THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFER STUDENT PROTÉGÉS IN A STUDENT-DRIVEN EMENTORING PROGRAM

by

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(Under the Direction of In Heok Lee)

ABSTRACT

Providing students with access to mentoring is now a national priority, as demonstrated by the prevalence and diversity of formal mentoring programs at postsecondary institutions (Crisp et al., 2017). The proliferation of formal mentoring programs has resulted in postsecondary institutions designing and implementing eMentoring programs. Despite their proliferation, these eMentoring programs remain understudied resulting in very little being known about the programs or people involved, which indicates the need to have a better understanding the outcomes of university mentorship programs for is of key importance (Gershenfeld, 2014). The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of transfer student protégés in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public research university in the southeastern United States. An interpretive qualitative research design was used to answer three central research questions: (a) how do transfer students experience wanting to participate in a student driven, eMentoring program?, (b) what experiences or insights do transfer students have while participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program?, and (c) how do transfer students reflect on their eMentoring experience? The six research participants were

recruited via purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) current degree-seeking student; (b) transfer student; (c) completed a 16-week mentoring relationship with an alumni mentor; and (d) conducted at a minimum of four mentoring sessions with their mentor throughout their mentorship. The key findings of this study consist of the following: (a) transfer shock; (b) no previous mentors; (c) career confidence; (d) appreciation for mentorship; (e) sense of generativity; and (f) engaged alumni. The results of this study may help educators, policy makers, and practitioners identify opportunities to better serve and support transfer students. Also, it may help institutions develop policies and processes to design a more transfer receptive culture for transfer students. The results may assist others in understanding the influence factors that contribute to the success of transfer students at public research universities.

INDEX WORDS: Mentoring, eMentoring, transfer, student, protégé, alumni, mentor

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DEDICATION

To my partner and best friend, Grace Daniel, your endless love, support, and patience have been instrumental since day one. I wouldn't be where I am today without you, but rather; I would be 6' below the earth. I am so thankful and grateful that God crossed our paths. You continue to inspire me to become a better husband, father, and disciple. Thank you for being such a wonderful spouse and mother of our three beautiful children, Sawyer, River, and Willow. Thank you for being willing to embark on this journey with me even though it was a monumental sacrifice for you and our family. I have a lot of making up to do due to not being present all that often due to always thinking about what homework I needed to complete. I am looking forward to becoming a more present husband and father upon submitting my dissertation for approval.

To my kiddos, Sawyer, River, and Willow, daddy loves you to the moon and back. Do not ever forget it. I am sorry that I have not been the best daddy over last several years. I am going to make it up to you tenfold upon graduating. Please know that I am pursuing this Ph.D. for you and want it to inspire you to always pursue new knowledge to constantly learn and grow as a human being.

To our unborn child that is expected to be due on June 24, 2021, I am doing this for you and our family. Your mother and I are eagerly awaiting your arrival; I can't wait to see your beautiful face and give you a big kiss. You are truly a miracle.

To Solomon, your mama and I miss you every day since we lost you at 22 weeks during pregnancy. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about you; you will

live in my heart. Thank you for being our angel. You inspire me daily to be a good daddy and husband; I am getting closer to seeing you day by day. I cannot wait to hug you again son. I love you to the moon and back, too. I miss you, and Sawyer wishes you were. I hope you are enjoying the balloons that we send you!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students that matriculate into one postsecondary education institution and then decide to transfer to enroll in another institution are defined as a transfer student. After these students transfer into a research university, they experience a "transfer shock" resulting in a drop in GPA and feelings of alienation, anonymity, and isolation (Allen et al., 2008; Jacobson et al., 2017; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Institutions that are not effective in addressing the real challenges associated with transfer shock risk significantly lower retention and degree-completion rates (Alfonso, 2006; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). It is critical to offer access to supportive institutional agents to help transfer students find a sense of belonging (Nunez & Oshimi, 2017). Regardless of their official roles, these transfer agents can equip students with encouragement, resources, mentorship, and critical institutional information (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009). Now, many universities are implementing student-alumni eMentoring programs as a strategy to provide students with another institutional agent than can enrich their student experience. eMentoring has been found to be more egalitarian, dialogical, and accessible across a more diverse spectrum of protégés than informal mentoring (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Headlam-Wells et al., 2005; Panapoulos & Sarri, 2013; Single & Single, 2005). For example, Northwestern University, John Hopkins University, Georgia Tech University, University of Michigan, Stanford University, Arizona State University, and many others

have implemented a student-alumni eMentoring program. Despite the proliferation of eMentoring programs, they remain understudied resulting in very little being known about the programs or participants involved in them (Gershenfeld, 2014). Moreover, scholars have noted there has not yet been enough study to understand the experiences and engagement of transfer students after they arrive in their new institutional environments, how these might be distinct from those of students at the same institution, and the associated implications for best serving these students (Ishitani & McKitrick 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Therefore, it is important to explore the phenomenon of eMentoring to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and program outcomes. Also, it is important to explore how transfer students make meaning out of their experiences and engagement in their new institutional environment.

The concept of mentoring has been around for thousands of years; however, only in the past 35 years, with the widespread emergence of mentoring programs has this phenomenon attracted extensive attention from researchers, policymakers, professional affiliations, and employer organizations (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). Mentorship is a professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support (National Academies, 2019). At its best, mentoring can be a life-altering relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning, and development. Its effects can be remarkable, profound, and enduring; mentoring relationships have the capacity to transform individuals, groups, organizations, and communities (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Mentoring has become an essential vehicle for

change every branch of society, positively impacting the lives of tens of millions of people (Clutterbuck et al., 2017).

Mentoring has the power to address key issues and problems currently facing postsecondary institutions across the country (e.g., increase degree completion rates, reduce inequities in outcomes for marginalized and underserved groups, and increase participation in the STEM pipeline, business sector, and workforce (Slovacek et al., 2011; Baker, 2016). Mentoring positively influences student outcomes, including but not limited to a sense of belonging, capacity for socially responsible leadership, deep and strategic learning approaches, and self-confidence in professional skills and abilities (Campbell et al., 2012; Chester et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2012; Thiry et al., 2011). Mentoring continues to be widely accepted as an effective mechanism for positively impacting undergraduate students (Eby & Dolan, 2015). Also, graduate students are more likely persist in their academic decisions if engaged in positive mentoring experiences (McGee & Keller, 2007; Williams et al., 2015). Overall, mentoring directly or indirectly improves academic outcomes, such as grade point average and persistence in higher education (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Campell & Campbell, 2007; Crisp, 2011). The proliferation of formal mentoring programs has resulted in postsecondary institutions designing and implementing eMentoring programs.

Transfer students who transferred from four-year institutions were shocked and unprepared, and it further intensified the challenges for these students when the adjustment to a new campus did not come easily (Kirk-Kuwaye & Kirk-Kuwaye, 2007). Furthermore, college administrators at receiving 4-year institutions have a limited understanding of transfer students' experiences and needs, resulting in institutional

neglect of these transfer students (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012). Qualitative research indicates that upon arrival at the 4-year institution, transfer students struggle with (a) finding access to institutional agents to help them navigate the new setting, (b) the increased academic demands and large classes of the new institution, and (c) difficulties making friends in a large population consisting mostly of students who began college at the same institution (Owens, 2010; Townsend & Wilson 2006). To address these limitations in the research and to inform institutional policies and practices, I am going to explore how transfer students made meaning of their experience participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative study is to explore the mentoring experiences of transfer student protégés' participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public research university in the southeastern United States. The potential sample was identified by determining the transfer students that completed a 16-week mentoring relationship with alumni within the student driven, eMentoring program. Then, I sent them all an email inviting them to participate in this research study; the research participants are the individuals are the ones that said that they would be willing to participate in the study. The use of a qualitative strategy should emerge to answer the central research questions. The advantages of this qualitative research design are the use of exploratory questions, which are appropriate as the foundation for qualitative inquiry are used when: (a) there is little known in a particular research area; (b) existing research is confusing, contradictory, or not moving forward; or (c) the topic is highly complex (Barker et al., 2002). Furthermore, despite the rapid growth of eMentoring programs in

postsecondary education, there is insufficient information about eMentoring, its effectiveness, or the experiences of protégés and mentors involved in the process (Bierema, 2017; Ensher, 2013). This study will address a gap in the body of knowledge and help inform eMentoring policies, practices, and processes. The three research questions that anchored my study are listed below:

1. How do transfer students experience wanting to participate in a student driven, eMentoring program?
2. What experiences or insights do transfer students have while participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program?
3. How do transfer students reflect on their eMentoring experience?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation and philosophical worldview used in this dissertation was social constructionism. In social constructionism, one looks at lived experiences and their meaning; the significance that one creates from those lived experiences is captured and reality is defined by the meaning one socially constructs (Walker, 2015). The framework acknowledges the researcher's primary assumptions and beliefs regarding the study and themselves; it is derived from the orientation one brings to their study. In this study, the research questions, design, and theoretical framework will be informed by existing literature pertaining to the theories listed below, the transfer student protégés, and myself as the researcher. The framework will be used as an initial guide for my study; it will inform how I make sense of emerging themes and ideas from the findings. Moreover, it will generate the problem of the study, specific research questions, data collection and analysis techniques, and how I will interpret the findings.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is rooted in three theories: (a) mentoring ecosystem theory (Lunsford, 2016), (b) theory of generativity (Erikson, 1950; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992), and (c) social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). I decided to use Lunsford's (2016) mentoring ecosystem theory as a framework to bound this study due to its comprehensive nature. The model indicates that there are three distinct components that influence mentoring: (a) protégés, (b) mentors, and (c) organizational setting. Each element warrants close attention for institutions and mentoring program managers that are launching, supporting, and/or sustaining a program. It is easy to solely focus on the participants in the mentoring relationship: the protégé and mentor. However, people interact in environments that influence the quality and type of their interactions (Lunsford, 2016). The social exchange theory was applied to this mentoring research study to discover whether the research participants underlying motivations for participating in the program aligned with this theory. It suggests that people form relationships and interact with each other to achieve their own goals (Zhao & Kemp, 2013). Generativity is defined as the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation and is considered a key characteristic of psychosocial maturity (Browning, 1973; Kotre, 1984; McAdams, 1985; Ryff & Migdal, 1984). Examining helping behavior because of mentoring could lead to the further integration of existing research on altruism and organizational citizenship with mentoring (Eby et al., 2008). The more generative a person is, the more likely that person is to contribute time and money toward building a strong family, workplace, and community (Hastings et al., 2015). A few higher education studies have examined the relationship between being mentored and a student's capacity

for socially responsible leadership (Campbell et al., 2012), yet little is known about the outcomes associated with the college students being mentored by an alumnus.

This theoretical framework is relevant for my study due to the following reasons: (a) It provides a holistic, macro level approach to studying the how transfer students made meaning of their experiences transitioning into a public, research university and engaging in mentoring relationship with alumni via a student-driven, eMentoring program; (b) the mentoring ecosystem theory (Lunsford, 2016) hasn't been used in an empirical study to date; (c) few studies have examined generativity in the college student context and previous generativity studies have not utilized rigorous qualitative methods (Hastings et al., 2015); and (d) the concept of generativity is neither included in the social exchange theory nor the mentoring ecosystem theory.

Significance of Study

Two of the primary ways that I assessed whether I should research this problem was whether the study would fill a gap or void in the existing literature and whether the study informs practice. This study fills a void by covering topics not addressed in the published literature (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). There is a lack of research pertaining to connecting students with alumni at postsecondary institutions via an eMentoring program. Most of the mentoring research is quantitative; therefore, qualitative data is needed to enhance our understanding of the role of mentoring in different contexts and content domains (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; Haddock-Millar, 2017). Also, there is a call for more empirical research exploring different cultural settings, contexts, and technologies (Tisdell & Shekhawat, 2019). eMentoring is on the rise; however, it is still being developed and explored as a career and learning

intervention and is underdeveloped its application to the academic environment (Mullen, 2017).

Secondly, mentoring research has been repeatedly observed by scholars to be underdeveloped relative to the importance and growing number of mentoring programs supported at the national, state, and local levels (Crisp et al., 2017). Empirical research is needed to guide the development, implementation, sustainment, and assessment of campus mentoring efforts. Research in this area continues to be scarce, especially where online mentoring models are concerned; researchers have yet to explore ongoing dynamic mentor-protégé interactions that happen before, during, and after mentoring (Mullen, 2017). Therefore, this proposed study will contribute to the body of knowledge and help guide other institutions of postsecondary education that are considering whether to implement a university-wide eMentoring program. Moreover, it will provide them with insight on ways to develop a more transfer receptive culture.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the literature review addresses numerous areas which informed my research study. First, this chapter provides information about transfer students. Then, it gives a brief history of mentoring, including the origin of mentoring, and how several scholars define the concept of mentoring. Next, it briefly highlights the differences between informal and formal mentoring. Then, it provides information on eMentoring along with its associated advantages and disadvantages. Next, I provide an overview of mentoring in higher education. Next, it discusses the impact that mentoring has on protégé s and mentors. Following, it addresses the impact of student-alumni mentoring on institutions of higher education. Then, the literature review covers the barriers and facilitators to mentoring programs in higher education. The literature review concludes by addressing the laws and policies relevant to eMentoring.

Transfer Students

Transfer students are an increasingly important source of undergraduate students (Handel, 2013). However, many transfer students face uphill battles that potentially deter them from achieving their educational goals. Mentoring programs have been used to help these students assimilate to the changes and demands of college and have proven to be a key ingredient of student success (Astin,1993; Crisp, 2010; Jacobi, 1991; Tinto, 1975). One potential benefit of mentoring programs is an increase in students' persistence and/or

desire to complete their programs of study. As students' involvement in college life increases, so will students' acquisition of knowledge and development of skills (Endo & Harpel, 1982). Meeting people and making friends when beginning college is a major preoccupation of student life (Tinto, 1997). This link, which has been extensively studied in four-year universities, may also help students succeed if applied to the two-year technical school model (Budge, 2006; Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Tinto, 1975).

Research suggests supportive institutional agents facilitates the transfer process for students, which highlights the importance of meaningful human interactions (Heidegger, 1927/62). Alumni mentors serve as institutional agents to help students navigate the complexity of higher education and prepare for the world of work. Nunez and Yoshimi's (2017) study is among the first to suggest that, in addition to faculty members, administrators can serve as institutional agents and foster a more supportive and responsive campus climate. One limitation of their study is that they did not consider alumni of an institution being able to serve as an institutional agent to better serve and support students. Faculty members and administrators often assume that transfer students have the same needs as the native students who began at the institution (Tobolowsky and Cox 2012). However, studies indicate that transfer students perceive their own needs as being quite different from those of native students, specifically on academic engagement, goal orientation, and de-emphasis on social engagement (Nunez & Yoshimi, 2017; Townsend & Wilson 2009). Transfer students engage less in social activities, like informal socializing and attending parties on campus, and more in academic activities, like clubs related to their academic major or conducting research with a professor (Ishitani & McKitrick 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Mentors could provide the

necessary emotional and instrumental support to these students as they are transitioning into higher education.

Mentoring may serve as a catalyst in improving student self-confidence and reduce stress and anxiety (Rodger & Tremblay, 2003). One key measure of whether students succeed is their beliefs about themselves and what they can achieve, which is known as self-efficacy, has been shown to correlate with student success in educational settings (Chopin et al., 2012). Mentors may encourage or facilitate an increase in students' self-confidence, resulting to greater skill achievement and a higher level of academic success. Academic success is correlated with student persistence and program completion (Tinto, 1975). Higher academic success has been correlated with higher self-efficacy, but even without the probable good academic outcomes, it is likely that mentoring will foster students' self-confidence (Chopin et al., 2012).

Herrera and Jain (2013) explain that institutions should develop a transfer-receptive culture and make an institutional commitment to provide the support needed for transfer students to be successful. Vertical transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions therefore offers a critical avenue for upward mobility for many underserved students, including low-income, first-generation, and racial/ethnic minority students, all of whom are disproportionately represented at community colleges (Carnevale, & Strohl, 2010). Also, existing research shows that is essential for institutions to have current information publicly available; websites and Internet sources serve as critical sources of information in the transfer process (Adelman 2006; Owens, 2010; Townsend & Wilson 2006).

History of Mentoring

There is much disagreement in the literature regarding mentoring and its definition; the literature contains over 30 variations of the definition of mentoring (Nora & Crisp, 2008). The word "mentor" originates from the Greek epic, The Odyssey (Carruthers, 1993), in which the hero Odysseus assigns his son's care to an old friend Mentor before leaving to battle in the Trojan War. Researchers have defined mentoring in countless ways; however, they commonly define it as a process concerned with the transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to their work, career, or professional development (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). The term mentor is often associated with concepts of advisor, friend, and teacher; it describes a relationship between a young adult and a more experienced adult who helps the younger individual learn to navigate the world and the world of work (Kram, 1985). Mentoring has been widely recognized as one of the key factors contributing to skills development, psychosocial or socioemotional support, and career advancement and success (Haggard et al., 2011; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Packard, 2016). The image of a mentor emerged as a wise person, guide, and stand-in parent who assists in the protégé's growth and development (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). The phenomenon of mentoring has attracted extensive attention from researchers, policymakers, professional affiliations, and employer organizations due to the widespread emergence of mentoring programs over the past 35 years (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). Current definitions of mentoring range from a personal relationship to an education process, an organizational or cultural context, or a systemic reform strategy that builds the capacity of individuals and organizations, including virtual and online global

communities (Allen & Eby, 2007; Huizing, 2012; Kochan et al., 2014; Mullen, 2005). At the most basic level, mentoring is an interactional undertaking, which, depending on environment and context, takes on a variety of concrete forms and purposes (Damaskos & Gardner, 2015). One with experience, expertise, and wisdom fosters the development and growth of the other who is less experienced (Howe & Daratsos, 2007). Mentoring interactions involve learning, networking, emotional affirmation, logistical support, and guidance in real-world applications of knowledge (Keller et al., 2014).

Kram (1983) proposed a conceptual model identifying both career development and psychosocial functions of mentoring. Career development functions are aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance career advancement, such as sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions are aspects of the mentoring relationship that primarily enhance sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a role, such as role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship. These functions define the multiple roles a mentor may portray, as well as the disposition in which the protégé develops. Various disciplines have studied mentoring, such as organizational behavior, management, human development, and psychology; the underlying factor in these studies is mentoring may be a key ingredient leading to upward mobility in employment, success in education, personal development, and professional development (Crawford & Smith, 2005).

