

CHOOSING TO ATTEND A PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGE: A SURVEY OF
STUDENT DECISION MAKING

by

STEPHANIE LYNN MEYER

(Under the Direction of Thomas Valentine)

ABSTRACT

Public two-year colleges play a critical role in providing students with access to higher education. Some students attend these institutions to obtain skills needed for employment, while others enroll with the intent to transfer to another college or university. The factors influencing students' selection of and enrollment in a public two-year college are numerous. However, comprehensive studies regarding the level of influence of these factors on the college-choice process in this context are limited. This quantitative study utilized a researcher-developed instrument in an effort to identify these factors. The survey instrument was developed based on a systematic process that included interviews with professionals in higher education, interviews with current students, and an extensive review of college choice literature and models. This study set out to answer five research questions: (1) To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice? (2) To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice? (3) To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice? (4) To what extent do financial factors influence college choice? (5) To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on

college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors? Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was utilized for data collection. The total sample consisted of 306 participants from 45 states in the United States. The findings suggested the following: (a) financial factors had the strongest influence on the decision to enroll in a public two-year college, (b) characteristics related to personal fit were the most influential college characteristics in the decision to enroll in a public two-year college, (c) the opinions of others influenced the decision to enroll in a public two-year college, with opinions of parents being most influential, and (d) the most influential recruitment efforts were those that could be self-accessed by the student. These findings extend the understanding of the characteristics of today's public two-year college student and help inform recruitment efforts and policies related to public two-year college access.

INDEX WORDS: Two-year college, Community college; Vocational college; College choice, Open-access institution; Higher education opportunities; MTurk

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Larry and Ann Shoultz, who laid the foundation for me to begin pursuing my dreams and always encouraged me to push myself to reach for what I may have thought was unreachable. The first main guy in my life, my dad, was so proud that I decided to embark on my doctoral journey. While he is not here to see me through to completion, I know he would be proud. My mom, who would cut phone calls short with me over the last few years so that I could finish coursework, is here to cheer me to the finish line. Thank you, Mom, for always being there and always encouraging me. The drives home from Athens would not have been the same without your voice.

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Ella, Brooks, Jordan, and Bronson, always remember, character is who you are when no one is looking. Do good things!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

By the year 2020, “65% of all American jobs will require some form of post-secondary degree or credential” (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013, p. 15). Practitioners and scholars agree that postsecondary education or training is mandatory for success in today’s economy (National Governors Association, 2018). The globalization and technology sectors consistently look to higher education for the training and retraining of their workforce (Kinzie et al., 2004), and two-year colleges are often called upon to provide such training (Van Noy & Heidkamp, 2013). “In today’s economy, higher education is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for individual economic opportunity, as well as America’s competitiveness in the global economy” (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a, p. 3). Thus, attending a postsecondary institution and earning a credential has value to both the individual and the workforce.

Earning an associate degree or other credential from a two-year college increases an individual’s earning potential (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011; Carnevale et al., 2013). “The recent [Great Recession] and its lingering aftermath have further highlighted the gaps between those with and those without post-secondary education. This gap reinforces an ‘economic imperative’ for adults to complete post-secondary education” (Van Noy & Heidkamp, 2013, p. 2). Obtaining a postsecondary credential is often a cost-effective route toward gaining skills necessary to excel in today’s workforce.

Public two-year colleges offer an affordable means to obtaining credentials that in turn allow individuals to earn higher incomes (Stokes & Somers, 2010). Two thirds of two-year college students have annual household incomes below \$50,000 (parental income included if they are dependents), and half of these students come from homes with an annual household income less than \$30,000 (Marcus & Hacker, 2015). Over 60% of students enrolled in two-year colleges are enrolled part-time, which allows them to also participate in the continuously changing workforce (Community College Research Center, 2017).

The U.S. workforce is undergoing a drastic generational shift. Baby boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964—are retiring in great numbers, with an estimated 10,000 heading into retirement each day (Friedberg, 2018). Businesses and policymakers are turning to colleges and universities to educate new employees to fill these workforce gaps (National Conference of State Legislators [NCSL], 2014). In addition, public two-year colleges establish curricula to address local workforce needs, allowing workers to increase their skills and improve their earning potential (NCSL, 2014). Public two-year colleges represent a key element of local workforce development; indeed, the vast majority of public two-year colleges include workforce development in their mission (Beach, 2010).

In July of 2017, the U.S. Department of Labor reported a record 6.2 million unfilled jobs. While not all of these jobs required a postsecondary degree or credential, economists tend to agree that one of the major reasons for the growing number of job vacancies is due to employers' inability to find adequately trained workers (American

Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2017). Yet, public two-year colleges can provide affordable training and skill development necessary for many vacant jobs.

For many students, two-year colleges serve as means for gaining skills for future employment. Many students enroll in these institutions to earn credentials and enter directly into the workforce. For others, two-year colleges serve as an entry point to a four-year degree. Whether the end goal is to get a job or to transfer to a four-year college, a two-year college can be a catalyst for future opportunities. Nearly half of all students graduating with a four-year degree in the 2013-2014 academic year had completed coursework at a two-year college (Smith, 2015a). Many two-year colleges have articulation agreements with four-year institutions, which can allow students to save money on tuition while earning degree-level credits that will count toward their bachelor's degree. As Reynolds (2012) noted, "states are encouraging two-year college attendance by adopting articulation agreements" (p. 346).

It is evident that students enter into two-year colleges for many reasons. However, few comprehensive college-choice studies have been conducted to examine public two-year college choice by both traditional and nontraditional student.

Despite the skills gap and job vacancies requiring less than a bachelor's degree, public two-year college enrollment across the nation continues to decline (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2017; Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016; Smith, 2015a.) The current state of the economy is often considered to be an indicator of two-year college enrollment: "A poor economy forces many adult learners into the classroom to retrain or hone their skills, but when it improves, enrollments decrease as they return to the workforce" (Smith, 2015b). As the U.S. economy continues to grow and workforce

development needs continue to rise, public two-year colleges must better position themselves to meet these needs.

According to Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2016), two-year public institutions spend roughly \$468 less per student on recruitment than four-year public institutions. With lower funding for recruitment, it is crucial for two-year institutions to put available funds toward messaging that attracts students who would potentially attend their colleges. “By understanding what attitudes, norms, and control issues are important to learners, educational institutions can tailor their recruiting” (Robinson & Doverspike, 2006, p. 64). With effective recruitment plans, two-year colleges can work to reverse the declining enrollment trends of last several years.

Public two-year colleges are poised to grow their enrollment. The need for skilled workers is on the rise, and two-year colleges serve as a skill-development pipeline for business and industry (NCSL, 2014; Smith, 2015a). Surveying current students at two-year colleges about why they enrolled at their respective institutions could help college administrators refine their marketing messages. Additionally, it could help inform policies related to “free college,” as many of the policies related to this topic do not serve the majority of two-year college students

In reviewing the literature around college choice, there is a gap in the research related to public two-year college choice. College-choice studies have historically focused heavily on four-year colleges and typically focus on recent high school graduates (Bryant, 2016; Chapman, 1981; Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Somers et al., 2004). Four-year colleges have higher retention rates than two-year colleges, leading to more dollars generated over the course of a student’s enrollment

(Bryant, 2016). The lower retention rates at two-year colleges make the return on investment of a college-choice study harder to justify (Rosenbaum, Redline & Stephan, 2007). If college administrators identify why students select their institutions, they will be better positioned to market themselves to potential students, leading potentially to increased student enrollment.

A majority of students would not be enrolled in higher education without the two-year college option (Rosenbaum et al., 2007). Potential postsecondary education students often do not realize that two-year college opportunities exist for them. Research conducted by Pew Research and Social Demographics (2011) found that many potential postsecondary students, particularly underserved students, felt unprepared to make decisions after high school, and many of these potential students did not understand that college was a real option for them. One mission of the U.S. Department of Education (2017a) is “to make sure that college is more accessible, affordable, and valuable for students” (p. 29). This mission, along with Pew’s research, further supports the need to study and better understand what college-choice factors influence two-year college choice. Identifying these factors will help colleges develop recruitment strategies that can fulfill this charge as well as more effectively promote these factors that influence college choice at their institutions.

Recruiting efforts help drive overall student enrollment within colleges, and more students equal more revenue. Kotler (1982) stated that institutions market themselves by “designing the organization’s offerings in terms of the target market’s needs and desires” (p. 6). In order to better market to potential students, institutions must understand the needs and wants that influence student enrollment: “To effectively publicize services an

institution must first understand its student markets.... An understanding of student markets often involves survey research” (Hoyt & Brown, 2003, p. 3).

Problem Statement

Despite the important, multifaceted role that public two-year colleges play, little empirical research has been conducted to understand why students enroll in these institutions. Though researchers have alluded to a variety of factors influencing two-year college choice, few studies beyond those focusing on underserved or nontraditional populations have been conducted. Underlying factors related to lower tuition costs, opportunities for improving GPAs, flexible course schedules, and articulation agreements with colleges and universities are often cited as impacting two-year college choice within underserved and traditional student populations; however, very few comprehensive studies regarding two-year college choice have been conducted. When considering the range of college-choice factors, colleges should exploit those that are most important to their students when developing their recruitment messages. As researchers identify a comprehensive set of factors influencing two-year college choice, college administrators can design marketing messages that attract more students to their institutions.

College-choice studies often focus on traditional students (Somers et al., 2006). With an increasing emphasis on college attendance and the changing demographics of the college-age population, college officials and policymakers are in need of more specific information regarding student college choice processes in order to increase their effectiveness in developing programs and marketing campaigns that can have impact on a broader student demographic. (Pitre, Johnson, & Pitre, 2005, p. 35)

The two-year college-choice process is complex since a student's reason for enrollment could be to transfer or to gain skills for success in the workplace. In order to better understand the two-year college student, researchers need to learn about the college-choice process from the perspective of both traditional and nontraditional students.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand what factors influence student public two-year college choice decision. Specifically, this study set out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?
2. To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?
3. To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?
4. To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?
5. To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?

For this study, *public two-year colleges* included community colleges, two-year technical colleges, and two-year vocational colleges offering associate degrees.

A survey was distributed to public two year college students throughout the United States to explore the research questions. The study used a composite model based on work done by college-choice researchers (Chapman, 1981; Hanson & Litten, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Ming, 2010; Somers et al., 2004). This model included variables related to student background characteristics, opinions of others, college recruitment efforts, college characteristics, and financial factors.

The study was national in scope. The data were collected using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, which allowed for the inclusion of a wide range of participants. The collected data were disaggregated into three subgroups: first-generation, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Significance of Study

This study extends and contributes to the theoretical knowledge and practical applications around public two-year college choice. First, study informs practitioners regarding factors influencing student enrollment in public two-year settings and offers a snapshot of the actual public two-year college student population. Second, this study works toward the development of a comprehensive college-choice model as well as a comprehensive college choice survey for public two-year colleges. Third, the study informs practitioners as to what college-choice factors influence various groups of students. Identification of influential factors can allow public two-year institutions to more effectively market themselves to potential students. Additionally, the identification of these factors can help to inform policies related specifically to two-year colleges, particularly tuition-free policies. Furthermore, the study contributes to the body of literature centering on public two-year college choice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Selecting a college is an exciting time in one's life. Developing a list of potential colleges, narrowing it to a point where true contenders emerge, and then selecting the one that best meets an individual's needs can be such a rush. As the literature has shown, four-year colleges and universities have access to through the literature to rich data associated with them that evidence why students ultimately select those institutions. Conversely, there are not as much data associated with public two-year institutions, and fewer studies related to college choice have been conducted in the two-year college arena (as this review of the literature illustrates). Perhaps this is because a majority of public two-year colleges are open-access or because these colleges do not have the resources to conduct such studies. At a time when federal and state funding of colleges is decreasing and when the economy is performing well, public two-year institutions would benefit from learning what drives students to choose their institutions.

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors influencing students' public two-year college choice decision. This chapter first offers a definition and history of public two-year colleges. It then discusses how recent presidential agendas have influenced public two-year colleges. The chapter then presents what current research has revealed about today's college student, followed by a consideration of issues related to two-year college policies. It then examines college-choice models—which inform the proposed research instrument discussed in Chapter 3—and presents gaps in the empirical

research related to the proposed topic. A discussion of the variables comprising the researcher-developed model used for this study follows. The chapter concludes with a call to future researchers to fill the gap in the literature related to public two-year college choice.

Defining Public Two-Year Colleges

Throughout their history, public two-year colleges have had an identity crisis (Bailey, Jagers, & Jenkins, 2015). As times have changed, so too have the mission of two-year colleges and the typical student. Public two-year colleges are often referred to as community colleges. In some states, such as Georgia and Kentucky, public two-year technical colleges are not considered as part of the community college system; however, they are able to meet the needs of degree-seeking occupational students as well transfer students. For the purposes of this study, public two-year colleges included community colleges, two-year technical colleges, and two-year vocational colleges offering associate degrees. The following section discusses the history of the public two-year college system and how it has evolved to its current state.

History of Public Two-Year Colleges

Depending on the era, public two-year colleges have been referred to as junior colleges, vocational colleges, technical colleges, or community colleges (Beach, 2010; Geller, 2001; Vaughan, 1985). Over the course of more than a century, public two-year colleges have evolved to encompass many facets. Tillery and Deegan (2017) identified five generations of community colleges in the United States: first generation (1900-1930), which they identified as an extension of secondary school; second generation (1930-1950), which they coined the junior college generation; third generation (1950-

1970), or the community college generation; fourth generation (1970-1985), encompassing the evolution of the comprehensive community college; and fifth generation (1985 to, presumably, the 1990s), during which they anticipated that community colleges would resolve the mission dilemma that stemmed from the diversity of roles played by these institutions. O'Banion (as cited in Geller, 2001), an additional researcher in the field, suggested a sixth generation: a learning community college. Most often, people associate public two-year colleges with "community colleges," where students seek an associate degree. Also, the students attending these institutions are thought to be those who desire to transfer to a four-year college. A brief history of the generations identified by Tillery and Deegan (2017) follows, illustrating not only the evolving public two-year college mission, but also the evolution of the students attending these institutions.

The first public junior college was founded in 1901. The college, Joliet Junior College in Illinois, was designed to deliver the collegiate freshman- and sophomore-year curriculum (Beach, 2010). Joliet Junior College was situated on a local high school campus; high school graduates would funnel into the college and take liberal arts courses and transfer these courses to a four-year college. This approach helped forge an image of two-year colleges as transfer institutions. Prior to 1930, a community college's main function was academic, with the primary purpose of providing the first two years of a baccalaureate degree (Beach, 2010; Vaughan, 1985).

In the early 1900s, the high school graduation rate began to rise, creating a greater need for higher education (Geller, 2001). In 1920, the first nationally recognized two-year college association, the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC), formed.

Initially, the AAJC identified junior colleges as institutions offering “instruction of strictly collegiate grade” (Beach, 2010, p.8). Three years later, this definition expanded to include the vocational, civic, social, and religious needs of a community (Beach, 2010).

In the early 1940s, after World War II, the junior college landscape began to change. In 1944, the Government Issue (GI) Bill of Rights passed congress, providing benefits such as low-interest mortgages, job training, hiring privileges, and grants for college tuition to U.S. service members (Military Benefits, 2018; Vaughan, 1985). The GI Bill represented the foundation of the federal government’s commitment to ensuring that no veteran or active-duty service member would be denied access to higher education because of financial barriers (Vaughan, 1985). This legislation sparked continued research into providing access to higher education for all Americans.

Shortly after the passage of the GI Bill, the work of federal commissions helped pave the way for the legitimization of public two-year colleges. For instance, in 1947, the Truman Commission’s Report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, sought to legitimate junior colleges by arguing that half of the American population could benefit from 2 years of postsecondary schooling, but the report also seemed to sanction a broad comprehensive mission for these institutions by suggesting a new name, and thereby a new institutional identity: the community college. (Beach, 2010, p. 16)

This report expanded the public two-year college’s mission to include general, vocational, and adult education as well as a commitment to local community needs (Beach, 2010). Another added benefit that grew out of the GI Bill, the Truman Commission Report, and other developments in the community college arena was the

“open door” or “open access” stamp that public two-year colleges still bear today. Open access eroded barriers to higher education by removing stringent admissions processes at public two-year community colleges. Ultimately, open access “became the hallmark of the community college, and its work with these students is among the most significant contributions of the community college to the nation’s education” (Vaughan, 1985, p. 12).

As the public two-year college moved into its “boom years” between 1960 and 1980, enrollment grew from 585,240 students to 4,826,000 (Vaughan, 1985). During this period, the majority of financial support for public two-year institutions was provided by the state (Vaughan, 1985). The Basic Education Opportunity Grant (now known as the Pell Grant), the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Work Study programs, and National Direct student loans paved the way for every American to access and benefit from higher education, regardless of their financial means (Vaughan, 1985). These federal grants gave eligible students the opportunity to obtain an education without assuming financial debt, while National Direct student loans gave eligible students access to college funding.

The civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s also helped remove individual barriers to higher education. During this era, colleges “accepted more and more racially discriminated, economically disadvantaged, and academically underserved populations who had received a poor-quality secondary education” (Beach, 2010, p. 37). This period also saw the expansion of developmental education offerings. Developmental, or remedial, education has become a critical element of the “community

colleges' commitment to access, student success, and serving the community" (Coley, 2000, p. 19).

