010) believe that it lacks specificity and the vectors are too general. In recent years, researchers like Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) have questioned the theories applicability to all sub-groups. Furthermore, this theory does not necessarily delineate from face-to-face and online education and whether differences may impact the findings. “Reisser (1995) acknowledged that more research is needed on the interrelationships of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, and aspects of psychosocial development and called for broad inclusive theories rather than ones that are narrow and group specific” (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 80). This study analyzes a couple of these aspects like age and gender.
Application to the Study

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development serve as a guide for this entire study. The elements of the framework are outlined in the research questions. This theory also comes with a well-connected instrument. The SDTLA (1999) and its developmental tasks and subtasks were designed with the underpinnings of the Vectors of Development (Winston, Miller, and Cooper). The reason for using a well-established instrument for this study was to help with the reliability and validity of the results (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research questions and focus group protocol were also built from this theoretical framework. Additionally, the framework helped shape the topics examined in the literature review. The literature review in the next chapter focuses on four overlapping areas; student service needs of online students, success of online students at community colleges, the purpose of student development, and similar research studies. Finally, this framework helped shape the methodology. Based on the structure of this theory and its comparison nature, non-experimental correlational research design was selected. It allows this study to gather large amounts of data at one time and still be able to compare online versus on face-to-face students. The rationale for using this theory is that it has a history of being effective when developing programming and determining needs (Evans, et al., 2010).

Summary

As online education continues to expand, the need to understand and support this population is an important matter for higher education. Issues with retention, skills gaps, and funding models only bring heightened attention to this matter. The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their
development while at QCC. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC.

The literature review in chapter two examines the abundance of literature related to development and focuses on four areas; student service needs of online students, success of online students at community colleges, the purpose of student development, and similar research studies. The methodology for this study is discussed in chapter three. Chapter four discusses the results from both the SDTLA and the focus group. Chapter five concludes with implications, recommendations, discussion of how the findings relate to the literature, and closing remarks on this journey.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

As the numbers of online students increase and the success rates continue to be a concern, the need to understand and provide adequate services for this population is important. The current body of literature on this population is robust; however, much of the existing literature is focused on the academic side (Taylor & Holley, 2009). As a result, institutions, particularly Student Affairs, lack the information necessary to provide the best support.

This review sought to highlight a current lack of focus on this population. The majority of the review focused on community college or state college online students. Many terms were used to perform this literature review like, online education, distance learning, student development, psychosocial development, and student services for online learning.

This review focused on four overlapping areas. First, literature that examined the student service needs of online students is discussed (Bailey & Brown, 2016; Britto & Rush, 2013; Chau, 2012; Dadabhoy, 2001; Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004; Hornak, Akweks & Jeffs, 2010; Kretovics, 2003; LaPadula, 2003; Levy, 2003; Liu, Gomez, & Yen, 2009; Ludwig-Hardman & Dunlap, 2003; Nichols, 2010; Pullan, 2009; Raphael, 2006; Stewart, Goodson, Miertschin, Norwood & Ezell, 2013; Taylor & Holley, 2009; Workman & Stenard, 1996). The second area of literature focused on the success of online students at community colleges (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Brock, 2014; Dougherty, 2006; Gregory & Lampley, 2016; Ishitani, 2006; Jaschik, 2015; Milem & Berger, 1997; Moore, Bartkovich, Fetzner, & Ison, 2002; Muse Jr., 2003; Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Shea & Bidjerano, 2014; Street, 2010; Welsh, 2007; Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005; Wolff, Wood-Kustanowitz & Ashkenazi, 2014; Xu & Jaggars, 2011). The third area of literature focused on the purpose of student development (“The Student Learning

**Student Service Needs of Online Students**

This section examined the research that focused on the student service needs of online students. Although this pool of literature is small compared to the studies looking at the academic needs of online students, certain trends are evident. This section concludes with the implications for this study and Student Affairs Practitioners.

There is no denying the impact that technology has made in higher education. The last couple of decades have changed the way education is conducted. As online education numbers continue to increase, Student Affairs Practitioners continue to struggle to adapt. One reason they may struggle to adapt is because much of the research on online education focuses on the academic side (Dadabhoy, 2001 & Taylor & Holley, 2009). Even more alarming, Pullan (2009) reported, that “according to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), when student services are considered, the most common services that are incorporated into the time and location independent format are those within the administrative core such as financial aid, admissions, and registration” (p. 243). In other words, there is a lack of focus on areas that offer extra-curricular programming.
The lag in Student Affairs within online education has been documented for over two decades. One of the first known studies to look at online education from a Student Affairs perspective was the research of Workman and Stenard (1996). Their study looked at the perceptions of students and administrators on the services for online students. The findings concluded with five areas of needs for online students;

“clarity of programs, policies, and procedures to ensure consistency for student planning; building of self-esteem; identification with the institution; development of interpersonal relationships with peers, faculty and staff; and accessibility to learning support services including the library, bookstore, computers, learning support services (Workman & Stenard, 1996, para. 12). These findings are important because of the obvious connection to student development and in particular, Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development. This study provides evidence that student development in online education was a challenge as far back as 1996. Furthermore, the authors appear to function under the opinion that online students are more mature. Workman and Stenard (1996) state “distance learners are highly motivated, mature students. They are relatively self-reliant as compared to traditional campus-based students” (para. 51). Although this is not surprising considering that the majority of online students during this time were likely non-traditional aged students, this does provide some evidence that even non-traditional online students may have development needs as well. With more traditional aged students entering online education, additional research on development is even more important.

Zav Dadabhoy has been a big proponent of looking at student services for online students. In 2001 Dadabhoy stated “much of Student Affairs’ online interests and presence has revolved around essential support services. Little, if any, emphasis has been placed on
developing online mechanisms to develop community or provide out-of-class experiences” (para. 18). An argument could be made that online students do not need these services because they are more developed and more mature. However, as noted from the results of Workman & Stenard (1996), age is not necessarily a predictor of development. Another argument could be made that online students do not have any interest in these services. The findings of this argument have been inconsistent.

LaPadula (2003) found that many online students wanted to have access to things like the book club, student newspaper and academic clubs. The results showed almost 40% of students reported more interest in social services (LaPadula, 2003). The findings from Stewart, et al. (2013) coincided with LaPadula (2003). They found that online students wanted more student clubs and organizations. They also found that when faculty members encouraged the students to be involved, it made a difference in success. This is important because Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Professionals really need to go hand and hand to be successful. The students in this study also reported many benefits from being involved like improved social skills, better connection to institution and improved communication skills (Stewart, et al., 2013). This provides more support for the need of student involvement.

LaPadula (2003) argued, “A successful online program allows its students to have the same opportunities and services as students in traditional classes” (p. 127). This sentiment seems to be a common theme among Student Affairs Practitioners; however, few seem to accomplish the task of providing equitable services for online students. For example, in a study done by Levy and Beaulieu (2003) they found that colleges believed student services were important, but few focused on them. “Although student services were mentioned in seventy-six plans in fifteen categories in the planning documents, the plans for student services existed at only twenty-three
colleges/or districts” (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003, p. 213). There appears to be a gap between perceived notion of importance of student services for online education and actual implementation. Another study that showed the lag within Student Affairs was Raphael (2006) when she did a needs assessment of student services for online students. The findings showed that online students perceived most of the services to be inadequate based on their needs (Raphael, 2006). In other words, it appears as though there is a gap between students’ and Student Affairs in terms of perceived needs of services for online students.

More recently, Chau (2012) and Bailey and Brown (2016) found evidence supporting the need for services for online students. From a survey of community college administrators, Chau (2012) noticed an increased level of importance being placed on student services for online students. In fact, the results from the survey ranked online services as the greatest challenge for colleges. However, despite this concern, Chau (2012) noted, “respondents reported a decline in their online student-support services” (Para. 5). Again, these findings suggest a possible gap between perceived level of importance and actual support provided to online students.

Brown and Bailey (2016) studied an overview of current best practices for online student services. They asserted “to encourage and engage students within the institution, as well as providing equal access to service in compliance with accreditation, Student Affairs Professionals must be mindful to reach out to online students as well as those on campus” (Brown & Bailey, 2016, p. 451). In conclusion, Brown and Bailey (2016) found that the two most important factors to equivalent services for online students were effective leadership and strategic planning. All of these studies provide evidence for the need of more support services for online students.

On the other hand, Taylor and Holley (2009) found contradicting results in terms of what online students wanted and needed. They found that social interaction and peer engagement was
rarely a priority for online learners (Taylor & Holley, 2009). “Six students specifically noted that their enrollment in the program was solely for career and professional advancement, not for new friends” (Taylor & Holley, 2009, p. 96). It is important to note that the population for this study was nursing students. Typically nursing programs are rigorous and time consuming. Furthermore, many nursing programs require pre-requisites, during which students could have been involved during this stage. Despite these findings, the authors note the important role that peer engagement plays on student development. Some students reported feeling isolated as a result of limited peer interaction (Taylor & Holley, 2009). Isolation has been noted as a major issue within online education (Aragon, 2003; & Ludwig-Hardman & Dunlap, 2003).

One potential impact of the lack of support services for online students is the environment that it creates. The research shows social presence is one of the biggest issues within online education. Aragon (2003) states “trying to establish social presence in a computer-mediated environment is no doubt more difficult to do and requires a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the course designers, instructors, and participants” (p. 67). This lack of social presence has led to isolation of students (Ludwig-Hardman and Dunlap, 2003). Liu, Gomez and Yen (2009) found a correlation between social presence and online success. They stated “A student with a positive perception of social presence maintains a high degree of interaction and collaboration with peers, and is more likely to successfully complete a community college online course with a better grade” (p. 173). Student Affairs should be playing a vital role in the social presence of online students.

Some researchers and experts have offered ideas on how to structure online education programs. Kretovics (2003) recommended that Student Affairs Practitioners address four areas within distance education:
A. Offering of services;
B. Creation of a community;
C. Creating a position for distance education;
D. More opportunity for graduate program preparation (Kretovics, 2003, para. 17).

Levy and Beaulieu in 2003 proposed a model for planning as a result of their findings of the lack of student services within online education. They proposed six areas of focus when planning online education programs.

1. A vision and plan that highlights the needs of distance learners;
2. Curriculum that is not solely built around technology;
3. Staff need to be trained and provided with the proper support;
4. Student services that offer the same experience an on-campus student would receive;
5. More student training and support provided;
6. Policies for distance learning (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003, pp. 207-208). Their findings showed “there is not enough planning for all aspects of ODL (Online Distance Learning), especially for staff training and support, student services, and student training and support” (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003, p. 217).

Floyd and Casey-Powell (2004) developed an inclusive student services model for online education. This model in particular focuses on the learner support pieces like creating a sense of belonging and getting involved outside of the classroom (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004). Angelino, Williams, and Natvig (2007) also offered several strategies for helping Student Affairs. They suggest that services need to be provided online. For example, things like Student Government meetings should be made available through an online platform (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007). Britto and Rush (2013) did a case study of the Lone Star Community College
system. Britto and Rush (2013) reported that the institution implemented a campus orientation for online students, an online student readiness assessment, a help desk for online students, and an online student support services team. Britto and Miller (2013) stated two goals from the changes “to provide at least comparable services to online students that face-to-face students received and to increase completion and success rates for online students in order to make them comparable to the face-to-face student population” (p. 39). All of these models and strategies provide a good foundation for how to inclusively incorporate student services into online education. However, as discussed above, until Student Affairs Practitioners coincide with student needs, challenges will continue.

Despite the early literature that highlights weaknesses, Student Affairs have yet to make the transition. Dare, Zapata, and Thomas (2005) stated “the weakest relationship is between Student Affairs and distance education” (p. 39). Taylor and Holley (2009) attributed this weak relationship to a lack of research in this area. Kretovics (2003) agreed and stated “additional research needs to be conducted on the impact or outcomes of distance education in regard to student development” (para. 40). Pullan (2009) suggested that an online student should have access to all services a face-to-face student would have access to. They deserve this not only because it is their institutional right, but they are also paying for these services. Furthermore, “regional accrediting agencies require colleges to offer the same student services and support to their distance education and traditional campus-based students” (Pullan, 2009, p. 243). As online education continues to grow and technology evolves; Hornak, Akweks, and Jeffs (2010) state “students will continue to view their world and education through the lens of technology as a means to expand connectivity and improve personal convenience” (p. 84). Student Affairs must continue to grow and adapt to these changes. From the review above, there seems to be an
unclear connection between services online students want or need and the services Students Affairs Practitioners perceive as important. As the population of online students continues to shift in age and demographics, more research will be necessary for best practices. The next section in this review discusses online success at community colleges.

**Online Student Success at Community Colleges**

There is a modest pool of literature that looks at the success of online students at community colleges, as most of the literature has looked at 4 year institutions (Wolff, Wood-Kustanowitz & Ashkenazi, 2014). This information is relevant to this study because the site is a community college. The following section discusses what the literature shows in terms of overall success rate and which factors influence success online. Gaps in the literature and contradictory results are discussed within this section.

Retention is an area that represents a consistent theme within higher education and in particular, online education. There is an abundance of literature that finds online students do not persist at the same rate as face-to-face students. In fact, the site for this study shows that online students are persisting roughly 10% lower than face-to-face students (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018). The five year average from 2013 to 2018 at QCC is relatively consistent between face-to-face students succeeding at a rate of roughly 8-10% higher than online students (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018). The 10% difference seems to be a common trend within the literature. Moore, et al., (2002), did a study at a large community college in the northeast and found a similar 10% difference in persistence rates. Xu and Jaggers (2011) also reported similar findings in persistence rates at Virginia Community Colleges. This particular study looked at the differences between online courses and on campus courses for English and Math. The results showed that students that took online English were less successful than those that took it on
campus. The gap was even higher for those that took online Math. Perhaps the most alarming piece of this study is the fact that it analyzes the results from one’s first college level Math or English course (Xu & Jaggars, 2011). If a student does not have the tools to be successful in their first semester online, a very dangerous trend for overall institutional retention is created. Additionally, the results looked at a 4 year gap and determined that there was little change in persistence rates for online students, “suggesting that evolving technologies were either not adopted or did not have a strong impact on online success rates” (Xu & Jaggars, 2011, p. 375).