Informal vs. Formal Mentoring

Informal and formal mentoring have been contrasted by mentoring researchers for decades (Mullen, 2017). Informal mentoring, characterized as traditional mentoring, is considered where the mentor and protégé encounter one another spontaneously (Allen &

Eby, 2007). A certain chemistry emerges drawing two individuals together for the purpose of professional, personal, and psychological growth and development (Galbraith, 2001). Both individuals are voluntary participants who select each other for a relationship, which is often the contributing factor into these relationships being successful since mutual liking, identification, and attraction are the catalysts for a relationship initiation (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Formal mentoring programs have become increasingly popular and formal mentoring theory (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000) offers guidance on helping formal mentoring programs mimic the interpersonal processes underlying informal mentorships. Specific program design features that facilitate such processes include: (a) allowing individuals to feel as if they have input into the matching process, (b) creating a sense that program participation is voluntary, and (c) taking steps to increase the opportunity for frequent interaction between mentor and protégé. Formal mentoring occurs in intentional and planned ways (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). Also, mentoring theorists advocate that formal mentoring programs be strategically designed that simulates an informal mentoring process (Burke & McKeen, 1989; Ragins et al., 2000). Offering training for mentors and protégés prior to program participation makes formal mentorships more rewarding by identifying program goals, clarifying role obligations, and establishing mutually agreed-upon relationship expectations (Allen et al., 2006). Training is one of the most frequent recommendations for formal mentoring programs (Kram, 1985). Training should enhance the amount of mentoring provided and may improve the quality of the relationship if administrators help protégés develop

appropriate expectations for the relationship, clarify the objectives of the program, and conveying the program's purpose (Eby & Lockwood, 2005).

Noe (1988) found that protégés participating in a formal mentoring program who reported more frequent interaction reported greater relationship quality and psychosocial mentoring. Developing a formal mentoring program where mentors and protégés are more motivated and can more easily interact with one another may help overcome this challenge and subsequently result in more impactful mentoring and mentorship quality (Allen et al., 2006). to increase the number of interactions between mentor-protégé, the research site provides its mentoring participants with an optional curriculum, which consist of monthly milestones (2-3 activities each month) that were designed based on the five stages of a mentoring relationship (Clutterbuck, 2008): (a) rapport building; (b) direction setting; (c) progress making; (d) winding down; and e) moving on/professional friendship.

Diversity and Inclusion in Formal Mentoring Programs

It was thought that formal mentoring programs would help make mentoring more accessible to women and members of minority groups (Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989). However, gender and race misunderstandings have been a source of incompatibility between mentees and mentors (Thomas, 1989; White, 1990). Therefore, program administrators should consider adding cultural, racial, and gender factors into the matching process (Ehrich et al., 2004). One of the primary reasons that formal mentoring programs were introduced into organizations in the United States was to address affirmative action legislation (Edwards, 1995). To make mentoring more inclusive and accessible, many in higher education institutions recommend the establishment of a

formal mentoring program (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Gardiner, 2005). It has been documented that culture greatly influences the socialization of minorities on postsecondary campuses wherein the dominant culture favors privileged groups and their access to the power grid (Mackey & Shannon, 2014; Reddick & Young, 2012). The eMentoring program under study was intentional with cultivating and nurturing relationships with administrators that served diverse populations to ensure that the program was inclusive and accessible for all their students. For instance, they consulted with the LGTB Resource Center, Embark, International Student Life, Office of Institutional Diversity, Office of Institutional Diversity, and many others campus partners that serve underrepresented students (minoritized populations, first generation students, transfer students, rural students, etc.) to ensure that their voice was included in the overall design of the program. The validation that students can attain through mentoring promotes academic skills and a sense of belonging in higher education; effective mentoring as a precondition to meaningful inclusion in higher education (Brown-Nagin, 2016). For example, minority students who have mentors are twice as likely to stay in school and earn better grades than minority students who do not have mentors (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). There has been research showing that underrepresented students leave university and STEM disciplines for reasons other than their capabilities (Ferrare & Lee, 2014). Overall, evidence suggests that mentoring relationships may have advantages for underrepresented students and may help reduce inequities in persistence and degree completion between Anglo/white and minoritized populations (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011).

eMentoring

eMentoring is an innovative concept where the mentoring between the protégé and mentor functions via online processes (Neely et al., 2017). With hybrid or blended eMentoring, mentors and protégés use a combination of face-to-face interactions and online elements to utilize synchronous and asynchronous communication. Since the communication occurs virtually, eMentoring can occur anytime and anywhere given that mentors and protégés have internet access (Bierma & Hill, 2005), which fosters greater opportunities for mentor-protégé communication. Therefore, eMentoring can be more economical and increase the amount of time mentors invest into the protégés (Salas et al., 2005). Moreover, it increases the opportunities for mentor-protégé interaction and creates a boundaryless structure (Bierema & Merriam, 2002) compared to traditional face-to-face mentoring; more contact can result in better mentoring outcomes. For instance, DiRenzo, Linnehan, Shao, and Rosenberg (2010) found a positive relationship between the success of eMentoring programs and the frequency of mentor-protégé interactions. Also, eMentoring can greatly increase the pool of mentors and protégés. As distance constrains face-to-face meetings, traditional mentoring relationships may have a limited resource pool, whereas eMentoring delivers a much larger external resource pool (Bierema & Hill, 2005). Furthermore, eMentoring provides increased adaptability, because mentors and protégés can communicate at any time, are not required to respond immediately, and can review the correspondence exchanges at any time (Headlam-Wells, 2004; Headlam-Wells et al., 2005). In one study, Kim and Rickard (2009) found that key to satisfaction in an eMentoring relationship was the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. If the mentor and protégé were in effective communication

with each other, the relationship was stronger and thus the protégé more satisfied. Other factors were the diversity of supports, the ability for the protégé to use the mentor as a sounding board, as well as the structure of the mentoring program (Rickard & Rickard, 2009). There are more benefits associated with eMentoring that have been identified within the literature: (a) more frequent communication; (b) reducing time for personal meetings; (c) offering a venue for developing a relationship; and (d) exploring issues in a less-threatening manner (Johnson, 2016). Additionally, An and Lipscomb (2013) identify efficiencies in time and costs in employing eMentoring over traditional mentoring models, such as removing the need to organize, travel to and conduct face-to-face meetings. eMentoring offers the potential for opening new avenues to form relationships that could not be done previously. eMentoring removes barriers for women, people of color, and other underserved populations who have more difficulty finding mentors and developing mentoring relationships due to implicit bias or mentor concerns about the relationship (Bierema & Hill, 2005). Research indicates that when it is available for women and people of color, eMentoring can boost their likelihood of initiating developmental relationships by increasing accessibility to mentors, equalizing salient differences between mentor and protégé, and deemphasizing demographic characteristics such as race, gender, age, or class (Ensher & Murphy, 2007).

Although eMentoring has countless benefits, there are several factors that can hinder its benefits. The single biggest obstacle to eMentoring is building a relationship of trust in the absence of face-to-face meetings (Philippart & Gluesing, 2012; Rosser & Egan, 2005). eMentoring may be less likely to capture the attention of protégés than traditional mentoring relationships (Stone et al., 2006). Compared with traditional

mentoring relationships, protégés may find it challenging to observe and replicate their mentors' manners. Therefore, role modeling is the function of mentoring that is least effective in an eMentoring relationship (de Janasz et al., 2008); computer-mediated communication complements, but does not replace, all elements of face-to-face exchanges (Lamb & Aldous, 2014). Also, protégés may be less likely to fully comprehend information, have fewer opportunities to clarify, and be less open to advice that mentors share via technology versus face-to-face communication (Stone et al., 2009). Several more barriers are the cost and risk of mismatched dyads, technological issues, individual differences that may impose on the relationship, and challenges in providing more effective role models (Bierema, 2017). Also, research indicates that men are less aware of how they are perceived in a virtual environment or how much they dominate virtual conversation to women (Smith-Jentsch et al., 2008). Moreover, there is a technology gap based on race, socioeconomic status, and age that may make it challenging for these groups to have access to participate in eMentoring (Bierema, 2017). Additional challenges of eMentoring include miscommunication, decelerated pace of relationship development, higher reliance on a well-developed ability to write and use technology, lack of nonverbal cues and privacy challenges (Clutterbuck, 2006; Ensher et al., 2003). Mentoring participants can alleviate the miscommunication issues by using a variety of mediums to communicate: (a) chat rooms, (b) phone, (c) e-mail, or (d) video conferencing. It is essential for each mentoring relationship to discuss their expectations and communications preferences at the onset of the relationship to establish mutual expectations. This will allow them to build their relationship on a solid foundation.

Mentoring in Higher Education

The informal focus on mentoring has given way to a proliferation of formal mentoring programs at universities across the world (Gonzalez, 2001). Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan, and Wuetherick (2017) explored mentoring in educational contexts in the United States (USA), Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom (UK); they discussed a range mentoring models: (a) faculty-student, (b) staff-student, and (c) student-student mentoring relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Gershenfeld, 2014). However, they did not explore the concept of student-alumni mentoring relationships within this literature review (Lunsford et al., 2017). Mentoring continues to be widely accepted as an effective mechanism for positively impacting undergraduate students, improving their academic performance, ensuring their persistence in university or in a specific discipline, and easing their transition into new institutional or disciplinary cultures (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Eby & Dolan, 2015; Fox et al., 2010). First-generation students with mentors are more likely to succeed academically and stay in school than those without mentors (Fruiht & Chan, 2018). Moreover, mentoring improves students' transition to university, by either helping them to attend university or once they are there, to be retained through to degree completion (Lunsford et al., 2017). This is particularly important since the research participants are transfer students; mentorship has been proven to be a helpful tool to help them transition into the new institution. This may result in the students having less of a "transfer shock" when they arrive on campus.

Mentoring relationships are critical as graduate students experience lofty academic demands, high levels of stress, and conflicts between various responsibilities

(Hadjioannou et al., 2007). The quality of mentoring may be more critical for certain graduate students. For instance, international students since they have an added challenge of trying to adjust to a new environment and culture (Rose, 2005). Moreover, female students and students from underrepresented, historically oppressed, and diverse groups, indicate that mentoring relationships are critical to helping these students navigate a complex and challenging educational and career path through graduate school (Williams-Nickelson, 2009). Also, another study found that female graduate students experienced feelings of self-doubt because of negative experiences with mentoring, including difficulties engaging with a quality mentor (Welton et al., 2014). This result of this research study shows why mentor training is essential to administering a quality mentoring program. Overall, research demonstrates the importance of mentoring relationships in effective graduate education (Baker et al., 2013) and indicates that most graduate students perceive mentoring as critical.

Unfortunately, the sobering reality is that majority college students do not have access to meaningful mentoring relationships. According to the Gallup-Purdue study (2018), only 25 percent of college graduates say they had "a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams (p.4)."

Impact of Mentoring on Protégés

Mentorships help protégés develop a sense of professional identity and personal competence and enable mentors to develop a sense of generativity and purpose (Erickson, 1963; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Moreover, protégés are positively influenced via mentoring with receiving these benefits: (a) sense of belonging; (b) capacity for socially responsible leadership; (c) deep and strategic learning approaches; and (d) self-

confidence in professional skills and abilities (Campbell et al., 2012; Chester et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2012; Thiry et al., 2011). Kram (1985) identified two primary different types of mentoring benefits for protégés, career and psychosocial functions, which have been confirmed by various researchers (Davis, 2005; Erdem & Ozen, 2008; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Mullen, 2007; Young & Perrewe, 2000). Mentoring opens the door for the learner to acquire new skills, abilities and knowledge that enhances their competencies and fosters their career development (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015). Career development is the opportunity to develop professionally and expand one's professional network.

The positive effects of mentoring programs in academia suggest that they promote the career success of participants (Muschallik & Pull, 2016). Also, mentoring relationships play a vital role in the formation of a protégé's purpose in life (Liang et al., 2016). Research has shown that mentoring is a means of directly or indirectly improving academic outcomes, such as grade point average and persistence in higher education (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Crisp, 2011). Mentoring at university has been linked to retention (Noonan et al., 2012; Phinney et al., 2011). Furthermore, mentoring has been widely recognized as one of the key factors contributing to skills development, psychosocial or socioemotional support, and career advancement and success (Haggard et al., 2011; Packard, 2016). Furthermore, minority students involved in mentoring programs are also more likely to persist and have higher grade point averages than minority students not involved in mentoring programs (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2011). Mentoring programs assist protégés in

removing financial obstacles and eliminating institutional barriers that contribute to a sense of alienation (Okozi et al., 2010).

Impact of Mentoring on Mentors

Scholars have noted that individuals benefit from serving as a mentor; they gain a sense of satisfaction, connection, and motivation from engaging in a mentoring relationship (Abramson & O'Brien-Suric, 2016). There is further evidence that mentors may benefit from relationships with undergraduate students, including improved cognitive and socio-emotional growth, teaching, and communication skills (Dolan & Johnson, 2009). By using their lessons and expertise, mentors are instrumental in avoiding the perpetual reinventing of the wheel and in fueling creative innovation (Damaskos & Gardner, 2015). In turn, mentors may feel a renewed commitment to their work through their interactions with students and novice practitioners. Sharing their wisdom, tips, knowledge, and practice experiences can be revitalizing and stimulating as they help prepare the next generation of students.

Specifically, for alumni mentors of an educational institution, they can mentor young professionals and to reunite with their alma mater, which promotes a sense of reconnection and meaningful contribution to their home learning community and to the profession (Egan & Cockill, 2012). A student-alumni mentor program provides alumni a significant opportunity to reconnect with their alma mater. Often, alumni wish to become involved in activities that further promote and serve the university, and being a mentor allows them to become involved in a meaningful way. Also, mentoring programs provide alumni who are not able to make financial contributions, a chance to contribute

something to their alma mater. Furthermore, these programs give alumni an opportunity to recruit promising talent to their place of employment upon graduation.

Impact of Student-Alumni Mentoring on Higher Education

Within higher education, mentorship has direct benefits in line with common goals of post-secondary institutions, including improved student retention and academic achievement (Putsche et al., 2008). Organizations benefit from formal mentoring programs through improved employee retention, enhanced organizational commitment (Chew & Wong, 2008), greater job commitment, job efficiency and job performance (Emmerik, 2008). Even higher education institutions may notice increased commitment and productivity throughout the institution and decreased turnover among employees (Knippelmeyer & Torraco, 2007). Mentoring is a tool that can be used to increase students' connectedness to their academic program and institution (Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014), an important factor for student retention (Bean, 2005).

Although students may see similar benefits from faculty-student or supervisor-student mentoring relationships, students gain unique benefits from having alumni as mentors. Having alumni as mentors provides students with the unique opportunity to develop relationships and expand their professional networks while they are still students, which is crucial for students and recent graduates who have a challenging task of acquiring social capital. This is particularly important for students who are female, of racial or ethnic minorities, immigrants, or part of other disenfranchised groups (Chadiha et al., 2014; Dow, 2014). Mentors equip students from historically underrepresented groups with a network of professionals who have navigated systemic barriers to their educational and career advancement. Mentoring relationships between students and

professionals from diverse social identities may be especially important because of the benefits mentoring has on people of color and other marginalized groups in the professional world, such as providing support in building diverse professional networks, coping with overt and covert prejudices, and overcoming barriers for advancement (Chadiha et al., 2014; Dow, 2014).

A student-alumni mentoring program invites students to interact with and seek guidance from alumni who aligns with their unique identity and interests. Alumni mentors may be in the best position to make connections between academic course work and real life because of their familiarity with the students' program and preferred industry. Alumni mentors provide students with a safe space; they do not evaluate their work as a student or intern. By being outside their home educational institutions, students can ask their alumni mentor questions openly and without fear of judgment (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). Also, scholars have noted that alumni are key stakeholders and can offer significant value to students' employability (Helgesen & Nesset, 2007; Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Student-alumni mentoring programs help institutions foster relationships with future supporters (Tyran & Garcia, 2005) and contribute to the evolution of successful university-community partnerships (Allen & Eby, 2007). Also, one important responsibility of schools is the professional socialization of students, including the development of their personal and professional selves (Miller, 2010). By implementing a student-alumni mentoring program, the school can support this socialization, which includes adopting important values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills through interactions with those already in the industry. Since mentoring takes resources, including time and

emotional commitment (Keller et al., 2014), it is unlikely professors or supervisors would be able to develop meaningful relationships with large numbers of assigned protégés. By using alumni mentors, who voluntarily wish to mentor students, the institution taps into a resource filled with talent and experience at no cost. Also, it includes access to resources through philanthropy or industry collaboration, marketing and promotion of the university, and alumni's potential to help students to support graduate employability (Ebert et al., 2015). Studies, for example, have found that student participants in alumni mentoring programs are more likely to graduate with a job and have higher levels of satisfaction of their university experience than students who did not participate (Crisp et al., 2009; Murphy & Ensher, 2001; Tenenbaum et al., 2001).

Barriers & Facilitators to Mentoring Programs in Higher Education

Mentorship has the potential to be time consuming and emotionally draining, which can be challenging for mentors and protégés who must contend with other roles and responsibilities (Keller et al., 2014). This is particularly the case for students who are balancing multiple identities and responsibilities as a college student. Also, students may not fully understand the value of mentoring, social capital, and cultural capital. Although mentoring relationships may be critically vital to students' success, most of these relationships are fostered once the student seeks them out (Clark et al., 2000), which can be a problem as not all students understand the value of mentoring and may not have the skills necessary and/or access to resources to find mentors (Simon et al., 2004).

Empirical research indicates that there are countless factors, elements, and strategies to achieve eMentoring success. Technology is rapidly advancing at a pace that is hard to keep up with as a consumer. Therefore, it is vital for eMentoring participants to

have technology literacy (Bierema & Hill, 2005). Successful eMentoring is also reliant on having an adequate technology infrastructure that supports computer mediated communication (Buche, 2008). The eMentoring program that is being studied uses a digital mentoring platform vendor to facilitate the mentoring relationships. Now, the ability to engage in easy access, real-time, free video exchange makes it easier than previously to bond, read emotions, and provide role modeling (Bierema, 2017). The digital mentoring platform, FaceTime, Skype, and Zoom provides opportunities for protégés to easily connect with their mentors. Situational factors include organizational culture and job characteristics; organizations that are more advanced in their technology use and foster growth and learning will better its constituents for productive mentoring relationships (Bierema, 2017). The mentoring digital platform has a user-friendly interface and is intuitive for most participants to navigate. Also, eMentoring programs are most effective when they are structured (Williams & Kim, 2011). The student-driven, eMentoring program being studied is structured in a way to provide adequate opportunities for mentoring participants to be intentional with the protégé's growth and development via monthly milestone activities.