As a result of the continued evolution of the community college landscape, "community colleges began taking on the chaotic characteristics of a shopping mall" (Beach, 2010, p. 31), seemingly offering all things to all people while becoming "an indispensable part of state systems of higher education" (Beach, 2010, p. 32). Community colleges began to look like a smorgasbord; if a student was interested, the community college had an option for them.

The 1980s brought an increase in specialized and customized training to community colleges, whose mission centering more on vocational training (Beach, 2010). During this time, there was an increase in low-income enrollment—an interesting phenomenon considering that the inflation rate was high and that most colleges had to raise tuition to adjust for inflation (Drury, 2003). Additionally, federal aid programs were helping disadvantaged populations gain access to higher education opportunities.

In the 1990s, the United States' population was on the rise once again, as were the number of high school graduates. During this time, community colleges began to aggressively market their institutions (Tucciarone, 2008). The workplace had also begun requiring different skills, thereby increasing the need for career/technical education. As in the 1980s, tuition was on the rise since the cost of running a community college had gone up faster than the cost of inflation (Gabert, 1991).

In the 2000s, a recession struck the United States, triggering all-time high enrollment at two-year colleges within the 18-24 age bracket (Coley, 2009). During this time, unemployment rates were up, which generally increases two-year college

enrollment (Betts & McFarland, 1995; Paulsen, 1990; Smith, 2015a). Adding to this state of flux, the number of high school graduates was also increasing again. Yet, while public two-year college enrollments were soaring, student completion rates were declining.

In the 2010s, data-supported evidence revealed that community colleges were failing miserably at helping students earn a bachelor's degree, and it was suggested that many two-year college students would perform better if they enrolled in a four-year institution (Matthews, 2013). In light of the public two-year college's multi-faceted mission, practitioners and researchers struggled to understand what success meant to two-year college students. Indeed, the definition of success varies among different categories of students. Success could mean transferring to a four-year institution, obtaining an associate degree, or taking a few courses and gaining the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. Had public two-year college choice been better studied during this era, student support services might have been put in place to better meet the diverse needs of this student population. Not all of these students were enrolled in hopes of earning an associate degree or transferring; some were interested in acquiring skills needed for future employment.

As shown in Figure 2.1, enrollment in public two-year colleges has been declining. Administrators often speculate on enrollment trends: Enrollment is down because the economy is booming, because students are transferring, because students are able to obtain gainful employment after a few courses, etc. If administrators learn more about why students choose their institutions, they could also learn whom to attract and potentially what services they could promote or create to keep their students.

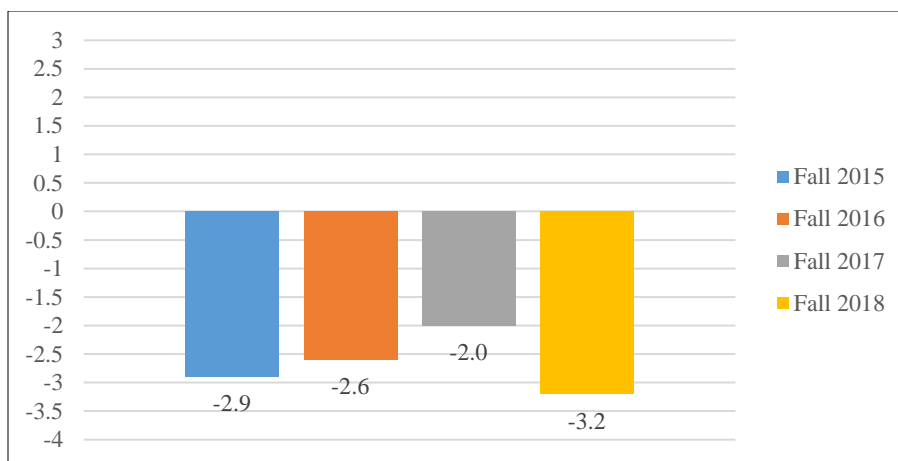


Figure 2.1. Percent of change, public two-year college enrollment trends. Adapted from “College Enrollment Declines Continue” by P. Fain, 2019, *Inside Higher Ed* (<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/05/30/college-enrollment-declines-continue>).

Influence of Presidential Agendas on Public Two-Year Colleges

Presidential agendas have a strong influence on public two-year colleges’ missions. The importance of earning college credentials has been a focus of presidential administrations’ agendas for years. In February of 2009, for example, President Barack Obama issued a charge for the U.S. to “once again have the highest proportions of college graduates in the world” (Fry, 2017, p. 1). At that time, the U.S. Department of Education stated that Obama’s goal would be met if 60% of 25- to 34-year-olds earned at least an associate degree by 2020 (Fry, 2017). By March of 2016, the number of individuals in this age group earning an associate degree or higher had increased seven percentage points, to 48% (Fry, 2017).

With the projection of 65% of U.S. jobs requiring some postsecondary credential by 2020 (Parker, Sisneros, & Pingel, 2016), postsecondary education needs to be more

affordable to all citizens. As the next section shows, the marketing of affordable college has typically been geared toward traditional or historically underserved students.

However, “there are not enough traditionally-aged high school and college students to create the educated workforce required for the 21st century economy” (Parker et al., 2016, p. 1). Moreover, current policies enacted to meet the employment demands and goals of the 21st century exclude the needs of American’s who have the ability to complete a credential and contribute to the workforce (Parker et al., 2016).

The Obama administration’s push for more individuals holding college credentials also led to an expanded discussion of making college, specifically two-year college, more affordable and, in several instances, free. Near the end of President Obama’s time in office, more states began embracing the “free tuition” for community colleges approach (Powell & Kerr, 2019), a trend that was jeopardized with the next administration.

When Donald Trump took office, there was a brief state of uncertainty regarding higher education and where public two-year colleges would be situated within the new presidential agenda. In 2017, President Trump’s new education secretary, Betsy DeVos, shared with community college leaders that community colleges would be key to workforce development (U.S Department of Education, 2017b). DeVos also told these leaders that their institutions are “absolutely essential engines of workforce and economic development—locally and regionally.... You help identify and close the skills gap between employers and job seekers, so U.S. businesses and industries can thrive and expand” (U.S. Department of Education, 2017b, p. 2).

The Center for Education and Workforce at Georgetown University found that the U.S. economy has become increasingly reliant on college-credentialed workers, particularly those with an associate degree (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Wisely, therefore, the Trump administration has acknowledged and continues to encourage the role of public two-year colleges in individual's acquisition of higher education credentials. As businesses thrive with a trained and skilled workforce, workers also see financial advantages after earning higher education credentials. However, paying for college tuition is not a reality for everyone in the United States. I believe that many policymakers do not understand who today's two-year college student really is.

The Two-Year College Student

Today's public two-year college student is not necessarily an 18-year-old, fresh out of high school, with a high GPA. In fact, the average age of two-year college students is 28 (AACC, 2018). Public two-year college students are more likely than their four-year college peers to come from a disadvantaged background or be an underrepresented minority (Baker, Bettinger, Jacob, & Marinescu, 2017). "Today's college students often balance work, family and school, and in a system of higher education not designed for that complexity, they struggle to complete" (Complete College America, 2018, p. 1). Students enrolled in community colleges are often older and more racially diverse, are more likely to be enrolled part-time, and are often low-income and first-generation (Ma & Baum, 2016). Given these general characteristics of public two-year college students, it is alarming that "free college" is in fact set up to the disadvantage of this population—which will be discussed in detail in the next section. Understanding who the true public

two-year college student is will help lawmakers craft legislation that can truly deliver higher education to these students.

Issues Related to Two-Year College Policy

The Obama administration’s 2009 push for more college-credentialed Americans helped reignite public discussion around “free college” for all, particularly within the public two-year college arena. “The momentum and interest in a recent policy innovation—free community college—holds some promise as a viable mechanism for states to reach adult learners” (Parker et al., 2016, p. 3). Since 2016, many states have enacted tuition-free college (Powell, 2018), though many have also imposed age restrictions, credit-hour enrollment requirements, and/or GPA requirements (Garcia, 2018). “Too often, students face tremendous challenges to completing their degree based on factors beyond their control” (Garcia, 2018, p. 8). While the intentions of the Obama and Trump administrations seem noble, there is a significant gap in who can realistically access higher education credentials.

Table 2.1 lists the 18 states that currently offer free college tuition and the eligibility stipulations for these programs. Notably, other states offer tuition-assistance programs, but they require student contributions or are only available to a limited number of recipients. For example, South Dakota is only able to award funds, through its Build Dakota scholarship, to one third of applicants (South Dakota Board of Technical Education, 2018), and in Minnesota, students who receive the Minnesota State Grant must still pay 50% of attendance costs (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2017).

The state programs outlined in Table 2.1 all have an in-state residency requirement, with the exception of Nevada, which allows citizens from bordering states

to access the program (Nevada System of Higher Education, 2018). All of these programs require students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Typically, students enrolled in a free college program are not allowed to participate if they have earned an associate degree or bachelor's degree prior to enrolling in the program.

Twelve of the free college programs presented in Table 2.1 have a maximum age requirement or time restrictions related to when a student earned a high school diploma or GED; this is Oregon's only requirement to participate in the program (Office of Student Access and Completion, 2019). Other states, such as Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Montana, have also established age restrictions for participation in their programs (Delaware Department of Higher Education, n.d.; Maryland Higher Education Commission, n.d.; Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2017; Missouri Department of Higher Education, n.d.).

Three states—Indiana, Oklahoma, and Washington—even require students to commit to their program before they graduate high school; these programs are based on family income as reported by the student when they are in 10th grade or earlier (Learn More Indiana, n.d.; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, n.d.; Washington Student Achievement Council, 2017). Thus, in these states, if students are unaware of these programs at an early enough age, they will miss these funding opportunities. Maryland, a newcomer to the field of tuition-free college, requires students to be recent graduates (Maryland Higher Education Commission, n.d.). As Parker et al. (2016) noted, “the vast majority of proposed free college policies to date, therefore, leave out one of the

most important student populations that states should engage to reach their attainment and completion goals: adults” (p. 4).

As stated earlier, research has shown that the average public two-year college student is 28 years old. As reflected in Table 2.1, Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and New York are the only states that allow residents of any age to participate in their free college programs (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2017; California Community Colleges, 2019; Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, 2019; Oklahoma’s Promise Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, n.d.; New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, n.d.; University of Hawaii n.d.). Of these states, all except for Kentucky base eligibility on income, which does align with the greater financial need of the average two-year college student. Kentucky, Arkansas, and Montana also restrict enrollment to high-demand career fields (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2017; Dettmer, 2017; Kentucky High Education Assistance Authority, 2019).

However, the free college eligibility stipulations fail the typical two-year college student by requiring full-time enrollment. California and New York—two of the states without an age stipulation—require that students enroll full-time (California Community Colleges, 2019; New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, n.d.). Research has shown that two-year college students typically work full-time (AACC, 2018), often to support their families. Free college programs may allow nontraditional students in, but they do not allow those individuals who need to work full time the opportunity to do so. Additionally, many of these programs require ongoing community service as a condition

of participation. While this is a noble idea and a great way for students to give back to the community, nontraditional students may not have the time to commit to this requirement.

While free-college offerings have certainly benefited some students, the programs are not designed to meet the needs of today's two-year college student. "While current policies are more attuned to challenges faced by high school students, new policies would be well-served to account for a broader variety of diverse student characteristics" (Parker et al., 2016, p. 2). Business and industry look to public two-year colleges and policymakers to help fill the skills gaps in the workforce (National Conference of State Legislators, 2014). Bills and policies are being passed and implemented in an effort to meet these needs; however, it is apparent the many policymakers either are ignoring who the current two-year college student is or simply do not know. Understanding college-choice behavior could have a positive impact on the design and improvement of state and federal grant programs, including loan programs.

Table 2.1

Free College Tuition Programs

State	Program Name (Year Began)	Eligibility Stipulations						
		Requires Pre-HS graduation commitment	Recent HS Graduate/ Recent GED/Age	Income-driven	Community Service Requirement	Fulltime Enrollment Requirement	High-demand Program Enrollment	
Arkansas	ArFuture (2017)				X		X	
California	California Promise (2017)			X		X		
Delaware	Delaware Student Excellence Equals Degree (SEED) (2014)		X			X		
Hawaii	The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship (2017)			X				
Indiana	21 st Century Scholars (1990)	X	X			X		
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship (2016)						X	
Louisiana	Taylor Opportunity Programs (1990)		X			X		
Maryland	Community College Promise Scholarship (2018)		X	X		X		
Michigan	Tuition Incentive Program (1987)		X	X				
Missouri	A+ Scholarship (1993)		X			X		
Montana	Montana Promise Grant Program (2017)		X	X			X	
Nevada	Nevada Promise Scholarship (2017)		X		X			
New York	Excelsior Program (2017)			X		X		
Oklahoma	Oklahoma's Promise (1992)	X		X				
Oregon	Oregon Promise (2015)		X					
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise (2017)		X			X		
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise (2015)		X		X	X		
Washington	College Bound Scholarship Washington (2007)	X	X	X				

College-Choice Frameworks

Economic and sociological factors are often the driving forces of college-choice frameworks (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Ming, 2010; Somers et al., 2006), and as new frameworks are conceptualized, these factors continue to be critical elements of model development (Stokes & Somers, 2009). Stokes and Somers (2009) noted that college-choice frameworks have been used to develop three conceptual approaches to modeling college choice: economic models, status-attainment models, and combined models. Economic models assume that prospective students make careful cost-benefit analyses when choosing a college, while status-attainment models assume a more utilitarian approach to college choice, one that incorporates social and individual factors that lead toward the fulfillment of educational and career aspirations. Combined models generally separate the college-choice process into three phases: aspirations development and alternate evaluation; option consideration; and the evaluation of options, which leads to a final college choice (Stokes & Somers, 2009).

Stokes and Somers (2009) found that research on college selection is geared almost exclusively toward the decision-making process of those students seeking to attend a four-year college. As the empirical studies discussion later in this chapter reveals, most research related to public two-year college choice has focused on particular groups of students, such as traditional students or students of a particular ethnic background, not on the whole population. Most empirical studies have been heavily situated within the four-year college system (Zyzniwski & Lichtenberger, 2013).

This study examined college-choice models developed after 1980 since models created before this time tend to focus on traditional student college choice (Graff, 2011).

Table 2.2 provides an overview of the college-choice models reviewed for this study. All of the models include variables related to student characteristics, external influences, and college attributes, and all of the models assume that “selecting a college is not a static decision, but rather a process” (Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 514). Previous researchers have agreed that the college-choice process begins around the seventh grade and comprises three phases: predisposition to attend college, the general college-search process, and the college-selection process (Paulsen, 1990; Stokes & Somers, 2010; Wood & Harris, 2015). In reviewing the college-choice variables in Table 2.2, it is apparent that the later-derived models were influenced by the earlier models.

Table 2.2

College-Choice Models, Variable Comparisons

Variable	Model Author/s (Year Developed)				
	Chapman (1981)	Jackson (1982)	Hossler & Gallagher (1987)	Somers, Haines, Keene, Bauer, Pfeiffer, McCluskey, Settle, & Sparks (2006)	Ming (2010)
Student Characteristics	Student Characteristics Level of Educational Aspiration High School Performance	Aspirations Academic Achievement	Predispositions Aspirations Motivation	Background Characteristics Aspirations	Student Characteristics Aspiration Aptitude High School Performance
Influence of Others	External Influences Significant Persons Friends Parents High School Personnel	Family/Friends	Expectations	Encouragement from family Information/encouragement from friends	Friends Attending Colleges Influence of Parents Influence of Friends Influence of Other Individuals
College Characteristics	Location Availability of Programs	Preferences	Search Entrance exams Campus visit College literature	Environment Social Environment Institutional Characteristics Institutional Climate	Location Academic Programs College Reputation Educational Facilities Employment Opportunities Advertising HEIs representatives Campus visit

Variable	Model Author/s (Year Developed)				
	Chapman (1981)	Jackson (1982)	Hossler & Gallagher (1987)	Somers, Haines, Keene, Bauer, Pfeiffer, McCluskey, Settle, & Sparks (2006)	Ming (2010)
Financial Factors	Cost (Financial Aid)	Exclusion Cost Admissions	*Information regarding financial aid and cost is included in predispositions	Net Cost Financial Variables	Cost Availability of financial aid

Chapman (1981) was an early college-choice researcher, and his work is often referenced in later-developed college-choice models. Chapman's model of student college choice is a longitudinal model that seeks to identify factors that influence college choice. The model takes into consideration the background and characteristics of the potential matriculant, as well as the characteristics of their family and of the college. It also considers socioeconomic status (SES) and aptitude, and the external influences of friends, parents, college information, and college characteristics. Chapman's model includes communication with potential students, which placed importance on print media as it relates to informing and recruiting potential students. The Chapman model is adaptable to current trends, such as digital print media, and allows data analysis to inform colleges about how the information they share (via whatever means they use) influences student college choice. The model also helps institutions to determine if their advertising dollars are influencing students' college choices.