Recent success rates of online students at community colleges are not showing much improvement. Jaschik (2015) reporting on the results from a large study looking at community college online students in California stated “no patterns could be found where students online performed better than those in face-to-face courses” (Para. 6). Gregory and Lampley (2016) also found that online students at community colleges did not perform as well. Their findings showed that online students were much more likely to withdraw than a face-to-face student (Gregory & Lampley, 2016). Despite the consistent findings supporting the fact that online students do not persist at the same rate as face-to-face students, the literature addressing why these students do not persist is more complex.

The complexity within community colleges is enhanced by the level of diversity amongst the student bodies. Community college students tend to be high risk, first generation, diverse in age, ethnicity, and gender. Additionally, community college students tend to have more personal responsibility as opposed to a student seeking an undergraduate degree at a traditional university. The findings as to who is at risk online are as diverse as the community colleges themselves.

Aragon and Johnson (2008) looked at the demographics of non-completers and completers in online courses at community colleges. The findings showed that age had no
impact. (Aragon & Johnson, 2008). Brock (2014) found similar results. Brock (2014) found no correlation between age and success online at a community college. Wojciechowski and Palmer (2005) found that age was a factor to success. In a study of community college students in a business program, they found that the younger the student was, the less success they had (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). In other words, non-traditional aged students tended to do better online. Patterson and McFadden (2009) also found age to be a predictor of online success. In contradiction to Wojciechowski and Palmer (2005), Patterson and McFadden (2009) found that older students were more likely to dropout. Doherty (2006) and Muse Jr. (2003) also found some contradicting results in their studies in terms of age. Doherty (2006) found that older students were more likely to complete online community college courses. Muse Jr. (2003) found similar results and stated “those at risk in the web-based learning environment were younger, had fewer quality points, a less stable student environment, had little break from earlier college experience, and less confidence their background had prepared them for this type of learning” (p. 254).

Aragon and Johnson (2008) found gender to have a difference in online success. They found that females were more likely to succeed online (Aragon & Johnson, 2008). Doherty (2006) also found females to have higher success rates online. Gender is an interesting characteristic for this study as 66% of online students at QCC are female (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018).

Aragon and Johnson (2008) stated “completers (online) were enrolled in more hours than non-completers” (p. 152). In other words, more successful students tended to be enrolled in more courses and part-time students were less successful online. Moore, et al., (2002) found the opposite in that those in full-time status online were less successful.
Other researchers have noted development as a reason for the lack of success online. Street (2010) noted that self-efficacy and autonomy are commonly noted as factors related to success online. Welsh (2007) also found development to be important for online success. She found that level of development was a more significant factor for online success than demographic factors (Welsh, 2007). The contradictory results on who is successful online provide a platform for more research. There does not appear to be consistent evidence as to why dropout rates are higher in online education.

Another factor leading to contradictory results has been the impact of high risk college students taking online courses. First generation students have been found to be historically at risk for college completion. Ishitani (2006) reported from his findings that first generation students are less likely to persist because of several variables like background, parental involvement and institutional characteristics. As noted above, community colleges tend to have a large population of high risk students. Moore, et al., (2002) found that being a first time in college student was correlated with less success online. Brock (2014) found similar results in the impact of being a first time college student. However, Shea and Bidjerano (2014) reported that a high risk student or a first time in college student was no less academically prepared than others online. Age and first-generation status are important variables to discuss when looking at online students at community colleges.

Other researchers like Wojciechowski and Palmer (2005) have noted different factors related to online success. For example, they found that online students that completed an orientation were much more likely to succeed (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). Wolff, et al. (2014) agreed that creating a mandatory online orientation can help the success of online students at community colleges. Understanding the differences between demographic factors and
other characteristics of online success could play a vital role in improving online retention. Addressing the challenge of persistence is important for institutions and Student Affairs Practitioners.

Milem and Berger (1997) created a model for persistence. The model involved key traits for persistence of all students. Their model looked at the student and also their academic and social integration. They argue their integration level predicts the persistence of each student. One other key factor from the model was social integration was found to play a more important role in institutional communication and intent to reenroll than did academic integration (Milem & Berger, 1997). Street (2010) created a model similar to this but more geared towards the online student population specifically. She believed that three areas predict online success; course factors, environmental factors and person factors (Street, 2010). Street (2010) describes person factors as self- efficacy, self-determination and autonomy (para. 13). This model seems to have obvious connections to student development.

There is no one size fits all solution to the lack of online success for community college students. Demographic and institutional characteristics seem to come with inconclusive results in the literature. The lack of social integration and developmental opportunities outside the classroom pose a good argument for lower retention rates for online students. However, more research is needed on the lack of social integration and its impact on online student development. This study attempts to fill some of these gaps. The need for student growth and development is not just important for retention, but it is also important for other stakeholders. The next section of this review looks at perspectives of why development at institutions is important.
The Purpose of Student Development

Historically, there has been a great deal of pressure on institutions and the product they are expected to produce. Many groups; students, institutions, society, and employers expect lofty outcomes from a college degree. For example, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) suggested outcomes of what a college educated student should possess. The lynchpins of an educated college student include:

A. Complex cognitive skills;
B. An ability to apply knowledge to problems;
C. An understanding and appreciation of differences;
D. Practical competence skills;
E. A sense of identity (“The Student Learning Imperative”, 2008, Para. 4)

As a result of historically perceived college outcomes, many best practices have evolved that support the need for student development. Integrated learning or learning reconsidered argues that Student Affairs and Academic Affairs need to collaborate on learning and development (“Learning Reconsidered”, 2004). Learning reconsidered suggests that Student Affairs programming is a key piece to developing students (“Learning Reconsidered”, 2004). “A truly transformative education repeatedly exposes students to multiple opportunities for intentional learning through the formal academic curriculum, student life, collaborative co-curricular programming, community based and global experiences” (“Learning Reconsidered”, 2004, p. 3). Best practice approaches offer great evidence for the need for student life and development. Not only do these approaches argue for the need, but historically; institutions and accrediting agencies state they require it.
Best practices are approaches an institution should take to improve outcomes. On the other hand, accrediting standards are approaches that are required in order to continue as an institution. The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) is the accreditation organization that oversees Quinsigamond Community College. Two standards in particular highlight the need for student growth and development. Standard 5.8 states:

“The institution systematically identifies the characteristics and needs of its student population and then makes provisions for responding to them. The institution’s student services are guided by a philosophy that reflects the institution’s mission and special character, is circulated widely and reviewed periodically, and provides the basis on which services to students can be evaluated” (“Standards of Accreditation”, 2016, p. 16).

Based on the inconsistencies form the literature described above, one could make a strong argument that many institutions have not identified the needs of the online education population. Standard 5.9 states:

“The institution offers an array of student services, including physical and mental health service, appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students. It recognizes the variations in services that are appropriate for residential students, at the main campus, at off-campus locations, and for distance education programs as well as the differences in circumstances and goals of students pursuing degrees” (“Standards of Accreditation”, 2016, p. 16). This standard clearly states that institutions must provide an array of services to online students. At a minimum from, a Student Affairs perspective, this is not happening at QCC. As online education continues to grow, standards of accountability are likely to increase and Student Affairs Practitioners must engage in more scholarly research on how to
better support online students. Another key highlight from these standards is the statement that services need to be in line with the institutions mission.

Institutions of higher education often have intended outcomes listed within the mission. For example, the mission of Student Life at QCC “is to foster the intellectual, cultural, social and emotional development of students by providing a climate conducive to learning and personal growth, enabling them to become fully productive citizens in a global world” (“Student Life Mission”, 2019, para. 1). Not only will this research help understand online students, but this study will help understand the role of student life within online success. This mission portrays a need for development and conveys an obvious connection to the need for student development theory.

Evans et al. (2010) state that student development theory “provides a lens through which to view students and helps educators put student behavior in context rather than simply being perplexed by it” (p. 26). In other words, student development helps educators and researchers understand how to work with certain populations. Theory also helps Student Affairs Practitioners to justify their work to academic partners (Evans, et al., 2010). Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling (1996) in a review of the literature found that out of class experiences are far more impactful than many faculty and academic administrators think. Additionally, student development theory can be used to address problems or examine the context of different groups/situations. For example, this study uses theory to examine the context of online students in an attempt to address the problem of equitable services. Academic partners, accrediting agencies, and student development theorists are not the only ones that expect lofty outcomes from college.
The outcomes of higher education are not just for those immediately revolved around education. Society often has lofty expectations as well. “Our society expects colleges and universities to graduate students who can get things done in the world and are prepared for effective and engaged citizenship” (‘Learning Reconsidered, 2004, p. 3). Employers expect this as well. For example, Fischer (2013) noted from findings of employers that the majority of recent grads do not know how to communicate effectively, have trouble adapting, and have a lack of problem solving skills. These deficiencies noted by employers are development aspects expected during the college years. Online education creates challenges to addressing these deficiencies.

Institutions, students, and employers all have expectations for how a college student should grow and develop during their time in higher education. Student development theory should guide institutions to best practices to support the growth these stakeholders expect. The expectations described above make it imperative that institutions are sharing the responsibility of creating a well-rounded graduate. However, as the research discussed earlier in this chapter suggests, there is still a gap within Student Affairs. The next section of this literature review discusses related studies to this research.

**Related Research Studies**

The psychosocial development of college students has been well documented in the literature. Despite the findings related to the poor success of online students, very few studies have focused on the development of this population. As noted earlier in this chapter, many studies regarding online education have focused on the academic side and most of the studies looking at development have focused on face-to-face students. More research is needed on the impact of online education in relation to development. This study focuses on two aspects; the
impact of online education in relation to development and the impact of student involvement in relation to development. The following covered similar research studies that helped shape this study.

The majority of studies have found a positive correlation between student involvement and development. Williams and Winston Jr. (1985) found that students who participated in student activities or student organizations showed greater development. In particular, they scored significantly higher in interdependence, educational plans, career plans, and lifestyle plans than did students whom did not participate (Williams & Winston Jr., 1985). As a result, these researchers argued for a greater need for student activities (Williams & Winston Jr., 1985).

Cooper, Healy, and Simpson (1994) found similar results in that members of student organizations scored higher in many development areas than those that were not involved in student organizations. They scored higher in educational involvement, career planning, lifestyle planning, cultural participation, and academic autonomy; in addition to the differences previously found in developing purpose and life management (Cooper, Healy & Simpson, 1994). This study was done in an effort to prove the validity of the services provided by Student Affairs Practitioners (Cooper, Healy & Simpson, 1994). Martin (2000) and McConnel (2000) found similar results in that development was heavily influenced by students being involved.

Some researchers have found autonomy and purpose to be impacted through involvement (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Huang & Chang, 2004; O’Keefe & Newton, 2011). O’Keefe and Newton (2011) asserted that “students who are involved with student organizations and take advantage of support services build strong relationships with university staff and develop a sense of belonging to the university community” (para. 8). Huang and Chang (2004) found that those who had strong academic and co-curricular involvement showed gains in cognitive and
communication skills. Foubert and Grainger (2006) found that more involved students reported higher levels of autonomy and establishing a purpose. There are many reasons why involvement and development are important. Perhaps the biggest reason revolves around persistence. Derby (2006), among others, has found that students involved in clubs in organizations are much more likely to persist.

Another challenge within online education is the lack of interaction. Martin (2000) found that students with more interaction developed more competence and a sense of purpose. Jaggars (2014) found student interactions problematic for online students when comparing them against face-to-face students. Online students are not likely to have the same level of interaction nor will they have the same level of access to clubs and organizations as face-to-face students. Studies like Harrison (2002) and Reason, Terenzini, and Domingo (2007) also found support for the importance of student interactions. In addition, Martin (2000) found that the college environment was a big factor for development. Wyatt (2011) found that environment was particularly important for non-traditional aged students.

The variable of age is an important factor for this study because online students tend to be very diverse. Macari, Maples, and D’Andrea (2006) found that non-traditional aged students were developing less than traditional aged students. This finding is interesting as many non-traditional aged students tend to have more life experience.

Almost all of the studies discussed above focus on the outcomes of face-to-face students that are involved. Only a handful of studies have focused specifically on the developmental outcomes of online students from a Student Affairs perspective (Dadabhoy, 2002; Kahrhoff, 2005; Peterson, 2001; Harrsion, 2002; Phaiah, 2006; Lupton, 2007 & Thomas, 2016).
Dadabhoy (2002) recognized the lack of programming for online students from a Student Affairs perspective. In fact, he stated “The Student Affairs profession needs to figure out how to harness the technology to provide holistic learning in the new virtual environment” (p. 91). In his dissertation, he proposed an online platform for Student Affairs Practitioners. The findings in his study showed support for his prototype in providing online students with the holistic development that is needed (Dadabhoy, 2002).

Harrison (2002) looked at development from an online education perspective. This was a qualitative study done with traditional aged online students. The findings of her study were very important for the development of this study. This study compared the findings to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors. “The analysis of the documentation and interview material for the ten students in the study using the student development vectors indicated that only two of the seven vectors, autonomy and integrity were accounted for in the interactions with most of the students” (Harrison, 2002, p. 206). Furthermore, “Developing competence, managing emotions, developing mature relationships, developing identity and purpose were not addressed in any way in most of the courses” (Harrison, 2002, p. 206). These findings are significant for Student Affairs Practitioners. The findings could suggest that there is lack of programming for online students that address these areas of development. Kahrhoff (2005) did a study focused on non-traditional aged online students. Kahrhoff (2005) found that development tended to be the highest among students that were older.

Lupton (2007) found that there was at least some form of psychosocial development occurring within online students. Lupton (2007) suggested that another study be conducted comparing online and face-to-face students. This study attempts to fill this gap. Thomas (2016) also found support for development online. The findings showed support for overall growth,
intellectual growth, and emotional growth in online education. Perhaps most importantly, Thomas (2016) also found that development tended to be correlated with ones’ level of student engagement. This again suggests that students more involved show higher development.

A couple of studies have looked at online education and development from the perspective of Student Affairs Practitioners. Peterson (2001) did a study on the perceptions of Student Affairs Practitioners in terms of the services that they provided for online students. She conducted a survey that attempted to cover several areas. The study instrument covered six areas:

(a) Perception of the importance of 23 student services for distance learners;

(b) What student services are being offered;

(c) The difference between perceptions of the important student services and whether these services are being offered;

(d) Perception of the level of effectiveness of student services;

(e) The difference between perceptions of importance and whether these services are being offered effectively;

(f) Perception of challenges in providing student services to distance learners (Peterson, 2001, p. 30).