Furthermore, one of the primary goals of mentoring is to help protégé s function independently (Allen & Eby, 2007). Moreover, the protégés' self-regulated learning is regulated during the mentoring experience when goals are stated and achieved (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011). Therefore, the research site has their students to attend a mandatory orientation to equip them with the necessary information and resources to drive the mentoring relationship. Students are instructed that they are responsible for taking

ownership for the relationship, to schedule meetings, to come prepared to each mentoring session with a learning agenda, and to develop SMART goals.

Laws and Policies Relevant to eMentoring

After conducting exhaustive search, I was unable to find any empirical studies that considered the laws and policies relevant to the work of eMentoring; therefore, this will fill a gap in the body of knowledge. Below I have outlined the laws and policies that institutions of higher education may want to consider when implementing a student-alumni eMentoring program. This section covers *Section 508, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).*

The public, research university has each mentoring participant agree to an overarching *terms and conditions*, *mentoring platform privacy policy*, *mentee professional responsibility agreement*, and/or *mentor professional responsibility agreement*. The professional responsibility agreements outlined their code of conduct within the eMentoring program and included additional policies. For instance, participants agreed to abide by the institution's *code of conduct* and the *non-discrimination and non-harassment (NDAH) policy*. Also, it includes a waiver of liability and agreement to not sue the university for what happens during and/or after the mentoring relationship. Also, the eMentoring program does not conduct a formal background check for each of the alumni mentors in the program. Rather, they ask alumni to self-disclose whether they have been charged or convicted of anything other than a minor traffic offense in their mentor profile. If yes, the institution reviews the nature of

the charge and/or conviction to determine whether to remove them from the eMentoring program.

Section 508

eMentoring programs should consider becoming familiar with the various technology accessibility laws and guidelines when selecting the program's software platform. Funding sources and the populations served will primarily govern what accessibility laws and guidelines are necessary for the program. For instance, eMentoring programs may be required to comply with Section 508, a component of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, that requires federal agencies to ensure that all electronic and information technology they develop, procure, maintain, or use is accessible to people with disabilities. This law is related to three federal laws: the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 255 of the Communications Act, and the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. Section 508 includes websites and software, including educational and training programs, developed through any agency of the U.S. federal government. The Section 508 guidelines were recently updated and include the requirement that agencies follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) that were developed in 2008 to establish international standards for creating accessible web content. The student-driven, eMentoring program consulted with their Disability Resource Center on campus during its design to ensure that they were in compliance with Section 508, and that the program is accessible for all students.

There are 85.3 million people in the United States, or 27 percent of the population, who have a disability (Taylor, 2018). Therefore, all eMentoring programs should be conscious of these guidelines and utilize them to evaluate any technology that

is required for participating in the program. Also, they should also be used to inform any decisions about technology that supports the program. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, closed captioning, form controls, and distinguishable content are all examples of accessibility elements that may be beneficial and/or required for participants to fully engage in the eMentoring program (MENTOR, 2019).

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium

These are standards that were created by an industry consortium. It provides international standards for websites, web applications, browsers, and other tools so that people with disabilities can use them. It is also designed to benefit people without disabilities. It is the foundation for 508 compliance.

FERPA

FERPA was designed to protect the privacy of the education records of students and prevent the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information from educational records. The federal agency with oversight of this statute is the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), and because it is a spending statute ("no funds shall be made available . . ."), DOE can encourage compliance only through the threat of discontinuing federal funding to an educational institution (MENTOR, 2019). Individual parents and students are not eligible to file a federal lawsuit against an educational agency or institution for a FERPA violation; however, they are able to sue in state court. FERPA covers the actions of anyone with access to students' educational records, and a FERPA violation occurs if a student's education records are released to any unauthorized persons. The statute requires that education institutions and agencies obtain written permission from the postsecondary education eligible student (age 18 or over) to release

any information from a student's education record. If a mentoring program is administered within an educational institution or agency, then it is subject to FERPA and cannot examine any educational records without written permission. Also, data may be used for monitoring mentees' educational functioning during the mentoring relationship and be beneficial to match support staff when having contact with match members during the life of the mentoring relationship.

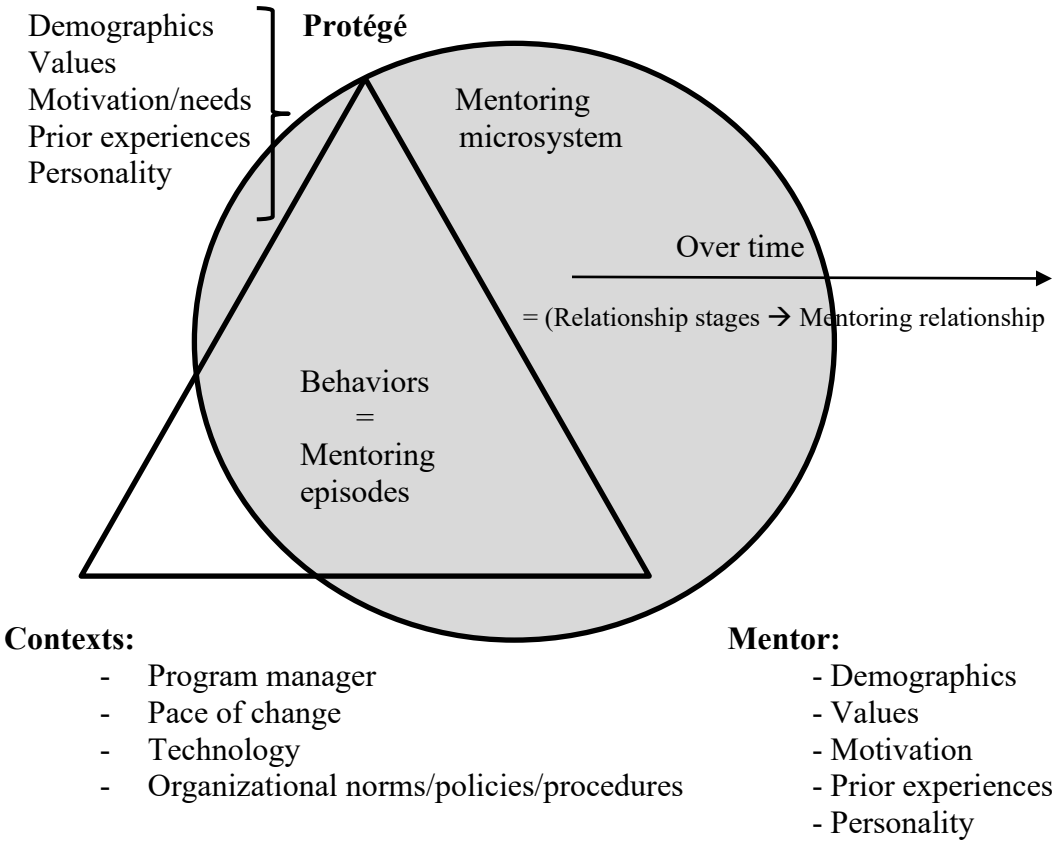
Theoretical Framework

Mentoring Ecosystem Theory

The mentoring ecosystem model (See Figure 1) posits that there are three distinct components that influence mentoring: (a) protégés, (b) mentors, and (c) organizational setting (Lunsford, 2016). Mentoring is a process; therefore, mentoring program managers should maintain a macro level focus and continually monitor each of these components to accomplish the organization's goals: (a) individual, (b) programmatic, and (c) organizational.

Figure 1

Mentoring ecosystem theory model (Lunsford, 2016)



Mentor and Protégé Characteristics.

Each unique protégé and mentor come into their relationship with their own personal preferences and prior experiences that influences the dynamics of their relationship. The mentoring ecosystem model (see Figure 1) indicates that shared attitudes and values, motivation, prior mentoring experiences, and personality traits are associated with a higher probability of having a more productive mentoring relationship.

Shared Attitudes and Values

There is belief among scholars that gender and race are vital characteristics to consider in matching participants; however, there is little evidence that these surface level

characteristics are significant in mentoring relationships (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Gender and race misinterpretations have been a source of incompatibility between mentees and mentors (Thomas, 1989). Therefore, program administrators may wish to consider including several demographic factors in the connecting process so that cultural, racial, and gender factors are considered (Ehrich et al, 2004). Shared attitudes, values, and beliefs are associated with higher quality mentoring relationships (Eby et al., 2010). Similar experiences are important determinants of career support, the advice related to the types of challenging projects to accept, how to build a personal brand, and how to network with those in industry (Lunsford, 2016). Career support refers to the advice related to exploring career interests, professional goals, potential career pathways, and how to network with others in the industry.

Motivation and Needs

Scholars of adult human development (Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977) propose that mentoring works best when protégés and mentors have needs and desires that are satisfied by engaging in a mentoring relationship. The degree to which protégés and mentors wish to learn effects how much they interact and invest in the relationship (Lunsford, 2016). Protégés with a greater desire to advance in their career are much more likely to experience successful outcomes from being mentored (Day & Allen, 2004). Furthermore, mentors are more likely to engage in these relationships when they are more successful and express greater career aspirations (Emmerik et al., 2005).

Prior Mentoring Experiences

Mentors who have extraordinary mentors have been found to have higher quality relationships with protégés (Bozionelos, 2004; Lunsford, 2014). These individuals were

able to benefit from the role modeling that their extraordinary mentors exhibited, which in turn lead to them being an effective mentor to their protégé. Conversely, negative mentoring experiences appear to make people want to disengage from these relationships (Eby et al., 2010). Therefore, mentoring experiences influence how mentors and protégés enter the relationship and interact with one another throughout the duration of their mentorship. Also, it may be harder for an individual to reengage in another mentoring relationship if they have had previous negative experiences with mentors. It is another reason that mentor training is paramount to ensure that everyone understands how to serve as an effective mentor.

Personality Traits

Personality describes individual differences that explain the individual differences that explain individual preferences over time and in different contexts (Lunsford, 2016). The Five Factor model of personality is one of the most accepted theories of personality (Judge et al., 2002). OCEAN is one acronym used to remember the five traits: (a) openness; (b) conscientiousness; (c) extroversion; (d) agreeableness; and (e) neuroticism. Openness refers to curiosity, inquisitiveness, and creativity; protégés who are low or high on openness do not receive as much mentoring. There is a direct connection between people who have more emotional stability and who are mentored (Lunsford, 2016). They need to be open to other individuals with different backgrounds and perspectives if they are going to be receptive to advice and guidance from a mentor. Agreeableness refers to the sensitivity toward others, trust, cooperation, and altruism; protégés that do not embody these values are not likely to be attractive to a mentor (Lunsford, 2016). Extroversion refers to a preference to interact with others and introverts prefer to interact

in smaller settings and have time to themselves. Protégés who are high and low on this trait receive more mentoring; however, it is the ambiverts (in the middle) that receive the least amount of mentoring (Lunsford, 2016).

Organizational Context

The organizational context is the third element that influences mentoring processes; systems theory sheds light on understanding how relationships influence mentoring. Systems theory offers an innovative way to conceptualize the intersection of mentoring and organizational environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The set of direct interactions that individuals have with others is said to be their "micro" environment. The protégé-mentor dyad lies in the microsystem; the interactions are influenced by reciprocity, balance of power, and affective relation or caring (Lunsford, 2016). It is the mutual giving and sharing of time and knowledge that characterizes the reciprocal nature of mentoring relationships.

The mesosystem is at the next level of relationships. How mentoring program managers interact with individual mentors and protégés comprises this level. For instance, if a program manager shares advice to a protégé on how to handle a challenge with their mentor. In turn, the protégé applies your advice, and thus you influence the mentor, even though you never interacted directly with them. This system is represented by the contexts in Figure 1. The third layer, exosystem, refers to events that influence the person, even though that they are not present. For example, if a mentor program manager decides to provide monthly spaces where protégés and mentors can interact and/or if there are challenges that make it difficult for partners to engage.

All three levels are influenced by the mesosystem; the organizational culture and values play a chief role. Two national cultural dimensions (power distance and collective versus individual orientation) may influence the design, launch, and sustainment of mentoring programs (Lunsford, 2016). Power distance refers to the status and power among individuals; individuals with collective orientations value the achievement of the group over the individual (Clutterbuck, 2007). Therefore, a mentor who concentrates on a protégé's personal and professional goals may have more success placing the conversation within the context of the organization, if the protégé is from a collectivist culture.

The mentoring ecosystem theory highlights the importance of a mentor program manager's role as the creator or replicator of organizational values via mentoring activities and as an advocate for protégés and mentors (Lunsford, 2016). The final contribution of systems theory is the significance that it focuses on transitions in learning; these refer to times when a person takes on a new role or enters a new setting. Often, individuals are more motivated to engage in mentoring when they take on new roles (Lunsford, 2016). For instance, when a college student transfers into a public, Research-1institution and/or a different institutional culture may benefit from mentoring. Similarly, as some alumni advance in their roles, they can experience a great sense of generativity and thus be motivated to pay it forward via mentoring students at their alma mater.

Additional Organizational Factors.

The pace of change and organizational calendar may influence the duration of programs. The environmental context influences mentoring dyads through organizational formal and informal rules. For example, mentoring programs in academia typically have

a longer duration than programs in other settings (Allen et al., 2011); however, the duration of each student-alumni mentoring relationship in this eMentoring program is only 16-weeks. Technology is another factor that greatly influences mentoring. Software platforms are enabling organizations to connect protégés and mentors who may be in different geographical regions; they no longer must be co-located to engage in a mentoring relationship (Lunsford, 2016).

Social Exchange Theory

One misconception of mentoring is that the benefits of the relationships are solely to the protégé. Social exchange theory contradicts that one-sided perspective; it indicates that mentors benefit from the relationship too (Ensher et al., 2003; Ugrin et al., 2008; Eby, 2007). The idea of reciprocity in mentoring extends to other cultures and contexts in mentoring (Ensher, 2013). Ensher (1997) further expanded on Kram's (1983) phases of mentoring by correlating it with social exchange theory and discussing how there must be a benefit for the parties involved in effective mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). In other words, mentoring relationships would not continue unless the parties involved gained some benefit from the relationship (Ensher, 1997). Eby et al. (2004) used Social Exchange Theory as the context to the subject of mentoring. The social exchange theory of mentoring refers to an expectation of an exchange of benefits from a protégé and mentor (Eby 2007). People engage in an activity in which they perceive benefits that are greater than the cost and discontinue to participate in those activities that they do not recognize as benefits (Eby et al., 2004). For instance, if the mentoring relationship is not going well, the mentoring relationship will cease. Protégés receive both career support

and psychosocial support through mentoring with role modeling as a vital part of this process (Baranik et al., 2010).

Theory of Generativity

In Erikson's (1950) model of psychosocial development, generativity is situated as the seventh (midlife) of eight successive human life cycle stages. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) authored a seminal generativity piece that offered a theory of generativity. McAdams et al. (1993) added Emmons's (1986) measure of personal strivings to evaluate generative commitment—goalsetting and decision-making that strives to take responsibility for serving the next generation (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). The conceptual model of generativity originates with two motivational sources: (a) an inner desire for agentic immortality and communal care for others and (b) a cultural demand for generativity.

Generativity is most expressed through mentoring, leadership, and service to others (Azarow et al., 2003). Generativity has been empirically identified as the most significant predictor of social responsibility (Rossi, 2001). Generativity is vital to the discussion of social responsibility, especially in adolescents. Adolescence is a provisional period of growth and development between childhood and adulthood; the World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between 10-19 years of age (World Health Organization, 2021). This age range falls within WHO's definition of young people, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24; however, in other societies adolescence is understood in broader terms that include psychological, social, and moral terrain and the physical aspects of maturation.

Since generativity is a midlife construct, young adults are not considered highly generative (Hastings et al., 2015). Contributing to society's betterment through socially responsible leadership has been identified as a core outcome of the collegiate experience (Astin & Astin, 2000). Generativity is important to the discussion of social responsibility, especially in college students (Hastings et al., 2015). Researchers have identified a need to further explore the link between mentoring and helping others since mentoring has been discussed as a form of prosocial behavior (Allen, 2003). Few studies have examined generativity within the college student context. Previous generativity studies have utilized neither rigorous qualitative methods nor mixed methods; Hastings et al. (2015) study addressed mentoring relationships in the college student context. Specifically, their purpose was to quantitatively examine generativity in college students at a 4-year, public Midwestern university who were mentoring a K–12 student, predicting that the presence of a mentoring relationship would positively impact generativity. Also, they gathered qualitative data to explore the impact of mentoring relationships on generativity. As a result of their mentoring experience, the participants attributed meaning to their experiences with generativity by acknowledging that generativity had become integrated into what they do and who they are. Therefore, after discovering this empirical study and personally having a passion for generativity, I wanted to apply this theory to this study. I thought it was relevant for this study for interpreting the mentoring phenomenon as preparing college students to be active contributors to the next generation is an important function of postsecondary education. I wanted to see if the transfer student protégés ascribed meaning to their experience with generativity from seeing the alumni mentors role model the behaviors of a mentor.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to describe and understand the experiences of transfer student protégés in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public, Research-1 university. The six research participants were transfer students that completed at least one 16-week mentoring relationship with an alumnus via a student-driven, eMentoring program. My study sought to understand what motivated them to engage with an alumni mentor, make meaning out of their experience, and gain insight on how they reflected following their eMentoring experience. The research questions that anchored my study are listed below:

1. How do transfer students experience wanting to participate in a student driven, eMentoring program?
2. What experiences or insights do transfer students have while participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program?
3. How do transfer students reflect on their eMentoring experience?

Research Design

A quality research design starts with the selection of a topic and paradigm (Creswell, 2013). This research study utilized an interpretative qualitative research design to explore, understand, interpret, and describe the experiences (Merriam, 2009) of six transfer students that participated as protégés in a student-driven, eMentoring program at

a public, research university. Decades before what we now refer to as qualitative inquiry became popular, anthropologists and sociologists were asking questions about individuals lives, the social and cultural contexts in which they resided, and the ways in which they made meaning with their worlds (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods depend on linguistic rather than numerical data and employ meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis (Polkinghorne, 1989). Learning how individuals experience their social world and the meaning it has for them is considered an interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). It is an inductive process, which allows researchers to gather data to build concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses in positivist research (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers conducting a basic interpretive qualitative study focus on three key items: (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experience (Merriam, 2009). The overarching purpose of qualitative research is to understand how people make sense out of their lives and experience.