Ming (2010) developed a similar college-choice model. Ming's model was heavily influenced by Chapman's (1981), but Ming's model includes variables of employment opportunities and expands on colleges' efforts to communicate with students. Ming's model indicates that fixed college characteristics, location, academic programs, college reputation, education facilities, cost, financial aid availability, and employment opportunities, as well as college efforts to communicate with students, advertising, higher education institution (HEIs) representatives, and campus visits, all contribute to the college-choice process. As applied in this study, Ming's model holds that findings would show that fixed college characteristics and college communication efforts influence the college selection process; these factors have been proven by

researchers to impact the college-choice process (Chapman, 1981; Ming, 2010; Somers et al., 2006).

Jackson's (1982) and Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) models examine the entire college-choice process. According to these models, students develop college-choice sets based on academic achievement and influences from family and friends. Cost, the admissions process, and financial aid are also associated with these models. A criticism of Hossler and Gallagher's model is that it is not necessarily applicable to underserved populations (Bergerson, 2009; Perna, 2006) because these populations do not typically have the financial means or support to research multiple colleges. I argue that this can also be seen in Jackson's model. As outlined earlier, these models were developed when more students were graduating high school.

Embedded in each of the college-choice models presented in Table 2.2 is aspiration and influence. *Aspiration* can be defined as "a strong desired to achieve something high or great" ("Aspiration," n.d.), while *influence* is "the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways" ("Influence," n.d.). Aspirations to attend college begin developing early in an individual's educational journey, often increasing or decreasing during middle and high school years, which is when students are deciding whether or not to continue their education in a post-secondary setting (Chapman, 1981). Aspirations can be influenced by factors such as academic performance, peers, family members, and socioeconomic status (Chenoweth & Gallagher, 2004; Khattab, 2015). Aspirations to attend college can change over time (DesJardins, Toutkoushian, Hossler, & Chen, 2019).

Somers et al.'s (2006) college-choice model is a hybrid that considers such factors as background characteristics, social environment, educational achievement, institutional environment and climate, as well as financial factors. These researchers developed this model to study enrolled community college students specifically. While the model shares similar features with the other models reflected in Table 2.2, this is the only model reviewed that was designed for two-year college-choice research.

Ming's (2010) and Chapman's (1981) models have an added focus on college marketing efforts. Anctil (2008) maintained that colleges need to be adaptive rather than prescriptive in relation to changing public two-year college needs and expectations: "The organization must know its market audience and how to appeal to it" (pp. 26-27). "Since the college student is ever changing, it is important to continue to research the factors that influence college choice" (Herren, Cartmell, & Robertson, 2011, p. 59). Organizational improvement demands knowing not just the product, but also the market and the consumer.

While models have emerged over time to evaluate college-choice factors, public two-year college choice remains understudied. The college-choice models presented here examine college choice primarily through a four-year-college lens. Even so, the models did help to inform the researcher-developed model used for this study, as discussed later in this chapter.

Empirical Studies

Finding empirical studies related to college choice in the context of two-year community colleges and public two-year colleges poses challenges. Iloh (2014) noted that little is known about the college-choice process for students enrolled in community

colleges. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 60% of students who obtain a bachelor's degree attend a two-year college first (Chen, 2015). Research has revealed that more students are attending public two-year colleges, but little research has been conducted to determine why they are attending these colleges. As two-year colleges become more attractive, colleges must examine the factors that influence their students' college choice. Presented here is a discussion around empirical studies related to college choice

Table 2.3 lists the empirical studies that were examined in this literature review. Researchers Barreno and Traut (2012), Broekemier (2002), Brown, Hernandez, Mitchell, and Turner (1999), Burns (2006), Herren et al. (2011), and Zyznieuski and Lichtenberger (2013) utilized a quantitative survey method for their data collection. Herren et al. (2011), Burns (2006), and Brown et al. (1999) all surveyed students who were interested and/or enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, whereas Zyznieuski and Lichtenberger (2013) surveyed students who were enrolled in high school and interested in attending a community college for their postsecondary education. Broekemier's (2002) survey population consisted of students who were at least 25 years old and enrolled in a two-year or four-year college. Broekemier found that the entire survey population was most influenced by future job prospects as well as convenience and cost. Barreno and Traut (2012) surveyed two-year community college students at one institution and found that transferability of courses, availability of programs and quality, campus location, cost, availability of educational facilities and technology, and advice from family and friends were the top reasons they enrolled in the college. Burns (2006) and Brown et al. (1999) found that financial ability influenced college choice, while Herren et al. (2011) found

that the top two influential factors for college choice were opportunities after graduation and academic reputation. Burns' (2006) study aligns with research on minorities and factors identified as influencing their college choice. Specifically, Burns found that African-American students were most influenced by scholarships. Brown et al.'s (1999) identification of financial ability was not surprising since their study examined in-state and out-of-state college choice. Ability to pay for out-of-state tuition emerged as an impact on a student's ability to attend. In the context of the current study, Brown et al.'s (1999) research served as a reminder to consider out-of-state students, as well as international students. Herren et al.'s (2011) study focused more on the campus visit, which is not widely used in public two-year college recruitment processes. Perhaps this is because these institutions are open-access and may feel less of a need to "show off" their campuses to recruit students. Herren et al. did find that web-based and print information influenced the college-choice process.

Stokes and Somers (2009) took a different research approach and mined student data from the 1995-1996 National Post-Secondary Study. They set out to determine how background characteristics, aspirations, high school experiences, college experiences, and cost influenced college choice. Though their data were dated, their study found that Latinos, females, and students listed as "other" were less likely to attend a two-year college. Their study confirmed the notion that two-year colleges expand access to those who would not traditionally attend college. Ethnicity, location, high school degree attainment, educational achievement, overall cost, and campus climate were the most influential variables influencing two-year college choice.

Lowry (2017), Okerson (2016), Hawk and Hill (2016), Tucciarone (2008), and Somers et al. (2006) utilized qualitative research methods within the two-year college setting. Lowry (2017) conducted one-on-one interviews with African-American students and found that many of the participants were predetermined to go to college and that their college-choice process was heavily influenced by their families. Okerson's (2016) phenomenological study utilized open-ended surveys and interviews for data collection. Okerson surveyed high school seniors across five states. The sample included 21 participants, all of whom identified community as a major influence on four-year college choice. Hawk and Hill (2016) surveyed traditional and nontraditional students enrolled at two-year colleges and identified affordability, minimal disruptions to life, and flexibility as influencers of two-year college choice. Tucciarone (2008) interviewed traditional students and found that participants' college choices were also heavily influenced by family, high school personnel, economics, and location. Somers et al. (2006) conducted focus groups and identified six themes impacting college choice: (1) "They said I couldn't," (2) "life happens," (3) educational aspirations, (4) influences of family and peers, (5) price and location, and (6) institutional characteristics. In these three preceding studies, the influence of others was a common factor impacting college choice.

Researchers have called on practitioners to develop an awareness of the factors that influence enrollment actions (Broekemier, 2002; Hawk & Hill, 2016; Tucciarone, 2008) since this awareness can inform recruitment efforts. Hawk and Hill (2016) suggested that a study examining "where students acquire their information about college and how this relates to students' socioeconomics and demographics would enhance researchers' knowledge of factors that influence college choice" (p. 40).

Table 2.3

Selected College-Choice Studies

Author (Year)	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results and Assessment
Lowry (2017)	To identify community college experiences of African-American students in relation to factors that contributed to their community college choice.	n = 19	One-on-one qualitative semi-structured interviews	This population of students had a predetermination to attend college, and going to college was their only option; their choice process was heavily influenced by their families. Practitioners need to be aware of how important the predetermination stage is as well as how influential their families are regarding their decision.
Hawk & Hill (2016)	To determine if there was a message that creators and producers of media were attempting to convey to community college students, and to determine if these portrayals influenced college choice.	n = 12	Semi-structured interviews	Traditional and nontraditional students participated in this study. Affordability, minimal disruptions, and flexibility influenced decision to enroll. In regards to media portrayal, participants believed media made fun of community college students because of the wide range of adults enrolled in community colleges. Those students attending community colleges could identify accurate portrayals of community colleges and what was exaggerated.
Okerson (2016)	To explore the extent to which the campus visit and various iterations of campus visitation experiences (i.e., class visits, overnight visits, information sessions, and yield programs) influenced a student's college choice.	n = 21	Open-ended qualitative survey	High school seniors at a high-achieving academy were surveyed regarding four-year college campus visits. Campus community was a major influence for all, followed by personal interactions and ability to see oneself on campus. Class environment and tour guide were the least important factors influencing decisions.
Zyznieuski & Lichtenberger (2013)	To examine student characteristics and environmental factors related to community college choice.	n = 26,513	Survey	83% of students surveyed within the region enrolled at a close/in district community college. The more distance between high school and college, the less likely students were to enroll. African-American students were less likely to enroll in-district.

Author (Year)	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results and Assessment
Barreno & Traut (2012)	To determine why students attended a two-year community college.	n = 80	Survey instrument	The majority of this sample consisted of full-time students. Transferability to a four-year college was most influential in the college-choice process. Availability of academic programs and campus locations ranked second and third, and cost ranked fourth.
Herren, Cartmell, & Robertson (2011)	To identify the recruitment efforts and external influences affecting the undergraduate college-choice process when enrolling in the College of Agricultural Sciences and National Resources at Oklahoma State University.	n = 339	Survey instrument	Two most influential institutional characteristics were opportunities after graduation and academic reputation. Information Sources Used and Usefulness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit: 87.6% • Conversation with Instructor: 71.7% • Web information: 77.3% • Printed publication: 72.3%
Stokes & Somers (2009)	To identify what factors significantly influenced the decision to enroll in a two-year college.	n = 1,814 two-year students n = 4,537 four-year students	National Post-Secondary Aid Study, 1995-1996	Latinos, students listed as “other,” and females were less likely to attend a two-year college. The notion that two-year colleges expand access to those who would traditionally not attend was confirmed. Ethnicity, location, high school degree attainment, education, overall cost, and campus climate were the most influential factors in the college-choice process.
Tucciarone (2008)	To analyze how advertising affected a students’ searches and community college choices.	n = 42	Focus group interviewing	Participants were all traditional students. Parents, friends, high school counselor, economics, and location were more persuasive than advertising in the search and choice process.
Burns (2006)	To describe factors attributed to the college choice of African-American students admitted to the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.	n = 22 (12 matriculants; 10 non-matriculants)	Survey with 4 broad sections (how you learned about program, influential factors in college choice, other individuals’ influence, social interaction)	Availability of scholarships was the most influential characteristic. Non-Missouri residents were more likely to attend, and relatives who attended had a large influence on matriculant’s college choice.

Author (Year)	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results and Assessment
Somers et al. (2006)	To begin a long-term research strand to explore why students choose to attend two-year colleges.	n = 223	Focus group	Six themes emerged: they said I couldn't, life happens, educational aspirations, influence of family and peers, price and location, and institutional characteristics. Family and friend influence was important.
Broekemier (2002)	To identify the relative importance of college-choice criteria in adult students attending two- and four-year institutions.	n = 276 (2yr = 156; 4yr = 120)	Survey	Participants were at least 25 years old. The most frequent reason for attending college was to get a better job with another employer. The top five most important choice criteria for two-year students were (1) days/times of courses, (2) program of study/major, (3) locations of courses, (4) cost, and (5) amount of time college personnel spend assisting students.
Brown, Hernandez, Mitchell, & Turner (1999)	To identify what factors influenced college choice and how these factors differed between in-state and out-of-state students.	n = 120	Survey measuring college choice, some open-ended questions	One resident hall was sampled. In-state and out-of-state income disparity. Recommendation: Train admissions representatives to recognize differences between in-state and out-of-state students.

Implications of the Literature for the Current Study

This literature review illustrated how the landscape of public two-year colleges has significantly changed over the past several decades, as have the demographics of the students they serve. In order to adjust to such changes, these institutions need to break out of the status-quo mindset and make intentional efforts to adapt. As the review reflected, public two-year college choice is understudied, and most of the existing studies have examined underserved students or traditional students. With fewer resources available for recruitment, practitioners within these institutions struggle to develop messages to draw students to their institutions. Though policymakers are working toward more legislation in support of tuition-free college, the majority of policies are designed to serve traditional students, who are not reflective of the majority of students enrolled at public two-year colleges. Thus, public two-year colleges themselves need to learn who their students are; that is, all students need to be researched, not just traditional students or a subset of the population (Paulsen, 1990).

The literature review highlights the changing public two-year college landscape, including its student population, and shows that public-two year colleges have experienced many identity changes, expanding access for an increasingly diverse student population. Serving such a wide variety of students—those who want to transfer, those who want to earn an associate degree, and those who want to earn credentials for future employment—leaves these institutions, as well as policymakers, facing a gap in their understanding of who they are serving.

Indeed, there is much to be learned about the students enrolled in public two-year colleges. An array of college-choice models exist; however, many of these models are

designed to understand traditional two-year college choice. Models developed by researchers in the field do address issues related to college choice, but this study sought to understand the diverse population of public two-year college students. Generally, college-choice studies have been heavily situated within the four-year context, and often these studies have involved traditional student participants (Zyznieuski & Lichtenberger, 2013). As the missions of two-year institutions continue to evolve and as tuition-free college policies are developed, a researcher-developed model informed by the studies discussed earlier can help to enhance the collective understanding of today's two-year college students. I believe that once practitioners, administrators, and policymakers have gained this understanding, they can work to better meet students' needs.

Table 2.4 displays the variables from the college-choice models presented earlier in this chapter along with the variables that were carried forward into the researcher-developed two-year college-choice model. Thirty-eight variables are presented in the study model, approximately 66% of which were carried over from the presented college-choice model variables.

The variables carried over for this study help capture the demographics of the students and of the college. As stated previously, several models have been developed to examine traditional college choice and/or four-year college choice. In an effort to capture data about what mattered most in a two-year college student's college choice, variables considered more pertinent to this population were added. This population, as noted, has an average age of 28, is often enrolled part-time, and is more likely to have children than the traditional-aged population. An older student may be responsible for caring for their aging parents or even adult siblings; hence, having a variable related to respondent load

(i.e., responsibility for children and parents and/or adult siblings) can help practitioners better understand what influences this population's college choice. Because this population is more likely to be employed, I added a variable related to hours worked per week as well as a variable to measure whether employer opinions influenced the decision to attend a particular two-year college. Graduation rate was added as a college-choice variable, as was faculty accessibility, access to public transportation, and availability of academic support. Payment plans are also emerging in the college setting; rather than take out a loan, students can make payments directly to the college. Therefore, a variable related to payment plans was added to capture its potential influence on college choice. Additionally, in order to better understand how this population learned about a college under consideration, a variable to measure social media influence was added.

Table 2.4

College-Choice Models, Variables Carried into the Current Study

Chapman (1981)	Jackson (1982)	Hossler & Gallagher (1987)	Somers, Haines, Keene, Bauer, Pfeiffer, McCluskey, Settle, and Sparks (2006)	Ming (2010)	Study Model (2019)
Student Characteristics Level of Educational Aspiration High School Performance	Preferences Aspirations Academic Achievement	Predispositions Aspirations Motivation	Background Characteristics Aspirations	Student Characteristics Aspiration Aptitude High School Performance	Student Characteristics *Respondent Load *Hours worked per week *Enrollment status (full-time/part-time)
Significant Persons Friends Parents High School Personnel	Family/Friends	Expectations	Encouragement from family Information/encouragement from friends	Friends attending colleges Influence of parents Influence of friends Influence of other Individuals	Opinions of: -Parents/guardians -Family Members -Friends -High school teacher -High School Counselor -Current/Past student of the college *Spouse/Significant Other *Employer
Cost (Financial Aid)	Cost		Net Cost Financial Variables	Cost Availability of financial aid	-Tuition -Fees -Financial Aid *Payment Plans

Chapman (1981)	Jackson (1982)	Hossler & Gallagher (1987)	Somers, Haines, Keene, Bauer, Pfeiffer, McCluskey, Settle, and Sparks (2006)	Ming (2010)	Study Model (2019)
Location Availability of Programs	Admissions	Entrance exams Campus visit College literature	Environment Social Environment Institutional Characteristics Institutional Climate	Location Academic Programs College Reputation Educational Facilities Employment Opportunities Advertising HEIs representatives Campus visit	-Visit to the college -Degree offering -Good fit -Ease of the admissions process -Location -College website -Printed materials -Responsiveness of admission staff -College fair -Attractiveness of campus -Graduates get good jobs -Transferability -Reputation in the community -Quality of technology *Faculty Accessibility *Social Media *Safe campus *Access to public transportation *Graduation rate *Academic support

Note. **Bold typeface** = variables included in both the researcher-developed model and other model(s) presented.

* = variables included in the researcher-developed model but not in the other models.

Policymakers are trying to find ways to improve access to two-year colleges; however, their efforts thus far have focused primarily on traditional students recently graduated from high school. In addition, the policies being developed around tuition-free college are designed to serve that traditional student base. Ignoring the nontraditional student population will leave the United States falling short of the goal of 65% of Americans holding a postsecondary credential by 2020 (National Governors Association, 2018). “Constructive policies should incorporate an understanding of who the students enrolling in community colleges are” (Ma & Baum, 2016, p. 21). This study will help to inform these types of policies and incite continued research of this student population.