The findings of this study showed that Student Affairs believe the services for online and face-to-face students are of equal importance. However, more emphasis was placed on the enrollment side of things for online students. Furthermore, “Social support services, student union, and student activities were shown to be offered by less than a third of the institutions surveyed” (Peterson, 2001, pp. 66-67). Thus, there seems to be a view that online students don’t need or want these services; or perhaps Student Affairs Practitioners have no idea how to provide them. These findings provide more support for Student Affairs being behind the curve in adapting to
online education and because the literature has shown that social support services are important for the holistic development of college students, this is a problem that needs further research.

Phaiah (2006) developed a similar study to Peterson’s (2001) analysis of the perceptions of Student Affairs Practitioners. Phaiah (2006) focused primarily on the social services aspect and their relation to development. This study surveyed Student Affairs Practitioners to find the perceived level of importance and also the level of effectiveness in offering development opportunities for online students. The survey conducted was developed to find the perceived importance of 14 development outcomes. The findings showed that those to be most important were interpersonal, social, and personal development (Phaiah, 2006). These findings provide support for Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors and the perceived importance of these from Student Affairs Practitioners. The findings of this study also showed a perceived high level of effectiveness in offering these opportunities to online students (Phaiah, 2006). Thus, if institutions believe that these development opportunities are important for online students and the majority of them believe that they are effective in offering these opportunities, online and face-to-face students should be developing and persisting at a similar rate of effectiveness. There currently is not enough research to answer this. This gap in the literature sets a good foundation for this study.

In a more recent study Jackson-Boothby (2017) found support for the findings by Peterson (2001) and Phaiah (2006). She found that there was a vast degree of differences from what professionals saw as the needs of online students. Furthermore, she found that much of the responses in her study were focused on academic development and this included the responses by Student Affairs Practitioners (Jackson-Boothby, 2017). Peterson (2001) found inconsistencies from higher education leaders in terms of needs for online students and still researchers like
Jackson-Boothby (2017) are finding similar inconsistencies. This is a major concern for institutions and the success of online students.

All findings noted in this section helped shape this current study. These studies provided significant findings in the area of online education and student development. Despite this, several gaps still exist in the literature. The next section of this chapter critiqued the current literature and provided further clarification of the aforementioned gaps.

Advocacy of Argument

There seems to be a consensus within the literature of the importance of student involvement in the overall development of students. However, many similar research studies provide evidence of gaps. Williams and Winston Jr. (1985), Cooper, Healy, and Simpson (1994), McConnel (2000), Martin (2000), and Foubert and Grainger (2006) all found positive support for programming provided by Student Affairs leading to the psychosocial development of college students. However, these studies were done at institutions that were primarily residential. The demographics between residential institutions and community colleges are significantly different.

The online education gap within Student Affairs was recognized by Dadabhoy (2002), but this study was an introductory pilot program for Student Affairs. Although this program did provide evidence of increased development of online students, not every institution is on a level playing field and perceptions of Student Affairs Practitioners tend to be inconsistent as noted by Peterson (2001) and Phaiah (2006).

Peterson (2001), Harrison (2002), Phaiah (2006), and Lupton (2007) all conducted qualitative studies on online education and the impact of Student Affairs. Peterson (2001) provided evidence that Student Affairs Practitioners find services important for online students however; this study was done using participants from doctoral and master intensive programs.
The students in these programs would not be considered traditional aged students and likely already showed some extent of development. The studies done by Phaiah (2006), Peterson (2001), and Jackson-Boothby (2017) did not use online learners as the participants. The participants were Student Affairs Practitioners. All three studies found that Student Affairs perceived it important to offer similar services to online students.

Harrison (2002) focused her study on traditional aged students. Harrison (2002) found evidence that online students are not properly developed. However, this study did not provide a comparative analysis of face-to-face students. Perhaps the institution being studied in her research did not do an efficient job developing students overall. A follow up study on those that believe they are effective could determine whether they are developing these students.

Kahrhoff (2005) was one of the few quantitative studies that used online students as their participants, though this study only used non-traditional aged students as the participants. Lupton (2007) did find support for the development of online students, but again, the researcher even mentioned there was a need for a comparative study with online and face-to-face students.

The critique of similar studies reveals several gaps within the literature. First, there seems to be a lack of quantitative studies looking at the development of online students. Second, there are some inconsistencies in the findings with variables like age and amount of involvement. Third, few studies have looked at online education from a Student Affairs Perspective. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is little to no evidence of a comparative analysis of face-to-face and online students. Most studies have focused on the psychosocial development of either face-to-face or online students by themselves. This intended comparative analysis will help address these gaps.
**Thesis Analysis and Statement**

With online education increasing, Student Affairs Practitioners must adapt. Student Affairs Practitioners are charged with providing programs that allow a student to develop in ways the classroom may not address. This literature review has found inconsistencies in perceived and actual needs for the online population. Despite the inconsistencies, online success rates seem to be fairly consistent within the literature. The majority suggesting online students are not as successful as face-to-face students at community colleges. The literature hints at the lag being related to development needs, but few studies have sufficiently addressed this. The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at QCC. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. Data derived from this research was intended to inform Student Affairs Practitioners about how to better support the needs of online students. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology for this study.
Chapter 3
Research Design and Methodology

An explanation of the research design for this study is discussed within this chapter. This study explored levels of development within online and face-to-face students during their time at QCC. This chapter accounted for strategies of recruitment, data collection, reliability, validity, data storage, ethical considerations, and limitations.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed based on Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development and the SDTLA (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). The tasks and subtasks of this instrument were created based on the Vectors of Development (Winston, Cooper & Miller, 1999). This study sought to address the following research questions quantitatively:

Quantitative Research Questions

1. What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC? (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships).

2. To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? (This question breaks participation into three categories: Strong participation is at least one event per week, average participation is at least one event per month, and no participation in Student Life Programming).

The first research question attempted to determine whether differences exist among online students taking 50% or more of their courses via the web, versus face-to-face students for all classes while at QCC. The second question attempted to determine the role that involvement
in Student Life Programming plays on student development. The dependent variables in this study were the three developmental tasks as outlined above. The independent variables for these two questions were online education, face-to-face education, and level of participation in Student Life Programming. Additionally, this study looked at variables like credits earned, GPA, age, and gender.

**Research Hypotheses**

1. What significant differences exist, if any between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC? (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships).

   Independent variables: Mode of course learning (online or face-to-face).

   Dependent variables: Three developmental tasks (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships).

   **Null hypothesis:** No developmental differences will exist amongst the three developmental tasks for face-to-face and online QCC students.

   **Alternative hypothesis:** Face-to-face students at QCC will show higher levels of development than online students in the three developmental tasks.

2. To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? (This question breaks participation into three categories: Strong participation is at least one event per week, average participation is at least one event per month, and no participation in Student Life Programming).

   Independent variables: Level of involvement in Student Life Programming.

   Dependent variables: Three developmental tasks (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose,
Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships).

**Null Hypothesis:** QCC students will not show significant differences in the three developmental tasks based on involvement in Student Life Programming.

**Alternative hypothesis:** Students involved in Student Life Programming at the strong or average level at QCC will show higher development in the three tasks as opposed to those not involved.

**Qualitative Research Questions**

This study also sought to address the following questions through a focus group.

1. How do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC?

2. How do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC?

The interview protocol for the focus group was completed following the analysis of quantitative data. It was determined that an in depth view into what students are involved in and their specific developmental needs would be beneficial.

**Research Design**

This study used a correlational quantitative research design. “Correlation designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators measure the degree of association between two or more variables using the statistical procedure of correlational analysis” (Creswell, 2014, p. 21). The nature of the research questions looked at associations between variables. For example, this study looked at how several variables (mode of learning, Student Life Programming, age, gender, GPA, and credits earned) impacted development. As a result, correlational quantitative research design was the most compatible. This study also included a
small qualitative component using a focus group comprised of online and face-to-face students to gain a deeper understanding. Although this study was not a full mixed methods study, this process did help to provide another perspective.

Research Site

The site for this study was Quinsigamond Community College. It is a mid-sized community college in the northeast. The college has roughly 8,000 students with over 2,000 students online. The major reason for selecting QCC was its latest strategic plan to increase retention and access to education (“QCC Strategic Plan”, 2019). From 2007 to 2018 online enrollment at QCC increased over 100% (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018). The roughly 8-10% difference in success between online and face-to-face students also made QCC a good site for this study (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018). It is also important to note that 66% of online students were female in 2018 and the top two programs for online were general studies healthcare and general studies (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018). The amount of general study students choosing online was of particular interest to this study as one of the developmental tasks analyzed was establishing and clarifying purpose. Not only has the institution seen an increase in online enrollment, but QCC also has plans to continue strengthening online offerings based on student demand (“QCC’s Operational Plan”, 2019). As a result of the sites ambition to increase their online course offerings and overall online experience, this study came at a great time. Finally, QCC was selected based on this researcher’s experience and firsthand knowledge of the lack of programming for online students. The findings from this research study provided valuable information for future strategic planning on the needs of QCC’s online students.
The current platform for online engagement at QCC is very limited. A face-to-face student currently has far more access to extra-curricular programming at QCC. Currently there is no online orientation at QCC. If an online student is unable to come to campus, they miss many of these development supporting programs. This is the case with the majority of programs at QCC.

Criteria for Selection

The population for this study was inclusive of all students over the age of 18. Students were categorized as either an online or a face-to-face student. A student was categorized as online if they were taking the majority of their classes online.

Procedures

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), quantitative research data were collected in order to answer the research questions. The data were collected using the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment, version 1.99 (Winston, Miller, Cooper, 1999). “The phenomena with which the SDLTA are concerned with are the changes produced in individuals as a result of accomplishing a developmental task or having addressed important life events or issues within the context of higher education” (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999, p. 11). The SDTLA (version 1.99) is made up of three developmental tasks; Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships, each of which is further delineated by subtasks (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999).

“The SDTLA instrument, manual, and answer key are offered here to users free of charge on an "as is" basis for non-profit educational and research purposes only. Accuracy of these materials or the soundness of their psychometric properties is neither guaranteed
nor implied. No warranties, express or implied, including warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular use are made to any user of these materials.” (“Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment”, 2018, para. 4).

The Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task is composed of four subtasks: Educational Involvement, Career Planning, Lifestyle Planning, and Cultural Participation (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). Students that excel within this task would have a strong understanding of their purpose and goals, their personal values system, and participate in a wide range of cultural arts (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). This task and the coinciding subtasks relate well to measuring competence, purpose, and integrity as outlined by Chickering and Reisser (1993). The Developing Autonomy Task is defined by four subtasks: Emotional Autonomy, Interdependence, Academic Autonomy, and Instrumental Autonomy (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). Students that excel within this task can make decisions without the need of input from others, be able to set timeline and goals for achievement inside and outside of the classroom, and be an engaged citizen in the community (Winston, Miller and Cooper, 1999). This task, and the coinciding subtasks, relate well to measuring competence, autonomy, and identity development as outlined by Chickering and Reisser (1993). The Mature Interpersonal Relationships Task is defined by two subtasks: Peer Relationships and Tolerance (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). Students that excel within this task can have successful relationships with their peers and show respect and understanding of different cultures (Winston, Miller and Cooper, 1999). This task, and the coinciding subtasks, relate well to measuring interpersonal relationships, emotional development, and identity as outlined by Chickering and Reisser (1993).

In addition to the three developmental tasks and coinciding subtasks, this instrument has two scales: the salubrious lifestyle scale and a response bias scale. “This scale (salubrious)
measures the degree to which a student’s lifestyle is consistent with or promotes good health and wellness practices, including moderating (or abstaining from) consumption of alcohol and abstaining from use of tobacco products” (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999, p. 13). The response bias scale helps with the reliability of the results to ensure that students are not answering in a way to portray them in a different light (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999).

Using a well-established instrument as opposed to creating your own can help with validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, as noted above, the instruments tasks and subtasks are interconnected to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999).

**Participant Recruitment**

Participant recruitment followed these steps:

1. A recruitment email (Appendix A) was sent to all faculty in hopes that they would forward to their students to complete the assessment (Appendix B);
2. A flyer was posted on campus and social media sites to recruit as well (Appendix D);
3. All participants electronically agreed to informed consent prior to moving forward (Appendix C).

The instrument was distributed electronically to all faculty members to send to students. All data were stored in password protected files that only the researcher/s had access to. The instrument was uploaded into survey monkey for ease of collection. Again, to ensure protection it was a personal survey monkey account that only the researcher/s had access to.

This study also collected qualitative data. The interview protocol was developed upon analyzing the data from the quantitative section. The interview protocol (Appendix G) helped guide the focus group interview. Participant recruitment followed these steps:
1. A recruitment email (Appendix E) was sent to all faculty members;

2. All participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix F).

The focus group lasted approximately one hour in length. Participants in the focus group were entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card as incentive. All questions were open-ended. Data were collected through note taking and recorded by two separate devices with one serving as backup. Recorded data helped with the transcription. All participants’ selected a pseudonym during the interview, which was used to protect identity (Creswell, 2014). All data were stored in password protected files that only the researcher/s had access to.

Data Analysis

The first step taken was downloading the raw data from survey monkey into SPSS. All statistical tests were performed using SPSS. Before statistical analyses were conducted, the data were screened and cleaned. Next, the data were scored according to the manual for scoring the SDTLA, which was provided by Appalachian State University (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). Following scoring, the data were assessed for outliers by visual inspection of frequency distribution of each scale and sub-scale. Additionally, a statistical cut-off of +/- 3 standard deviations from the mean was used to identify outliers. Next, missing data were assessed for randomness to determine whether data were missing at random. If missing data were to become an impediment to further analyses, the analysis would be conducted by eliminating missing cases and/or imputing missing values.

After the data were coded and cleaned, internal reliability of each scale and subscale was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. A value of .70 or greater is considered acceptable for internal reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Descriptive statistics for each scale and subscale were
reported. Measures of central tendency (i.e. mean, median, & mode) were also reported, as is typically the case in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014).