Social experiences being studied are so complex and interwoven that they cannot be reduced to isolated variables (Creswell, 2013). The emphasis of this research study was to understand how transfer student protégés make meaning of their eMentoring experiences rather than trying to indicate ordinal values or identify social facts (Guest et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). An advantage of qualitative research is that it allows for flexible and sensitive methods to discover aspects of social life not previously understood (Groenwald, 2004). It is advantageous for investigating problems directly as it is used to

collect emerging data to develop themes (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012). Another benefit of qualitative research is the ability to obtain more details and explanations of experiences from participants, which will be used to improve our understanding and generate new knowledge about transfer student protégés in an eMentoring program.

The primary disadvantage of qualitative research is the fact that it does not allow the researcher to generalize. Also, there is greater potential for biased perspectives in qualitative inquiry since the researchers are the data collection instruments (Patton, 2015). I will use reflexivity, which requires researchers to reflect and discuss their own perspectives and experiences, with the research topic throughout the research process to address biases (Patton, 2015). The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world; the world is not a fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research (Merriam, 2002).

The qualitative design was suitable for my study; the goals of interpretative qualitative studies include rich descriptions about participants, how participants interpret their experiences, and what meanings they assign to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry posits that participants are at the center of the study and are the experts who will define an accurate representation of their experiences (Guest et al., 2012; Holliday, 2007). The design of the study is emergent and flexible, responsive to the shifting conditions (Merriam, 2009). A central phenomenon is the key concept, idea, or process studied; the central phenomenon is eMentoring using the experiences of transfer student protégés (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Research Site

The site chosen for this interpretive qualitative study was within a public research university in the southeastern United States. I was able to access the data to the transfer students who had participated in the student-driven, eMentoring program, which was stored within the digital mentoring platform. The eMentoring program was developed by following the approach designed and tested scholars who have studied the characteristics of formal mentoring programs associated with improved program outcomes (Dubois et al., 2011; Giscombe, 2007; Wanberg et al., 2003). These characteristics can be grouped into four categories: (a) recruiting the right participants; (b) orienting participants to the program goals; (c) supporting participants; and (d) assessing progress.

The student-driven, eMentoring program, utilizes a digital mentoring platform, which allows students to connect with alumni, regardless of geographic location, who can help them realize their potential. The eMentoring program is currently available for degree seeking students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional students) to establish a mentorship with alumni and friends of the University. “Friends” are defined as anyone serving the University in a leadership capacity (i.e. Board of Trustee, Board Visitor, College/School Advisory Board Member, etc.). Each mentoring relationship formally lasts 16 weeks with the recommendation of the pairs connecting at least once/month and investing 1-2 hours/month in the relationship. Students are required to attend a thirty-minute orientation session prior to be eligible to request a mentor. Using the digital platform, protégés and mentors each complete a profile. After students complete their profiles, the platform will present students with 3 suggested mentors. Students may request a mentor from this list, or they can search for a different mentor based on

available search criteria to narrow down the selection. Previous research has shown that the importance of the matching is a recurrent subject, and there is agreement that when the match is good, the learning and psychosocial development are influenced positively (Eby et al., 2004). Once the student requests a mentor, the alumni or friend can either accept or decline the request, establishing mutual ownership in the mentorship connection process. The mentoring relationships will occur in three capacities: (a) virtual e-mentoring (i.e. solely via technology, (b) hybrid e-mentoring (combination of technology and face-to-face interactions), (c) traditional mentoring (face-to-face interactions).

Participant Selection

The intent of qualitative inquiry is not to generalize to a population, but rather to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon with specific people (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Therefore, this qualitative research study will identify participants through purposeful sampling to determine individuals who can best help me better understand the central phenomenon (Seidman, 1991). Moreover, in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals to better understand the central phenomenon; the standard using in choosing participants and sites is whether they are information rich (Patton, 2015). Choosing a purposive sample is most appropriate for providing the best available data necessary, based on prior information about the selected participants (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Moreover, it is recommended that qualitative research is conducted at a site where participants experience the issue or problem under study (Merriam, 2009). This up-close information gathered by directly engaging with the participants and seeing them behave and act within their natural setting is a major characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

To ensure that the transfer student populations from which participation was sought met the above criteria, only students whose transfer status was verified were invited to participate. It was verified by looking on the backend of the digital mentoring platform to see if they disclosed that they were a transfer student in the demographic section area of their mentee profile. After verifying that they were a transfer student within the digital mentoring platform, I invited the potential sample of 132 transfer students via email and included the letter of participation (Appendix A).

To gather participants' feedback, I used informed consent forms to gain agreement on the purpose of the research, willingness to participate, risks and benefits of the research, participants' right to stop the research, and procedures used to protect confidentiality (Groenwald, 2004). I followed up with each participant via email and scheduled the interviews via Zoom. Also, each participant received a $20 Amazon gift card to provide faster recruit times, fewer no shows, long-term savings, and a token of appreciation for the research participants. To develop rapport with my participants, I adhered to Taylor and Bogdan's (1984) five issues to address at the outset of every interview: (a) the investigator's motives and intentions and the inquiry's purpose; (b) the protection of respondents using pseudonyms; (c) deciding who has final say over the study's content; (d) payment; and (e) logistics regarding time, place, and number of interviews to be scheduled. All participants were informed that I would assign them a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. Upon completion of interviews, the participants were asked to examine their transcripts to ensure data credibility. Also, participants were strongly encouraged to make comments, ask questions, and provide

constructive feedback during the interview session. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A

Data Collection

Qualitative data can be collected from three major sources; interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam, 2002). Interviews and documents are the primary qualitative research methods (Patton, 2014). I relied on video recordings, audio recordings, analytic memos, and follow-up notes to provide a detailed review of participants lived experiences. To gather participants' feedback, I used informed consent forms to gain agreement on the purpose of the research, willingness to participate, risks and benefits of the research, participants' right to stop the research, and procedures used to protect confidentiality (Groenwald, 2004). Based on the scope of this research, which focused on making meaning, I selected interviewing as the primary means of collecting data. The qualitative researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2002) and primary administrator of the instrument. My primary data collection methods consisted of semi-structured interviews, collected as video/audio recordings, and written notes (Patton, 1990). Interviewing is a vital data collection tactic to acquire information on behavior, feelings, and how people make meaning of the world and their experiences in the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In describing the purpose of interviews, Patton (2015) emphasized that we interview individuals to learn from them those things we cannot directly observe.

Semi-Structured Interviews. I decided to use semi-structured interviews as they are frequently used in qualitative research. It is essential to have a structure for the interviews; an interview protocol reminds the researcher of the questions and provides a

means for recording notes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Most interviews fall between highly structured and un-structured (Merriam (2002). The open-ended questions allow participants to express their experiences unconstrained by the researcher's perspective or past research findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Moreover, the semi-structured interview format makes room to seek clarification upon answers from respondents (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Interviewing transfer students provided them with an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their experience participating in a university-wide eMentoring program in a safe environment. The semi-structured interviews were designed to prompt participants to reflect on their mentoring experience and to talk extensively about their experiences based on pre-determined interview questions that aligned with the researcher's theoretical framework. This technique is useful for researchers when the goal is to obtain detailed information about an individual thoughts and behaviors (Guest et al., 2012).

To collect data for this research study, I chose to purposively sample from a potential sample pool of 132 transfer student protégé s that completed a 16-week mentorship in the student-driven, eMentoring program. It is important to note that the number of participants to be interviewed depends on the questions to be asked, the data that will be generated and resources available to conduct the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). There is no minimum on how many research participants should make up a sample, if the necessary information is acquired (Tongco, 2007). Merriam (2009) explained there are not a specific number of people who should be targeted for an interview when conducting qualitative research. Therefore, the sampling will conclude when no new information is emerging from my sample population. Most scholars argue

that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when mulling over sample size decisions in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). Saturation is reached once the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data; it is ‘‘when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories’’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113).

There are several issues with interviewing. For instance, interviews only provide information filtered through the interviewers' lens (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Moreover, interview data may be misleading and provide the perspective that the interviewee wants the researcher to hear. Also, the responses may not be articulate, perceptive, or clear. Therefore, I practiced facilitating interviews with my friends, family, and colleagues, and mentors to become more confident and competent in administering the semi-structured interviews. Also, I used "probing" to draw out deeper information from the participant throughout the interview protocol (Fraenkel et al., 2012). A probe question is a sub-question that may be utilized immediately after the participant's response to a primary interview question; they allow the human instrument to clarify respondent answers to interview questions which may be unclear to the researcher (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

This research study's interview questions (Appendix B) were designed to elicit an open range of expression from each research participant. Qualitative research involves a simultaneous process of analyzing while you are also collecting data (Merriam, 2002). When you are collecting data, you are also analyzing other information previously collected to explore for major ideas; the data analysis begins with the start of the first participants interview (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is described as taking the individual responses apart and putting them back together in summary form (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019). The data analysis phases are an iterative process; I cycled back and forth between data collection and analysis. There is no single, accepted approach to analyzing qualitative data as it is a unique process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It typically involves data preparation, organization, developing themes, and representing the data in an appropriate format (Creswell, 2013). Morrow and Smith (2000) described data analysis in qualitative research as the process of "discovering or constructing meaning from data" (p. 213). Data analysis allows the interviewer to yield trustworthy findings and answer their research questions. For this research, recorded audio and written notes were used to collect participant experiences during the Zoom interviews. The data was analyzed using codes, categories, labels, and themes.

Due to COVID-19 and in the best interest of the participants' safety and wellbeing, I conducted virtual interviews with each research participant via Zoom. One of the benefits of virtual interviews is that it allows the researcher to go revisit each recording in greater detail to gain a deeper understanding of each participant and their experience. The constructivist lens will inform my decisions throughout the data analysis process; social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2014). I made these decisions regarding data analysis, because within basic interpretative qualitative research, I captured the ways that transfer students make meaning of their experience participating in a student driven, eMentoring program. Also, to capture the complexity of situations, I analyzed the data for

contrary evidence, which is information that does not support or confirm the themes and provides contradictory information about a theme (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Data Transcription & Organization

I utilized Microsoft Word to transcribe and organize the data; it allowed me to easily color code the various sections. Moreover, it provided me with the opportunity to review the data on numerous occasions and within each of the six interviews. Microsoft Word was a pragmatic application to develop a systematic method of identifying the open and axial codes, category labels, and themes. The data availability for this study totaled six interviews from six participants, which I transcribed verbatim. The video recordings, audio recordings, and transcripts were stored on a USB flash drive and kept in a locked safe at my personal residence. I constantly worked within the data and reflecting on the data to grasp a better understanding of the research participants' experiences and how they made meaning of that experience.

Coding

The holistic content method was utilized; it is beneficial when the researcher aims to capture the lived experiences of participants in terms of their own meaning and to preserve the essence of their stories (Charmaz, 2011). Once the researcher is used to identify themes and patterns, coding permits the researcher to identify similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009). It recommends that researchers comb over the written transcriptions numerous times as they hunt for common themes and patterns. A text should be read multiple times to garner an emergent pattern (Lieblich et al., 1998). Upon collecting the participants responses through interviews, transcribing, and completing multiple readings, coding of the data is the next sequential step. Most importantly,

effective analysis starts at the design phase when researchers pose research questions, decide on methods, and identify participants (Patton, 2015).

Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Although there are no set guidelines for coding data, there are some general procedures that exist (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tesch, 1990). The purpose of the inductive coding process is to make sense of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes. Open coding helps establish and maintain the essence of a qualitative study by giving names to ideas and concepts discovered. Then, axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) is the process of grouping your open codes. Assigning codes to pieces of data allows one to begin constructing categories, which are a conceptual elements that span numerous individual examples (Merriam, 2009).

I attempted to use the ATLAS.ti 9 qualitative software platform as a data analysis tool; it is a powerful workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. However, after numerous attempts, I decided to conduct the data analysis by hand, which is a process is described as “hand-coding” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This allowed me to “winnow” the data (Guest et al., 2012) to remove some of the information to focus on the most important data. To begin the data analysis process, I used open coding to classify discrete concepts and patterns in the data, and axial coding to make connections between those patterns (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). While open and axial coding are distinct analytical procedures, I adhered to Strauss and

Corbin's (2015) recommendation that they can occur simultaneously as researchers identify patterns and then begins to note how those patterns fit together.

Build Themes

The researcher needs to breakdown the data into concepts to compare for similarities and differences; concepts can be communication, imagery, objects, or familiar properties (Khandkar, 2009). Developing themes consists of answering the major research questions and establishing an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development; themes are alike codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019); themes have labels that typically consist of no more than 2-4 words. To ensure accuracy, it is valuable to discover relevant text, identify repetitive ideas, report ideas that have a common theme, and then develop theoretical constructs to interpret meaning accurately (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Report and Interpret Findings

The primary form for representing and reporting findings in qualitative research is a narrative discussion; it is a written passage in a qualitative student in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). For instance, I included dialogue that provides support for themes. Also, I reported direct quotes from interview data or from observations of individuals to capture feelings, emotions, and ways people talk about their experiences. After the data analyzation process, I generated 5 themes; Creswell recommends a total of 5-7 themes (2019). Then, I will interpret the findings; interpretation encompasses making sense of the data, or the lessons learned (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Interpretation in qualitative research means that

the researcher steps back and forms some larger meaning about the central phenomenon based on personal views and previous studies.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Research that is perceived as worthless is said to lack rigor; this means the findings are not worth noting or paying to, because they are unreliable (Amankwaa, 2016). Trustworthiness can be defined as the understanding of reality, which is the researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretations or understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2002). Also, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that the value of a research study is bolstered by its trustworthiness, which involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Using research methods that are accepted by the academic community and can be verified by others adds to the credibility (Shenton, 2004). Peer researchers, co-analysis, and participant checks are also ways to ensure reliability (Morrow, 2005). Credibility can be maintained by using the coding process and by sticking to accepted research by using recommended sample size. I strived for credibility by providing sufficient details of data collection and data analysis for others to judge the quality of the final product.

Transferability

Transferability means the results of the study can be applied to different situations; it can be an issue in a qualitative study due to a low number of participants, making it difficult for the researcher to prove whether the results would apply to all cases (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, I established transferability by accurately defining the scope

and the boundaries of the study, participants, geographic location, data collection methodology, length of the interviews, and the time frame (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

The goal of dependability is accomplished by the management of subjectivity and the accountability through an audit trail (Morrow, 2005). Dependability will be addressed by reporting on the process in detail and providing adequate literature to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). By reporting on the process in detail and providing the background information, the reader should have enough data to decide for themselves if the study is dependable. I strived to establish dependability by documenting an audit trail, written account, for the exact processes and procedures taken to determine the research findings.

Confirmability

The integrity of findings is in the data and that the researcher must tie together the data, investigative processes, and conclusions in a way that the reader can endorse the adequacy of the findings (Morrow, 2005). Researchers' responsibilities are to be consistent with data sources, have the strength of evidence, and a stable pattern of analysis. Readers judge findings by using validity and reliability (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003); validity focuses on aligning findings with participants' experiences and their interpretations of those experiences (Merriam, 2009). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) propose three of the prominent strategies for validating accuracy of a qualitative study: 1) triangulation, 2) member checking, and 3) external audit. Reliability allows people to arrive at the same interpretation or facts (Krippendorff, 2011); however, it is subjective since human behavior is subjective. I established confirmability by

triangulating the data sources: (a) video, (b) audio, and (c) interviews; conducting member checks with each research participant to verify each personal transcript, which they all agreed that their voice was accurately portrayed; and having a mentor and professor conduct an external audit of my research process and findings.

Researcher's Perspective

The role of the researcher is to discover and contribute to the body of knowledge with the objective to provide a new perspective and maintain respect for views held by others (Creswell, 2013). Epistemology provides a context for a researcher to understand views held by others because it studies the relationship between knowledge and justification (Merriam, 2009). The epistemological paradigm that framed this study was an interpretative constructivist stance because it was based on observation and the reality that the researcher constructs knowledge rather than finds knowledge (Merriam, 2009). My goal is to share a deep understanding of transfer students' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013).

My professional interests are closely aligned with my personal interests, because I live with a social equity lens, meaning that I constantly strive to serve economically disadvantaged underserved students to increase their social capital, cultural capital, and financial capital in hopes that they obtain a postsecondary credential. Education is one of the greatest equalizers in our society. My hope is for every student to have a mentor in their corner prior to obtaining a postsecondary credential who can share their knowledge and experience to inspire them to reach their fullest potential. I have personal biases related to this area of research due to having a strong desire for more college students,

specifically transfer students, to understand the value of mentorship. However, I constantly reflected to ensure that my biases did not get in the way of the research.

Assumptions and Limitations

Qualitative studies help us better understand people's meanings of experiences (Fellows & Liu, 2008); however, it comes with its limitations. One of the major limitations is that the study involves participants that completed a 16-week mentorship via a digital platform when they are not all students have access to quality internet and/or software equipment. Moreover, the results of this study are limited to transfer students who participated as a protégé in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public, Research-1 university in the southeast United States. Another limitation is the sample size; the qualitative study's findings are unable to be generalized to the general population with the same degree of confidence compared to quantitative research (Atieno, 2009). The external validity is an issue due to only interviewing seven research participants. However, the findings will provide insight about experiences of transfer student protégés. The research findings were not measured to determine statistical significance; therefore, the research may be viewed narrow by some in the scholarly community since it cannot be classified as a frequent phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative studies have been criticized, since it is subjective, expensive, and cannot be replicated (Doody, 2013). The researcher adhered to all requirements and best practices to encourage active participation and maintain trustworthiness in the study's results. Appendix C provides a timeline that will serve as a guide for my research study.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

This chapter contains profile narratives of six transfer students from a diverse range of backgrounds who were participated as protégés in the student-driven, eMentoring program. Each narrative reflects data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant to examine their experiences and meanings they ascribed to their experiences. Each interview was vital; they provided the foundation for my understanding, helped maintain structure, and provided focus during data analysis (Seidman, 2006). Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, I conducted web-based video interviews with each participant through Zoom, which consisted of asking questions from participants and recording their responses. Covid-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 the virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks (CDC, 2021). As of February 6, 2021, there have been 909,000 cases and 14,413 deaths in the United States.

Each profile includes a description of the student's past and present educational experiences, along with her career aspirations. Individual narratives provide an opportunity to share each participant's unique story. During the interviews, I became aware of many shared experiences between the transfer student protégés that will be examined in a later section detailing observed themes. I share their experiences to give

voice to their personal journey and provide a new perspective (Creswell, 2013). The protégés are presented by their pseudonym. Table 1 provides biographical information of each participant.