In summary, this study of public two-year college choice was informed by many researchers. Choice among two-year college students is a changing phenomenon that demands further study. This literature review offers a conceptual and empirical base for the college-choice process, and highlights practical applications of this work. Additionally, the review informed the developments of the methodology instrument, sampling, and data collection of this study, which sought to expand the current literature in an effort to better understand the public two-year college-choice process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. The purpose of the study was to understand factors influencing students' public two-year college choice. Specifically, the study set out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?
2. To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?
3. To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?
4. To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?
5. To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?

This chapter is organized into six sections: (a) measurement framework, (b) research instrument development, (c) sampling plan, (d) data collection, (e) data preparation and analysis, and (f) limitations of the study.

College choice has been widely studied, particularly in the context of four-year institutions. Factors influencing college choice have remained consistent over the last 60 or more (Kinzie et al., 2004). Empirical research has shown that economic and status-attainment factors are the major driving forces behind college choice. Since the 1990s, most studies, whether quantitative or qualitative, centering on college choice have utilized combined college-choice models (Somers et al., 2006). Creswell (2003)

suggested that a quantitative approach is best when a study seeks to identify “factors that influence an outcome” (p. 21). This study sought to provide a snapshot of what influenced public two-year college students in their college choice decision. A strength of quantitative research is providing data that is descriptive (Madrigan & McClain, 2012). Using quantitative variables allowed me to relate or compare samples or groups (Creswell, 2009). Conducting a quantitative study helped me determine whether, and to what degree, relationships existed between two or more variables. Additionally, the quantitative approach allowed me to identify correlated variables. This study was national in scope, and the data were collected through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, which allowed me to reach a wide range of participants.

Measurement Framework

Hossler, Braxton, and Coppersmith’s (1989) definition of *college choice* was used to guide this study: College choice is a “complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university, or institution of advanced vocational training” (p. 234). The college-choice models that have been developed tend to focus on a particular type of student, such as a traditional or nontraditional students. This study, however, took a broader approach, examining factors that influence both types of students. After a review and comparison of the college-choice literature, it was determined that this study would utilize a composite college-choice model to explain why college students choose to attend public two-year colleges.

Past researchers have identified factors influencing student college choice, including high school academic performance, influence of parents, teachers, and friends,

location, and cost (Chapman, 1981; Hanson & Litten, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Ming, 2010; Perna, 2006; Somers et al., 2006). Researchers have typically used a combined college-choice model, which examines economic and sociological factors influencing college choice (Somers et al., 2006). In a combined college-choice model, factors influencing college choice center on student characteristics, external influences, and fixed college attributes. This study sought to examine how these factors influence public two-year college choice. The following four constructs were identified: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors. Table 3.1 provides definitions of each of these constructs.

Table 3.1

Definitions of College-Choice Constructs

Construct Name	Definition
<i>Opinions of Others</i>	Opinions from an influential person(s)
<i>College Recruitment Efforts</i>	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll
<i>College Characteristics</i>	Fixed features of the college
<i>Financial Factors</i>	Financial considerations taken into account when applying to and enrolling in college

The preceding constructs served as areas of measurement for the study. Figure 3.1 illustrates a conceptual model of the college-choice constructs and variables that guided this study. Also included in this model are student characteristics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, which were collected to develop a set of possible predictor variables for each of the constructs. This model incorporates the theoretical underpinnings of the study, as well as the four constructs that were measured. As indicated by the constructs

chosen, this study examined the amount of influence each constructs had on the selection of a participant's current two-year college. Additionally, the study explored the correlation between student characteristics and the following constructs: (a) opinions of others, (b) college recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors.

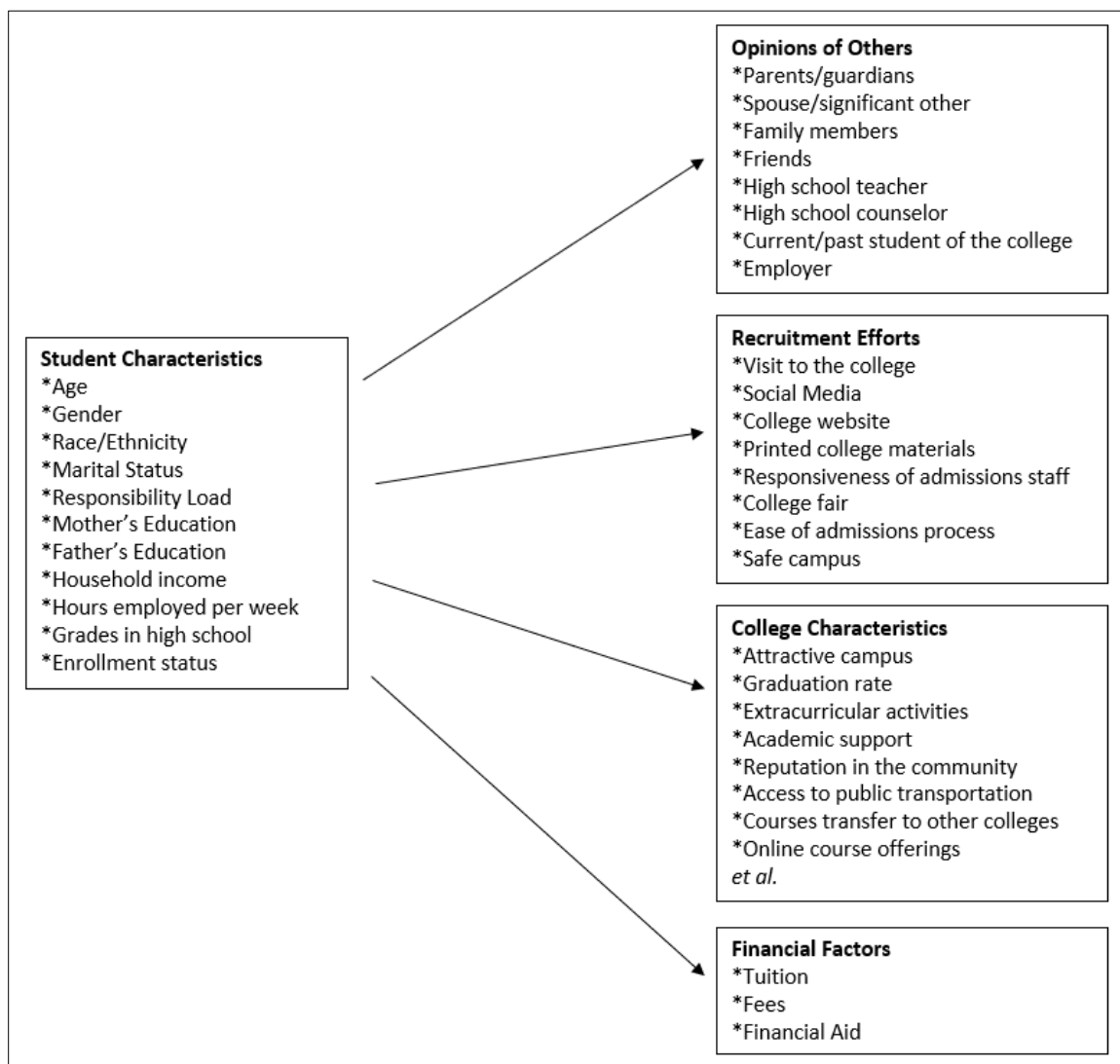


Figure 3.1. Conceptual model of the study.

Instrumentation

To address this study's research questions, a researcher-designed instrument was developed (see Appendix A for the final instrument). As shown in Appendix B, the instrument represents a more than year-long effort to identify items representative of college choice. Both theoretical and empirical work, as well as expert opinions in the field, informed the development of the final instrument. The initial item pool grew to over 600 items and was refined to 56 items, which included student characteristic variables. Different response scales from existing measures were standardized into a single 4-point Likert scale. This section discusses the survey development process, as well as the response scale for measurement and the pilot study.

The instrument was designed to measure factors that current public two-year college students across the United States believe influenced their overall college choice. The process for developing the instrument included the following tasks: (a) development of the item pool, which included a literature review and expert reviews; (b) refinement of the item pool; (c) selection of the item format; (d) conducting pilot studies; and (e) finalization of the instrument and dissemination to the sample.

Development of the Item Pool

As the instrumentation process began, a clear definition of college choice was identified. As research instruments were reviewed, common variables began to emerge. As indicated earlier, most of the instruments reviewed were developed for traditional students in a four-year setting.

In reviewing the college-choice literature, it became quickly evident that most models and instruments were geared toward four-year college choice, traditional student

college choice, or particular groups of underserved students. As this study sought to understand the whole population of public two-year college students, as well as various categories within that population, I determined that developing an instrument was necessary to include all possible categories of students. Therefore, I gathered items from the literature that measured college choice. Appendix C includes the initial item pool, which contained over 300 items.

As items were examined or developed for measuring the constructs, language was also considered. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), colleges must present college-related information at an eighth-grade language level (ADA, 2010). Converse and Presser (1986) suggested that researchers provide participants with a brief introduction to the study, offer definitions where needed, avoid double negatives, and pretest the instrument. As the item pool began to form, I kept these considerations in mind.

As the study methodologist and I worked with the items, the following initial constructs (also reflected in Appendix C) emerged: (a) economic, (b) sociological, (c) psychological, (d) college recruitment efforts, and (e) college reputation. As I narrowed the item pool, a prototype instrument was developed and then shared with fellow graduate students in a research course (see Appendix D). The study methodologist and I discussed whether the constructs properly reflected the items and whether the sociological and psychological constructs needed to be separated. As a result of these discussions, another prototype instrument was developed (see Appendix E).

Refinement of the Item Pool

After continued conversation between the study methodologist and myself, it was determined that the constructs were still not clear. I went back to the literature and reviewed several college-choice questionnaires that had been administered by individual colleges and universities. This led me to add additional items to the item pool (see Appendix F), which at this point had grown to over 600 questions. After continued refinement of the item pool—which was influenced by discussions with professional colleagues and continued discussion with the methodologist—I once again re-sorted the item pool into categories, including (a) direct advice of others, (b) comfort/convenience/familiarity, (c) direct recruitment action, (d) financial aid/cost, and (e) potential employment/better life (see Appendix F). During this re-sort, comfort/convenience/familiarity emerged as the largest item pool, followed by direct advice of others, financial aid/cost, and direct recruitment action. After further discussion with professional colleagues, it was determined that most of the comfort/convenience/familiarity items were actually related to college characteristics. Additionally, I was very tied to employment opportunities, which included items related to a better life. As shown in Appendix F, this category included only had 2% of the overall items. After further conversation with the study methodologist, it was determined that this could also be considered a characteristic of the college.

Following this final re-sort, the following constructs emerged: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors. Several student characteristic variables also emerged. After all refinements to the item pool were made, 39 items remained, along with 17 background/demographic items; these

questions were identified to help me make inferences about particular categories of students—for example, factors influencing college choice among various age groups and ethnic backgrounds. Appendix G includes a table view of the initial constructs and items that were identified and used in the first pilot study. A discussion of the student characteristic variables selected and each of the four constructs follows.

Student characteristics. Predisposition characteristics and variables may encourage or discourage students from enrolling at a college (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982). These factors include aspiration, aptitude, and high school performance, which may inform two-year colleges about the academic level of students to which they could better market (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982). Additionally, demographic data were collected, allowing me to examine the influence of student characteristics on the other four constructs. By examining demographic data, I intended to make generalizations across various categories such as age, sex, and income.

Opinions of others. The college search process usually involves external influences from others, such as friends, high school teachers, counselors, parents, family, and significant persons (e.g., a famous person endorsing a college; Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982). Some external influences may have more impact on college choice than others. The results of this study will help practitioners determine which of these external influences have the greatest impact on college choice.

College recruitment efforts. Factors related to college communications, advertising, interactions with admissions staff, and campus visits can also impact the college-choice process (Chapman, 1981; Herren et al., 2011; Ming, 2010; Tucciarone,

2008). Experts within the higher education sector also believe that staff responsiveness may be a factor that influences the college-choice process.

College characteristics. College attributes related to location, academic programs, reputation, educational facilities, and employment opportunities can influence the college-choice process (Chapman, 1981; Ming, 2010; Somers et al., 2006).

Additionally, as discussed with experts in the field, campus safety, public transportation access, faculty and college reputation, and availability of student support services can influence the college-choice process.

Financial factors. Financial factors, such as availability of financial aid, affordable tuition, and availability of repayment plans, play a major role in public two-year college choice (Burns, 2006; Chapman, 1981; Herren et al., 2011; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Ming, 2010; Tucciarone, 2008). As previous research has demonstrated, repayment plans, not to be confused with student loans, allow the student to enroll, register, and then make payments for tuition and fees over the course of a semester. Experts believe that the expansion of repayment plans may impact college choice.

Selection of the Item Format

After combining existing item measures, a standardized response scale needed to be identified. The items were standardized in a 4-point Likert-scale format, allowing the respondents to identify how important—on a scale ranging from “not at all important” to “very important”—each measured factor was in their overall decision to enroll in a public two-year college. Initially, I selected a 4-point scale because I sought to understand what factors mattered least and most to students in their college-choice process. An even-

numbered Likert scale encourages the respondent to take a position on the topic; I did provide a “not at all” option for respondents, but the scale was designed to understand what mattered most to the college-choice process.

Scholars highly encourage researchers to conduct focus groups and interviews prior to implementing a study (Ajzen, 2002; Dillman et al., 2014). The purpose of focus groups is to ensure that the attitudes and beliefs that the researcher believes they are measuring are indeed important to the participants. As an internal employee of a college, I utilized my professional network to critique and discuss the questionnaire items and constructs.

Pilot Studies

Prior to conducting the final study, two pilot studies (A and B) were conducted to assess the extent to which the questionnaire items captured differences among the participants (variance and distribution), the items consistency of measuring respective constructs (reliability), and the relatibility of the items (multicollinearity).

Pilot study A. The web-based survey platform SurveyMonkey was used to create and administer the online survey. Appendix G lists the survey items; Appendix H includes the instrument for Pilot A.

To collect data for this pilot, I contacted people within my personal network via social media (see Appendix I), namely individuals whom they believed had either just finished their first semester at a public two-year college or those who would be entering into a public two-year college in the spring of 2019. Additionally, I reached out to parents and guardians whom they believed had children who met these same criteria. Between December 20 and December 31, 2018, I distributed the survey link to those whom they

thought fit in this category. This section offers a brief description of the pilot study results.

The pilot questionnaire's first question, "Did you just finish your first semester at a public two-year college OR will you be entering into a public two-year college in the spring of 2019?," was offered as a screener question to ensure that the questionnaire was completed by the intended participants. Out of the 53 total participants, 18 (or 33.96%) of the invited participants answered "Yes" to this question and were able to proceed through the remaining questions.

The results of this initial pilot study showed that:

- all items exhibited sufficient variance to address the research questions; and,
- the reliability of the following three outcomes constructs were satisfactory: opinions of others, .82; college recruitment efforts; .84; and college characteristics, .84.

Through further statistical and logical analysis, and discussion with the researcher's dissertation committee, technical writer, and a graduate student who had recently used MTurk, changes to the survey were made, as outlined in Appendix J. Some of these changes included the following:

- replaced the Likert-scale option "not applicable" with "not at all important" and reduced the survey to a three-point Likert scale, which Jacoby & Matell (1971) found does not reduce reliability of validity;
- added a question to account for the number of adults for whom a participant could be responsible;
- some questions were revised for improved readability/flow;

- added four financial questions;
- added attention-check questions for quality control purposes;
- reworded questions for clarity and flow (see Appendix J); and,
- released the survey early in the morning on a weekday (rather than the evening) to help eliminate MTurk workers who may not take surveys as seriously, thereby reducing the number of survey submissions that could be rejected.

Pilot study B. After discussions with a fellow graduate student who had recently utilized Amazon MTurk for data collection, it was decided that a second pilot study would be conducted within the platform to help eliminate issues related to lack of experience with the system. Additionally, I switched from SurveyMonkey to Qualtrics for administering the online survey. Qualtrics is provided free of charge to students enrolled at the University of Georgia, while SurveyMonkey only allows 100 free responses before the researcher is required to pay \$40 per month to continue using the service. Appendix K includes the Pilot B survey instrument. To collect data for this second pilot study, I developed an advertisement that was displayed within MTurk to attract *workers*, which is MTurk's term for participants (see Appendix L).

I sought to identify a sample that would closely mimic the final sample population. Several qualifiers were used to determine eligibility for participation in the pilot study:

- the student's first semester of enrollment in a public two-year college was spring 2019;
- the student attended a college located in the United States; and,

- the student had earned a high school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED).

Additionally, attention-check questions were used to help ensure that participants were paying attention. These questions required the participant to:

- create a unique user ID and then enter the ID into the MTurk platform as well as the Qualtrics survey software; and,
- type the semester and year the participant had begun enrollment at their two-year college.

A qualifications test and attention-check questions were used to screen potential participants for the study. A total of 113 participants accessed the study instrument via the MTurk website. Sixty-three participants passed the qualifications test to complete the study questionnaire; 13 of the participants were eliminated during data analysis because they did not answer correctly the attention-check question, “What was your first semester and year of enrollment at your current college?” In order to be included, participants must have begun their education in the spring 2019 semester. The next section provides a brief description of the results, while Appendix L provides a detailed report of the findings.