Since descriptive statistics only presented a snapshot of the overall results and each particular group, inferential statistics were also needed to compare differences across multiple groups for both research questions. While each individual item for the scales and sub-scales were ordinal in nature, the composite scores may be, at least practically, continuous in nature. As such, prior to conducting any inferential analyses, the assumptions of the parametric statistical test were tested in order to determine the most appropriate statistical analysis for each research question. If the assumptions of the parametric test were not met, a non-parametric equivalent analysis was conducted. Alpha was set to .05 for tests of significant differences.

To examine the first research question regarding differences between online and face-to-face students in three developmental tasks while at QCC, the statistical assumptions of the parametric analysis, a t-test, was first assessed. The independent samples t-test was the appropriate statistical analysis to examine differences across two independent groups; online and face-to-face students (Creswell, 2014). If the assumptions were not met, the non-parametric equivalent, the Mann-Whitney U Test, was conducted for all three developmental tasks, as well as the sub-tasks, to determine whether the median scores of face-to-face and online students differed. Additionally, participant characteristics, such as age, GPA, and number of credits earned were considered.

Before analyzing the second research question, the extent to which participation in Student Life Programming influenced the three developmental tasks while at QCC, the statistical assumptions of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was assessed. The independent variable examined in the second research question was the level of involvement in Student Life
Programming (three levels: (1) strong, (2) average, and (3) none. Strong involvement was defined as one activity per week, average was one activity per month, and none was zero involvement in student activities while at QCC). If the assumptions of ANOVA were violated, the non-parametric equivalent, Kruskal-Wallis H test, was conducted to determine if participants’ in the three levels of involvement differed on any of the three developmental tasks and/or subtasks. If any significant differences were observed, a follow up post-hoc Dunn test was performed to determine which levels were significantly different from each other. Finally, participant characteristics, such as age, GPA, and number of credits earned were considered to determine whether they had any potential impact on level of involvement and development.

Data analysis from the focus group followed the six step process as outlined by Creswell (2014). Step one included preparing and organizing the data for analysis (Creswell, 2014). This was done by transcribing all audio recordings and typing all notes. Step two included exploring and coding the data (Creswell, 2014). This was done by doing an initial look at the data and finding emerging themes and trends. Step three included coding to build description and themes (Creswell, 2014). “This process involves examining the data in detail to describe what you learned, and developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 247). This was done by creating and displaying the major themes relevant to the research questions. Step four included representing and reporting the findings (Creswell, 2014). Step six included validating the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). This is discussed in the following section.

**Reliability and Validity**

When doing research, reliability and validity must be accounted for (Creswell, 2014). Reliability and validity with the data from the SDTLA was addressed in a couple ways. First,
students’ responded to a social desirability scale to determine the validity of their responses. Internal reliability of each task and sub-task were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. It was found that inter-item reliability for each of the three developmental tasks was acceptable (> .70).

The validity, trustworthiness and authenticity of the data from the focus group were addressed through two processes; triangulation and member checking. “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from difference individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2014, p. 259). This was done by comparing the responses from the online and face-to-face students through the use of both notes and recordings to discern the major themes. Member checking was done by asking participants to verify the results (Creswell, 2014).

One of the major concerns when collecting data through a focus group is research bias (Creswell, 2014). At the time of this study, this researcher was in a position of power and directly related to the study. This researcher took all preventative measures to account for researcher bias.

**Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations**

There was minimal risk from participation in this study. Ethical issues were addressed at each phase in the study. In compliance with the regulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the permission for conducting the research was obtained for both the SDTLA and the focus group. The application was filed and contained a detailed description of the investigator, the intended type and number of participants, and funding for this study. Participants were not discriminated for selection and the study was inclusive to all QCC students over the age of 18. The results from the SDTLA and the focus group were completely anonymous.
An informed consent form was used for the survey and the focus group. The forms included a detailed description of the rights of each participant, a detailed account of what this study was intended to do, and a statement about withdrawing from this study at any time. All data collected was held in confidence and carefully guarded in password protected files. The instruments used in this study provided the participants’ with complete anonymity and protected them from any disclosure whatsoever. Results were shared with the participants, but in no way were they able to trace the responses back to them. Finally, participants were given the names of the primary investigator and the Director for Human Subject Research Protection at Northeastern University.

Limitations

There were three key limitations to this study. First, the generalizability of these results is in doubt as this study took place at one institution. This study took place at an open access community college. The perspective of students at a University or other institutions may differ significantly. Additionally, the response rate N-122, was a bit low likely due to the length of the instrument. This further impacted the generalizability of the results. The focus group was a face-to-face focus group on campus, which may have limited the access to many online students. Finally, when conducting a focus group, subjectivity of the findings is always going to be a concern (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

This study explored the development of online and face-to-face students while at QCC. A quantitative non-experimental correlational research design was utilized, as well as, a small qualitative piece using a focus group. Data collected from the SDTLA was analyzed to determine, if any, the differences between the development of online and face-to-face students
and what impact student involvement had on development while at QCC. Following this, an interview protocol was completed to conduct a small focus group to gain a deeper understanding. The next chapter discusses the results from the SDTLA and the findings from the focus group.
Chapter 4

Results and Findings

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development as students while at QCC. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. As such, this research was guided by two questions: 1) What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships)? And, 2) To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? The research results in this chapter are based on the analyses of a sample of 122 QCC students (*Note: not all students completed each item on the survey. The N’s for each particular task and sub-task are specified). 65 respondents were female and 57 were male. 85 respondents were traditional aged students in the range of 18-24 years old. 22 respondents were 25-30 years old and 15 were over the age of 31. 70 respondents were on-campus students and 52 were online. 59 respondents classified their involvement as either strong or average, while 63 responded with no involvement. In relation to involvement, 40 responded that they are involved in clubs, 19 involved in leadership events, 24 in social events, and 22 in community service events. 50 respondents had a 3.0 GPA or higher, 48 had a 2.0 or higher, and 14 had a 1.0 or higher. 77 respondents had completed 30 or more credits, while 45 had completed fewer than 30 credits. Results pertaining to each specific research question of the SDTLA and the focus group are reported separately.
Quantitative Results

Research Question 1: What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships)?

The research hypothesis associated with research question one was that a significant difference between online and face-to-face students would occur in each of the three developmental tasks. The null hypothesis asserts there will be no significant differences between online and face-to-face students in any of the three developmental tasks. First, composite scores were created for each of the three developmental tasks, as well as their sub-tasks. Additionally, students responded to two scales: 1) salubrious lifestyle, and 2) social desirability, to determine the validity of their responses. Internal reliability of each of the tasks and sub-tasks was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha (Creswell, 2014). It was found that inter-item reliability for each of the three developmental tasks was acceptable (> .70) (Creswell, 2014). Descriptive statistics for each task and sub-task are reported in Table 1.

Before addressing research question 1, the appropriate statistical test needed to be determined. The statistical assumptions associated with an independent samples t-test were assessed. The first assumption, independent observations across groups, is accounted for in the study design. That is, participants were coded as either online or face-to-face students. They could not be both. The assumption that there are no significant outliers was assessed using a cut-off of +/- 3 standard deviations from the mean. There were no outliers identified (Figures 1, 2, & 3).
Table 1.
*Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Item Reliability for all Tasks and Sub-Tasks.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Participants (n)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing and clarifying purpose</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2.75 (0.80)</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.74 – 3.86</td>
<td>.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Involvement</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2.79 (0.83)</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.77 – 3.85</td>
<td>.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2.68 (0.79)</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.95 – 3.37</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle Planning</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>2.70 (1.06)</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.75 – 3.75</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.91 (0.94)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.27 – 3.51</td>
<td>.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Autonomy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3.30 (0.62)</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.76 – 4.39</td>
<td>.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Autonomy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.33 (0.68)</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.01 – 3.86</td>
<td>.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2.84 (0.75)</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.72 – 3.98</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Autonomy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3.89 (0.79)</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3.55 – 4.35</td>
<td>.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Autonomy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.09 (0.69)</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.41 – 3.55</td>
<td>.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Interpersonal relationship</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.48 (0.73)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>2.13 – 4.25</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task

Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of Developing Autonomy Task
The assumption of normally distributed data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality (Creswell, 2014). A significant $p$ value (i.e. $< .05$), an acceptable value according to Creswell (2014), indicates that the shape of the distribution significantly differs from that of a normal distribution. The results of this analysis revealed that none of the three developmental tasks approximated a normal distribution. Peer relationships was the only sub-task that approximated a normal distribution. Additionally, the Salubrious Lifestyle scale approximated a normal distribution (Table 2). As a result of non-normal distribution, it was determined that the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was the appropriate statistical analysis to compare face-to-face and online students on the three developmental tasks (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment provides a social desirability measure as a manipulation check for response bias. Higher scores on the social desirability scale indicate that the student is attempting to portray him or herself in an unrealistically favorable way. In other words, they are responding to items in a manner they deem socially acceptable or desirable. Scores higher than three indicate that the validity on the
assessment is suspect and probably not accurate (Winston, Miller & Cooper, 1999). Based on this criterion, no participants’ data were removed from the analyses.

Table 2.

**Results of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality to Assess the Distribution of Each Developmental Task While Attending College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Shapiro-Wilk test of normality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing and clarifying purpose</td>
<td>Statistic  df  p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Involvement</td>
<td>.954  122  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning</td>
<td>.933  109  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle Planning</td>
<td>.914  109  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Participation</td>
<td>.934  111  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Autonomy</td>
<td>Statistic  df  p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Autonomy</td>
<td>.946  107  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>.939  109  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Autonomy</td>
<td>.948  110  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Autonomy</td>
<td>.949  111  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Interpersonal relationship</td>
<td>Statistic  df  p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>.962  106  .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>.981  110  .112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salubrious Lifestyle</td>
<td>.955  115  .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Desirability</td>
<td>.830  120  &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A significant difference between online and face-to-face students was observed in each of the three developmental tasks: 1) Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, $U = 707, p < .001$; 2) Developing Autonomy, $U = 474, p < .001$; 3) Mature Interpersonal Relationships, $U = 488.5, p < .001$. Face-to-face students scored significantly higher than online students on all three developmental tasks (Figure 4).

*Figure 4. Average Scaled Scores on Each of the Three Developmental Tasks for Traditional Face-to-Face and Online Students.*

Furthermore, face-to-face students scored higher than online students on each sub-task within each of the three developmental tasks. Within the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task, a significant difference between face-to-face and online students was observed for each sub-task: 1) Educational Involvement, $U = 686.5, p < .001$; 2) Career Planning, $U = 807.5, p < .001$; 3) Life Planning, $U = 622, p < .001$; 4) Cultural Participation, $U = 815.5 p < .001$. Face-to-face students scored higher than online students in each sub-task (Figure 5).
Within the Developing Autonomy Task, face-to-face students scored higher than online students in all four sub-tasks: 1) Emotional Autonomy, $U = 529, p < .001$; 2) Interdependence, $U = 808, p < .001$; Academic Autonomy, $p < .001$; and Instructional Autonomy, $p < .001$ (Figure 6). Within the Mature Interpersonal Relationship Task, face-to-face students scored higher than online students in Peer Relationships, $U = 732.5, p < .001$, and Tolerance, $U = 548.5, p < .001$ (Figure 7).
Additionally, student demographics were analyzed to determine whether any gender, age, or differences in credits were observed on the three developmental tasks. A significant difference was observed between males and females on each of the three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, \( U = 923, p < .001 \); Developing Autonomy, \( U = 769.5, p < .001 \); and
Mature Interpersonal Relationships, U = 776.5, p < .001. Females scored significantly higher than males on all three developmental tasks. (Figure 8).

*Figure 8. Average Scale Scores by Gender for Each of the Developmental Tasks.*

Finally, using the rankings from the Kruskall-Wallis test, the output showed there was a significant difference among GPA levels on each of the three developmental tasks: Establishing Clarifying Purpose Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 36.67, p < .001$; the Developing Autonomy Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 38.59, p < .001$; and the Mature Interpersonal Relationships Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 23.87, p < .001$.

Students’ with GPAs in the 3.0-4.0 range scored higher on all three developmental tasks than other students (Figure 9). There were also significant differences in relation to age on each of the three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 25.31, p < .001$; the Developing Autonomy Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 21.78, p < .001$; and the Mature Interpersonal Relationships Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 13.85, p < .001$. Older, non-traditional aged students scored higher on all three developmental tasks (Figure 10). Finally, the number of credits earned did not have an impact on the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task, $p > .05$. However, there was a significant difference on the Developing Autonomy ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.64, p = .02$) and the Mature
Interpersonal Relationships ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.90, p = .02$) Tasks, such that students with 30 or more credits scored lower than other students (Figure 11).

*Figure 9. Average Scale Scores by GPA Levels for Each of the Developmental Tasks.*
Figure 10. Average Scale Scores by Age for Each of the Developmental Tasks.

![Bar chart showing average scale scores by age for each developmental task: Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The x-axis represents the tasks, and the y-axis represents the scale score. The bars are color-coded to represent different age groups: 18-24, 25-30, and 37+. Error bars are present for each bar.]

Figure 11. Average Scale Scores by Number of Credits for Each of the Developmental Tasks.

![Bar chart showing average scale scores by number of credits for each developmental task: Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The x-axis represents the tasks, and the y-axis represents the scale score. The bars are color-coded to represent different credit ranges: 0 - 15, 15 - 30, and 30+. Error bars are present for each bar.]

Research Question 2: To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC?

The research hypothesis associated with research question two was that a significant difference would occur in each of the three developmental tasks based on the level of student life involvement (strong involvement, average involvement, or no involvement). The null hypothesis suggests that there will be no significant differences in any of the three developmental tasks based on involvement level.

The dependent variables, the three developmental tasks (Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships) were already assessed for normality in research question one. It was determined that all three were non-normally distributed. As a result, for research question two, the non-parametric equivalent to the one-way ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to compare the type of involvement and each developmental task (Creswell, 2014).