Table 1

Biographical Information of Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Class Year	Number of Mentors	Major	Expected Graduation
Maple	White	Female	21	4	2	Financial Planning	December, 2021
Nancy	White	Female	23	4	1	Human Development & Child Science	December, 2021
Wilder	Hispanic	Male	22	4	2	Economics	May, 2021
Destiny	White	Female	21	3	3	Advertising	May, 2022
Sara	White	Female	22	4	1	International Affairs	May, 2021
Willow	White	Female	22	4	3	Economics	May, 2021

Maple

Maple and I had the pleasure of chatting over Zoom. She surprised with me her body posture of laying down with a boot on her right foot. She had recently sprained her ankle, yet she was in great spirits. Maple was a 21-year-old, fourth year student and identified as a White Caucasian woman. Maple mentioned that she was doing well with not picking up anything new to manage her mental health. Classes have been challenging;

however, she is excited to be able to help people upon graduation. Maple is excited about serving people in her community as a financial planner.

Maple previously attended Wingate University, which is located approximately 35 minutes from Charlotte, North Carolina. Maple was at Wingate University for her freshman year prior to transferring to the University of Georgia. Maple stated,

> And this was about two weeks before I needed to decide where I was going to college. So my mom was like, "Oh, let's go look at Wingate, your sister loved it." And then, we went and she was like, "I have never been here in my entire life." I said, "What?" And she was like, "I was thinking of Winthrop, not Wingate." And I was like, "Okay."

During her time at Wingate, Maple discovered that she wanted to pursue dietetics and become a registered dietician; however, they did not offer the program. Therefore, she decided to come to [SCHOOL NAME] primarily due to the HOPE Scholarship. The HOPE scholarship is available to Georgia residents who have demonstrated academic achievement. The scholarship provides money to assist students with the educational costs of attending a HOPE eligible postsecondary institution located in Georgia. Maple stated:

> I would definitely say, at first... Because I was pretty much driving to move into my place in Athens, and just realized, "Oh my goodness, I just left all my friends, a great campus." I'd moved around high schools a lot, so I wasn't planning on transferring because I wanted a stable, continuous four years. And I just kind of had to decide at that moment, confidence is truly a choice. And so, I just had to decide to be confident, that all the doors opened to that point. And just the fact

> that I can even transfer after my freshman year, because I had so many dual enrollment credits, so it was just like a sure sign that I was supposed to transfer for me. So transferring in I just decided like, "Okay, I'm going to make this work." And I've had a lot of practice of just making things work and making friends and getting connected with my experience of going to three different high schools. So I was like, "Alright, I'm ready for this," and just jumped in.

Maple's experience attending three high schools may have prepared her with the resilience and grit to be confident with this new transition. Also, she may have been more confident in transferring due to having the access to secure many dual enrollment credits. Maple plans on being a fee only financial advisor. She wants to serve middle-income population and not be on extreme of high-wealth clients and then serve on the side for lower income individuals. I asked Maple if she ever considered a career in higher education administration career given her extensive involvement as a student leader. Maple stated:

> No to higher ed career - don't think I can out-pour that much emotionally full-time, and then also care for a family or a future spouse or something like that, just because you're kind of always managing the next social crisis or... And students are always in such a dynamic time and everything. So, maybe I'll come back, one day, as like a faculty member and I definitely want to stay pledged in with [SCHOOL NAME] upon graduation. So hopefully I'll be one of those good alumni.

Moreover, Maple moved in with girls who attended [SCHOOL NAME] for their freshmen year; therefore, they were able to connect her to many friends and resources in

the community. The 1785 Day with the Student Alumni Council is what really set her up for success. She donated to a fund that supported obesity research, resulting in her getting connected to a diverse friend group from all over campus. Anna stated, “So that was what really helped me succeed here, was having that great community.” Also, whoever was next to her in class, she would just be like, "Hey I'm Maple, what's your name?" And meet some friends there and go to a dining hall after class or something, if we had a break. Maple said, “My experience transferring in was an easy transition, just because I was able to go and meet people and just roll with it.” Maple’s prior experience navigating change throughout 3 different high schools may have helped her to be resilient in a transitioning into a new institutional environment.

Nancy

Nancy was a 23-year old, fourth year student studying Human Development and Family Science who identifies as a white Caucasian female. Nancy aspires to be a Child Life specialist; she wants to normalize the stressful situations that youth might have to go through, and supporting them, and preparing them for procedures. She only had 1 mentor; however, she loved her and said, “She’s mine; I don’t want to share her.” Nancy was unable to finish high school in time; she finished six months late. And because of that, she took a gap year. People asked Nancy, "What did you do in your gap year?" And she told them, "Well, I did stroke recovery. I don't know what you do in your gap year, but I did that." Nancy had to subsequently start college a year later than her peers. Due to her stroke, she was still in rehab and doing activities to build her strength and endurance.

Nancy started school at Oglethorpe University, which is three miles from her home. She was an enrolled student there for two years. Nancy stated, “Oglethorpe...

between you and me…Oglethorpe is not a college. It's crazy." She didn't enjoy being a student at Oglethorpe and desired to have a bigger college experience to have more of a sense of community.

Nancy mentioned that her transfer experience was unique:

> My last well, last semester at Oglethorpe, I had already gotten into [SCHOOL NAME], or I was getting... I was in the process of getting into [SCHOOL NAME]. And I knew I was coming here, so I spent the whole spring semester just preparing to transfer. So I had all the stuff I needed. I did all the research. I spent so many hours on the [SCHOOL NAME] website. I did my research, so I would be prepared. So getting here, really wasn't, it wasn't a very rough experience. I had visited a couple of times, so actually my sister is technically a year younger than me in school. But since the stroke and the gap year and all that, we are in the same year at school. So, I came and hung out with her and got to feel out Athens a little bit and just enjoy the city, so it was fun.

Nancy had ample time to prepare for the transition and was disciplined in doing her homework to complete all the necessary steps to transfer to another University. When I asked Nancy whether she was able to develop a sense of community shortly after arriving at the University, she stated:

> Community is hard, so yes and no. It's like a superficial community. I don't know… I just feel like transferring in, I didn't find my group. I tried a bunch of different things, but I didn't find my group. And I have had to go through the process of understanding it takes a lot more time than just like instant friends. So it's been a process, but I'm a pretty positive person. I have stayed upbeat.

Nancy struggled to find a sense of belonging at the beginning of her time at the University; however, her optimistic attitude and prior experience of dealing with a stroke helped prepare her to be resilient. Nancy was determined to get really engaged since she was deprived of social interaction at Oglethorpe. She became a College of Family & Consumer Sciences Student Ambassador, Dean of Students Ambassador.

Wilder

Wilder was a twenty-two-year-old, senior studying economics at the University who identified as a Hispanic male. His desired career occupation is to be a consultant. Wilder hopes to do consulting within the data analytics industry; he plans on applying into the MSBA program.

He has had two mentors in the student-driven, eMentoring program. Wilder grew up in College Park, Georgia, and first matriculated into Columbus State University (CSU). He was an enrolled student at CSU for one year; he stated:

> I got out quick." I wanted to transfer to the University of Georgia due to its prestige.. I'm kind of a first... Not a first, my mom went to college, but she went to a private small university in Texas. So my dad didn't go to college, so I wanted the real-life, public-university experience. And a lot of people from my high school went to Georgia. So my story is, I applied out of high school, and I didn't get in. So I was like, "Dang, what do I do now?" Because I didn't want to go... I thought about going out of state, but then we were discussing the financials of that and it made zero sense.

Wilder expressed frustration with the negative connotation around being a transfer student; you could tell in his body language and facial reactions:

> Because you know, I'll tell you this from a student perspective out of high school, it's for some reason, I don't know why, transferring is a really bad... It has a really bad connotation. For some reason, you're looked down upon if you say you're transferring. I don't know whether that's because people... Well, at least for me, coming from... I went to a private school, so if you were like, "Yeah, I'm going to transfer in a year or whatever, but I'm going to Kennesaw or Columbus State or Georgia State," you'd be surprised where most people would be like, "Oh, why? Why are you doing that? Why aren't you just going out of state? You don't want the freshman experience?"

Wilder has been able to serve as a mentor for his younger brother, which has greatly enhanced his transfer experience. You could tell that he was really proud to serve as his mentor based on his facial emotions and tone of voice. However, he also acknowledged that his brother had a much smoother transfer experience. Wilder stated:

> His experience is more enhanced because I went through the transfer, I transferred, and I was able to give him an insight like, "Here's what the classes are like. Here's what classes are important for Terry. Here's how you apply to Terry. Here's what majors you can take. Here's clubs you can get into. Here's like... Because it's very... I don't think they realize how daunting it is. A lot of these kids are coming from smaller universities to here, so I think that they need something like a little bit of a... Like this mentorship program for transfer students, I would think that having a bigger program for that, I think that would benefit a lot of their students greatly, in my opinion. Talking to somebody that actually went through what you went through, compared to somebody that just got in and they're doing

this because they want to. But you're not going to have the same connection. So I think that they could institute like a transfer ambassadors program.

The University implemented a transfer student mentor program in 2020, which did not exist when Wilder transferred. Also, the University launched a Transfer Student Ambassador Program in 2021. Then, I asked Wilder to tell me about his transfer student orientation experience, and he stated:

> I think it's very surface level. I think it's very... I think it's literally the minimum amount of stuff you need to know. I feel like they sit you in the place, they show you the video, "Here's Georgia, blah, blah, blah." And then they have the... You go into split-up groups. Then you have these over-exuberant people talking about how Georgia is amazing, and you're just like, "Whatever. Okay. Let me see my academic advisor." You take a tour around campus, and then you go to your academic advisor. And they plop you in a seat, and they're like, "Okay, you've got to take this, this, this, this, and this, but you can't choose your professor because you're a transfer, so you registered last, so you're stuck with this." So it's kind of like... Because I got a really bad accounting professor. She doesn't work here anymore, but I didn't know because I didn't know. I didn't know that this teacher was how she was because my advisor had been like, "Yeah, by the way, she's really tough, but I think you'll be okay." And then what was crazy was at the end of the semester, I talked to my... Because I was doing bad in the class, and I talked to my advisor and she was like, "Yeah, we have a lot of transfer students that don't do very well in this class, and they have these problems." And I was like, "So how does that help me at all?" That's kind of like... It's kind of like saying,

"Well, you could always... " She was always like, "Well, you could take it, or you could drop it." And I was like, "Well, that would have been nice to know back in August when I was at orientation," but easier said than done in my opinion.

Wilder expressed that he felt like he was an “odd one out” and that he had “one hand tied behind his back.” He wished the University would have helped him know what courses to take and how to find more information about the various professors. Also, Wilder desired to know more about his college; he wasn’t informed that he had to apply to that college nor the crucial courses where needed to succeed.

Wilder credited his Career Consultant at the University’s Career Center for inspiring him to participate in the student-driven, eMentoring program:

> She did an excellent job when I went... So I went to see her in her office right before COVID hit, because I was looking for internships and trying to get my professional life, then talk everything right, had her look at my LinkedIn, resume, everything. Probably just how accomplished they are with the platform that they provide us, you can see the degrees they have, the job experience that they have, just... I'll look them up on LinkedIn and just see like... They're very successful people. And I think for most kids, at least for me, it means a lot for me because you'll reach out to some people, especially in the job recruiting process, and you know they don't really care about you.

Wilder was really impressed with the caliber of alumni professionals in the student-driven, eMentoring program. He desired to learn from their career journey and knew that they would have the [SCHOOL NAME] connection:

It's like, you guys may be completely different, be from completely different parts of the world, but you went to [SCHOOL NAME]. So that's like... For me, that helped me break the ice, because I was like, "I'm at the same place as them, taking probably the same courses," because you could filter it and do econ, I can do econ majors, stuff like that. And it's like... And they respond pretty quickly and it's crazy. I remember when I got my first one, she responded in like a day. And yeah, she was like, "Yeah, I can help you." She was enthusiastic, she called me the next week. I told her about all my problems for the Masters of Science in Business Analytics (MSBA). I needed to do this, internship this, take the GRE, do all this stuff. And she told me her experience, she's like, "Don't worry about it." And then she was awesome because she gave me contacts from her MSBA class that went through the program. So I called them up and I got two full pages of notes. And they're telling me about what the program's like, what to do, what not to do, what to say in the application process, just... That her opening the door for me to talk to those people meant the world because that's one connection. That's four or five connections that I got that I would have never had had she not helped me with that. So that's what I really like about the program.

Would you say that your life is better due to participating in this eMentoring program?

Wilder stated that his life was 100% better due to participating in the eMentoring program. Wilder said, “I gained so much, like I've said before, so much knowledge, 100%. It was definitely worth doing, 100%.”

Destiny

Destiny was a 20-year old, junior studying advertising, who identified as a white Caucasian female. She grew up in Roswell, Georgia. Destiny first matriculated into the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina. Destiny stated:

> My dream school was [SCHOOL NAME]. And when I did enter as a freshman, I thought, "Okay, USC is has bigger, similar type of vibe," or so I thought. But for me, just my time there, I was a little further from home. I was about four-and-a-half hours from home whereas [SCHOOL NAME] is about an hour-and-a-half from where I live originally. And then just academically, overall, I felt that there wasn't as big of an emphasis on academics as I had seen in my peers that were at [SCHOOL NAME], and I had... I was actually really lucky to work with the journalism school at the University of South Carolina as one of their journalism school ambassadors, and that was a great opportunity for me to kind of see what else was out there just based on that program.

Also, due to being a Georgia resident, she could take advantage of the HOPE Scholarship. Destiny said:

> So I was paying around $30,000-$40,000 and my parents were paying thankfully at USC, whereas now, I have the HOPE scholarship, so 80% of my tuition is covered. So I would say financially, that was a huge part of it. I could have stayed at USC, and my parents would have made it happen, but I didn't feel that it... I was getting my value's worth, whereas at [SCHOOL NAME], I'm so much happier. I feel like academically, I'm more challenged, I have a better sense of community here, and I'm saving my family tens of thousands of dollars by not

being an out-of-state student. So it was kind of a bunch of things. And also social factors, just in a new city, it was different for me. And the type of people that go to USC, I was very surprised to see the stark difference in there versus out here. So it was definitely a combination of things. There was positives, but for me, the positives of [SCHOOL NAME] outweighed the positives of USC, so it just made the most sense for me to transfer.

Destiny's desired occupation is to go into advertising sales or branding. Destiny is keeping an open mind due to not exactly sure; she would love to do something that incorporates advertising and creativity or sales and networking. Destiny's main strengths are communication and organization. Destiny has had three mentors within the student-driven, eMentoring program.

Destiny was the only student that mentioned that she had a very smooth transition due to the Transfer Department at [SCHOOL NAME] offering resources and sending out newsletters. She greatly appreciated knowing that there was people in her corner, and that they seemed to be experienced with serving and support transfer students. Destiny said, "[SCHOOL NAME] is, I think, one of those schools that a lot of people do transfer into, so it just seemed like they were equipped to welcome transfers, which is something that I didn't have the best experience with at USC." Destiny was fortunate that transferred to an institution where she knew a good amount of people. She said:

I was very lucky in the sense that a lot of people... I wouldn't say a lot, but a good amount of people from my hometown do attend [SCHOOL NAME]. And I had my boyfriend already here and two of my closest friends from home that already went here. And then I was also very lucky to be able... I was in a sorority at USC,

> and I was able to transfer my membership to [SCHOOL NAME]. And it just so happened that a lot of my friends were in that sorority at [SCHOOL NAME] as well, so I could not have been more lucky to have just a set group of friends and community. And my sorority specifically was very, very welcoming for transfer students as well, which really helped. So the community from that and the community from hometown friends as well as honestly the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program being a part of it, everyone's been really awesome. So I definitely have my outlets in terms of sorority and friends and extracurriculars that has made it just... Honestly, I have a better sense of community at [SCHOOL NAME] than I did at USC. So I'm very thankful for that.

Destiny's friend motivated her to participate in the student-driven eMentoring program. Destiny said,

> So I had a friend that had a mentor, and he was like, "Yeah, I have this mentor, and he works for a big company. And he's been kind of helping me navigate what I want to do after college and even specifically what he does at his company and how he can help me if I ever was interested in his company." I was like, "Wow, that's really useful. I didn't know that existed.

Therefore, within a week, Destiny signed up for the eMentoring program and attended the mandatory student orientation session. Every student (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) has to attend a mentee orientation to understand effective mentee strategies and to learn how to navigate the eMentoring platform.

Destiny has always believed that mentorship is important throughout one's journey. She stated:

> And I've always thought it's really important to have mentorship of some type, whether that be a family friend or someone that's alumni of your school or works at a company you want to work for, just because for me, since I don't know exactly what I want to do, I like to hear from other people that have been there. So the second I heard that there was a program or people that actually wanted to help students, they took their personal time to help people that have been in their shoes, I thought that was really important. So that's what sparked my interest. For me, it's been more just like parents of friends that I... Or friends of mine whose parents work in industries similar to me, or family friends that have encouraged me or told me, "I think you'd be good at this, or if you ever need help with this, reach out to me," that kind of thing, so not a professional mentor relationship, but just people that are kind of in my corner that I could reach out to if I needed guidance.

Destiny's ancestors are from Italy, so they came over in the early 1900s and came from absolutely nothing. Destiny's great-grandfather continues to inspire her:

> My great-grandfather came over to the US when he was 16-years-old, and he was a shoe shiner. Her great-grandfather literally had no money, nothing, and fast forward to now, my family lives in a suburban city. And I'm very thankful for everything we have, and they built, I would say a semi-successful life for me, my family. And so it's just been really inspiring me to see the roots of where I came from started at nothing, and my great-grandpa, he was a shoe shiner, but he worked really hard and eventually was able to open his own business, and then my grandparents were born and then they had kids. And so it's just seeing the

> generations, everyone is kind of climbing and everyone's working really hard to be able to have a great life for their kids and their kids' kids. So I would say it kind of starts at that, but just everyone in my family has always been really hard workers and very adamant in my life about working hard and the importance of getting what you deserve and doing things for yourself and not depending on other people because your opportunities... You create your own opportunities. You have to seek them out and search for them, and that whole kind of thing.

Destiny mentioned that she felt that she had a late start compared to her peers at the University:

> When you come in [SCHOOL NAME], you're connected with people in your dorm and connected probably more on campus. And when you're a transferee, you don't have the same start, that same even playing field at the start as those who come in as a freshman. Especially because I started spring semester of sophomore year, I felt like, "Oh my gosh, my time is ticking. I only have two-and-a-half years at this school whereas I would have loved to have four." So sometimes it's easy to get down on yourself or have that self-doubt about, "I don't have a lot of time and so I really do feel like I'm doing the right things and then I'm on the right track because my time is more limited."