Finalization of the Instrument

Following the data collection for Pilot Study B, the data ($n = 50$) were analyzed in terms of scaled scores and reliabilities among the scales. Reports were run with mean scores and standard deviations, correlations among survey measures and constructs, and coefficient alphas. The distribution scales showed that the survey items captured differences between individual respondents. Additionally, reliability coefficients were strong: opinions of others (.82), college recruitment efforts (.76), college characteristics (.90), and financial factors (.77). The study methodologist and I determined that the

survey questionnaire showed reasonable results related to variance and reliability. Based on this analysis, it was determined that this instrument would be used for the main study, with minor revisions, as identified in Appendix A. Tables 3.2 through 3.5 include all the items for each scale included in the final instrument.

Table 3.2

Final Survey Items, Measuring Opinion Factors

Identifier	Item
6.1	The opinions of parents
6.2	The opinions of significant other
6.3	The opinions of other family members
6.4	The opinions of friends
6.5	The opinions of your high school teacher
6.6	The opinions of your high school counselor
6.7	The opinions of past or current students at the college
6.8	The opinions of your current employer

Table 3.3

Final Survey Items, Recruitment Efforts

Identifier	Item
7.1	A visit to the college
7.2	The college's social media messages
7.3	The information provided on the college website
7.4	The information provided on the college's print materials
7.5	The responsiveness of college staff to my questions
7.6	The information I received at a college fair
7.7	The ease of the admissions process

Table 3.4

Final Survey Items, College Characteristics

Identifier	Item
8.1	The quality of the technology provided by the college
8.2	The attractiveness of the college campus(es)
8.3	The accessibility of the college via public transportation
8.4	The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life
8.5	The excellent reputation of the faculty
8.6	The accessibility of faculty to their students
8.7	The positive academic reputation of the college in my community
8.8	The college courses will transfer easily into a four-year college
8.9	The high graduation rate of students at the college
8.10	The graduates of this college get good jobs
8.11	The college offers fully online programs
8.12	The college offers online courses
8.13	The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace
8.14	The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports
8.15	The college serves a diverse student population
8.16	The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities
8.17	The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges
8.18	The college offers the type of degree I need
8.19	The college is a good fit for people like me
8.20	The safety and security of the college

Table 3.5

Final Survey Items, Financial Factors

Identifier	Item
9.1	The college has affordable tuition
9.2	The college has affordable fees
9.3	The college offers financial aid
9.4*	The college allows me to make payments directly to the college instead of taking out student loans

Note. * This item was excluded from the composite results.

Study Population and Sample

Originally, a target population of just one public two-year institution was considered for this study. However, after discussions with a dissertation committee member, it was determined that the sample would not have been reflective of the entire system as a whole, and the findings would not necessarily have lent themselves to generalizability. As an alternative, the committee member and I discussed using MTurk to conduct a national study. Utilizing MTurk would allow me to establish a broad scope of the factors influencing college choice across the nation. I would also be able to create subgroups of students, allowing for generalizations of college-choice factors within various categories of students. The study methodologist agreed to use MTurk for the study as well.

Convenience sampling—a type of non-probability sampling—was used as the data-collection strategy for this study. The convenience sampling approach allowed me to use MTurk to collect national data more efficiently. Further justification for the use of MTurk is included later in this chapter.

Description of Respondents

The sample included 306 respondents who were enrolled in their first or second term at a public two-year college. Table 3.6 provides a summary of respondent characteristics. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 70 years, with a mean age of 26. The gender breakdown was almost evenly split (i.e., 49.7% females, 49.3% males, 1% “other”). There was a lack of racial and ethnic diversity: 70% of the respondents reported their race as White or Caucasian, 15% reported their race as African American or Black, and the remainder or the “other” race and ethnicity groups reported under 7%. Sixty-six percent of the respondents reported that they intended to earn an associate degree, 21% intended to earn intend to earn a diploma or certificate, 11% intended to transfer to another college, and the remaining respondents reported attending for skill development.

Table 3.6

Respondent Characteristics (n = 306)

Variable	Value
Gender	
Male	n = 151 (49.3%)
Female	n = 152 (49.7%)
Other	n = 3
Race/Ethnicity	
African American/Black	n = 45 (14.7%)
Asian	n = 16 (5.2%)
Biracial	n = 5 (1.6%)
Caucasian/White	n = 215 (70.3%)
Hispanic/Latino/a	n = 21 (6.9%)
No response	n = 4 (1.3%)
Age	
	Mean = 27.3
18-24	n = 143 (47.0%)
25-29	n = 70 (23.0%)
30-34	n = 31 (10.2%)

Variable	Value	
35-39	n = 35	(11.5%)
40-49	n = 15	(2.6%)
50-59	n = 8	(4.9%)
60+	n = 2	(0.6%)
Marital Status		
Married/marriage-like relationship	n = 115	(37.6%)
Not married/marriage-like relationship	n = 191	(62.4%)
Responsibility Load		
Children		
0	n = 220	(71.9%)
1	n = 40	(13.1%)
2	n = 20	(6.5%)
3	n = 13	(4.2%)
4	n = 5	(1.6%)
No response	n = 8	(2.6%)
Adults (parents, siblings)		
0	n = 197	(64.4%)
1	n = 56	(18.3%)
2	n = 38	(12.4%)
3	n = 13	(4.2%)
No response	n = 2	(0.6%)
Mother's Educational Level		
High school diploma or GED	n = 90	(29.4%)
Some college	n = 53	(17.3%)
Associate degree	n = 37	(12.1%)
Bachelor's degree	n = 91	(29.7%)
Master's degree	n = 32	(10.5%)
No response	n = 3	(0.9%)
Father's Educational Level		
High school diploma or GED	n = 88	(28.8%)
Some college	n = 42	(13.7%)
Associate degree	n = 38	(12.4%)
Bachelor's degree	n = 89	(29.1%)
Master's degree	n = 40	(13.1%)
Graduate degree or higher	n = 5	(1.6%)
No response	n = 4	(1.3%)
Average Household Income		
Less than \$10,000	n = 13	(4.2%)

Variable	Value	
\$10,000 – \$19,999	n = 17	(5.6%)
\$20,000 - \$29,999	n = 48	(1.6%)
\$30,000 - \$39,999	n = 43	(1.4%)
\$40,000 - \$49,999	n = 41	(1.3%)
\$50,000 - \$59,999	n = 37	(1.2%)
\$60,000 - \$69,999	n = 29	(0.9%)
70,000 - \$79,999	n = 24	(7.8%)
\$80,000 - \$89,999	n = 13	(4.2%)
\$90,000 - \$99,999	n = 15	(4.9%)
More than \$100,000	n = 26	(8.5%)
Hours Employed Per Week		
Maximum	0	
Minimum	60	
Mean	28.85	
Enrollment Status		
Part-time	n = 198	(64.7%)
Full-time	n = 108	(35.3%)
Tuition Status		
In-state	n = 292	(95.4%)
Out-of-state	n = 11	(3.6%)
International	n = 1	(0.3%)
No response	n = 2	(.7%)
Veteran Status		
Veteran	n = 16	(5.2%)
Non-Veteran	n = 290	(94.8%)
Intended Award Type		
Associate Degree	n = 201	(65.7%)
Diploma	n = 31	(10.1%)
Certificate	n = 34	(11.1%)
Intend to Transfer	n = 34	(11.1%)
Skill Development	n = 4	(1.3%)
No response	n = 2	(0.7%)
State		
Alabama	n = 8	(2.6%)
Alaska	n = 1	(0.3%)
Arizona	n = 7	(2.3%)
Arkansas	n = 1	(0.3%)
California	n = 25	(8.2%)

Variable	Value	
Colorado	n = 4	(1.3%)
Connecticut	n = 5	(1.6%)
Florida	n = 27	(8.8%)
Georgia	n = 8	(2.6%)
Illinois	n = 9	(2.9%)
Indiana	n = 4	(1.3%)
Iowa	n = 4	(1.3%)
Kansas	n = 3	(0.9%)
Kentucky	n = 3	(0.9%)
Louisiana	n = 5	(1.6%)
Maine	n = 3	(0.9%)
Maryland	n = 3	(0.9%)
Massachusetts	n = 3	(0.9%)
Michigan	n = 17	(5.6%)
Minnesota	n = 4	(1.3%)
Mississippi	n = 2	(0.6%)
Missouri	n = 7	(2.3%)
Montana	n = 2	(0.6%)
Nebraska	n = 1	(0.3%)
Nevada	n = 4	(1.3%)
New Hampshire	n = 5	(1.6%)
New Jersey	n = 7	(2.3%)
New Mexico	n = 2	(0.6%)
New York	n = 23	(7.5%)
North Carolina	n = 13	(4.2%)
North Dakota	n = 1	(0.3%)
Ohio	n = 15	(4.9%)
Oregon	n = 1	(0.3%)
Pennsylvania	n = 20	(6.5%)
Puerto Rico	n = 2	(0.6%)
South Carolina	n = 4	(1.3%)
South Dakota	n = 1	(0.3%)
Tennessee	n = 7	(2.3%)
Texas	n = 20	(6.5%)
Utah	n = 4	(1.3%)
Vermont	n = 1	(0.3%)
Virginia	n = 48	(15.7%)
Washington	n = 4	(1.3%)
West Virginia	n = 1	(0.3%)
Wisconsin	n = 3	(0.9%)

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey using Qualtrics software under license by the University of Georgia. With the intent of garnering a national perspective on public two-year college choice, a convenience sample was used. This approach allowed me to gain a broad perspective of college choice in the public two-year college setting. The study sample was recruited using the MTurk online platform.

Data Collection Strategy

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) maintained that “the internet can be a useful mode for conducting surveys targeted at very specific populations, such as college students” (p. 69). MTurk is an online platform for human intelligence tasks (HITs), offering a “one-stop shop” for bringing researchers and participants together in a virtual space and enabling data collection (Buhrmester, Kwan, & Gosling, 2011). MTurk allows the researcher to set criteria for selecting participants. Upon completion of the survey, the researcher pays the participant a small fee, generally less than a dollar (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Researchers have found that MTurk survey participation rates are around 91% (Dupuis, Engicott, & Crossler, 2013). Research has also shown that the quality of the data received from MTurk participants is promising.

Research surrounding the quality of online data collection finds that the online process helps to reduce biases that may emerge with traditional research methods (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004). Researchers have found that “the quality of data provided by MTurk met or exceeded the psychometric standards associated with published research” (Buhrmester, Kwan, & Gosling, 2011, p. 5). To help ensure quality of responses, Dupuis, Engicott, and Crossler (2013) recommended developing “catch

trials”—that is, when the researcher develops survey questions in such a way that anyone paying attention to the wording should be able to answer each one correctly.

Researchers are selective in their data-collection strategy and typically employ methods that have been vetted by other researchers. As MTurk becomes an increasingly popular method for collecting data, researchers are finding that the “quality is generally high, the cost is low, and the turnaround time is minimal” (Dupuis et al., 2013, p.1) Additionally, “MTurk samples will provide good, if not better diversity than participants that were recruited for research ... In the U.S., the demographics of participants are comparable to other types of samples often used, and in some instances they may be superior” (Dupuis et al., 2013, pp. 2-3). Based on this researcher’s professional experience, securing the participation of students can be difficult. MTurk’s platform already has interested potential participants, which should increase participation.

MTurk not only helps in screening participants, but it is also a cost-effective way to gain participation in research studies. “MTurk provides an opportunity for researchers to perform research on the web often at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods” (Dupuis et al., 2013, p. 5). The convenience of identifying the population for this study and the fact that researchers have found the quality of the data to be high supported the use of MTurk for this study.

Data Collection Procedure

After analyzing the data collected during Pilot Study B, the study methodologist and I made minor revisions to the survey (Appendix M). During the prospectus defense, the committee members approved these revisions to the instrument and authorized me to proceed with the study. After the revisions were made, the online survey was created in

Qualtrics. The final version of the instrument, the MTurk participant recruitment materials (Appendix N), and the informed consent information (Appendix O) were submitted to the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Upon receiving approval from the IRB, the survey was finalized in Qualtrics. I then created an MTurk creator account, which allowed the HIT to be created. Several eligibility requirements were put in place to limit MTurk workers' ability to complete the survey. Specifically, each worker was required to: (1) have a 95% acceptance rate, (2) have completed 500 or more HITs, and (3) be located within the United States. Based on suggestions from previous research, it was suggested to pay workers at a rate that would equal \$6 per hour (Dupuis et al., 2013). Based on Pilot Study B, I estimated that the survey would take approximately 10 minutes to complete. As a result, I set the pay for this HIT at \$1. I requested 300 MTurk workers. MTurk charged a fee of \$0.20 per HIT, resulting in a final per-response cost of \$1.20.

Figure 3.2 summarizes the MTurk platform data-collection procedure. MTurk workers had to be signed in to the MTurk website, which allowed them to see a list of HITs, or surveys published by MTurk. Generally, workers review the introductions of the surveys and click on the online survey links if they wish to participate. If they chose to participate in this study, they were given a link directing them to the online survey at Qualtrics. Here, they reached the informed consent information and then completed a qualifications test. If they passed the qualifications test, the worker continued on to complete the survey. After survey completion, I reviewed the survey submission and determined whether to accept or reject the HIT/survey completion. If the HIT/survey was accepted, the participant received payment. If the HIT/survey was rejected, the

participant was not paid, and the HIT/survey was reposted on the MTurk platform for a new participant.

The survey was launched on a Wednesday morning with a total of 300 tasks to be completed. It took a total of four days to collect the data. I monitored data collection throughout the process and approved/rejected HITs/surveys as they were submitted. This approach allowed me to provide timely feedback to participants and also allowed for some submissions that were initially rejected to be reversed (e.g., one participant entered spring 2020, but emailed to advise of her error, and the rejection was reversed). The overall acceptance rate was 53%. A total of 583 responses were submitted, with 47% of the responses being rejected. The main reason for rejection was because participants failed to enter the unique survey completion code they created in Qualtrics or because they stated that their first term was a time other than spring 2019 or summer 2019. Research has shown that some MTurk workers will try to cheat the system by quickly completing HITs/surveys and not paying attention. Thus, I was advised by another graduate student to include more than one attention-check question, thereby improving quality.

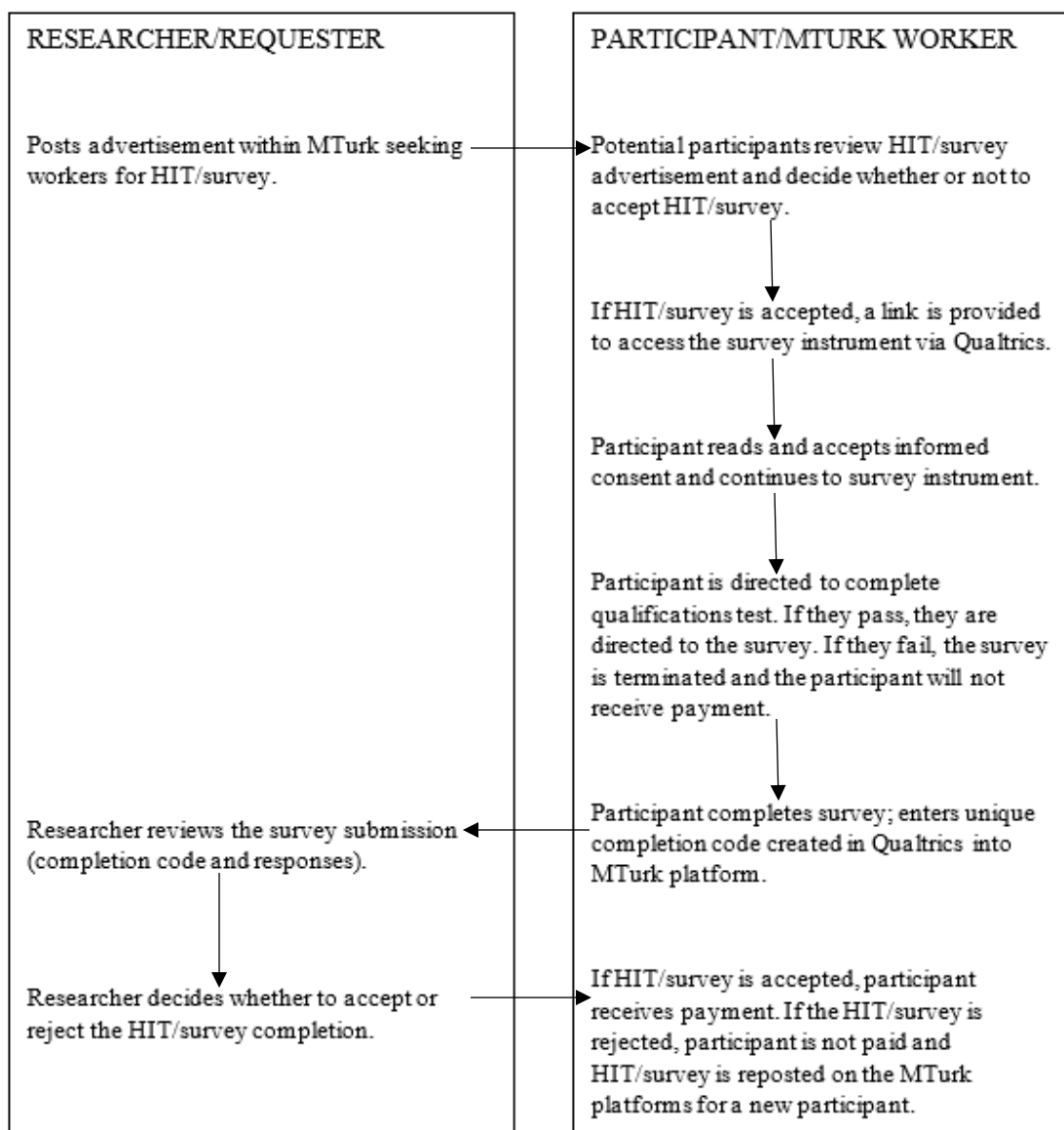


Figure 3.2. Data collection process using Amazon Mechanical Turk.