The chi-square output showed a significant difference in student life involvement and the Establishing Clarifying Purpose Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 16.46, p < .001$; the Developing Autonomy Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 23.91, p < .001$; and the Mature Interpersonal Relationships Task, $\chi^2 (2) = 14.20, p < .001$ (Figure 12). Participants who reported having no student life involvement scored lower than those with average and strong involvement. A follow-up Mann-Whitney U test, compared participants with strong and average involvement, showed no significant differences in any of the three developmental tasks (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose: U = 417.5, $p = .791$; Developing Autonomy: U = 235.0, $p = .732$; Mature Interpersonal Relationship: U = 259.0, $p = .422$).
Within the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task the chi-square output showed a significant difference was observed for each sub-task: Educational Involvement, $\chi^2 (2) = 15.82, p < .001$; Career Planning, $\chi^2 (2) = 14.75, p < .001$; Life Planning, $\chi^2 (2) = 14.50, p < .001$; and Cultural Participation, $\chi^2 (2) = 26.72, p < .001$. Students with no involvement scored lower than those with strong and average involvement (Figure 13).
Figure 13. Average Scale Scores on Each of the Sub-Tasks Associated with the Establishing and Clarifying Purpose Task by Student Involvement Levels.

Within the Developing Autonomy Task the chi-square output showed a significant difference was observed for the Emotional Autonomy sub-task, $\chi^2(2) = 17.00, p < .001$; the Interdependence sub-task, $\chi^2(2) = 27.82, p < .001$; and the Instrumental Autonomy sub-task, $\chi^2(2) = 9.98, p = .007$. The Academic Autonomy sub-task did not differ across the different student involvement levels, $p > .05$ (Figure 14).
Within the Mature Interpersonal Relationship Task the chi-square output showed there was no difference in the Peer Relationships sub-task across levels of student involvement, \( p > .05 \).

However, there was a difference in the Tolerance sub-task, \( \chi^2 (2) = 16.72, p < .001 \). Students with no involvement scored lower on the Tolerance sub-task than students with strong and average involvement (Figure 15).
Figure 15. Average Scale Scores on Each of the Sub-Tasks Associated with the Mature Interpersonal Relationship Task by Student Involvement Level.

Summary of the Results from SDTLA

Regarding the first research question, it was found that participants’ scores on the three developmental tasks (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships) were impacted by their status. In other words, face-to-face students scored higher on all developmental measures than online students. This pattern of results was consistent across all developmental tasks, as well as the individual sub-tasks. This finding supports the original alternative research hypothesis. A second finding was that student characteristics also impacted their scores on the developmental tasks. Females scored higher than males across all developmental tasks and sub-tasks. Students with GPAs in the 3.0 to 4.0 range also scored higher across all developmental tasks and sub-tasks. Older, non-traditional aged students scored higher across all developmental tasks.

Regarding the second research question, the extent to which participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC, the major finding was that students with no student life involvement consistently scored lower across all developmental
tasks and sub-tasks than students with average and strong involvement. Among students with average and strong involvement, there was no significant difference across the developmental tasks.

In addition to answering the two research questions, tests were run to determine what types of programming QCC students wanted to see. Results showed that the majority of responses wanted to see more social programming (i.e. dances, trips, parties, etc.), followed by cultural arts programming and academic clubs (Figure 16). Tests showed no statistically significant difference between the types of programming wanted from online and face-to-face students. The results from the focus group provided a more in-depth look into the correlation between type of programming and mode of learning.

Figure 16. Types of Programming Wanted at QCC.

![Graph showing types of programming wanted at QCC]

Qualitative Findings from the Focus Group

The focus group, which consisted of 4 online students and 5 face-to-face students, was conducted in order to gain more insight. The majority of online participants were non-traditional aged students, as opposed to the face-to-face participants who were all traditional aged students. All participants, but one online student, classified their involvement as heavy. A common theme
of flexibility emerged among those that suggested they chose online over face-to-face. Furthermore, those that chose face-to-face insisted that it is a better experience. In response to why he chose face-to-face learning, Will stated, “I’ll say it’s probably the college experience, I believe this is the best way to gain an education and understand every aspect of the course material” (Will, Personal Communication, February 8th, 2019).

The following two research questions were posed to organize and assess the findings from the focus group: 1) how do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC? And, 2) how do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC? These research questions and the prompts within the interview protocol were developed from the background of the tasks from the SDTLA and Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors of Development (1993). In other words, when discussing the findings in relation to development, the three major tasks; Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships were the guiding definitions.

**Research question 1: How do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC?**

All participants seemed to show high regard for the role QCC played in their development, regardless of mode of learning. However, a difference in importance of what developmental aspects mattered more did emerge. For example, online students tended to focus more on the impact of purpose. Sam, an online student, stated “The role QCC played in my development is basically weeding out what I do want to do and what I don’t want to do” (Sam, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Bonny, another online student, stated “Being at QCC has given me more confidence, so although I did kind of have an idea of what my purpose
was, QCC further cemented the idea that I wanted to work with people” (Bonny, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019).

Face-to-face students tended to focus more on the role QCC played in developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships and Autonomy. For example, Dean, a face-to-face student, stated “QCC has helped me get more confident about myself and it helped me also interact with a lot of different people and cultures” (Dean, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Furthermore, Jacob, another face-to-face student, stated “QCC definitely helped me with decision making and like I said before interacting with people and experiencing and learning from other people has helped me a lot” (Jacob, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019).

The results from the SDTLA revealed that face-to-face students showed higher development than online students in all three tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The findings from this focus group suggest minor differences in that online student responses tended to suggest higher development within the area of Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, while face-to-face student responses tended to suggest higher development in Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Age could be a major factor here, as noted above, the majority of online students in this focus group tended to be non-traditional aged students. Another factor could be that the online students tended to be much more involved in activities to help plan their career. For example, Logan, an online student, stated “pretty much everything I do is geared towards my career” (Logan, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Furthermore, Hailey, another online student, stated, in response to how often are they involved in career related activities, “Daily, sometimes more frequent, but I am on several conference calls a week that will help me go towards my goal” (Hailey, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Meanwhile Jacob, a face-to-face student
responded to the same question by stating “since I am undecided in my career, I am still looking for the best option” (Jacob, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Another possible explanation for the differences could be how each student viewed their needs while at QCC, which leads to the second research question.

**Research question 2: How do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC?**

When coding the findings from the focus group, a couple of themes emerged regarding this research question. The first is that online students tended to have more of a need and a want to establish and clarify their purpose. This was evident by the types of programming that online students participated in and also, the types of programming they wanted to see at QCC. For example, two online students, Logan and Bonny, suggested that the majority of what they are involved in is related to their purpose. All online students tended to follow this pattern, with the only exception being Sam, who noted zero involvement. In addition, the online students tended to have a need for more online programming at QCC. For example, Jody, an online student stated, “For online, I found that when I tried to join clubs online nothing happened” (Jody, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Hailey, another online student stated, “As an online student I was unaware of anything that was open to students outside of my academics” (Hailey, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). These statements, and also the types of programming that the online students wanted to see at QCC, suggest that online students may have a need for more opportunities to develop interpersonal relationship skills. A follow up study on the impact of the lack of face-to-face interaction in relation to interpersonal development for online students could provide more clarification.
The second theme that emerged was the need for the development of autonomy for face-to-face students while at QCC. This was evident by the responses to what types of programming face-to-face students wanted to see and also their responses around decision making. For example, Dean, a face-to-face student, stated “For my decision making, I sometimes seek my parents for help” (Dean, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Furthermore, Will, a face-to-face student, stated “Academically at first, I used to go to my advisor a couple times a week” (Will, Personal Communication, February 8, 2019). Face-to-face students also leaned heavily towards the need for QCC to add more leadership programming, which again would suggest the need for some autonomy development.

**Summary**

The findings from the focus group differed slightly from the results of the SDTLA survey. The results from the survey found that face-to-face students showed significantly higher levels of development in all three tasks; Developing Autonomy, Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The findings from the focus group suggested that online students showed higher levels in development in Establishing and Clarifying Purpose and face-to-face students showed higher levels of development in Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The differences from the survey and focus group highlight the importance for the need of follow up studies and specifically, studies that focus more on demographics and the impact of factors like age, gender, etc. The next chapter covers recommendations, implications, and concluding remarks.
Chapter Five

Discussion of Results and Findings

The increase in online education has created challenges for institutions. As the numbers grow, retention continues to be a major concern. As research and best practices attempt to solve the riddle of online retention, Student Affairs Practitioners in particular, have been challenged to create a holistic college experience similar to what a face-to-face student would have access to. An abundance of literature offers evidence that the more involved students are more likely to succeed. Despite the challenges and the evidence of the importance of a holistic college experience, Student Affairs is still trying to adapt to the online population. Little is known about the impact of Student Life Programming on the online population. As a result, the primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at QCC. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. Two central research questions guided this study: 1) What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC (Establishing & Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, & Mature Interpersonal Relationships)? And, 2) To what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? In an attempt to dig deeper into the quantitative results, this study also included a small focus group that was guided by the following two questions: 1) How do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC? And, 2) How do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC?
Major Results from the SDTLA

The data from the SDTLA yielded seven major results. The first major result to address research question one; what significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC, found that face-to-face students scored higher than online students in all three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Face-to-face students also scored higher than online students on each sub-task within each of the three developmental tasks. This included the sub-tasks within Establishing and Clarifying Purpose; Educational Involvement, Career Planning, Lifestyle Planning, and Cultural Participation. It included the sub-tasks within Developing Autonomy; Emotional Autonomy, Interdependence, Academic Autonomy, and Instrumental Autonomy. Finally, this also included the sub-tasks within Mature Interpersonal Relationships; Peer Relationships and Tolerance.

The significant difference within these tasks and sub-tasks are important for many reasons. First, within the task of establishing and clarifying purpose it is extremely important as the literature has shown purpose to be one of the most important factors for student retention. If online students are struggling to find their purpose or develop their purpose, the odds decrease for retention. The institution should be ensuring that online students are actively engaged in developing their purpose. Career services should be connecting with online students to ensure they are engaging in activities that would help with lifestyle planning. Student Life should be analyzing how to incorporate cultural events for online students. These types of programming will also ensure that students feel more connected and engaged with the institution.

The second task developing autonomy, composed of the subtasks emotional autonomy, interdependence, academic autonomy, and instrumental autonomy is significant for many
reasons. First, online education in nature tends to be structured in a way that requires a higher level of autonomy. The subtask of academic autonomy, in particular is concerning for online students. If online students do not have the inherent self-discipline skills, the success rate is not likely to be very high. Furthermore, instrumental autonomy, which relates to how well a student can structure their lives, is also concerning; especially when talking about Community College students. Community College students in nature tend to have a wider array of duties as opposed to the traditional residential student. The institution should look to implement some form of online readiness test. An online orientation should look to teach and ensure that online students are comfortable with the institutions process and online structure. Student Life should look to incorporate activities that increase online student connections to both the institution and to their community. Things like an online leadership program and civic engagement events could provide online students more development opportunities within this task.

The significant findings from the third task, Mature Interpersonal Relationships, composed of peer relationships and tolerance is important as well for online students. First, the peer relationships sub-task ensures that students can have honest and open relationships with their peers. Again, online education in nature has historically struggled with the lack of peer interaction. As discussed in the literature review, the environment of online learning and the lack of interactions has led to a decrease in retention. Furthermore, this task is a big supplier of many of those soft skills that are employers are looking for today and that some noted were lacking from graduates. The ability to communicate, work as a team with a diverse group, and problem solve are key traits of a successful student, employee, and citizen that should be enhanced during their time in higher education. The fact that these results show online students are lagging behind is concerning for many stakeholders.
In addition to addressing research question one, several demographics were collected and analyzed. The second major result showed that females scored higher than males on all three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The third major result showed that older, non-traditional aged students scored higher on all developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships.

In addition to collecting demographic data, this survey also collected data on their status at QCC. This led to two additional major results. The fourth major result showed that students with GPA’s in the 3.0-4.0 range scored higher in all three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The fifth major result showed that the number of credits had no impact on Establishing and Clarifying Purpose. However, students with 30 or more credits scored lower on Developing Autonomy and Mature Interpersonal Relationships.

Two more major results emerged while addressing research question number two. In addressing the question; to what extent does participation in Student Life Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC, the sixth major result showed students who had strong or average involvement in student life programs scored higher than those not involved at all. Involved students scored higher on all three developmental tasks: Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. There was no difference between those students that reported strong or average involvement.

Finally, in addition to addressing research question two, this survey also collected information on what types of activities QCC students wanted to see. The seventh major result showed that the majority of QCC students wanted to see more social programming. There were
no significant differences in the types of programming wanted from online and face-to-face students.

These findings from research question two are important for online students in many ways. Historically, there has been a debate about whether 1) online students wanted to be involved, 2) whether online students needed these programming pieces, and 3) how does student affairs provide these services. As online students become younger in age, institutions, and QCC in particular, can no longer assume answers to these questions. These results show the benefits of involvement and more opportunities for online students must be presented. QCC should look in incorporate technology whenever possible to increase engagement opportunities for online students, both in the classroom and out of the classroom. Programs like an online student leadership program, an online orientation, online club meetings and an all-inclusive FYE program could help increase involvement for online students.

**Major Themes from the Focus Group**

As a result of the focus group, six major themes emerged. In addressing research question one; how do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC, the first major theme one showed that online students viewed more development in Establishing and Clarifying Purpose while at QCC. In contrast, the second major theme showed that face-to-face students viewed their development higher for Mature Interpersonal Relationships.

In addressing research question two; how do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC, the third major theme showed that online students showed more of a need and want for Establishing and Clarifying Purpose. The fourth major theme showed that online students wanted to see more virtual programming offered (i.e. online clubs). In contrast, the fifth major theme showed that face-to-face students had more of a need to
Develop Autonomy while at QCC. Finally, the sixth major theme showed that face-to-face students wanted to see more leadership programming offered at QCC.

The themes from the focus group are important for a few reasons. First, it offers more evidence that indeed online students do have a need and a desire to have more extra-curricular programming options available to them. Second, the themes highlight the importance for developing purpose for online students. Online students continuously asserted that purpose was their sole reason for being at QCC. QCC should look to ensure that online students are strongly invested in their purpose development.

The following sections discuss what these results mean in relation to the theoretical framework and the literature. Implications for future research and practice are also discussed. This chapter concludes with closing remarks and reflection on the journey to becoming a scholarly practitioner.

**Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development. This theory was selected for two reasons; one, because of its direct relation to the survey instrument, the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment and two, because of the theory’s effectiveness in programming needs assessment (Evans, et al, 2010). Chickering and Resisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development; Developing Competence, Managing Emotions, Moving through Autonomy Toward Interdependence, Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, Establishing Identity, Developing Purpose, and Developing Integrity, provide a road map of sorts for the development of a student during their college years.