Sara

Sara was a twenty-two-year-old, fourth year student studying international affairs, who identified as a white, Caucasian female. Sara was raised northeast of Atlanta in the Lawrenceville, Georgia area. She first matriculated in Ohio Wesleyan University located in Delaware, Ohio. She swam growing up competitively, and then she decided to pursue

a swimming career, and so that is why she enrolled there. Also, her grandfather went to Ohio Wesleyan, so that was a legacy connection for her and another reason for her to continue to the family tradition.

It was challenging for Sara leaving her family. Ohio Wesleyan was nine hours from home, and she desperately missed her family. Destiny said:

> I got homesick a lot, so that was probably one of the biggest factors in transferring to a different University close to home. And then another reason was I just, I really didn't enjoy my time there. I feel like I didn't really get... I guess I did get a freshman experience, it just was... I just... I don't know, I just wasn't super happy there. And honestly, I didn't know if that was a big enough reason to transfer until I came to [SCHOOL NAME] and realized that I am so happy here, I love [SCHOOL NAME], so I definitely realized that is absolutely a relevant factor into why I transferred.

Sara transferred to the University after just one year. She struggled repeating the "whole freshman experience" with having to making friends to make a friend group. It was a big adjustment for her. Fortunately, she was able to bond with her roommates. Sara said it was kind of nerve-racking not knowing anybody, and that the academics were a big adjustment due to the increased rigor and larger classes. Sara stated:

> Coming to [SCHOOL NAME], I think one thing that I definitely figured out is how important it can be to be independent. So when I went to Ohio Wesleyan, I obviously... That was kind of thrown on me because I was so far from home, I was like on my own and I had to do everything on my own, so I think I didn't really... I definitely adjusted to being more independent, but it was kind of not

> necessarily a learning processes, it was hit all at once kind of thing. But adjusting to [SCHOOL NAME] I think one thing that I... One piece of advice I would have given myself is to make sure that I continue with the independence because I definitely went home a lot more when I transferred, because it's only 45 minutes from home. So I definitely went home every other weekend, and so I would say I not necessarily lost that skill, but definitely, really... So it was a lot easier to be dependent on parents when you're so close by, so that's probably one factor I would say.

Sara said that she would have advised herself to participate in the student-driven, eMentoring program, because she now knows how helpful it would have been to find someone else who was a transfer student. She said, "They would have an enormous amount of advice to give that would have really benefited me back then. And then again, making connections is always good." Connections create a sense of belonging and help students become aware of resources that can help them reach their fullest potential.

Sara wants to pursue a career in politics and her dream goal is to serve as the President of the United States of America. The 2016 election as sparking moment for her to "hop in and get involved." She was interning in a congressional office in Washington, D.C. when the interview took place. Sara had one mentor in the student-driven, eMentoring program; Sara stated, "I'm doing the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program again for a second time, but I'm keeping the same mentor because I love her." Sara had to connect with a mentor due to her participation in the Washington Semester Program. Sara said, "I'm really glad that that was one of the mandated things that we had to do, because it just narrowed in on how specific my experience is to how theirs is." She searched for

an alumni mentor who had experience in a congressional office, because she was hoping to secure an internship in a congressional office.

Willow

Willow was a twenty-two-year-old, fourth year student studying economics, who identified as a white female. She was born in Karaganda, Kazakhstan and grew up in Clarksville, Georgia. Willow was adopted. She is hoping to go into Economic Development. Her long-term goal is to work for Georgia Power like her father to serve communities across the state of Georgia.

Willow transferred during the summer of her junior year to the University of Georgia. She stated:

> My summer experience it was, you know, more calm, less people, so I was able to just get my feet in and get used to the teaching style. And it was just... It was smaller. It was what I was used to, having smaller classes and everything. And then we fall hit, I was just like, "Oh my goodness, there's so many people here." I was stunned by the amount of people, and it was overwhelming, definitely just because at my former college, I was able to just get by with not really having to study. So I finally had to study and, okay, figure out, "How should I go about it?" And so that was a little hard to do, but overall, I don't have any regrets on transferring.

Willow had three alumni mentors in the student-driven, eMentoring program. She matriculated into Piedmont College, which was close to her hometown of Clarksville, Georgia. Willow enrolled in Piedmont to go into athletic training, and she thought about transferring to [SCHOOL NAME] to go into physical education. However, Willow took a class her freshman year, and it was about how to build a healthy community. They talked

about the business aspect, and it was more like health-related, and then she fell in love with it. Then, she started talking to her dad more about it, and she was like, "Oh, I actually liked Economic Development, community and Economic Development." Then, Willow took an unpaid internship that year with the city right next to the college, where she got to experience just how they operate and their community engagement, community development stuff.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES

Each research participant had a unique story to share regarding their experience as a transfer student and a protégé in the student-driven, eMentoring program. Six themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. Table 2 provides a list of questions that informed each theme.

Table 2

Themes and Interview Questions

Theme	Interview Question
Transfer Shock	Tell me about your experience transferring into the University.
No Previous Mentors	Have you previously had any mentors in your corner prior to participating in this student-driven, eMentoring program?
Career Confidence	Tell me what you gained from the eMentoring experience or what has your mentor done to help you develop personally and/or professionally.
Appreciation for Mentorship	Reflecting on your experiences with your mentor, what changes did you notice about your thoughts or actions regarding your academic, personal, and professional concerns now that your mentoring relationship has formally concluded in the platform?
Sense of Generativity	How has your mentoring experience impacted your generativity? What changes, if any, in your generativity do you associate with your mentoring experience?

Engaged Alumni	What do you think your involvement with the university and/or the mentorship program will look like in the future?

Transfer Shock

All the students experienced some degree of a "transfer shock" from transferring from their original institution to the University of Georgia. Willow was stunned and overwhelmed by the sheer number of people and figuring out the best way to study. Then, Willow stated,

> Transfer students are kind of put in the back of the line… I just felt like it took a little while for me to start my orientation from when I got accepted, but I guess that's how larger colleges do it in the transfer process. It was just having to get used to that.

Also, Willow said that she was intimidated with just feeling like a number and intimidated to ask for help. She recommended that the University provide a Transfer student e-module course that had evergreen content that students could access at their convenience versus an optional transfer student credit-bearing course.

Wilder stated that he struggled during his first year with trying to get adjusted to the larger classrooms and the rigor at the University, especially his major courses. He believes the University should do more for the transfer student population since they are a large constituency base. He recommended that the University start a transfer student mentor program and transfer ambassador program; the University launched a transfer student peer-to-peer mentor program and transfer ambassador program in 2020.

Therefore, the University is making progress for the transfer students coming behind Wilder. Also, Wilder expressed frustration with being “penalized” for being a transfer student when it came to registering for courses later than the native students at the University:

> I think the transfer student orientation is very surface level. I think it's very... I think it's literally the minimum amount of stuff you need to know. I feel like they sit you in the place, they show you the video, "Here's Georgia, blah, blah, blah." And then they have the... You go into split-up groups. Then you have these over-exuberant people talking about how Georgia is amazing, and you're just like, "Whatever. Okay. Let me see my academic advisor." You take a tour around campus, and then you go to your academic advisor. And they plop you in a seat, and they're like, "Okay, you've got to take this, this, this, this, and this, but you can't choose your professor because you're a transfer, so you registered last, so you're stuck with this." So it's kind of like... Because I got a really bad accounting professor. She doesn't work here anymore, but I didn't know because I didn't know. I didn't know that this teacher was how she was because my advisor had been like, "Yeah, by the way, she's really tough, but I think you'll be okay. And I was like, "Okay." And then what was crazy was at the end of the semester, I talked to my... Because I was doing bad in the class, and I talked to my advisor and she was like, "Yeah, we have a lot of transfer students that don't do very well in this class, and they have these problems." And I was like, "So how does that help me at all?" That's kind of like... It's kind of like saying, "Well, you could always... " She was always like, "Well, you could take it, or you could drop it."

> And I was like, "Well, that would have been nice to know back in August when I was at orientation."

The remaining participants also noted that they had issues with developing a sense of community at the University as a transfer student, and that the orientation experience could have been improved to help them ease the transition into the University. Abby was homesick upon transferring into the University and went home every other weekend. Nancy said, "I just feel like transferring in…I didn't find my group despite trying many things." Maple stated:

> So for transfer students, I think the orientation is really lacking, and it's just a short experience where you pop in, you get a name tag, you go to advisement and you leave. But I was lost on campus, and I didn't make any connections with students while I was there, but because I'm happy to talk to people. Course registration for transfer students isn't great. I remember I was just about to cry not being able to get into chemistry when I thought I had to take chemistry. Yeah, most of the classes are gone because you're kind of the last to register.

Destiny felt like she was always having to compete at a much higher level versus the native students. She stated:

> When you're a transfer student, you don't have the same start, that same even playing field at the start as those who come in as a freshman. Especially because I started spring semester of sophomore year, I felt like, "Oh my gosh, my time is ticking. I only have two-and-a-half years at this school whereas I would have loved to have four.

No Previous Mentors

Every participant informed me that they did not have a mentor in their corner prior that was guiding and supporting them in their pursuit of a career pathway prior to participating in this student-driven, eMentoring program. They all desired an experienced [SCHOOL NAME] alumni professional who they could connect with to learn more about their future career. Each participant indicated that the primary factor they included their mentor search was the mentor's industry to provide them with more career clarity and to equip them with career connections in that field. Willow stated, "I was able to find people immediately that were in the professional realm that I wanted to get to know and make connections with." Wilder was a first-generation student; his dad was a construction worker and did not have an appreciation for postsecondary education.

Destiny expressed that she was eager to join the eMentoring program due to a friend informing her that they had connected with a mentor at a "big company." Destiny stated:

> So I had a friend that said, "I just connected with mentor, and they helped me navigate what I wanted to do after college and even specifically what he does at his company and how he can help me if I ever was interested in his company. I was like, "Wow, that's really useful. I didn't know that existed." So within a week, I signed up for the mentor program and attended orientation.

I could tell that Destiny was primarily motivated to engage in the student-driven, eMentoring program due to expecting to receive some benefits that would help her personally and professionally, which aligns with the social exchange theory.

Sara mentioned to me that she has had zero professional experience, and that all

of her past work experience was working at the on-campus gym. She informed me that she did not have any connections or mentors in her corner.

Maple pondered for a moment after hearing this question. She mentioned That she had never had a mentor in her life that helped her academically or professionally. She stated, "mentorship is extremely difficult and not very many people can do it well. I've had the best experience with mentorship through this [eMentoring program' name]."

Career Confidence

The transfer students expressed that they achieved a new sense of confidence; I could see and feel it during our virtual interviews. Their body language, facial reactions, and tone spoke more than the words that came out of their mouth; I listen more with my eyes than my ears. Maple stated, "I was on a journey of figuring out what I do wanted to do since I came to Georgia dietetics…I was on this frantic journey like, 'What do I do?'" Maple's mentors were able to equip her with many connections, a job shadowing opportunity, and secured her an internship in summer 2019. She is more confident knowing that there are [SCHOOL NAME] alumni willing to support her and her peers. They played a pivotal role in influencing her decision to change her major and future vocation; she said they were a "a little signpost along my trail." Maple stated:

Most beneficial was just reaching out and connecting me with other people who they're like, help me where they may be, kind of just because it wasn't what they were doing. So connecting me with other folks was the most beneficial, it was just inspiring me as a human, they're great people, and both carry themselves with a lot of kindness and

integrity. And then, you change your expression, it showed me the value of intentionality in relationships. And how loved you can make someone feel by little, small things.

Although Nancy didn't really appreciate her mentor at the beginning of their relationship, she finally started taking it seriously when her mentor had a call with her:

> She was like…we have to give get practicums and internships and all this stuff, and move around for Child Life, it's very common to have to move. So she was like, "So what are you going to do with that? How are you going to do that?" Where do you want to go? When are you going to apply? And I was like, "Oh wait, I've never thought about that." So I was talking to her like a month ago, and I was like, "Would you have thought when we talked in December that I would be here where I am right now?" And she was like, "No, there's no way." Because she asked me those questions and I was like, "What? I have no plans." So she really just gave me the kick that I needed to pursue everything that I want.

Nancy's mentor helped her by using reflection questions to help Nancy begin to think with the end in mind. Then, she was able to maximize her time at the University to be in the best position to secure a Child Life Specialist role upon graduation. Also, Nancy stated:

> If she had not been my mentor, I would still be just in this mindset of like "Oh yeah, let's take classes in Athens. Let's do... " Actually, I probably wouldn't even be there, I'd probably be floundering and frustrated and out of control because Corona has taken over and I would have no idea what to do. I think. I don't know, I mean that makes me sound so non-resilient, but I don't know. She just... I think she helped me come to the realization that I would have gotten to on my own a lot sooner, so that

I could take the necessary steps to get there. In December was when she kind of alerted me like, "Oh, you should probably think about getting a practicum." That is something that I need and that's what I needed. I would not have applied to this practicum that I've applied to this fall unless she had put that on my radar. And then, after COVID hit, when I was frustrated with having nothing to do, she helped me refine my resume to make it very professional. I think because I interact with her, and I'm like, "Oh, she cares about what I have to say," that because of that, I can have the confidence to talk to other people, like other specialists in the field and then ask questions and try to network with them and just be confident in my abilities in that. I just think I've gained a sense of confidence in my school work and in being a Child Life student and in being an intern and things like that, I just think I'm so much more confident with the skill set and knowledge that I have, and she was able to reinforce that. She's given me the confidence to be the Child Life Specialist that I know I can be. She's a person that I go to when I have questions, which I do all the time. And I send her an email and she answers me. She's just been... I really don't know what I would have done, what I'd be doing right now, if it weren't for her. She's been an integral part of my journey.

Willow smiled with great excitement and her body language told me that she was engaged in our conversation. It was extremely apparent that she benefitted mostly from this eMentoring experience from receiving a deep-rooted sense of confidence that will serve her throughout her career. She stated:

I feel like the confidence. I've mentioned that earlier, just having that confidence, having those relationships and being able to connect with them. I'm able to tell

them about my internship experience from the summer, and just whenever I catch up with them, I'm just like, "Oh, hey, how's it going?" Just, I'm able to have talking points with them, and I'm able to connect with other people who know them, and it's just, it's made it easier where I'm just... They've given me really good advice, and I know I can still go back and ask them for advice, or, "Hey, check out this article," or, "What do you think about this article?" Stuff like that. So it's good to have different viewpoints, because it's good to have that. . With the confidence before, it was more of with interpersonal skills. I feel like I would have not been even just... If I'm at a conference or an engagement, just going up to people and talking to them or introducing myself, I was able to learn how to go about it and some talking notes on what should you ask them? Like, "Oh, how did you get started with Economic Development?"

Sara said, "My life is exponentially better than with this program, because I just learned so much from her, and honestly, even though it's just one person, I know that she's going to be such a strong connection."

Wilder articulated that his resilience was invaluable as he was navigating the university as a transfer student by himself. However, I could tell by his facial emotions that he was disappointed to not have the same resources when he initially transferred into the institution. It was almost as if he was pondering where his life may be at the moment if he would have had a mentor at the crucial point in his collegiate experience. He stated:

> But I do wish that when I was going through that problem, that I had what I have now in terms of an alumni to talk to that went through what I went through, because I can't tell you how many times I've talked to my alumni. But I have my

alumni mentor right now, and me and him were just talking about how difficult the job process is, how to do well in an interview, and I was telling him about how hard it was for me and just having somebody that went through the same thing, but made it. It just made me feel like that's normal, because I feel like a lot of kids, they'll struggle through everything and they won't... They'll feel bad about themselves because they're like, "Well, I see these other kids getting this job, getting these grades, why am I not doing it right?" But it's not easy. So I think having that extra safety net of somebody to relate... Having someone to relate to your experiences impacts a lot of people more than I think people think.

Wilder gained a tremendous amount of personal and professional insight for his career listening to his mentors' stories. He was able to get insider knowledge about the organizations culture, which is invaluable. He stated:

Every mentor I have, I ask them about their lives, so I'm like, "Hey, what's it like working for Truist, what's it like working for Protiviti? How's work?" And then when COVID hit, it was like, "Hey, how are you guys working from home with COVID? How is that in the professional... I know how it's impacted me for school, how's that impacting you in the workplace?" I would ask them too, "How would you interact with your co-workers? How does that look? What about your superiors, your higher-ups?" them about just their environment and what the culture's like, so that I could get an idea of what I was sticking my feet into when I would be doing stuff.

Also, Wilder has benefitted from the transparency from his mentors providing him

candid information regarding his desired career occupation. He was able to gain firsthand knowledge of the roles and responsibilities in industry, which is hard to gain within the classroom environment. Wilder was able to tangibly touch his career, which bridges the gap between higher education and industry. He stated:

> I'll be like, "I want to do consulting!" He's like, "Do you know what consulting is? Do you know what you'll be doing in consulting?" And I'd be like, "Well, here's what I think I'd be doing," and then he's like, "Okay, this is what you actually do." [chuckle] So yeah, he's a funny guy, so he would just like... He would bring in and at first he would say, "Here's what you think you know, then here's how it is," so that's kind of how I would explore my professional goals with said person.

Moreover, Wilder was excited to learn about the hidden curriculum within higher education to be successful in networking with professionals and how to successfully conduct an interview. Also, I could tell by the tone of his voice that he was proud of who he had become through the eMentoring program, especially with the newfound confidence and professionalism. He stated:

> I'd say a sense of professionalism, they showed me how to respond properly to an email from a corporate person, how to talk, how to conduct the STAR method for interview, how to... The first girl, she really taught me in getting into these graduate schools or getting into programs, you need to take that extra step in contacting the recruiters, contacting the department heads, shooting them an email, setting up a Zoom call, being more... Like how... They taught me not to be afraid to reach out, it's like the biggest thing. They're like, "Don't be afraid to reach out to these higher-up people that make these decisions, that if anything,

that helps your case, but I'm going to show you how to talk to them to correct way. . Terry College of Business, I should be getting... People should be knocking on my door for this job." [chuckle] Yeah, and the real world doesn't work like that. So they just helped me, I should say before, I didn't know... But I didn't know, like I didn't know that. So then they told me, they were like, "Hey, this is what you got to do, you got to get in front of these people one way or another." So they helped me progress, and now I can... I'll email recruiters, I know how to use LinkedIn, I know how to talk to people, send messages, send emails, just talk to the person that can get me to the right person for the job, so I feel like they alleviated... And this goes back to the beginning, they alleviated that fear of having to talk to those people, which is what I feel like they helped me with most.