I received very little backlash from MTurk workers when they were rejected from the survey. As shown in Appendix P, I provided a detailed reason for why their HIT/survey was rejected and responded to any inquiries about the rejection in a timely manner. I made an effort to be respectful of the time the workers/participants took to complete the survey. There were approximately 15 workers/participants who contacted

me in frustration, but in general, MTurk workers were polite and pled their case for reversal kindly. I found MTurk to be an efficient means for gathering data from a diverse sample.

Data Preparation

Before the data collected in Qualtrics were exported to SPSS statistical software, I eliminated some survey responses. I eliminated participants' survey data for three primary reasons:

1. the survey response was incomplete;
2. the response to attention-check question 24 (“In what semester and year did you first begin taking courses at your current public two-year college?”) was a time other than spring 2019 or summer 2019; or,
3. attention-check item 30 (“Create a unique survey completion code”) was not completed properly.

I also informed interested participants (in the advertisement posted on the MTurk platform) that their participation could be rejected if they took fewer than 600 seconds to complete the survey; however, very few participants were rejected for this reason.

After the respondent data were cleaned in Qualtrics, the data were downloaded as a comma-separated value (CSV) file, and I reviewed the dataset in Excel. Data labels were added to the CSV file, and the file was checked for accuracy. As the data were reviewed in Excel, participants who received rejections emailed me to determine the reason for their exclusion from the study. I responded to these participants in a timely manner and was able to reverse some rejections. Attention-check item 30, in which the respondent created a unique survey completion code, allowed me, where appropriate, to

match the respondent to the response data and reverse rejections. Appendix Q provides an example of a communication with a respondent regarding a reversed rejection.

Once the file was cleaned in Excel, it was imported into SPSS for further data cleaning. Values for age were calculated by subtracting the year provide from 2019. In further reviewing age values, the study methodologist and I found that there were two ages that fell below 18 (i.e., nine and 13). The study methodologist and I recoded these responses to “missing.” For transparency, and for frequencies and other statistics, items such as household income, age, marital status, race, and gender were recoded since they did not return appropriate responses in SPSS. Race and gender were recoded to numeric values (i.e., 1 = African American, 2 = Asian, 3 = Biracial, etc.). It was determined that gender would be dichotomized to include male and female. While there were three participants who yielded as queer or non-binary, there were not enough participants in this category to make generalizations about these reported gender identities. Additionally, while there was some variance in race/ethnicity, it was determined that there was not enough difference between the reported races/ethnicities, and a race-dichotomized variable was created that included those who reported as White or African American. Due to the low number of respondents who identified as a veteran, this response was eliminated from the data analysis. I reviewed the hours per week employed and eliminated responses over 61 hours per week. In reviewing the number of children and adults and/or siblings for whom the respondent could have been responsible, I determined that these questions were intended to understand the respondents’ load and the impact it had on their college choice; therefore, I merged these two variables to create a new variable: respondent load. An additional variable—first-generation—was created to

identify respondents who identified as first-generation based on their parents' educational level. Each variable was then viewed to ensure that it was classified correctly as ordinal, nominal, or categorical. The items associated with each construct were combined to create four scales: (1) Opinions of Others, (2) College Recruitment Efforts, (3) College Characteristics, and (4) Financial Factors.

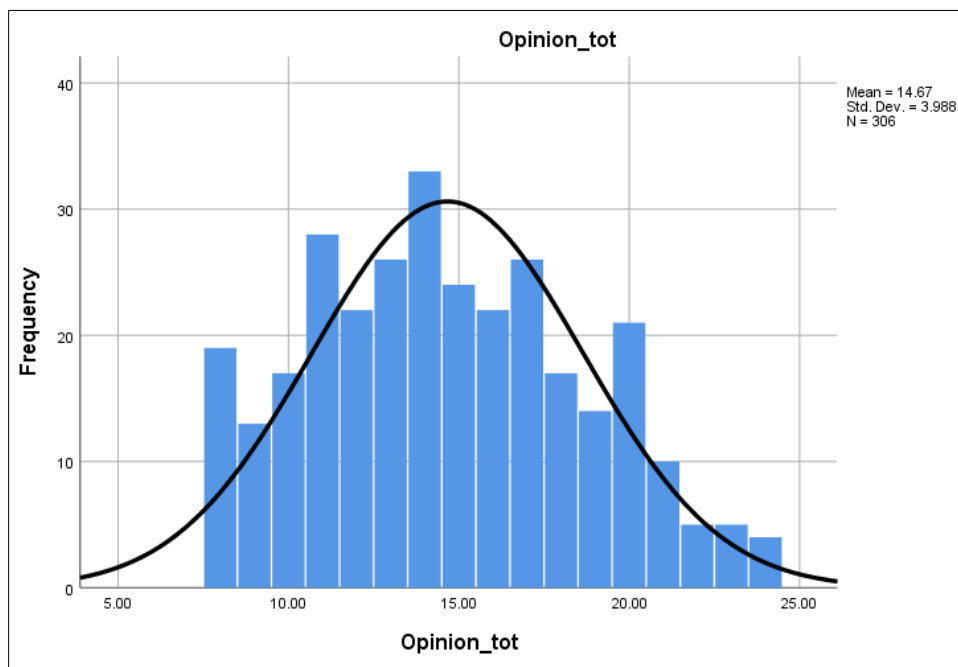
Frequency, means, and standard deviation were calculated in SPSS for each variable. Coefficient alphas for each of the four construct scales were also calculated to determine reliability. I noted that the Financial Factors construct was not performing as well as the other constructs. It was determined that the item related to students making payments directly to the college instead of taking out student loans was skewing the coefficient alpha. This was not surprising since the pilot studies revealed that this question was bothersome, and I reworded the question. It was assumed that participants did not understand the question or were not taking advantage of this financing option. As a result, I created a new scale—Financial Total Minus Payments—which eliminated the payments item from the scale.

The coefficient alpha was lowest for the Financial Factors scale (.72). The other scales had higher coefficient alphas with College Characteristics yielding a .84, Opinions of Others yielding a .83, and the College Recruitment Efforts yielding a .77. Table 3.7 summarizes the distribution and reliability of scales and is followed by histograms and frequencies for each scale (Figures 3.3 through 3.6). As illustrated in these figures, most of the scales had good distributions and close to normal curves.

Table 3.7

Distribution and Reliability of Key Measures

Scale	Number of Items	M	SD	Mean Item Mean	Alpha
Construct					
Opinions of Others	8	14.67	3.99	2.21	.83
College Recruitment Efforts	7	17.64	3.44	2.19	.77
College Characteristics	20	43.51	6.76	2.29	.84
Financial Factors	3	8.08	1.37	2.69	.72
Total	37				

*Figure 3.3.* Distribution of the Opinions of Others scale.

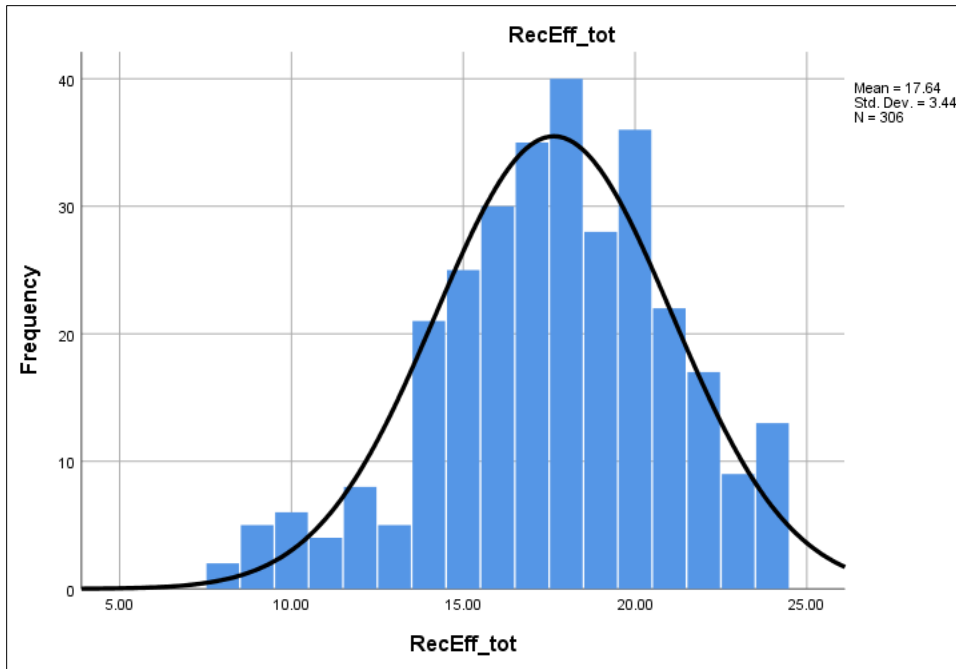


Figure 3.4. Distribution of the College Recruitment Efforts scale.

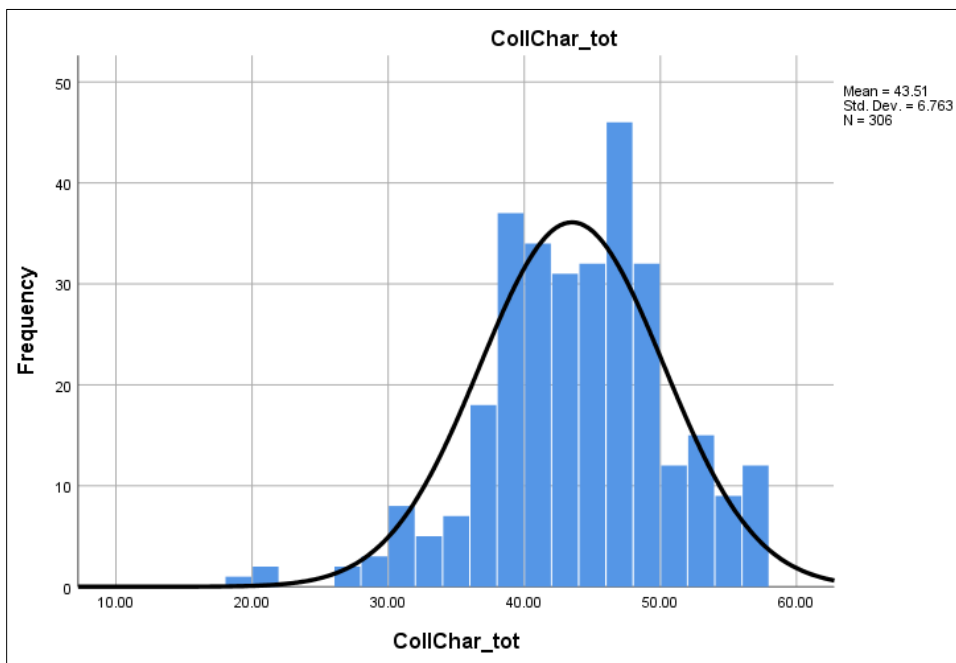


Figure 3.5. Distribution of the College Characteristics scale.

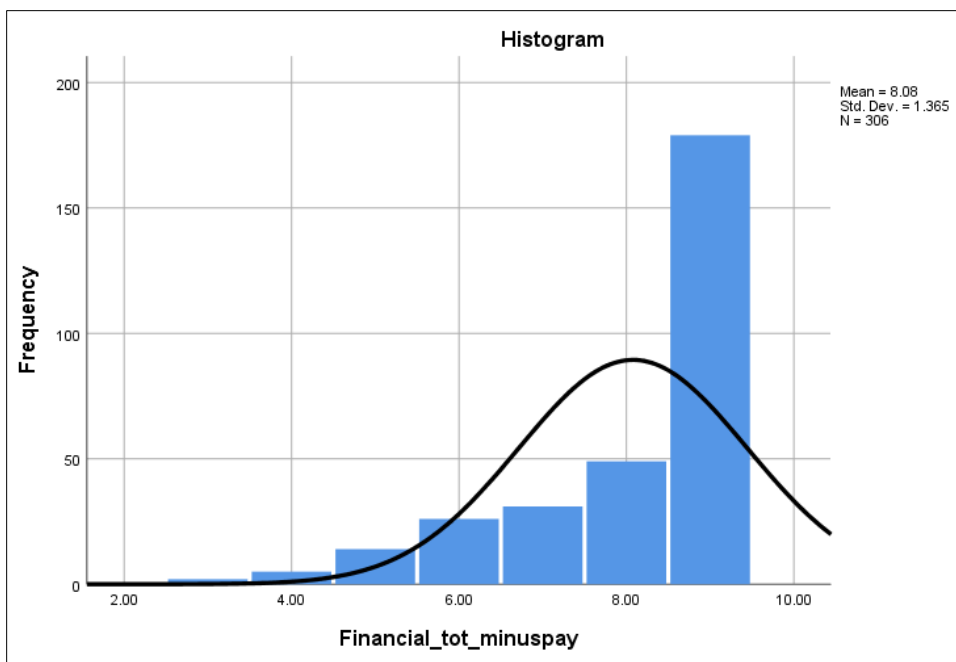


Figure 3.6. Distribution of the Financial Factors scale.

In addition to determining the distribution and reliability of each scale, correlations among the scales were also calculated. The correlation coefficient was significant between each scale at the .01 level. Table 3.8 presents the Pearson's correlations between the scale measures. Based on the coefficient of determination, the constructs shared a range of 8% to 55% of the variance. In each case, they were separate from one another, and evidenced reasonable divergent validity. The intercorrelation between financial factors and recruitment efforts was weakest, at 7%, and the intercorrelation between college characteristics and recruitment efforts was strongest at 55%. While there was a wide range of intercorrelation, in the judgement of the study methodologist and myself, these four constructs provided sufficient divergent validity.

Table 3.8

Intercorrelations Among the Scales

	Opinions of Others	College Recruitment Efforts	College Characteristics	Financial Factors
Opinions of Others	1			
Recruitment Efforts	.46**	1		
College Characteristics	.41**	.74**	1	
Financial Factors	-.58	.29**	.46**	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Appropriate analyses were conducted for each research question. The study utilized descriptive statistics and other statistical procedures, including univariate and bivariate analysis, and simple regressions to determine predictive relationships.

The following research questions were addressed through univariate analysis:

1. To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?
2. To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?
3. To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?
4. To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?

The mean of each item within each construct was calculated and ranked from highest to lowest. The total items were then ranked to identify which constructs had the most influence on college choice.

Research Question 5 (“To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of

others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?") was addressed by a series of simple regressions. Each student characteristic was explored to understand its predictive power of opinions of others, recruitment efforts, college characteristics, and financial factors. High-priority recruiting populations were also identified, and the predictive power of selected college-choice factors on these populations was examined.

Limitations

This study set out to obtain a large sample to promote the generalizability of the results. A convenience sampling approach was taken and data were collected using an online survey platform. The study was able to collect responses from a fairly diverse population of participants. This allowed several statistical analyses to be conducted. However, because this study took a convenience sampling approach, it might be more difficult to generalize the results compared to those of a random sample. Logical inference is needed to generalize the study results. While MTurk is likely to provide a much more diverse sample than a sample of undergraduate students (Buhrmester et., al 2011), these workers are more likely to be Caucasian and highly educated (McDuffie, 2019). The sample was less diverse in terms of race and ethnicity than I would have liked, however, statistical analyses were able to be conducted to compare Caucasian and African American participants reported levels of influence. In regards to education, I was very specific with my HIT title and description and did implement "check" questions to eliminate workers who did not meet the criteria for the study. While these checks helped eliminate participants who did not fit the profile, the review of individual submissions did require extra time.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses that were conducted to answer the research questions of this study. The purpose of the study was to understand factors influencing students' public two-year college choice. Specifically, the study set out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?
2. To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?
3. To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?
4. To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?
5. To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?

This chapter presents the findings related to each of the research questions, as well as an overall ranking of all of the items related to college choice for the administered survey.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

The first research question asked, "To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?" Descriptive analyses were conducted to better understand this construct. Table 4.1 displays the means and ranks of the items measuring the influence of others. The ranking was based on a 3-point scale (1 = very important, 2 = somewhat

important, and 3 = not at all important). The opinions of parents item yielded the highest mean, 2.06, followed by the opinions of past or current students at the college, 1.94. The opinions of your current employer had a mean of 1.60, which was the lowest mean of the construct. Only one item within this scale, the opinions of parents, ranked above the theoretical midpoint.