This theory is strongly revealed in the findings of this study. It offers strong support that all seven of the vectors are impacted during the college years. As noted, the theory has strong
value when discussing programming. The results showed favorable evidence of this. For example, the findings showed that students’ with strong or average involvement in Student Life Programming showed higher levels of development. This offers support that these vectors can be addressed through different types of programming while in college.

Although the findings offer support for the development of these vectors during the college years, many limitations emerged. The first limitation that emerged was the theories applicability to different demographic characteristics. As noted in the results, females scored higher than males on all three developmental tasks. This finding suggests that males and females do not develop on the same scale. This is consistent with past studies using this theory (Evans, et al, 2010). This makes it difficult to examine development as a single snapshot in time during the college years.

The characteristic of age was another factor that was examined. It was found that non-traditional aged students scored higher in all developmental tasks compared to traditional aged students. As traditional aged students enter college with more life experience, the applicability of this theory to this population is questionable. Reisser (1995) asserted that more research on the applicability of this theory to demographics like age, race and gender are needed (Evans, et al, 2010).

A second limitation of the framework in relation to the results is the lack of specificity, as noted by researchers (Evans, et al, 2010). Although the SDTLA instrument created by Winston, Miller, and Cooper (1999) was designed using Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) Vectors of Development, not all of the vectors are given equal attention. For example, although the three main Tasks; Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships are interconnected to all Vectors of Development outlined by
Chickering and Reisser (1993), it is clear that some of the vectors are more involved in the measurement. This is likely because some vectors like integrity are hard to measure (Evans, et al, 2010).

The final limitation of the framework noted from this study was its relation to the online population. A large underpinning of this framework is the impact of involvement on development during the college years. The limitation with this theory is that it assumes that college students are on a level playing field with access to programs provided by the institution. As noted in the literature, Student Affairs Practitioners do not always provide equal services to the online students.

Relation to the Literature

Many of the findings from this study were consistent with the current literature. However, there were a few points of contradiction. The following section compares the results of this study to the current literature. This section also discusses points of nuances from the current literature pool.

One of the findings from this research was that online students did have a need and want for social programming and other activities. This was evident by the responses on the survey and the focus group. This finding is in contradiction of what Taylor and Holley (2009) found in that online students rarely saw social interaction as a priority. However, the finding in this study was consistent with that of LaPadula (2003) and Stewart, et. al (2013). Both of these studies found that online students wanted more things like online clubs.

One of the themes that emerged from the focus group was that QCC has a lack of services for online students. This supports the findings from Raphael (2006) in which showed that most online students find that the services are inadequate. As Pullan (2009) stated, “all
students deserve access to a full array of student services” (p. 248). Results from this study show evidence that there is a need for more programming for online students. However, there also seems to be a lack of services for online students. This could be a result of the findings from Peterson (2001) and Phaiah (2006) who found that Student Affairs Practitioners perceive services to be important for online students, but fail to provide them equitably.

As the literature discussed in chapter two, student development is important on many levels. Findings from this study provide evidence that online students lag behind face-to-face students in overall development. This is problematic because of the current literature that provides evidence of the success gap for online students. For example, Jaschik (2015) found no patterns in which online students performed better than face-to-face students. Gregory and Lampley (2016) found similar results in that online students were more likely to withdraw. If student development is highly correlated with persistence and online students are not showing the same level of development as face-to-face students, this could be contributing to the roughly 8-10% success gap at QCC (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018).

Perhaps the area where the most contradiction lies is the area of demographics and in particular for this study, age and gender. The findings from this study showed that older students tended to score higher in all developmental tasks. The findings of Muse Jr. (2003) and Wojciehowiski and Palmer (2005) also found that younger students show lower success rates. In contradiction though, Aragon and Johnson (2008) and Brock (2014) found no correlation to age and success for online students at community colleges. Patterson and McFadden (2009) found that older online students at community colleges tended to be less successful. The characteristic of age is an area where more research must be done. Age, in relation to success, likely has many other factors that impact them, like program and institution type.
Welsh (2007) found that development levels were far more important than demographic factors in predicting the success of online students. Many other studies have showed the importance of development as well. The findings from this study were consistent with that of Williams and Winston Jr. (1985) and Cooper, Healy, and Simpson (1994) that showed those involved in student organizations and activities produced higher levels of development. This study found that those involved at the strong or average level scored higher on all three developmental tasks.

The findings of this study were also consistent with that of Foubert and Grainger (2006), Huang and Chang (2004), and O’Keefe and Newton (2011) in that those involved showed higher development of autonomy and purpose. As mentioned above, this study found a strong correlation between age and overall development. This is consistent with Kahroff (2005) and Macari, Maples and D’Andrea (2006) in which they found that older students showed higher levels of development. Additionally, the findings from this study are in line with those from Harrison (2002) who found that the development of competence and mature relationships was not addressed for online students.

Not only does this study add to the current literature base, but there are a few nuances that separate it. First, this study is a comparison analysis of the development of online and face-to-face students. This study looks at development both quantitatively and qualitatively. The majority of studies within the current literature pool either look at online or face-to-face students by themselves. This comparative analysis provides an interesting lens of looking at the development of students. This study also separates itself from studies like Peterson (2001) and Phaiah (2006) that look at online development through the lens of Student Affairs Practitioners.
Finally, this study also incorporated two other factors, GPA and number of credits completed, which are not focused on in the current literature.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

As a result of this study, there are several implications for research and practice. This study contributes to a larger scholarly community on psychosocial development. The findings from this study enhance the current literature through its comparative analysis of online and face-to-face students. The findings also present some areas that are recommended for future research. Since this study only presents a snapshot of online and face-to-face student development at a single institution, the results are not generalizable to other institutions. As a result, more research needs to be conducted on the development of online students. More longitudinal studies comparing online and face-to-face student development would be beneficial. Additionally, more research on the needs of online students is also recommended based on the results from this study. In particular, more research on the programming needed to enhance the development of online students. Development results based on demographic characteristics still seem to be contradictory, suggesting that they may be program or institution specific. Longitudinal studies on demographic factors and their relation to online development could shed some more light into this topic. More research also needs to be conducted comparing online students who are also involved in extra-curricular activities versus online students not involved in these activities. This would dig deeper into the impact of extra-curricular programming for students. Finally, more research needs to be conducted on student development in relation to the retention of online students. As previously noted, retention is a major concern for online programs.

The findings from this study also have implications for QCC and this researcher. The findings from this study should assist Senior Staff members at QCC in developing a plan to best
support online students. Results from this study should guide QCC Administrators to best practices like Angelino, Williams and Natvig (2007) who suggested things like online club meetings or like Britto and Rush (2013) reported from Lone Star Community College and incorporate things like an online orientation and the addition of online support staff.

Although this study is not meant to show QCC Administrators things they already know like the 8-10% (“QCC Online Enrollment Report”, 2018) difference in retention with online and face-to-face students, it is meant to highlight the need that exists. QCC administrators should look to best practices for models of persistence, like Milem and Berger’s (1997) model that looks at key traits of the students or the model posed by Street (2010) that is specifically geared towards online students.

As a result of these findings and the inherent low retention rate of QCC online students, some form of online readiness should be implemented. Perhaps more of a hybrid model should be implemented until students show a higher level of development or online readiness. QCC should also look to incorporate an all-inclusive First Year Experience program. This would ensure that all QCC students are engaging in development activities. One of the historical issues with online learning is the lack of contact between the student and the institution. Both the results from the focus group and the SDTLA suggest that online students lack interpersonal development. QCC should look to incorporate all forms of technology to ensure that online students have the same experience as a face-to-face student would have. The results from this study, and also past literature, show that students who have a firm understanding of their purpose are more likely to be successful. QCC should ensure that adequate programming is being provided to online students to make sure that they are actively developing their purpose. As the literature shows, Student Affairs is lagging behind in serving online students. The results from
this study should not only have implications for QCC, but other institutions should also look to analyze their online student services.

This study also has implications for the practice of this researcher. Although not a Senior Administrator at QCC, this researcher does hold an Administration position directly related to this study. As the Director of Student Life and Leadership it is this researchers’ responsibility to create programming opportunities inclusive to all students. As a result of the findings from this study, this researcher will look to incorporate things like an online orientation and the creation of a platform for the social engagement of online students. This researcher will also continue to collect data on the needs of QCC online students which will help shape the programming offered.

Although this research was done from a perspective of Student Affairs, it is important to address the idea of holistic development. In an ideal higher education setting, academic and student affairs should go hand-in-hand in relation to enhancing student development. There is no one activity or one course that will fulfill the development needs of an online student. In order for holistic growth and development to be achieved, Student Affairs programming should enhance the experiences an online student is receiving in the classroom.

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the differences in effects of online and face-to-face students and their development while at QCC. A secondary purpose of this research was to determine whether participation in Student Life Programming impacted student development while at QCC. Two central research questions guided this study: 1) What significant differences exist, if any, between online and face-to-face students in the three developmental tasks while at QCC? And, 2) To what extent does participation in Student Life
Programming influence the three developmental tasks while at QCC? In an attempt to dig deeper into the quantitative results, this study also included a small focus group that was guided by the following two questions: 1) How do face-to-face and online students view their development during their time at QCC? And, 2) How do face-to-face and online students view their development needs during their time at QCC? Using a correlational comparative analysis, this study found that face-to-face students scored higher in all three developmental tasks; Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Another major finding was that QCC students that had strong or average involvement scored higher in all three developmental tasks; Establishing and Clarifying Purpose, Developing Autonomy, and Mature Interpersonal Relationships. As a result of the findings, it is suggested that QCC Senior Administrators show heightened attention to serving online students.

With using Student Development Theory, this study offers a view of potentially what programming pieces are needed for both face-to-face and online students. It is important to paint a picture between what theory is and what student development in general is. Student development is the growth and knowledge gained as a result from higher education. Theory and research like this should help guide both Academic and Student Affairs Practitioners to best practices of a holistic view of student development.

In closing, this study represents a journey to becoming a scholarly practitioner. This process has greatly enhanced this researchers’ awareness of the role of a scholarly practitioner. As a practitioner beginning the program, this researcher had a firm understanding of the issues surrounding higher education. Throughout the course work and the dissertation process, the concept of a scholarly practitioner has become clearer. This researcher finds he has a responsibility to become a change agent within higher education. As a practitioner for over a
decade, using best practices to inform decisions has always been the norm. Now as a scholarly practitioner, this researcher understands the importance of scholarly work to create best practices for higher education.
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Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Subject Line: Support Needed from Students

Dear Faculty,

I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am currently conducting a study for my doctoral thesis and am seeking research participants.

I am researching the state of development of online learners and face-to-face learners while at QCC. My goal is to raise awareness for the needs of online learners and to strengthen the support services offered.

The Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment is composed of statements shown to be typical of some students and is designed to collect information concerning college students’ activities, feelings, attitudes, aspirations, and relationships. The Assessment is designed to help students learn more about themselves and for colleges to learn how to assist students more effectively. The SDTLA’s usefulness depends entirely on the care, honesty, and candor with which students answer the questions. The following link is the survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6MW59S6.

Please consider sending this to your students. For convenience, I have attached NEU IRB approval for this project.

Thank you for your help.

Regards,

Michael Beane
Appendix B

Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment (Winston Jr, Cooper & Miller, 1999)

Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Demographic Questions:

What is your Gender? (Select only one for this question and all questions following)

Male
Female
Other

What is your GPA? (Select other if first semester)

1.0-2.0
2.0-3.0
3.0-4.0
Other

Are you an online student or on campus student? (If both, choose the one in which you take the majority of your classes)

Online
On Campus

What would describe your involvement in student activities?

Strong Involvement (At least one activity per week)
Average Involvement (At least one activity per month)
No Involvement in Activities

If involved at QCC, what kinds of activities do you participate in? (Select all that apply)

Clubs
Community Service
Leadership Events
Social Events (i.e trips, ice cream socials etc.)
N/A

What types of programming would you like to see while at QCC?

How many credits have you earned?

0-15
15-30
30 Plus
What is your age range?

18-24
25-30
31-36
37Plus

**Part 1: Statements 1 – 21**

Respond to the following items by marking:
A = True
B = False

1. I never regret anything I have done.
2. I am currently involved in one or more activities that I have identified as being of help in determining what I will do with the rest of my life.
3. I followed a systematic plan in making an important decision within the past thirty days.
4. I have personal habits that are potentially dangerous for my health.
5. I like everyone I know.
6. It’s important to me that I be liked by everyone.
7. I would prefer not to room with someone who is from a culture or race different from mine.
8. I never get angry.
9. Within the past six months, I have experienced unfamiliar artistic media or performances.
10. During the past 12 months, I have acquired a better understanding of what it feels like to be a member of another race.
11. Since beginning college, my friends have become more frequent sources of support than my parents.
12. I only attend parties where there are plenty of alcoholic beverages available.
13. I never say things I shouldn’t.
14. Within the past six months, I have learned about or experienced a culture different from my own through artistic expression.
15. I never lie.
16. I always take precautions (or abstain) to assure that I will not contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

17. Within the past 12 months, I have undertaken an activity intended to improve my understanding of culturally/racially different people.

18. I never get sad.

19. Within the past 12 months, I had a conversation or discussion about the arts outside of class.

20. I avoid discussing religion with people who challenge my beliefs, because there is nothing that can change my mind about my beliefs.

21. Within the past 12 months, I have undertaken an activity intended to improve my understanding of people with disabilities.

Part 2: Statements 22 – 68
Respond to the following statements by selecting the appropriate letter:

A = Never (almost never) true of me
B = Seldom true of me
C = Usually true of me
D = Always (almost always) true of me

22. I satisfactorily accomplish all important daily tasks (e.g., class assignments, test preparation, room/apartment cleaning, eating, and sleeping).

23. I seek out opportunities to learn about cultural/artistic forms that are new to me.

24. It bothers me if my friends don’t share the same leisure interests as I have.

25. I’m annoyed when I hear people speaking in a language I don’t understand.

26. I have made conscious efforts to make the college a better place to attend.

27. I have a difficult time in courses when the instructor doesn’t regularly check up on completion of assignments.

28. I pay careful attention to the nutritional value of the foods I eat.

29. I feel comfortable socializing with people who have physical, emotional, sensory, or learning disabilities.

30. I plan my activities to make sure that I have adequate time for sleep.
31. I seek to broaden my understanding of culture (e.g., art, music, or literature).