I could sense Wilder's confidence when he stated, "Oh yeah, I feel like I... We had the virtual career fair, I know what questions to ask, I'm not afraid, I'm not scared. I just say, "Hey, here's my name, here's what I do, here's what I got to ask." That was not me during my time in undergraduate education; I didn't have the courage to attend the large career fairs. It was too daunting of an experience of me. It makes me wonder where I would be right now if I would had mentors during my undergraduate and graduate education experience.

Destiny now knows that success is possible in her field and career; she was able to gain a greater amount of clarity on her career pathways. You could tell that Destiny had a sense of peace about her. She stated:

I think it's given me the opportunity to see that success is possible in my field and my major. And it's shown me the different options I have. And my life has become more,

> I would say, clear and clarified. I've gained a lot of clarity on what direction I want to go in, and what's important to me and what I need to prioritize based on these connections and these women that have mentored me. They've definitely instilled in me that same kind of go-getter attitude. And just knowing that anything that I do, I can do anything I set my mind to, I know it sounds corny, but that's something that all of them have instilled in me. And I think just having that reassurance from people is life-changing. I mean, to know that there's people that do believe in you and do think you're capable, and they themselves have found that for them and saying that they can see that in me or they know that if I take their advice or if I continue to stay on my path that I can end up like someone in their shoes and then hopefully continue, maybe even mentor someone when I'm older and kind of pass it on, so that's been life changing for me.

Appreciation for Mentorship

Through this student-driven, eMentoring program experience, all the research participants gained an appreciation for mentorship. Each transfer student were really grateful for the institution providing this resource. Moreover, they were energized and excited when they were elaborating on the value of mentorship. For instance, Wilder stated:

> And there's so many kids that are like me that need this. Please, like, please market this to these kids. Please, whatever I can do, if I can put it on my LinkedIn, put it on whatever, like please show that to these kids, because this is such an amazing resource. So, I think that this program, I really hope that it expands to like crazy heights in the future, because I think it can help. And it's

like I feel like it's a positive. It has positive externalities because it's like, the more kids you get involved, the more they talk about it, the more recognition the university gets for giving back to its students, like I feel like there is nothing wrong with that.

Also, Destiny learned that mentors don't have all of the answers to their questions. Mentors provide value with their connections. She stated:

I've definitely gained valuable connections, just having my mentors offer their help to me. Even if they can't give me the answer or they can't directly help me, they know someone who can. So that definitely helps professionally in terms of looking for a job or looking for opportunities, or even just getting advice or reference. Having three different people that are in the professional world already that have my name and know me as a person and are able to refer me to someone or guide me and put me in the right direction professionally, that's just so huge to already have those connections as the student, so that when I do get out into that world, that's pretty much available for me, readily available. So professionally, that's been huge for me.

Maple got emotional when she started talking about her newfound appreciation for mentorship; she stated:

Before participating, like we mentioned before, you asked like, "Have you had a mentor before?" I was like, "Not really." And so now I value mentorship more. And I want to learn to be a better mentor, because I don't feel like I know how to mentor, I'm not sure if there's a checklist or a how-to-do, or something. I'm not sure exactly what makes a mentor. I gained more of an affinity for mentorship and

value it more. I think it's great to just know I'm supported by alumni, it's great to see the commitment of alumni, just the fact that they're willing to show up to mentor students is incredible. So even if I did ever participate in the program, it just speaks to the University of Georgia and to the people here that they're awesome and committed, and successful in whatever terms that success need to be in, or the situation. So, I definitely enjoyed and gained from the experience.

Wilder was very surprised their availability and willingness to lend a helping hand to him. He stated:

> Their availability honestly surprising to me because they're professionals and they have their own stuff going on. But I was very surprised by how, like every time they'd always be like, "Don't be afraid to call me, don't be afraid to send me an email." It could be the dumbest thing. It could be like, what are you doing today? It was always like, "Just send me an email. Just call me, here's my phone number, here you go. I'll put in a good word for you.

Sense of Generativity

All the participants were unaware of the term of generativity; however, it was clear that they gained a sense of generativity from seeing the role modeling from their mentors. Through this experience, they have discovered a passion for investing in the next generation. Sara stated:

> So I think just because of how much I've enjoyed this mentorship program and how happy I am with my mentor, like I want do this. What my mentor has done for me, I want to do for someone else. I want to be a connection for someone else. So after graduation, I definitely want to stay connected, be a mentor and help someone that's

in my shoes and really expand their knowledge of what they want to do…I want to be able to explain and be like, "Look, you can do this. You're just as capable as anyone else, and we need more people like... Whoever it is." So yeah, I think that'd be... I definitely want to stay connected with this program and [SCHOOL NAME].

Wilder expressed his sentiment for generativity without me prompting him with the generativity interview question. When I prompted Wilder with this question, “Tell me how this eMentoring experience has impacted you in your trajectory thus far,” he stated:

I would say... You know what's crazy about it? It made me want to help other people, it made me say... It made me want to give back, it was like if this program's around and I've got free time or I've got time to do this, it would make me want to say, "Hey, I want to give it back to the university's community. I want to give back to the kid who was in my shoes and needed just that extra little push and extra little help." It made me want to give back and it made me love the university more because it's like... I don't know a lot of school... A lot of my friends that go to other out-of-state schools, I don't know that they have as robust of a program. And you know what was crazy to me? That they were saying, "This is a new program and it's just kicking off," I was surprised because thinking about it, I felt like this should be a normal thing, an alumni-mentor program that the university sets up. I feel like that should be something that every university has to support students.

Moreover, Wilder continued saying:

My alumni mentor showed me that, so I was like, if he or she is in the professional space, and they can do that for me, why can I not do that for my peers? So it made me

want to give back because I received something from someone, so it made me want to help other people**.**

When Wilder was asked whether the experienced played a role in him having a greater sense of generativity, he stated:

> I would say just the idea of giving back and supporting the next generation. I feel like now, with social media, with everything, there's only hate. There's just so much hate in the world right now. And just having this program and being able to help, just saying like, for once, not being like, "What can you give me?" More, "What can we give you?", is what I would say would progress the generativity idea. And for me as a person, it would really show me that there are people that want to help, and the corporate world is not just like, it's this cut-throat, just like horrible place. It's like there are people that want to help you and want to reach out and will... I hope that that becomes a bigger part of the university. And just the next generation of students, I hope that this program, after it goes through a couple of cycles, it's like, "This needs to be like... " This doesn't need to be just your career advisor…this needs to be front and center. Georgia needs to promote this so that more and more students can find out about it.

Nancy said:

> I would like to pour into someone else and mentor them through this journey. Actually, I guess I am currently mentoring my peers. I love mentoring the little, sophomore Child Life students. I have a big heart for that. But the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program has kind of shown me, like me having someone to guide me through the dark has been so helpful. I think everyone needs someone just a

little bit older, like one step ahead of them, to just guide them through the dark tunnel.

Destiny stated:

> I think it's increased that, if anything, because now I feel that I want to do the same for people in my shoes because I've seen how much it's helped me. So I would be more than ecstatic to be able to do this for someone else and kind of pour into them, and even carry on that same advice that my mentors have given me. I'm sure it'll change by the time I become a mentor and I have a mentee, but just like the evolving landscape of what I am majoring in, hearing about it from them, it inspires me to want to do that for others. And by the time I get into my career, I'm sure there'll be new developments that I will be eager to share with those who are about to enter the field. It's just one of those things where they're doing it for me, they're giving their time and their wisdom, and they don't have to do that. So I feel like, if anything, it would almost be a slap in the face if I were not do that for someone else. I would love to be able to do what they've done for me for the next generation or for someone that is in my shoes while I'm in my mentor shoes.

Willow believes it is critical to pay it forward to the next generation; she stated passionately:

> I definitely think it's important. I think it's really important to give the knowledge and give the experiences that you've had to someone else younger so that they kind of know the different ways that people have gone about it. I was listening to an Economic Development podcast, and they were talking about the different. And it's

just like, same as storytelling that they did in the past with the story going down generation to generation, just being able to give the knowledge and bringing it down to each generation, I think it's super important. And I feel like with Economic Development, especially, the whole goal is to build communities and places for the future. You're wanting to create these jobs and you're wanting to have a good workforce, and it's all about the next generation, in my opinion. So just understanding it from that standpoint and just making it a place where you want to live and your kids and grandkids to live, I think it's really important. And just gaining the experience that I've heard from other people older, I think it's important for older people to want to build leaders into the younger generation.

Engaged Alumni

Another theme that emerged is that all the participants indicated that they will be an engaged alumnus upon graduating from the University of Georgia. The fact that they felt supported by the University inspired them to want to be engaged to invest in the next generation of Bulldogs (University's mascot). This program helped strengthen the students' affinity toward the University of Georgia and will hopefully strengthen the Bulldog family. Moreover, it may play a factor in leading these students and many others to be more philanthropically involved with the University by making financial donations to the University.

Wilder stated:

> If the University of Georgia sent me an email or was like, "Do you want to get involved with the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program?" My answer would probably be 100% yes, because I know that I wouldn't be as advanced and as

> forward as I am now without the program. So it would definitely make... It would make me as a person, almost feel obligated to give back because of what I received.

Willow enthusiastically said:

> I would most definitely do it just to give someone else a different viewpoint and do what was given to me. I would definitely love to give back to [SCHOOL NAME] just because I love the college and the school and everything, and I feel like [SCHOOL NAME] does a great job, especially Terry with their alumni and keeping them intact and taking our money.

Nancy stated:

> I think I will hop right back into the [SCHOOL NAME] pool right when I graduate and say, "Sign me up, I'm a certified Child Life specialist now, I would like to pour into someone else and mentor them through this journey."

Summary

In this chapter, I shared how six transfer students made meaning of their experience participating as a protégé in a student driven, eMentoring program at a public Research-1 university. Their stories were shared through individual narratives, themes, and personal perceptions. The narratives were driven by the research participants' responses from the semi-structured interview instrument. It is my hope that the readers are able to place themselves in the students' shoes to view the mentorship experience from the participants' lens. The overarching themes are important to connect readers to the commonalities that were most prominent across the participants.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of transfer student protégés in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public, research university. The six research participants were transfer students at a public, research university in the southeastern United States, completed a 16-week mentorship with an alumni mentor, and met with their mentor at a minimum of four times during their mentorship. Findings reflect the stories of six students that had a transformational learning experience from this experience. For these students, opportunity to discover their career path and to cultivate meaningful connections with alumni was a strong motivational factor for them to participate in the eMentoring program. Based on previous findings that reveal how challenging it is for transfer students (Budge, 2006; Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Chopin et al., 2012; Herrera & Jain, 2013; Tinto, 1975), it is remarkable that these transfer students were resilient in their pursuit of a postsecondary degree. In studying the experiences of these transfer student protégés, I found that their mentors were critical in helping them ease the transfer shock, gain career clarity, equip them with social capital, and inspire them to invest in the next generation of students.

Summary of Findings

Data analysis revealed several meaningful findings and themes. Findings are the recurring patterns or themes supported by the data from which they were derived (Merriam, 2009). First, all participants experienced some kind of "transfer shock" when they enrolled in the University of Georgia. Transfer students face numerous hurdles at the receiving institution, including insufficient academic preparation (Dowd et al., 2008; Melguizo et al., 2011); limited access to information about how to navigate the new institution (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Townsend & Wilson, 2006); and problems making connections with students and faculty members. Moreover, some transfer students see an initial decline in GPA upon transferring (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010), which has been described as a more general manifestation of the transfer shock experienced in moving from one institutional culture to another (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). The transfer students may experience marginalization and a struggle to feel a sense of mattering to faculty and staff members at the receiving institution (Schlossberg, 1989). This may not be shocking considering that faculty members, administrators, and other staff members sometimes lack the appropriate awareness of the distinctive needs and experiences of transfer students (Tobolowsky & Cox 2012). More understanding is needed about the factors that hinder or support successful transfer into 4-year institutions (Townsend & Wilson, 2009) and that more research is needed on the experiences of students after they transfer into the receiving institutions (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). This research study will hopefully fill in gaps within the body of knowledge around the experiences after they transfer into a public, Research-1 institution. Universities should consider paying closer attention to the transfer student experience and potentially have a transfer student

advisory group to find ways to continually improve the systems and structures to develop a more transfer receptive culture.

Secondly, another key finding that these students never had a mentor in their corner that were helping them to think with the end in mind, specifically with their desired career pathway. They were motivated to participate in this student-driven, eMentoring program since it was student-driven; they had complete autonomy in requesting their own mentor based on their unique identity and interests. Moreover, they were eager to connect with accomplished, experienced [SCHOOL NAME] alumni who had previously been in their shoes.

Another finding of interest was that each participant's motivation for participating in the eMentoring program aligned with the social exchange theory (Thomas & Ensher, 2013). Social exchange theory is the theory that people form relationships and interact with each other to achieve their own goals (Zhao & Kemp, 2013). The literature proved to be accurate since the students remained committed to their mentoring relationship; none of the students disengaged with their mentor (Eby, 2007; Eby et al., 2004; Ensher et al., 2003; Urgin et al., 2008). The mentoring participants could have withdrawn their mentoring relationship within the mentorship platform if they became unsatisfied with their mentor at any point.

The fourth finding was that students benefitted from the eMentoring experience via receiving career development and psychosocial support. Kram (1983) proposed a conceptual model identifying both career development and psychosocial functions of mentoring. Career development functions are aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance career advancement, such as sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching,

protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions are aspects of the mentoring relationship that primarily enhance sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a role, such as role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Kram, 1983). Mentoring is critical for individuals, particularly within the early stages of their career development (Baker et al., 2003).

Another finding was that this study supports the use of the mentoring ecosystem theory (Lunsford, 2016) in designing and guiding one's mentoring program. It is rather easy to solely focus on the people in the mentoring relationship: the protégé and mentor. However, people interact in environments that influence the quality and type of their interactions (Lunsford, 2016). There are three distinct components that influence mentoring: (a) protégés, (b) mentors, and (c) organizational setting. Each element warrants close attention for mentoring program managers that are starting, supporting, and/or sustaining a program. All research participants indicated that the mentee orientation, mentoring resources, and optional structured curriculum for mentoring pairs helped them be organized and driven in their mentoring relationship. Hopefully, this played a role in them being an effective mentee and maximizing their mentoring relationship. However, there was not consensus among the participants that each mentoring relationship must necessarily align on personality, values, beliefs, etc. to have an effective mentoring relationship. Most of the participants expressed that they really valued the professional nature of their mentoring relationship. A couple of students even mentioned that they intentionally did not approach the personal aspects of their relationship; they wanted to interact in a professional capacity.

The next finding is that this eMentoring experience played a role in helping the transfer students gain a greater sense of generativity. This finding aligned with the several pieces of empirical research which spoke about the intersection of generativity and mentoring (Azarow et al., 2003; Hastings et al., 2015). Moreover, it was clear that the transfer students' newfound sense of generativity correlated with an increased desire of social responsibility (Rossi, 2001). Generativity is vital to the discussion of social responsibility, especially in adolescents in higher education. The concept of generativity is neither included in the social exchange theory nor mentoring ecosystem theory. Hopefully, there are many more students that are gaining a sense of generativity throughout the eMentoring program. Gallo and Cownie (2019) noted that a qualitative study considering the protégé perceptions of impact of the alumni mentorship program would yield insight into why and in what ways a program offers such a bridge to philanthropic thinking. Therefore, it is nice to see that this qualitative study provides a gap in the body of knowledge.

Another finding from this research study is that all the transfer students are looking forward to the moment of becoming alumni of the University. Throughout the eMentoring experience, they gained a new level of appreciation for alumni who take time out of their busy schedule to pay it forward. Due to seeing the role modeling that the alumni showcased, they are eager to serve as an alumni mentor to invest in the next generation of Bulldogs (School mascot) upon graduation. Their desire to give back will result in countless positive ripple effects for the University as it strengthens the students' affinity toward the University. For example, graduates who were emotionally supported during college -- who had a mentor who encouraged their hopes and dreams and

professors who cared about them as people and made them excited about learning -- are three times as likely to have thriving wellbeing after college and six times as likely to be attached to their alma mater (Gallup, 2021). Therefore, this eMentoring experience may result in the students being committed to serving the University throughout their lifetime.

Practice Recommendations

This study's results indicate that interacting with supportive institutional agents facilitates the transfer process, reflecting the importance of meaningful human interactions or positive solicitude (Heidegger, 1927/62). While the influence of administrators has typically been overlooked in the literature (Hurtado et al., 2012) and while we did not anticipate finding that administrators could serve in this role, our study is among the first to suggest that, in addition to faculty members, administrators can serve as institutional agents and foster a more supportive and responsive campus climate. Faculty members and administrators often assume that transfer students have the same needs as students who began at the institution, but research indicates that transfer students perceive their own needs as being quite different from those of native students, particularly with respect to the emphasis on academic engagement and goal orientation and a de-emphasis on purely social engagement (Tobolowsky & Cox 2012; Townsend & Wilson, 2009).

University-Wide Mentorship Program

One major issue with college mentoring programs is that there is rarely one overarching program that is accessible to all students. Many colleges/schools within the institution, academic departments, career centers, and/or student organizations offer their own tailored mentoring programs targeting specific student populations. Often, these

programs operate in silos, independent of each other. Higher education expert Ryan Craig said that at most universities, the five most important pillars for students—Admissions (financial aid), Academics, Student Affairs, Career Services, and Alumni Relations—"feed information downward toward students … [and] have minimal interaction with one another," despite overlap in potential services and knowledge sharing opportunities. Ultimately, this lack of departmental cross-collaboration weakens their collective efforts to deliver the greatest impact for the greatest number of students (Craig, 2017, p. 1). It is extremely important to have buy-in from upper administration; it signals that that mentoring is an institutional priority and subsequently creates buy-in from the various campus partners across campus. Therefore, I recommend that other postsecondary education institutions consider designing and launching one student-alumni mentor program that the entire campus can support.

Also, another recommendation is for other institutions to design their mentoring programs to be student-driven and to develop an optional curriculum/framework to guide them along the journey. The student driven design feature ensures that students have complete autonomy and choice in requesting their mentor based on their unique identity and interests. After an exhaustive search in the literature, I was unable to find another student-driven mentoring or eMentoring program. The eMentoring program where the research study was conducted is 100% student-driven; the program administrators do not match the students and mentors. This is all too often the case in higher education; administrators match participants based on subjective criteria. Moreover, it is important for mentoring program managers to ensure that they methodically design an empirical based mentoring curriculum/framework for the mentoring participants. All too often

mentoring participants are connected by a program manager without any resources to guide them throughout their mentorship journey. Both recommendations align with the formal mentoring theory, which suggests that you should give the protégés choice in the mentoring relationship connection process (Dubois et al., 2011; Giscombe, 2007; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000; Wanberg et al., 2003).