Table 4.1

Rank Order Listing of Opinions of Others Items (n = 306)

Rank	Item	Item Language	M	SD
1	6.1	The opinions of parents	2.06	.71
2	6.7	The opinions of past or current students at the college	1.94	.76
3	6.4	The opinions of friends	1.87	.73
4	6.2	The opinions of significant other	1.87	.79
5	6.6	The opinions of your high school counselor	1.82	.77
6	6.5	The opinions of your high school teacher	1.76	.73
7	6.3	The opinions of other family members	1.75	.72
8	6.8	The opinions of your current employer	1.60	.71

Findings Related to Research Question 2

The second research question asked, “To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?” Descriptive analyses were also conducted to better understand this construct. Table 4.2 displays the means and ranks of the items measuring influence of others. The ranking was based on a 3-point scale (1 = very important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = not at all important). Only one item, the college’s social media messages, fell below the theoretical midpoint in this scale. Recruitment efforts had a major influence on college choice. The information provided on the college website

item stood out with the highest mean, 2.41, with the college’s social media messages yielding the lowest mean, 1.65. Additionally, the direct interaction that the participant received—a visit to the college and the responsiveness of college staff to my questions—had a significant influence on a student’s choice to attend a particular two-year college (both with a mean of 2.33).

Table 4.2

Rank Order Listing of College Recruitment Effort Items (n = 306)

Rank	Item	Item Language	M	SD
1	7.3	The information provided on the college website	2.41	.64
2	7.7	The ease of the admissions process	2.35	.67
3	7.1	A visit to the college	2.33	.69
4	7.5	The responsiveness of college staff to my questions	2.33	.69
5	7.4	The information provided on the college’s print materials	2.23	.71
6	7.6	The information I received at a college fair	2.06	.76
7	7.2	The college’s social media messages	1.65	.72

Findings Related to Research Question 3

The third research question asked, “To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?” Descriptive analyses were again conducted to better understand this construct. Table 4.3 displays the means and ranks of the items measuring influence of others. The rankings were based on a 3-point scale (1 = very important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = not at all important). Seventeen of the 20 items ranked above the theoretical midpoint within this scale. The highest means yielded by items in this construct centered on “fit.” The college offers the type of degree item stood out with

the highest mean, 2.70, while the college is a good fit for people like me item yielded a mean of 2.60, the college courses will transfer easily into a four-year college had a mean of 2.57, and the class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace had a mean of 2.52. For this student population, the data revealed that extracurricular activities and the opportunity to participate in sports were not major influencers of the college-choice process.

Table 4.3

Rank Order Listing of College Characteristics Items (n = 306)

Rank	Item	Item Language	M	SD
1	8.18	The college offers the type of degree I need	2.70	.55
2	8.19	The college is a good fit for people like me	2.60	.59
3	8.8	The college courses will transfer easily into a four-year college	2.57	.65
4	8.13	The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace	2.52	.65
5	8.10	The graduates of this college get good jobs	2.44	.72
6	8.4	The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life	2.42	.67
7	8.7	The positive academic reputation of the college in my community	2.42	.66
8	8.1	The quality of the technology provided by the college	2.41	.67
9	8.6	The accessibility of faculty to their students	2.39	.67
10	8.12	The college offers online courses	2.38	.68
11	8.5	The excellent reputation of the faculty	2.35	.65
12	8.20	The safety and security of the college	2.28	.71
13	8.9	The high graduation rate of students at the college	2.21	.72
14	8.2	The attractiveness of the college campus(es)	2.19	.71
15	8.11	The college offers fully online programs	2.18	.73
16	8.17	The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges	2.13	.76
17	8.3	The accessibility of the college via public transportation	2.05	.81
18	8.15	The college serves a diverse student population	1.94	.70
19	8.16	The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities	1.90	.80
20	8.14	The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports	1.70	.78

Findings Related to Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, “To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?” Descriptive analyses were conducted to better understand this construct. Table 4.4 displays the means and ranks of the items measuring influence of others. The rankings were based on a 3-point scale (1 = very important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = not at all important). The first three items, affordable tuition, affordable fees, and financial aid, had a mean greater than 2.6. Payments directly to the college had the lowest mean, 2.49. As the table reveals, all of the items in this scale ranked above the theoretical midpoint.

Table 4.4

Rank Order Listing of Financial Factors Items (n = 306)

Rank	Item	Item Language	M	SD
1	9.1	The college has affordable tuition	2.73	.55
2	9.2	The college has affordable fees	2.72	.54
3	9.3	The college offers financial aid	2.63	.62
4	9.4	The college allows me to make payments directly to the college instead of taking out student loans	2.49	.67

Findings Related to Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked, “To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?” The population for this study comprised a near equal split of male/female, and 18.6% of the sample population identified as first-generation college students. The tables

that follow display the background variables for these populations as well as dichotomized variables for race/ethnicity, including African-American and Caucasian populations.

To determine the bivariate relationships, the Pearson correlation was obtained for each of the scales. Then, in order to determine the relationships between the student characteristics and each of the four scales—Opinions of Others, College Recruitment Efforts, College Characteristics, and Financial Factors—t-tests were conducted. When correlations were significant, the correlation coefficients were squared to obtain coefficients of determination (r^2). The coefficients of determination provided the proportion of each dependent variable explained by each of the independent variables.

Table 4.5 shows that father's educational level, household income, and mother's educational level influenced the Opinions of Others scale most significantly. The higher the parent education level, and the higher the household income, the more that opinions of others influenced the respondent's college-choice decision. While these regressions were comparatively weak, they were still statistically significant. Father's educational level explained 7% of the observed variance within the Opinions of Others scale. The other statistically significant correlates were household income (3%) and mother's educational level (2%).

Table 4.5

Student Characteristics Impact on Opinions of Others (n = 306)

Variable	Beta	Sig	r²
Father's educational level*	.27	.00	.07
Household income*	.16	.01	.03
Mother's educational level*	.15	.01	.02
Respondent load	-.12	.04	.01
Age	-.02	.71	.00
Grades	-.03	.96	.00
Hours employed	-.03	.56	.00

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

Related to opinions of others, race/ethnicity and first-generation students were also influenced differently than other groups of students, as shown in Table 4.6. African-American respondents were more influenced by the opinions of others than Caucasian respondents, whereas first-generation students were less influenced by the opinions of others.

Table 4.6

Student Characteristics Impact on Opinions of Others (n = 306)

Variable	t	Sig
Race/ethnicity dichotomized*	2.29	.02
First-generation*	-3.37	.00
Marital status	.96	ns
Gender dichotomized	-.108	ns
Enrollment status	.00	ns

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

As shown in Tables 4.7 and 4.8, the only student characteristic that impacted the College Recruitment Efforts scale was respondent load and race/ethnicity. Two percent of the variance within the scale was explainable by the respondent load. The higher the number of individuals the respondent was responsible for, the more impact recruitment efforts had on their choice to attend their current two-year college. African-American respondents also reported that recruitment efforts had a greater influence on their college-choice process.

Table 4.7

Student Characteristics Impact on College Recruitment Efforts (n = 306)

Variable	Beta	Sig	r²
Respondent load*	.15	.01	.02
Grades	.10	.08	.01
Father's educational level	.09	.12	.01
Household income	.09	.11	.01
Hours employed	.04	.49	.00
Age	.02	.71	.00
Mother's education level	.02	.78	.00

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

As outlined in Table 4.8, race/ethnicity was the only variable influenced by recruitment efforts. African-American respondents were more influenced than Caucasian students by college recruitment efforts.

Table 4.8

Student Characteristics Impact on College Recruitment Efforts (n = 306)

Variable	t	Sig
Race/ethnicity dichotomized*	4.15	.00
Marital status	1.78	ns
First-generation	-.155	ns
Enrollment status	.13	ns
Gender dichotomized	1.35	ns

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

As identified in Tables 4.9 and 4.10, College Characteristics was the only construct reported to be influenced by race/ethnicity.

Table 4.9

Student Characteristics Impact on College Characteristics (n = 306)

Variable	Beta	Sig	r²
Mother's educational level	.04	.50	.00
Father's educational level	.10	.09	.01
Household income	.07	.24	.01
Hours employed	-.04	.54	.00
Grades	.0	.32	.00
Age	-.03	.67	.00
Respondent load	.02	.71	.00

The African-American population reported being more influenced by college characteristics than the Caucasian population.

Table 4.10

Student Characteristics Impact on College Characteristics (n = 306)

Variable	T	Sig
Race/ethnicity dichotomized*	3.47	.001
Gender dichotomized	1.81	ns
Marital status	1.04	ns
First-generation	-.85	ns
Enrollment status	-.24	ns

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

Tables 4.11 and 4.12 display student characteristics and their influence on the Financial Factors scale. As shown in Table 4.11, the higher the parental education level, the less financial factors influenced the respondent's choice of college. Two percent of the variance can be explained by the mother's educational level, and 4% of the variance can be explained by the father's educational level.

Table 4.11

Student Characteristics Impact on Financial Factors (n = 306)

Variable	Beta	Sig	r²
Mother's educational level*	-.13	.02	.02
Father's educational level*	-.19	.00	.04
Household income	-.08	.17	.01
Hours employed	-.03	.63	.00
Grades	.01	.91	.00
Age	-.00	.98	.00
Respondent Load	-.06	.31	.00

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

As shown in Table 4.12, first-generation and female students were influenced differently than other students regarding financial factors. Females and first-generation students were more influenced by financial factors than other groups of respondents.

Table 4.12

Student Characteristics Impact on Financial Factors (n = 306)

Variable	t	Sig
Gender dichotomized*	3.19	.00
First-generation*	2.33	.02
Marital status	.60	Ns
Race/Ethnicity dichotomized	.91	Ns
Enrollment status	-1.72	Ns

Note. *Significant at the level .01.

Overall Ranking of Importance by Item

In an effort to identify potential difference between the constructs, each scale was analyzed. Table 4.13 presents the descriptive statistics. The College Characteristics scale showed the highest mean ($M = 43.51$), while Financial Factors had the lowest mean ($M = 8.08$). The overall mean item mean rank revealed that financial factors ranked first, followed by college characteristics, opinions of others, and, lastly, college recruitment efforts. All of the scales used in this study had an acceptable internal consistency, exceeding .72 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 4.13

Rank Order Listing of Construct Scales

Scale	Number of Items	M	SD	Mean Item Mean	Alpha
Construct					
Financial Factors	3	8.08	1.37	2.69	.72
College Characteristics	20	43.51	6.76	2.29	.84
Opinions of Others	8	14.67	3.99	2.21	.83
College Recruitment Efforts	7	17.64	3.44	2.19	.77
Total	37				

After the rankings by individual constructs were completed, the constructs and items were combined and placed in rank order, as reflected in Table 4.14. Three of the top five items influencing two-year college choice were related to financial factors: affordable tuition, affordable fees, and the offering of financial aid. Two college characteristics—degree offering and college fit—were also among the top five items that most influenced two-year college choice. Recruitment efforts rankings emerged as influencers in the 11th ranking. The opinions of others construct did not emerge until rank 29 and fell below the theoretical midpoint, with opinions of current employer ranking lowest at number 39. Overall, 28 of the 39 items ranked above the theoretical midpoint.

Table 4.14

Overall Ranking of College-Choice Factors

Rank	Item	Construct	Item Language	M	SD
1	9.1	Financial	The college has affordable tuition	2.73	.55
2	9.2	Financial	The college has affordable fees	2.72	.54
3	8.18	College Characteristics	The college offers the type of degree I need	2.70	.55
4	9.3	Financial	The college offers financial aid	2.63	.62
5	8.19	College Characteristics	The college is a good fit for people like me	2.60	.59
6	8.8	College Characteristics	The college offers courses that will easily transfer into a four-year college	2.57	.65
7	8.13	College Characteristics	The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace	2.52	.65
8	8.10	College Characteristics	The graduates of this college get good jobs	2.44	.72
9	8.4	College Characteristics	The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life	2.42	.67
10	8.7	College Characteristics	The positive academic reputation of the college in my community	2.42	.66
11	7.3	Recruitment Efforts	The information provided on the college website	2.41	.64
12	8.1	College Characteristics	The quality of the technology provided by the college	2.41	.67
13	8.6	College Characteristics	The accessibility of faculty to their students	2.39	.67
14	8.12	College Characteristics	The college offers online courses	2.38	.68
15	7.7	Recruitment Efforts	The ease of the admissions process	2.35	.67
16	8.5	College Characteristics	The excellent reputation of the faculty	2.35	.65
17	7.1	Recruitment Efforts	A visit to the college	2.33	.69
18	7.5	Recruitment Efforts	The responsiveness of college staff to my questions	2.33	.69

Rank	Item	Construct	Item Language	M	SD
19	7.8	College Characteristics	The safety and security of the college	2.28	.71
20	7.4	Recruitment Efforts	The information provided on the college's print materials	2.23	.71
21	8.9	College Characteristics	The high graduation rate of students at the college	2.21	.72
22	8.2	College Characteristics	The attractiveness of the college campus(es)	2.19	.71
23	8.11	College Characteristics	The college offers fully online programs	2.18	.73
24	8.17	College Characteristics	The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges	2.13	.76
25	8.17	College Characteristics	The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges	2.13	.76
26	7.6	Recruitment Efforts	The information I received at a college fair	2.06	.76
27	8.3	College Characteristics	The accessibility of the college via public transportation	2.05	.81
28	6.7	Opinions of Others	The opinions of past or current students at the college	1.94	.76
29	8.15	College Characteristics	The college serves a diverse student population	1.94	.70
30	8.16	College Characteristics	The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities	1.90	.80
31	6.4	Opinions of Others	The opinions of friends	1.87	.73
32	6.2	Opinions of Others	The opinions of significant other	1.87	.79
33	6.6	Opinions of Others	The opinions of your high school counselor	1.82	.77
34	6.5	Opinions of Others	The opinions of your high school teacher	1.76	.73
35	6.3	Opinions of Others	The opinions of family members	1.75	.72
36	8.14	College Characteristics	The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports	1.70	.78
37	7.2	Recruitment Efforts	The college's social media messages	1.65	.72

Rank	Item	Construct	Item Language	M	SD
38	6.8	Opinions of Others	The opinions of your current employer	1.60	.71

Summary

Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and simple regressions were used to answer the research questions. Key findings included the following: (1) Financial factors were most influential, and college characteristics were least influential in the public two-year college-choice process; (2) different races/ethnicities placed different value on factors related to the opinions of others, college recruitment efforts, and college characteristics; and (3) first-generation students were more influenced by financial factors than the opinions of others.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes previously presented findings from the college-choice survey that was administered on a national level to public two-year college students who were enrolled in their first or second semester of college. The purpose of the study was to understand factors influencing students' public two-year college choice. Specifically, the study set out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?
2. To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?
3. To what extent do college characteristics influence college choice?
4. To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?
5. To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?

This chapter provides an overview of the study's methodology, then summarizes the key findings. It then presents principal conclusions based on the findings, followed by a discussion around implications for practice, policy, and future research.

Methodology Overview

This study employed a researcher-developed instrument that was administered to public two-year college students across the United States. The 57-item instrument was developed to measure factors that current public two-year college students believed

influenced their college-choice decision. Data were collected using an online survey tool. A total of 306 surveys were completed by participants. Statistical analyses of the survey results included descriptive statistics, rank ordering of means, correlations, and simple regressions. In an effort to address Research Questions 1 through 4, item means were calculated and rank ordered. Simple regressions were conducted to explore the fifth research question.

This national study represents respondents from 88% of U.S. states. The median age of respondents was 27.3 years old, and there was a near split regarding their gender. In addition, 64.7% of the respondents identified as part-time students.

Summary of Findings

Descriptive analyses were used to better understand the study sample. Rank ordering of the items in each of the four constructs—Opinions of Others, College Recruitment Efforts, College Characteristics, and Financial Factors—was used to answer Research Questions 1 through 4. Rank ordering of all of the items was also performed. The means ranged from 1 to 3 on an influence scale of “not at all important” to “very important.” Twenty-seven of the 38 items related to college choice fell above the theoretical midpoint.

Research Question 1

Means and rank ordering of the eight opinions of others items were used to answer the question, “To what extent do the opinions of others influence college choice?” The highest ranking item was opinions of parents, followed by opinions of past or current students at the college. Opinions of family members and opinions of current employers ranked lowest in this scale. Opinions of friends and opinions of significant others were

tied in mean rank, while opinions of the high school counselor were more influential than opinions of the high school teacher. Only one item in the Opinions of Others construct fell above the theoretical midpoint: opinions of parents.

Research Question 2

Means and rank ordering of the seven college recruitment efforts items were used to answer the second research question: “To what extent do college recruitment efforts influence college choice?” The two highest ranking items were the information provided on the college website and the ease of the admissions process, followed by a mean tie between a visit to the college and the responsiveness of the college staff to my questions. The information provided on the college’s print materials followed in influence, with the information received at a college fair and the college’s social media messages being the least important. The item related to the influence of the college’s social media messages on the decision to enroll was the only item in the College Recruitment Efforts construct that fell below the theoretical midpoint.

Research Question 3

Means and rank ordering of the 20 college characteristics items were used to answer the third research question: “To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?” Degree offering, fit, ease of transfer, and class schedule (allowing demands of life to be met) emerged as the top four influencers regarding college characteristic. The jobs that graduates earn, minimal disruptions to life, positive reputation in the community, and the technology provided all placed in the top eight ranked college characteristics that influenced college choice. Accessibility of faculty to their students

and the offering of online courses rounded out the top 10 ranked items within the College Characteristics construct.

Reputation of faculty, safety and security of the college, graduation rate of students, attractiveness of the campus, availability of fully online programs, and supports for academically challenged students ranked 11 through 16, respectively, followed by accessibility to public transportation. Three items fell below the theoretical midpoint: the college serving a diverse student population, extracurricular activities, and the opportunity to participate in sports.