32. When I wish to be alone, I have difficulty communicating my desire to others in a way that doesn’t hurt their feelings.

33. I avoid groups where I would be of the minority race.

34. My classmates can depend upon me to help them master class materials.

35. I don’t perform as well in class as I could because I fall short of requirements.

36. I limit the quantity of fats in my diet.

37. Because of my friends’ urgings, I get involved in things that are not in my best interest.

38. A person’s sexual orientation is a crucial factor in determining whether I will attempt to develop a friendship with her/him.

39. It’s more important for me to make my own decisions than to have my parent’s approval.

40. I conceal some of my talents or skills so I will not be asked to contribute to group efforts.

41. I have plenty of energy.

42. It’s more important to me that my friends approve of what I do than it is for me to do what I want.

43. It’s hard for me to work intensely on assignments for more than a short time.

44. I am satisfied with my physical appearance.

45. I feel uncomfortable when I’m around persons whose sexual orientation is different from mine.

46. When in groups, I present my ideas and views in a way that it’s clear I have given them serious thought.

47. It’s very important to me that I am successful both inside and outside the classroom.

48. My weight is maintained at a level appropriate for my height and frame.

49. My personal habits (e.g., procrastination, time management, assertiveness) get in the way of accomplishing my goals or meeting my responsibilities.

50. I try to avoid people who act in unconventional ways.
51. I accept criticism from friends without getting upset.

52. I get bored and quit studying after working on an assignment for a short time.

53. I eat well-balanced, nutritious meals daily.

54. I find it difficult to accept some of the ways my close friends have changed over the past year.

55. I have difficulty following through with decisions I have made when I discover others (e.g., parents or friends) disagree with these decisions.

56. I have difficulty disciplining myself to study when I should.

57. I exercise for 30 minutes or more at least 3 times a week.

58. I don’t socialize with people of whom my friends don’t approve.

59. My study time seems rushed because I fail to realistically estimate the amount of time required.

60. I plan my week to make sure that I have sufficient time for physical exercise.

61. I feel confident in my ability to accomplish my goals.

62. I am annoyed when I have to make an accommodation for a person with a disability.

63. I become inebriated from the use of alcohol on weekends.

64. I try to dress so that I will fit in with my friends.

65. It’s essential that those important to me approve of everything I do.

66. Even when I’m not particularly interested in a subject, I’m able to complete course requirements satisfactorily.

67. It’s important to me that I achieve to the limits of my abilities.

68. I use library materials, resources, and facilities effectively.

**Part 3: Statements 69 -73**

Respond to the items below by selecting one of the following:

- A = Strongly Agree
- B = Agree
- C = Disagree
D = Strongly Disagree

69. I have arranged my living quarters in a way that makes it easy for me to study, sleep, and relax.

70. I have become more culturally sophisticated since beginning college.

71. Learning to live with students from cultural or racial background different from mine is an important part of a college education.

72. Society has a responsibility to assist people who cannot sustain themselves.

73. As a citizen, I have the responsibility to keep myself well-informed about current issues.

Part 4: Statements 74-87
Respond to the statements below by selecting one of the following:

A = Never
B = Seldom
C = Sometimes
D = Often

74. I wonder what my friends say about me behind my back.

75. I dislike working in groups when there are a significant number of people who are from a race or culture that is different from mine.

76. Within the past year, I have participated in activities that directly benefited my fellow students.

77. Within the past 3 months, I engaged in activities that were dangerous or could be risky to my health.

78. I have used my time in college to experiment with different ways of living or looking at the world.

79. I am confident in my ability to make good decisions on my own.

80. I participate in community service activities.

81. I trust the validity of my values and opinions, even when they aren’t shared by my parent(s).

82. I express my disapproval when I hear others use racial or ethnic slurs or put-downs.

83. I have an inner sense of direction that keeps me on track, even when I am criticized.
84. In the past 6 months, I have gone out of my way to meet students who are culturally or racially different from me because I thought there were things I could learn from them.

85. I feel anxious when confronted with making decisions or taking actions for which I am responsible.

86. I meet my responsibilities to my parent(s) as well as I should.

87. Within the past 12 months, I have taken a public stand on issues or beliefs when many friends and acquaintances didn’t agree.

Part 5: Statements 88 – 153
Select the one best response from the alternatives provided.

88. After a friend and I have a heated argument, I will
   A. Never (almost never) speak to him/her.
   B. Seldom speak to him/her.
   C. Usually speak to him/her.
   D. Always speak to him/her.
   E. I never have disagreements with friends.

89. In terms of an academic major or concentration,
   A. I am uncertain about possible majors and am a long way from a decision.
   B. I have thought about several majors, but haven’t done anything about it yet.
   C. I have made a tentative decision about what I major in.
   D. I have made a firm decision about a major, but I still have doubts about whether I have made the right decision.
   E. I have made a firm decision about a major in which I am confident that I will be successful.

90. Thinking about employment after college,
   A. I do not know how to find out about the prospects for employment in a variety of fields.
   B. I have a vague idea about how to find out about future employment prospects in a variety of fields.
   C. I know one source that could provide information about future employment prospects in a variety of fields.
   D. I know several sources that can provide information about future employment prospects in a variety of fields.

91. When thinking about the kind of life I want 5 years after college, I have . . .
   A. not come up with a very clear picture.
   B. a vague picture, but have been unable to identify the specific steps I need to take now.
   C. a clear enough picture that I can identify the step necessary for me to take now in order to realize my dream, even though I haven’t done very much about it yet.
D. a clear enough picture and identified the steps.

92. During this academic year,
   A. I have organized my time well enough for me to get everything completed.
   B. I sometimes had difficulty organizing my time well enough to get everything done.
   C. I often had difficulty organizing my time well enough to get everything done.
   D. I seldom seem able to organize my time well enough to do everything.

93. I participate in the arts (e.g., draw, write, play musical instrument, or sing) just for my own enjoyment.
   A. I never (almost never) do this.
   B. I seldom do this.
   C. I occasionally do this.
   D. I frequently do this.

94. When faced with important decisions this year, I have . . .
   A. relied on others—such as parent(s), friend(s), or teacher(s)—to tell me what to do.
   B. sought information and opinions, but made the final decisions on my own.
   C. relied on myself alone in making the decisions.
   D. attempted to avoid making decisions as much as possible.

95. I have identified, and can list, at least 3 ways I can be an asset to the community.
   A. No, I haven’t thought about that much.
   B. No, I don’t know what I can contribute.
   C. No, that’s not important to me.
   D. Yes.

96. During this academic year,
   A. I have tended to put off most school work, and assignments to the last minute and, as a result, don’t do as well as I could.
   B. I have often forgotten about assignments or put them off so long that I was unable to turn them in on time.
   C. I have established a study routine that has enabled me to get most school work and assignments completed on time and to my own satisfaction.
   D. I have established a study routine that has enabled me to get all work and assignments completed on time and to my own satisfaction.

97. When I have experienced stress or tension this term,
   A. I have most often sought relief by listening to music, reading, or visiting friends.
   B. I have most often had a few drinks or beers to relax.
   C. I have most often exercised, worked out, or played a sport.
   D. I have kept on going and ignored the stress.
   E. I have had occasions when it became too much to handle and I had to take days off to relax or rest/sleep.

98. In terms of the array of possible academic majors at this college, I have . . .
A. not spent much time investigating the possibilities.
B. talked to some students about their majors, but have not done any systematic investigation.
C. read the catalog and talked to some students and/or faculty/staff members about possible majors.
D. made a systematic effort to learn about possible majors and what they entail.
E. made a systematic effort to learn about possible majors and have carefully looked at my abilities and interests and how they fit different majors.

99. Within the past 6 months,
   A. I haven’t seriously thought about possible post-college jobs or careers.
   B. I have thought about possible post-college jobs or career, but haven’t done much about exploring the possibilities.
   C. I have asked relatives, faculty members, or others to describe positions in the fields in which they are working.
   D. I have taken definite steps to decide about a career, such as visiting a counselor, placement center, or persons who hold the kinds of positions in which I am interested.

100. If something were to prevent me from realizing my present educational plans, I have . . .
   A. no idea what else I might pursue.
   B. a vague notion about acceptable alternatives.
   C. several acceptable alternatives in mind, but I haven’t explored them very much.
   D. several acceptable alternatives in mind, which I have explored in some detail.

101. When I have heated disagreements with friends about matters such as religion, politics, or philosophy, I . . .
   A. am likely to terminate the friendship.
   B. am bothered by their failure to see my point of view but hide my feelings.
   C. will express my disagreement, but will not discuss the issue.
   D. will express my disagreement and am willing to discuss the issue.
   E. don’t talk about controversial matters.

102. I have made a positive contribution to my community (residence hall, campus, neighborhood, or hometown) within the past 3 months.
   A. No, that isn’t important to me.
   B. No, I don’t know what I could do to make a positive contribution.
   C. No, but I have tried to find ways.
   D. Yes.

103. In terms of an academic major/concentration, I have . . .
   A. determined what all the requirements are and the deadlines by which things must be done, for the major I have chosen.
   B. investigated the basic requirements for graduating with a degree in my academic major.
   C. a general idea about the courses and other requirements needed in my major.
D. not paid much attention to the requirements for my major; I depend on my advisor or others to tell me what to take.
E. yet to decide on an academic major.

104. I have decided the place (if any) that marriage has in my future.
   A. No, I will just wait to see what develops.
   B. No, I don’t think about it.
   C. No, but I know what I would like to have happen.
   D. Yes, I have made a definite decision.

105. I am familiar with sources of help on campus (e.g., tutoring, counseling, academic information, library research tools and procedures, and computers).
   A. I really don’t know much about these things.
   B. I know about a few.
   C. I know about most of them.
   D. I know about all of them.

106. When I don’t agree with someone in authority (e.g., professor, administrator), I . . .
   A. never express my opinion.
   B. express my opinion only when I am angry.
   C. express my opinion when asked.
   D. express my opinion if given a chance.
   E. avoid dealing with persons in position of authority if possible.

107. Within the past 3 months, I have taken an active part in a recycling activity/program.
   A. No, recycling is too much trouble.
   B. No, I don’t know where to dispose of materials.
   C. Yes, I have participated occasionally.
   D. Yes, I have participated regularly.
   E. Yes, I have participated and promoted recycling activities to others.

108. I use tobacco products (smoke, chew, or dip).
   A. Never.
   B. Once a week or less.
   C. Several times a week.
   D. Most days.
   E. Everyday.

109. In terms of the labor market demand for people with a degree in my major, in the career area in which I am most interested,
   A. I have yet to decide on a career area and/or academic major.
   B. I don’t have much of an idea of what I will face upon graduation.
   C. I have a general, although somewhat vague, picture of what I will face upon graduation.
   D. I have investigated things enough to be pretty clear about what I will face upon graduation.
110. I can clearly state my plan for achieving the goals I have established for the next 10 years.
   A. No, because I have no specific goals for the next 10 years.
   B. No, because I don’t like making detailed plans for long-range goals.
   C. No, because I haven’t worked out my plan completely.
   D. Yes.

111. Within the past month,
   A. I took the initiative to bring several people together to resolve a mutual problem.
   B. I joined with several people to resolve a mutual problem.
   C. I have not encountered a problem that needed a group effort to solve.
   D. I have avoided situations that required me to work with other people in solving problems.

112. Within the last 12 months, I have attended a play or classical music concert when not required for a class.
   A. Yes
   B. No, I don’t like those kinds of things.
   C. No, I just haven’t gotten around to it.
   D. No, there aren’t such things available here.

113. If I thought my friends would disapprove of a decision I made, I would most likely . . .
   A. try to keep them from finding out (keep it a secret).
   B. tell them and pretend I didn’t care what they thought.
   C. tell them and explain my reasoning for this decision.
   D. make up something to mislead them from knowing the truth.

114. In the past 12 months, I have taken an active part in activities or projects designed to improve the community, such as a charity drive, clean up campaign, or blood drive.
   A. Never
   B. Once
   C. Twice
   D. Three times
   E. Four or more times

115. I have more than one drink (i.e., 1.5 ounces of liquor, 5 ounces of wine, or 12 ounces of beer).
   A. Never
   B. Once a week or less
   C. Two to three times a week
   D. Most days
   E. Everyday

116. Over the past 12 months at this college, I have . . .
   A. taken the initiative to set up conferences with an academic advisor.
B. kept appointments with an academic advisor when she/he scheduled them.
C. avoided dealing with my academic advisor.
D. not investigated how obtain academic advising.
E. not been at this college long enough to get involved in academic advising.

117. In the past year,
A. I have discussed my career goals with at least 2 professionals in the field that interests me most.
B. I have had minimal exposure to people in the career field that interests me most.
C. I know several professionals in the career field in which I am most interested, but I haven’t talked to them about entering the field.
D. I have yet to decide on a career area.

118. My plans for the future are consistent with my personal values (for example, importance of service to others, religious beliefs, importance of luxuries, desire for public recognition).
A. No, my future plans are unclear and I am undecided about my personal values.
B. No, my future plans are clear, but I am undecided about my personal values.
C. No, my future plans are unclear, but I am clear about my personal values.
D. Yes, I have recently begun to think about how my values will shape my future.
E. Yes, I thought about this a lot and have a clear plan.

119. Each day,
A. I depend on my memory to make sure that I get done what needs to be done, and that works for me.
B. I keep a calendar or make a “To Do” list of what needs to be done each day and that works for me.
C. I dislike planning what I need to do; I just let things happen and that works for me.
D. I don’t make detailed plans about what I need to do each day, and as a result I forget important things.

120. Within the past 12 months, I have visited a museum or an art exhibit when not required for a class.
A. Yes
B. No, I don’t like those kinds of things.
C. No, I just haven’t gotten around to it.
D. No, there aren’t such things available here.

121. In regard to social issues (e.g., homelessness, environmental pollution, or AIDS),
A. I don’t think much about them.
B. I am concerned, but haven’t taken any specific actions.
C. I contribute money to organizations that address the issue(s), but that is the extent of my involvement.
D. I am actively involved in organizations that address the issues(s).