Mentoring Community of Practice

Another recommendation would be for program managers of mentoring programs in higher education to consider launching a community of practice focused on mentorship. Communities of practice are "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). There are three core characteristics that are crucial within each community of practice: (a) the domain - shared interest and competence in each domain, (b) the community - community of individuals willing to help one another, and (c) the practice – practitioners who develop resources to improve practice. Based on research and data acquired in the academic arena, the most effective practice to achieve successful mentoring in the higher education setting is to create a mentoring culture across the university at all levels (Doles, 2008; Lindenberger, 2006). The public, research university under study designed a mentoring community of practice in March 2019, consisting of an interdisciplinary group of approximately 25 stakeholders, who are mentoring practitioners and/or researchers, to elevate mentoring across the university community. Their strategic statement of purpose is to foster a culture of mentoring across campus and to ensure that every student, faculty, and staff have access to meaningful mentoring relationships. Their vision is to become a premier research university that is recognized

for high quality mentoring. This strategy will allow postsecondary institutions address the mentoring landscape from a macro perspective and then identify how mentorship aligns with the university's strategic plan. Then, they can discuss the necessary artifacts to be in place for the institution to be recognized as an institution that prioritizes and values mentoring for their students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Transfer Student Advisory Group

Higher education institutions should consider forming a diverse, advisory group of stakeholders at postsecondary institutions to look at the ways to enhance the transfer student experience at their institution. The group could conduct focus group with transfer students and constituents that serve transfer students to establish an accurate measurement of where they stand currently and to develop key performance indicators to improve the transfer student experience. The students provided numerous recommendations during their interview regarding the transfer orientation experience, cultivating a sense of community, and registering for courses. The advisory group could look providing students with access to mentoring is now a national priority, as demonstrated by the prevalence and diversity of formal mentoring programs at postsecondary institutions (Crisp et al., 2017). Through collaboration, starting with a clear understanding of best practices for supporting the academic and co-curricular needs of transfer students and by analyzing and understanding their transfer data, the University of Albany made significant strides (e.g. 2 per cent increase in first-year retention rate) to create a culture where transfer students succeed (Jacobson et al., 2016). They created an Enhancing Student Experience (ESE) Working Group consisting of stakeholders from the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness, the Office of

Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs, and University Libraries. They were able to make data driven decisions to holistically address the transfer student experience. Researching, brainstorming, conceptualizing, and enhancing programs and initiatives and actively seeking points of congruence and collaboration committed to a common goal resulted in a better understanding of the strengths of units and of individuals (Jacobson et al., 2016).

Transfer Student Ambassador Program

Postsecondary institutions should consider developing a Transfer Student Ambassador Program to provide transfer students with an experiential learning opportunity that could enrich their college student experience. Moreover, it would allow them to create a sense of community, enhance their leadership skills, provide feedback on services/programs that could benefit the next generation of transfer students, etc. The transfer students personally know the barriers and challenges to finding a sense of community, getting registered for courses, and achieving academically. The students' experience and perspective can greatly inform higher education administrators with the current pulse of transfer students on campus, the necessary programs, and the invaluable resources and services that could better serve and support the transfer students.

Embed Mentoring into the Curriculum

There has been mounting literature focusing on the importance of graduate employability within higher education, it is expected that universities will continue to leverage alumni mentoring programs as a mechanism to support students' pathways into the workforce (Clarke, 2018; Dollinger et al., 2019). Also, postsecondary institutions may want to determine programs and/or courses that would appropriate to embed mentoring

into the curriculum. This would expose students, particularly transfer students, to the value of mentorship and the mentoring programs at their institution that could help provide them with the necessary career development and psychosocial support. Faculty members at this public, research university in the southeastern United States started embedding mentoring into their curriculum in Spring 2021 and several more are starting to in summer and fall 2021. This will help institutions scale their mentoring programs to reach more students.

Student mentoring is strongly associated with employment after graduation, which is a major priority for higher education (McDonald, Erickson, Johnson, & Elder, 2007). Still, undergraduate mentoring remains an underexplored form of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Navarro, 2008) that provides a unique opportunity to bridge the student's academic experience with the professional world after graduation (D'Abate, 2010).

Policy Recommendation

Transfer Student Course Registration Policy

Postsecondary institutions may want to revisit their policy on when transfer students can enroll in their courses versus the native students. Several students expressed frustration with not being able to register until stepping foot on campus. I am not sure how this compares to when native students are eligible to register; however, there appears to be some inequity when the students are able to register for their courses.

Future Research Recommendations

Alumni Mentor Perspective

I was unable to find any empirical studies that sought to understand how alumni mentors made sense of their experience serving as a mentor. This would be an important for the mentoring body of knowledge to discover how it strengthens their relationship with and support of their postsecondary institution. There are several areas that may be interested: alumni engagement, philanthropy, corporate relations, foundation relations, etc. Dollinger et al. (2019) investigated three alumni mentoring programs at a large research-intensive university in Australia. One of their research questions looked at how their experience impacted their perceptions of the university and impact their future behavior to engage with the university. It would also to learn more about how mentors benefit from serving as a mentor. Alumni mentors benefit by building their own professional development and leadership skills (Christie & Baghurst 2017; Priest & Donley 2014).

Mentoring Program's Role in Philanthropy

After an exhaustive search, I was unable to find any empirical studies that discovered whether there was any correlation with the proliferation of mentoring programs across the world being associated with inspiring the alumni to give philanthropically to their alma mater. Leadership may be very intrigued about ways to use student-alumni mentoring programs to move the dial with their development efforts. Anecdotally, I know several institutions that are actively using their mentoring program for development efforts; however, there have not been any empirical studies published on this topic.

Volunteering is a critical aspect that is proven to eventually lead to philanthropic support. Gallo (2012) developed a framework for identifying alumni involvement over four stages (affiliation, affinity, engagement, and support); by bringing young alumni back to campus within the first three years of their graduation and involving them in a student mentoring program, these young professionals are already active in the final stage of involvement—supporting their college is already the "high altruistic" level in which alumni are giving back without concern for their own direct benefit (Gallo, 2012). An alumni mentorship program is one way to enhance alumni engagement, the affinity and connection with an alum's alma mater. The hope is that through the participation of alumni as mentors will yield better educational outcomes for students. Alumni mentors may consider other avenues to re-engage with their alma mater, which may result in monetary donations to the institution. There is a scarcity of research in this area, whether participation in student-alumni mentorship leads to identifying and creating future donors; there is an opportunity to examine the proposed causality (Gallo & Cownie, 2019). Another potential piece of philanthropy is the ability to identify prospective corporate donors, corporate partnerships, sponsorship opportunities or financial donations from individuals to the institution. Wastyn's (2009) review of the alumni relations and advancement literature aligns alumni engagement after graduation to donating to their alma mater. This is reinforced in other studies (Weets & Ronca, 2007a). Another Weerts and Ronca article (2007b) explores the link between alumni participation in their alma mater and giving, describing some supportive alumni as those 'who do it all' (p20), drawing on Volkwein et al.'s theoretical framework (1989) that examines capacity to give and volunteer along with the inclination to do so (Weerts & Ronca, 2007b &

Volkwein et al., 1989). These theoretical underpinnings could help to formulate a concerted study that examines the relationship between mentorship participation and financial giving (Gallo & Cownie, 2019). As outlined in Gannon & Maher (2012), it can be difficult to find meaningful ways to create alumni engagement. A positive interaction, such as a mentorship program, may be such a means of creating long term connection with alumni and deriving philanthropic support from them.

Transfer Students

Additional research is needed to better understand the preparation, performance and motivation of transfer students, both those who elect to remain at their transfer institutions, and those who depart (Jacobson et al., 2016). There is also a need to further explore how student-alumni eMentoring could play a role in supporting transfer students to degree completion and associated career outcomes. Also, there is a need to explore how peer-to-peer mentoring supports transfer students to see if it makes their transfer experience smoother and creates a sense of belonging for them.

eMentoring Program Research

Mentoring is occurring much more virtually, but, to date, there is insufficient empirical research on e-mentoring and its (Ensher, 2013; Ensher et al., 2003; Ensher & Murphy, 2011; Mullen, 2017). Future research might focus on understanding results related to different approaches to mentor-protégé matching and on more clearly delineating what occurs during mentoring relationships and how this affects specific groups (Lunsford et al., 2017). There is a myriad of opportunities to conduct research with mentoring participants in an eMentoring program. For instance, scholars may wish to explore the various difference associated with the various ways that the mentoring

relationships: (a) completely virtual, (b) hybrid (blend of virtual and in-person, and (c) completely in-person. There may be differences with associated with each one regarding how they made sense of their experience and their level of satisfaction from the relationship. Also, scholars could explore how a mixed-methods study to explore the ways that student and/or alumni populations are impacted by the experience. For instance, one could look at the various populations that are participating within an eMentoring program: (a) major; (b) race/ethnicity; (c) sexual orientation; (d) first generation student; (e) international student; (f) Embark student (one that has experienced foster care or homelessness; (g) student-athlete; etc. Additionally, scholars could take a macro level approach to explore how these programs are impacting institutional factors that play a role in accreditation and rankings. For example, they could see if these student-alumni mentoring programs are positively correlated with persistence, increased grade point average (GPA), and graduation.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is that is qualitative in nature; therefore, it is not generalizable. There is greater potential for biased perspectives in qualitative inquiry since the researchers are the data collection instruments (Patton, 2015). I used reflexivity, which requires researchers to reflect and discuss their own perspectives and experiences, with the research topic throughout the research process to address biases (Patton, 2015). Moreover, there are several issues with interviewing. For instance, interviews only provide information filtered through the interviewers' lens (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Moreover, interview data may be misleading and provide the perspective that the interviewee wants the researcher to hear. Also, the responses may not be articulate,

perceptive, or clear. I practiced facilitating interviews to become more confident in facilitating interviews.

Secondly, the diversity of participants was not as good as I had hoped. Therefore, this study is not representative of the students that reflect the diversity of this public, research university in the southeastern United States. There were two more historically underrepresented students that participated in this study; however, one had graduated (disqualified them from the study) and the other one's recording via Zoom did not save. Also, the student with the Zoom recording was an international student from the Bahamas; she left her entire family to pursue her studies in the United States. The student-driven, eMentoring program was critical in helping her discover her why, sense of community, and potential career pathways.

Another limitation of this study was that all the research participants were from the state of Georgia and transferred from a four-year institution. Therefore, it would be great if another study would focus on participants that moved from one state to another when they transitioned. My assumption is that it would result in a different story and experience. Also, another researcher should consider studying individuals that transfer from a 2-year institution to a 4-year institution; it may result in a different experience and story, too.

Conclusion

As students, graduates, and parents continue to question the return on investment of higher education, institutions are utilizing alumni mentorship to expand its value beyond the classroom (Gallo & Cownie, 2019). Student-alumni mentor programs are growing in popularity across the world as there is a greater emphasis on career outcomes

and graduate employability. This co-curricular, experiential learning opportunity significantly altered their trajectory of these six transfer students. Imagine a world where every college student has a constellation of mentors in their corner helping inspire them to achieve all their personal and professional goals.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM

THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFER STUDENT PROTÉGÉS IN A STUDENT-DRIVEN, E-MENTORING PROGRAM

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Investigator: Dr. In Heok Lee

Career and Information Studies

inheok@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the experiences of transfer student protégés in a student-driven, eMentoring program at a public, Research-1 university. You are being asked to be in the study, because you completed a 16-week mentorship in the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program, a student-driven eMentoring program.

Procedures and Time Commitment: If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview over the course of the fall 2020 semester. No experimental procedures will be conducted. Follow up questions may be necessary for clarification. In-person interviews are currently unavailable due to the COVID-19

pandemic. Interviews via phone or video teleconferencing will be necessary. Should COVID-19 restrictions be lifted, in-person interviews will be offered. Interviews will be audio recorded and preferably video recorded. Participation is voluntary. You may stop at any time without penalty. We estimate that it will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete the interview.

Discomforts and Risks: We do not expect that the interview questions will create any discomforts or risks on your part. You will not be required to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing. Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you can stop taking part at any point. Your decision about participation in the research will not impact their participation in the mentoring program or the services they receive from [SCHOOL NAME].

Benefits: Because minimal research has been conducted within this field, the contribution of your insight and experiences as a transfer student protégé in a student-driven eMentoring program will help advance this field of research. By doing so, future researchers, administrators, and policy makers can build upon this study to better support transfer students that follow your chosen path.

Incentive: A $25 Amazon gift card will be given to you at the completion of the study. The e-gift card will be distributed via email following their one semi-structured interview.

Confidentiality/Records: As described, this research will be conducted through video teleconferencing, offering in-person interview options should the COVID-19 restrictions be lifted. Audio and possible video recording will be the primary means of capturing a record of the interviews. This research involves transmission of data over the internet

through email, personal computer filing, and video conferencing platforms. All reasonable efforts have been and will be taken to ensure the effective use of available technology. It must be understood that confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed. Minimal risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure of information is always present. Your electronic files will be password protected and encrypted. All possible measures to keep your information confidential will be taken. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept secure. Your information will not be shared with anyone who is not connected to this research study unless required by law.

Upon completion of the interviews, anything that personally identifies you will be removed and deleted. Any audio/video or teleconference recordings will be destroyed after the study is complete. De-identified transcripts may be shared with other researchers for future studies. These will contain no personal identifiers from your transcripts.

Questions: Please feel free to ask any questions you have at this time. If you have questions at a later time, you may contact Dr. In Heok Lee at inheok@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Participant Consent: By moving forward with this interview process, you are agreeing to participation in the research project as titled and described.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Participant Background Information

- Age
- Current Year at [SCHOOL NAME]
- Current Major
- Desired Career Occupation
- Desired Industry
- Number of Mentors in the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program

Developing Rapport Questions

Objective: To develop rapport each one of my research participants.

1.1.Where are you from originally?

1.2 What factors led you to making the decision to transfer to the [SCHOOL NAME]?

1.3 Tell me about your experience transferring into to the [SCHOOL NAME]?

1.4 Probes – Have you been able to develop a sense of community?

1.4.1 Tell me about your level of engagement on campus.

1.4.1.1 Are you involved in any extracurricular activities? Student organizations?

1.5 What are the top 3 things you wish you knew when you transitioned into the [SCHOOL NAME]?

1.6 What do you hope to be doing professionally after going beyond the Arch?

Research Question 1: How do transfer students experience wanting to participate in a student driven, eMentoring program?

Objective: To understand the underlying motivations of the transfer student protégés for entering this student-driven, eMentoring program. Also, to use the social exchange theory and mentoring ecosystem theory to guide the interview questions.

1.1 Please tell me the story about how you became interested in this student driven, eMentoring program.

1.1.1 Did you previously have a mentor? Tell me about that individual and how they supported you.

1.2 How did you hear about the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program?

1.3 What was your motivation for connecting with a [SCHOOL NAME] alumni mentor in this student-driven, eMentoring program?

1.4 What factors did you consider when you were searching and requesting for an alumni mentor?

1.5 How did you and your mentor align on shared attitudes, values, and beliefs?

1.6 Did you and your mentor have similar personalities? If so, tell me about how that played a role in your mentoring relationship.

1.7 How, if any, did you do think that this relationship would help you achieve your own goals?

1.8 Tell me how you thought a mentor was going to help you in the stage of your collegiate journey?

Research Question 2: What experiences or insights do transfer students have while participating in a student-driven, eMentoring program?

Objective: To learn about the experiences and/or insights transfer students had in the program. Also, to use the social exchange theory and mentoring ecosystem theory to guide these questions. Also, I want to see if the program is helping transfer students as it pertains to the 3 student centered goals of the program.

1.1 Tell me what you gained from the eMentoring experience or what has your mentor done to help you develop personally and/or professionally.

1.1.1 If you don't feel you benefited, what was lacking for you?

1.2 Is your life better due to your participation this eMentoring program?

1.2.1 How?

1.3 How did this mentoring experience further develop your personal and professional network?

1.3 Were you able to explore your professional goals, career interests, and workplace preferences with your mentor?

1.3.1.1 If so, what activities did you engage in with your mentor to explore your professional goals, career interests, and workplace preferences?

1.3.1.2 Tell me how this impacted you and your trajectory.

1.4 How did the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program (team, platform, milestones, resources, etc.) influence your mentorship?

Research Question 3: How do transfer students reflect on their eMentoring experience?

Objective: I want to see how students make meaning out of mentoring now after having the opportunity to connect with an alumni mentor, especially if it affected their sense of generativity.

1.1 Reflecting on your experiences with your mentor, what specifically did your mentor do that was most beneficial?

1.1.1 What qualities and/or characteristics made them a mentor?

1.1.2 With what areas of concern do you wish your mentor had been more helpful?

1.2 Reflecting on your experiences with your mentor, what changes did you notice about your thoughts or actions regarding your academic, personal, and professional

concerns now that your mentoring relationship has formally concluded in the platform?

1.3 How was your experience in the program similar to or different from what you initially expected?

1.4 If you were describing the eMentoring program to a classmate, what would you tell them?

1.5 What do you think your involvement with the university and/or the mentorship program will look like in the future?

1.6 Theory of Generativity question

1.6.1 How has your mentoring experience impacted your generativity? What changes, if any, in your generativity do you associate with your mentoring experience?

1.6.1.1 Generativity is defined as "primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation."

Conclusion Question:

1.1.Do you have any suggestions for improving the [SCHOOL NAME] Mentor Program?

Thank You Note

1.1 I am extremely grateful for you and your willingness to participate in this research study. Best wishes on all your future endeavors. Don't hesitate to let me know how I can be a resource for you.

APPENDIX C

TIMELINE AND LOGISTICS

Timeline and Logistics

Goal	**Date**	**Contact Person**	**Location**
Submit IRB application for approval	August 2020	[SCHOOL NAME]	Human Subjects Office
Obtain approval from IRB	September 2020	Jeremy Daniel & Dr. In Heok Lee	[SCHOOL NAME]
Invite prospective transfer student protégés to participate	October 2020	Jeremy Daniel	Email
Select research participants and obtain consent forms	November 2020	Jeremy Daniel	Phone calls, emails, and/or Zoom
Interview participants	December 2020	Jeremy Daniel	Zoom
Conduct member checks	January 2021	Jeremy Daniel	Email/Zoom
Record final responses	February 2021	Jeremy Daniel	
Compile data and submit final report	May 2021	Jeremy Daniel	
Maintain protocol file for five years	May 2026	Jeremy Daniel [SCHOOL NAME]	[SCHOOL NAME]