122. I have a mature working relationship with one or more members of the academic community (faculty member, student affairs/services staff member, administrator).
A. Yes
B. No, I don’t like dealing with them.
C. No, I have tried to form relationships, but haven’t been successful yet.
D. No, I don’t know any.
E. No, I don’t have time for that kind of thing.

123. When thinking about occupations I am considering entering,
   A. I don’t know what is required in order to be competitive for a job.
   B. I haven’t decided which occupations interest me most.
   C. I have a general idea of what is required.
   D. I can list at least 5 requirements.

124. I have developed strategies to maximize my strengths and to minimize my weaknesses in order to accomplish my goals in life.
   A. No, I don’t know myself well.
   B. No, I haven’t figure out how to do that.
   C. No, I don’t have a clear picture of my life goals.
   D. Yes, I have done this, but I’m not very confident about my strategies.
   E. Yes, I have done this, and I am confident that my strategies will be effective.

125. I have one or more goals that I am committed to accomplishing and have been working on for over a year.
   A. No, I don’t like making definite goals.
   B. No, I have tried, but have been unable to follow through.
   C. No, I have difficulty making realistic long-range plans.
   D. Yes.

126. Over the past year, I have frequently participated in cultural activities.
   A. No, that isn’t something that I enjoy or consider important.
   B. No, there haven’t been any cultural activities available in which I could participate.
   C. I have attended when others have encouraged or invited me.
   D. Yes, I have taken advantage of as many opportunities as I could manage.
   E. Yes, only when required by the college.

127. Within the past 12 months, I contributed my time to a worthy cause in my community (campus or town/city).
   A. No
   B. 1 – 10 hours
   C. 11 – 20 hours
   D. 21-30 hours
   E. 31 or more hours

128. Within the past 12 months,
   A. I haven’t attended any non-required lectures, programs, or activities dealing with serious intellectual subjects.
B. I have attended 1 or 2 non-required lectures or programs dealing with serious intellectual subjects.
C. I have attended 3 or 4 lectures or programs dealing with serious intellectual subjects that were not required for any of my courses.
D. I have attended 5 or more lectures or programs dealing with serious intellectual subjects that were not required for any of my courses.

129. In terms of practical experience in the career area I plan to pursue after college, I have . . 
   .
   A. yet to decide on a post-college career area.
   B. had no experience.
   C. had very little experience.
   D. had some experience.
   E. had a great deal of experience.

130. I am involved in hobbies or leisure activities today that I see myself continuing to pursue 10 years from now.
   A. Yes
   B. No
   C. I don’t know

131. In addition to my academic studies,
   A. I spend much of my free time involved in organized activities on campus or in the community.
   B. I spend most of my free time “goofing off” or watching television.
   C. I spend most of my free time with friends doing things we enjoy.
   D. I spend most of my time working to support myself and/or caring for my family.

132. In regards to college organizations specifically related to my chosen occupational field, I have . .
   A. yet to decide on a post-college occupational field.
   B. investigated joining one or more, but have not actually joined.
   C. joined one or more, but am not very involved.
   D. joined one or more and am actively involved.

133. I have investigated what I must do in order to satisfy my need or desire for material goods, such as cars, clothes, and a home once I complete my education.
   A. No, I’m unsure about how important material goods are to me.
   B. No, I haven’t thought much about what I will need to do.
   C. No, I have given some thought to this, but things are still unclear.
   D. Yes, I’m somewhat sure that I will be able to satisfy my needs/desires.
   E. Yes, my current plans are likely to meet my needs or desires.

134. I have formed a personal relationship (friendly acquaintanceship) with one or more professors.
   A. Yes, but I find it difficult to talk to him/her (them).
B. Yes, we often enjoy interacting with each other.
C. No, I would like to but haven’t taken any action.
D. No, I would like to and have tried unsuccessfully.
E. No, because that isn’t important to me.

135. Considering beginning-level positions in business, industry, government, or education for which I would be eligible when I complete my education,
I . . .
A. can name 3 or more.
B. can name only 2.
C. can name only 1.
D. cannot name any.
E. haven’t made a decision about my academic major/concentration; therefore, I don’t know for what I might be qualified.

136. I have considered the kinds of tradeoffs (in areas such as family time, leisure time, job status, income, or time with friends) I will need to make in order to have the kind of lifestyle I want to have 5 years after completing my education.
A. I haven’t thought about this at all.
B. I have thought about this in general.
C. I have a fairly clear idea of the tradeoffs required.
D. I have a very clear idea of the tradeoffs required.

137. I have been actively engaged in a student organization or college committee in the past 6 months.
A. Yes
B. No, I don’t have time because of my job(s) and/or family responsibilities.
C. No, I am not interested.
D. No, I haven’t been in college long enough.
E. No, but I plan to do so soon.

138. When thinking about narrowing the number of career areas I wish to explore,
A. I have identified specific personal abilities and limitations which I can use to guide my thinking.
B. I have some general ideas about what I would be successful in.
C. I have only a vague sense of where I can best use my skills or minimize my shortcomings.
D. I have never thought about careers in this way.

139. I am purposefully developing intellectual skills and personal habits that will assure that I continue to learn after completing my formal education.
A. I haven’t thought about this.
B. I rely completely on course requirements to do this.
C. I think about this some times.
D. I do this systematically.
140. Within the past 3 months, I have had a serious discussion with a faculty member concerning something of importance to me.
A. No, I don’t like talking to faculty members.
B. No, I have tried, but was unsuccessful.
C. No, I haven’t found one who seemed willing to interact in that way.
D. Yes, I initiated such a discussion.
E. Yes, I responded to a faculty member’s initiative.

141. Within the past 3 months,
A. I haven’t thought seriously about my career.
B. I have read about a career I am considering.
C. I have been involved in activities directly related to my future career.
D. I have thought about my career, but things are still too unsettled for me to take any action yet.

142. I have weighed the relative importance of establishing a family in relation to other life goals.
A. No, my desire to establish a family is too uncertain.
B. No, my life goals are too uncertain.
C. Yes, but my priorities tend to change.
D. Yes, my priorities about these goals are clear.

143. While in college I have acquired practical experience directly related to my educational goals through an internship, part-time work, summer job, or similar employment.
A. No, I haven’t been enrolled long enough.
B. No, I haven’t thought about it very much.
C. No, I have yet to establish any specific educational goals.
D. Yes, I did it to satisfy program requirements.
E. Yes, I did it on my own initiative.

144. I have established a specific plan for gaining practical experience in the career area I plan to pursue after college.
A. No, I have yet to decide on a career area.
B. No, but that is something I should be doing.
C. No, that isn’t something I want to do.
D. Yes, but I haven’t actually acted on my plan.
E. Yes, and I have begun implementing my plan.

145. I have considered how my present course of study will impact my goals for the future.
A. No, I haven’t thought about this at all.
B. Yes, I have thought about this, but it’s unclear how my studies will shape my future.
C. Yes, I have a fairly clear idea about how my studies will shape my future.
D. Yes, I have a very clear picture of how my studies will shape my future.

146. I have developed a financial plan for achieving my educational goals.
A. No, my parent(s) are taking care of it.
B. Yes, I have a plan which depends on the continuation of the present level of funding.
C. No, I haven’t thought much beyond the current term.

147. I carefully investigated the intellectual abilities and necessary academic background needed to be successful in my chosen academic major.
A. No, I have yet to make a definite decision about an academic major/concentration.
B. No, I chose my major/concentration solely on the basis of what I enjoyed most.
C. No, I have narrowed the choice down to a few areas, but haven’t really investigated majors in that way.
D. No, I never thought about it in that way.
E. Yes.

148. I am acquainted with at least one person who has a disability.
A. Yes.
B. No, I have not met anyone with a disability.
C. No, I am not interested in knowing anyone with a disability.

149. Within the past 3 months, I have read a non-required publication related to my major field of study.
A. No, I have yet to decide on an academic major/field of study.
B. No, I don’t have time to read such things.
C. No, that would be too boring.
D. Yes.

150. I am acquainted with at least 3 persons who are actively involved in the kind of work I visualize for myself in the future.
A. Yes.
B. No, I haven’t met many people doing the work I visualize for myself.
C. No, I have yet to decide on a post-college occupational area.
D. No, I don’t think that is very important.

151. I often have trouble visualizing day-to-day work in the career area I have selected.
A. Yes, because I have yet to decide on a career area.
B. Yes, because I don’t know what routine work in my career area is really like.
C. Yes, because I don’t like to think about that.
D. No, I can visualize work in that area, but I’m not sure that it’s realistic.
E. No, I have a clear and realistic picture of work in my career area.

152. Within the past 12 months, I have had a serious conversation about my long-term educational objectives with an academic advisor or other college official.
A. No, I don’t know to whom to talk.
B. No, I have tried, but no one will help me.
C. No, but I want to do that.
D. No, I don’t want my options limited.
E. Yes.
153. While in college, I have visited a career center or library to obtain information about a chosen career.
   A. No, but I will do that when I find time.
   B. No, I don’t need career information.
   C. No, there is no place or person that deals with careers on my campus.
   D. Yes.

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Survey
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies

Doctor of Education Program

Title: Student Development and Online Students

Principle Investigator (PI): Dr. Michael Dean, Northeastern University

Student Researcher: Michael Beane, Northeastern University

Request to Participate in Research: We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. I am researching the state of development of online learners and face-to-face learners while at QCC. My goal is to raise awareness for the needs of online learners and to strengthen the support services offered. This survey should take about 25 minutes to complete. We are asking you to participate in this study because you are a QCC student over the age of 18.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the researcher hopes that the information gathered through this study will raise awareness of the needs of online students. The findings from this study will be shared with faculty, staff, and administrators with the intention of strengthening support services for online learners on college campuses.

Confidentiality: Your part in this study is anonymous to the researcher(s). However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey will be capturing those data. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Michael Beane Student Researcher at beane.m@husky.neu.edu, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Michael Dean at m.dean@northeastern.edu, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.
By clicking on ‘Ok’ you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for your time.
Dr. Michael Dean Principal Investigator
Michael Beane Student Researcher

Appendix D

Flyer for Recruitment
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies  
Doctor of Education Program

**QCC Students Wanted for a Research Study**

I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am researching the state of development of online learners and face-to-face learners while at QCC. My goal is to raise awareness for the needs of online learners and to strengthen the support services offered.

I am looking for QCC students, both online and on campus and age 18 and older to participate. By participating in this study, you will be providing administrators with a better perspective of the programming needs of QCC Students. The following link is the survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6MW59S6 and takes about 25 minutes to complete.

To learn more about this research, call Michael Beane at 315-323-3381 or email him at beane.m@husky.neu.edu. This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Michael Dean, College of Professional Studies, Northeastern University. He can be contacted at m.dean@northeastern.edu or 646-404-2433.

Appendix E
Recruitment Email for Interviews/Focus Groups
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Subject Line: Support Needed from Students

Dear Faculty,

My name is Michael Beane and I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am currently conducting a study for my doctoral thesis and am seeking research participants.

I am researching the state of development of online learners and face-to-face learners while at QCC. My goal is to raise awareness for the needs of online learners and to strengthen the support services offered.

Please consider sending this to your students. For convenience, I have attached NEU IRB approval for this project. If they choose to participate in this study, I will be interviewing them about their experience as an online student or as an on campus student. The expected time commitment is one hour. Participants will be entered into a drawing for $25 gift card for participating. Interested students should email me at beane.m@husky.neu.edu with the information below.

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Preferred days and times to meet (including weekends):

Thank you for your help in recruiting students to participate.

Regards,

Michael Beane

Appendix F
Informed Consent for Focus Groups/Interviews
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Title: Student Development and Online Students
Principle Investigator (PI): Dr. Michael Dean, Northeastern University
Student Researcher: Michael Beane, Northeastern University

Request to Participate in Research: We are inviting you to take part in a research study. I am researching the state of development of online learners and face-to-face learners while at QCC. My goal is to raise awareness for the needs of online learners and to strengthen the support services offered. We are asking you to participate in this study because you are a QCC student over the age of 18.

Procedure: If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in a focus group interview. All interviews conducted in person will be audio recorded and transcribed into writing. Any information you provide in writing will also be analyzed. All materials will be stored securely and your name will be omitted. Instead, a pseudonym, which you may select during the initial meeting, will be used to organize the information. The focus group will take approximately one hour to complete.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the researcher hopes that the information gathered through this study will raise awareness of the needs of online students. The findings from this study will be shared with faculty, staff, and administrators with the intention of strengthening support services for online learners on college campuses.

Confidentiality: Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers will see the information about you. If you decide to participate, you will select a pseudonym that will be used throughout the study to protect your identity. Any reports, presentations, or discussions associated with this study (i.e. doctoral thesis, journal articles, conference presentations) will utilize this pseudonym and will not include any personal information linked directly to you. Information about your age, gender, race, and field of study will be included to help others understand and interpret the research findings. Our interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into writing. The researcher will code the written transcript to identify patterns and themes within your interview and across interviews with other participants. All physical documents or files related to this study will be stored in a secure area. All electronic files will be stored in a password protected online file storage program and on an external data storage device. Only the researcher will have access to these storage mechanisms.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate and you may withdraw at any time. You are not obligated to answer all questions that are asked of you during interviews. You may indicate your desire to skip a
question by stating “pass.”

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
You will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card for your participation.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
You will be responsible for the cost of traveling to the interview site.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Michael Beane *Student Researcher at beane.m@husky.neu.edu*, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact *Dr. Michael Dean at m.dean@northeastern.edu*, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

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<td>Michael Beane, Student Researcher</td>
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Focus Group/Interview Protocol

Northeastern University College of Professional Studies

Doctor of Education Program

1. Tell me about why you chose QCC, your experience and how long you have been at the institution?

2. Tell me what your mode of learning (Online or Face-to-Face) is and why did you choose that?

3. Describe your involvement at QCC?

4. If involved, how would you describe how that impacted you at QCC? If not involved, please tell me why?

5. What types of programming would you like to see at QCC?

6. Tell me about what your development needs have been during your time at QCC?

7. How often are you involved in activities/events to help you plan for your career?

8. Tell me about how you make decisions about life and education and who influences you?

9. Tell me about a time you worked in a culturally diverse group while at QCC and how this impacted you?

10. How often are you involved in community and/or cultural events and tell me about how they impact you?

11. Describe the role QCC has played in your overall development?
12. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything about your experience at QCC that you think influenced you that we have not had a chance to discuss?

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