Research Question 4

Means and rank ordering of the four financial factors were used to answer the fourth research question: “To what extent do financial factors influence college choice?” All of the four items within the Financial Factors construct fell above the theoretical midpoint. Affordable tuition and fees were most important to the study population, followed closely by the availability of financial aid.

Research Question 5

Simple regressions were used to determine a response to Research Question 5: “To what extent do student characteristics predict the amount of influence the following four areas have on college choice: (a) opinions of others, (b) recruitment efforts, (c) college characteristics, and (d) financial factors?” Five of the student characteristic variables predicted the opinions of others: (1) father’s educational level, (2) household income, (3) mother’s educational level, (4) race/ethnicity dichotomized, and (5) first-generation student. The higher the father’s and/or mother’s educational level, the more influence that the opinions of others had on the respondent’s decision to enroll in a

particular college. The higher the household income, the more that the opinions of others influenced a respondent's college choice. Only two student characteristic variables—respondent load and race/ethnicity dichotomized—predicted recruitment efforts. The more individuals for whom a respondent was responsible, the more influenced they were by college recruitment efforts. Additionally, African-American students were more influenced by recruitment efforts than Caucasian students. Race/ethnicity dichotomized was the only student characteristic that was influenced by college characteristics. African-American respondents were more influenced by college characteristics than Caucasian students. Race/ethnicity dichotomized was identified to have the strongest predictive power when examining the level of influence within the Opinions of Others, College Recruitment Efforts, and College Characteristics constructs.

Overall Ranking of Importance for All Items

After the rankings by individual constructs were completed, the constructs and items were combined and placed in rank order (as discussed in Chapter 4). Three of the top five items influencing two-year college choice were related to financial factors: affordable tuition, affordable fees, and the availability of financial aid. Two college characteristics—degree offering and college fit—also ranked in the top five items that most influenced public two-year college choice. Recruitment efforts rankings emerged as influencers in the eleventh ranking, with the first represented item, information provided on the college website, yielding a high mean of 2.41 on a 3-point Likert scale. The Opinions of Others construct did not emerge until rank 27. Only one item within the Opinions of Others construct fell above the theoretical midpoint: opinions of parents. Social media messages and the opinions of current employers were ranked the lowest.

Overall, 28 of the 39 items related to college choice ranked above the theoretical midpoint.

Principal Conclusions

Four conclusions were drawn from the study findings, each of which is discussed in detail in the next section:

- Conclusion 1: Financial factors had the strongest influence on the decision to enroll in a public two-year college.
- Conclusion 2: Characteristics related to personal fit were the most influential college characteristics in the decision to enroll in a public two-year college.
- Conclusion 3: The opinions of others influenced the decision to enroll in a public two-year college, with the opinions of parents being most influential.
- Conclusion 4: The most influential recruitment efforts in the decision to enroll in a public two-year college were those that could be self-accessed by the student.

Discussion

This section examines the four conclusions derived from the research findings. Each conclusion is discussed in reference to existing literature.

Conclusion 1: Financial Factors Had the Strongest Influence on the Decision to Enroll in a Public Two-Year College

One of the major findings of this study was that financial factors had the most influence on the decision to enroll in a public two-year college. Three items related to financial factors were included in this study: The college has affordable tuition, the college has affordable fees, and the college offers financial aid. When examining the

means and ranks of the individual items within the Opinions of Others scale, all of the items had means above the theoretical midpoint. As noted in Chapter 4, of the 38 items related to college-choice influencers, affordable tuition ranked the highest, followed by affordable fees. The college offering financial aid ranked as the fourth highest influence among all of the items contained in the survey.

This study found the reliability of the Financial Factors construct to be acceptable at .72. In a similar study conducted by Lee and Chatfield (2011) in a four-year college setting, the factor associated with cost had a reliability of .64. While Lee and Chatfield's study had lower reliability than the present study, the researchers deemed the reliability to be acceptable. For the present study, .72 was identified as an acceptable reliability.

The findings of this study align with previous studies that explored influences on student decisions to enroll in college. Somers et al. (2006) explored factors that influenced students to enroll in a community college and found that students enrolled for a variety of reasons, including individual aspirations, price, location, institutional characteristics, and the influence of peers. Financial factors were also identified as influential in Burns' (2006) and Brown, Hernandez, Mitchell, and Turner's (1999) studies. Public two-year colleges are often associated with open-access institutions with lower attendance costs, adding further meaning to these findings.

The results of present study also align with findings from Hawk and Hill's (2016) study, which was conducted in the two-year college setting. Hawk and Hill identified affordability, minimal disruption to life, and flexibility as the most influential factors in the decision to enroll in a two-year college. Likewise, the current study found that

personal fit was a strong influencer of two-year college choice (as will be discussed further in Conclusion 2).

In addition, Bryant (2012) found that cost and financial aid were the most influential factors to first-year community college students. The present study yielded similar results within the first-generation subgroup, finding that that financial factors were more influential than other factors in the college-choice process. The current study also found that the availability of financial aid influenced the decision to enroll at a two-year college, which aligns with Nurnberg et al. (2012), who found that students based their college decision partly on the financial aid package offered to them.

This study found that financial factors were the most influential in the overall public two-year college-choice process. Understanding how financial factors influence the college-choice process can help practitioners structure events and campaigns that enhance awareness of the affordability and financial aid opportunities that public two-year colleges offer.

Conclusion 2: Characteristics Related to Personal Fit Were the Most Influential College Characteristics in the Decision to Enroll in a Public Two-Year College

College-choice researchers have found that factors related to personal fit or preference influence the college-choice decision (Barreno & Traut, 2012; Broekemier, 2002; Bryant, 2012; Herren et al., 2011; Somers & Stokes, 2009; Zyznieuski & Lichtenberger, 2013). The current study results are consistent with these earlier findings. For the respondents in this study, personal fit, the quality of being right for a particular person, strongly influenced the college-choice process. As shown in Chapter 4, 17 of the 20 items related to college characteristics fell above the theoretical midpoint, with eight

items related to suitability ranking at the top of the college characteristics factors. This study found that students were most influenced by college characteristics that allowed them to see themselves enrolled at the college. Based on the findings, the college characteristics that were most influential to a student's decision to enroll centered on personal fit.

When examining the ranked means for the College Characteristics scale, *the college offering the degree I need* and *the college being a good fit for me* ranked as the most influential. Transferability, minimal disruptions to life, graduates obtaining good jobs, and the college's academic reputation all ranked as influential factors related to the public two-year college decision. The study population was less interested in the diversity of students, extracurricular activities, and the opportunity to participate in sports.

In the current study, the college offering the type of degree the student needed was a strong influencer in the decision to enroll in a particular public two-year college, which supports the findings of Broekemier (2002) and Barenno and Traut (2012) that program availability was the most influential factor in the two-year college-choice process. In the present study, the degree offering was found to be slightly more influential than the location of the college.

Researchers have also identified an institution's geographical setting as influential in the college-choice process (Somers & Stokes, 2009). Zyznieuski and Lichtenberger (2013) found that the shorter the distance between an individual's high school and college, the more likely they were to enroll in a community college. Similarly, the present study identified location and minimal disruption to life as top college characteristics that influenced college choice. Bryant (2012) also identified geographic

setting and academic reputation as influential college characteristics. The present study found means of 2.42, on a 3-point Likert scale, for both college location and academic reputation.

Herren et al. (2011) found that the top two influential factors for college choice were academic reputation and opportunities after graduation. The findings of the current study related to future job prospects align with Herren et al. (2011), and with Broekemier's (2002) study, which found that the nontraditional-aged, over-25 population was influenced by future job prospects. The ability of graduates to obtain good jobs after graduation was identified as the eighth most influential factor in the college characteristic scale. Broekemier also found that convenience was important to the student. The current study found that students were strongly influenced by the minimal disruptions to life that attending the college would have.

Two year-colleges serve a variety of students. Some students enroll to obtain skills needed for future employment, while others enroll with the intent to transfer to another college. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that 60% of students who earn a bachelor's degree attend a two-year college at some point (Chen, 2015). For the current study, the transferability of courses was influential in respondents' college-choice decision. Barreno and Traut's (2012) study also identified transferability as a top reason for a student to attend a two-year college.

This study found that college characteristics matter in the public two-year college-choice decision. Factors related to personal fit influenced the decision process more than fixed college characteristics. Understanding how these factors influence the overall

decision to enroll in a public two-year college can help marketing personnel develop messages related to college characteristics and attract more students.

Conclusion 3: The Opinions of Others Influenced the Decision to Enroll in a Public Two-Year College, with the Opinions of Parents Being Most Influential

While this study found that that opinions of others did influence public two-year college choice, some opinions had more influence than others. As reflected in Chapter 4, only one item related to the opinions of others fell above the theoretical midpoint: opinions of parents. Overall, the opinions of others were the least influential factors in the overall college-choice decision. Within the Opinions of Others scale, opinions of employers were determined to be least influential. With the average age of participants being 25.7 years and 47% of the sample reporting an age of 18 to 24, it is not surprising that the only item related to opinions of others that was above the theoretical midpoint was related to parental influence.

The findings of the present study align with those of earlier research. Tucciarone (2008) interviewed traditional-aged students and identified the opinion of parents and of high school personnel as the most influential opinions to the college-choice process. Additionally, Somers et al. (2006) and Lowry (2017) identified opinions of others as the most influential factors in the college-choice process. Bryant (2012), whose study was conducted in a two-year college setting, examined several factors that could influence the college-choice process, including cost, financial aid, academic reputation, size of the institution, recommendations from family, geographic setting, campus appearance, and personalized attention prior to enrollment. Bryant also identified recommendations from family as a less influential factor in determining which college to attend. The present

study found that the opinions of significant others and the opinions of other family members fell below the theoretical midpoint, thereby supporting Bryant's findings.

Edelman (2013) asserted that parents have significant influence on the college-choice decision because their involvement is often necessary for postsecondary enrollment. For financial aid purposes, students under the age of 25 must submit applications for financial aid utilizing their parents' tax returns, which may limit how a student pays for college and what college they can attend. Approximately half of the population in the current study fell within this age range, which helps explain why parental influence was ranked so high.

Hossler et al. (1999) conducted a study with high school students and found that friends' decisions to enroll in a particular college can influence an individual in their college-choice process. The current study did not find that the opinions of friends had a strong influence on overall college choice. While almost half of the respondents reported being traditional-age (18-24), the study was conducted in the spring and summer, which could have diminished the amount of influence a recent high school graduate might have placed on their friends' opinions.

This study found that the opinions of others, particularly opinions of parents, influenced the decision to enroll in a public two-year college. Understanding who students are most influenced by can allow practitioners to create programming that strategically engages various influence groups.

Conclusion 4: The Most Influential Recruitment Efforts in the Decision to Enroll in a Public Two-Year College Were Those That Could be Self-Accessed by the Student.

The present study found that college recruitment efforts did influence the public two-year college-choice decision. The study results shows that this population of students was less influenced by the college's direct efforts to recruit them and more influenced by the recruitment efforts they could access on their own. Recruitment efforts that typically require a financial commitment, such as printed materials or registrations at college fairs, were identified as the least influential recruitment effort.

Tucciarone (2008) found that advertising was not as persuasive as other factors, such as opinions of others and finances. Similarly, Hawk and Hill (2016) found that media were not overly influential in the college-choice process, whereas Barreno and Traut (2012) found that web-based information and communication with college personnel were most influential. Grandillo (2019) argued that

the most effective recruiting practices and strategies employed by enrollment professionals are visits to high schools in primary markets by a member of the admissions office, interaction on the Internet, hosting campus visits with prospective students, and offering merit-based scholarships. (p. 2)

The present study supports Grandillo's assertion, along with Barreno and Traut's (2012) findings. As reflected in Chapter 4, this study found that information provided on the college website, the ease of the admissions process, a visit to the college, and the responsiveness of college staff to students' questions were the most influential recruitment efforts. Similarly, Bryant (2012) found that personalized attention prior to

enrollment was an influential factor in college enrollment, and Okerson's (2016) study of high-achieving high school seniors identified personal interactions with college staff as a strong influencer of college choice. Two-year college students are often underserved, which adds meaning to the findings of the current study. If college personnel are willing to give individualized attention to this student population, their efforts have the potential to improve the likelihood that students will enroll at their institution.

Prospective students also engage with the college without a direct recruitment effort via the college website. Herren et al. (2011) found that web-based information influenced the college decision. Colleges utilize websites to convey college information to potential students and various stakeholders. Respondents in this study identified information provided on the college's website as the highest ranked recruitment effort. Indeed, a website that properly displays information about a college can be an effective recruitment tool.

Social media offer a slightly different slant on college recruitment. Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) found that students expected to see blogs and discussion forums on social media platforms. The present study found that social media messages represented the least influential recruitment effort. Perhaps this could be due to social media blasts from colleges being perceived as one-sided conversations, not interactive (Davis et al., 2015). In light of the surge in social media applications, it was surprising that more respondents in the current study did not indicate they were influenced by social media.

The student population represented in this study placed value on a visit to the college in their decision to attend a college, a finding that aligns with Herren et al.

(2011), who found that a college visit does influence college choice. These researchers also identified conversations with instructors, web information, and print publications as influential factors in students' college-choice decisions. While the present study did not find that print publications yielded a strong influence, interactions with college personnel were identified as influential to the process.

This study found that recruitment efforts related to information that students can directly access or seek access to were most influential in the College Recruitment Efforts scale. These efforts are often low-cost and can yield increased enrollments. Practitioners should seek to better understand these factors since they have the potential to drive enrollment and revenue.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study provide practitioners with knowledge related to factors that influence public two-year college choice. As explained in the following sections, this study has practical implications and can help inform policy related to public two-year colleges.

Practical Implication: Recruitment

Two-year colleges devote a smaller portion of their budget to recruitment efforts than four-year institutions (Bryant, 2016). While research has shown that advertising and recruitment efforts are not overly valuable, this population represented by the current study was influenced moderately by college recruitment efforts. Based on the findings, which aligned with those of other researchers presented earlier, students seek information from the college website. Colleges should therefore take great care in developing easy-to-navigate websites and include information that can help students most.

This study revealed that first-generation students were more influenced by cost and that the lower the parental education level, the less cost mattered. The only opinions that mattered to this group of students were the opinions of their parents. Two-year colleges are poised to promote their lower cost options to potential student and parent groups. Thus, they should seek ways to get these groups of influencers on campus.

With financial factors being identified as most influential among all factors, recruitment professionals should to create affordability marketing campaigns (EAB, 2017). “Significant numbers of students who are sensitive to college costs mean significant numbers of students who can potentially be won over by an institution offering additional financial aid” (Seltzer, 2017, p. 2). Additionally, colleges should host financial aid nights and other on-campus events to recruit students (Johnson, 2011).

This study also found that the higher the respondent load, the more influenced the student was by recruitment efforts. If students with higher respondent loads are being driven to two-year colleges, these institutions should, for instance, promote childcare facilities (if available) or offer other childcare options, whether housed on or off campus. For example, if a college does not provide childcare, it could offer a list of nearby childcare options. These types of offerings could be used simultaneously as recruitment and retention efforts.

This study also identified parents as the most influential individuals in the college-choice process at the two-year college level. Colleges should develop new methods for reaching parents. College recruiters spend time on high school campuses; however, they are most likely not reaching parents at high school events. As suggested previously, colleges should explore ideas for attracting parents of prospective students to

their campuses. Colleges need to understand how to reach parents to communicate about their institutions.

This study also revealed that different groups of students reported different levels of influence within the four areas related to college choice. An enhanced understanding these populations could help institutions develop targeted marketing campaigns.

First-generation. Approximately 47% of the survey population identified as first-generation college students. Generally, this population comes from lower income households and has a greater need for financial aid. First-generation students also often has less family support than other students, making it more difficult to enroll in courses full time. This study found that first-generation students were less influenced by the opinions of others and more influenced by financial factors. In light of this finding, colleges should invest in methods to make potential students aware of the affordability of their institutions.

Gender. In the majority of the scales, male and female respondents interacted in similar ways. However, one scale, Financial Factors, did reflect that women interacted differently than men. The study found that females were more influenced by financial factors than men.

Race/ethnicity. 14.7% of the sample population identified as African-American. The study findings suggest that African-American students were influenced differently than Caucasian students by college characteristics, recruitment efforts, and opinions of others. For instance, while Lowry (2017) found that African-American students were heavily influenced by their families, and Burns (2006) found that African-American students were most influenced by availability of scholarships, this study did not find that

African-American students were highly influenced by financial factors. Based on the sample size, this study should be replicated to support or reject these findings.

Colleges should work to serve all students. Traditionally underserved students, such as first-generation, females, and African American students, could be better served by recruiters who understand their unique experiences. For example, some colleges employ recruiters dedicated to active and retired military personnel. These recruiters, who have encountered the unique experiences these populations may face, could help students see themselves enrolled at a particular college.

Practical Implication: Working Toward a Comprehensive Model of College Choice

Research related to two-year college choice is not as plentiful as research centering on four-year institutions. Various models exist for measuring college choice, with roughly a 60% overlap in variables related to two-year and four-year institutions. As discussed previously, the study aligns with findings of several studies conducted in the four-year context (Okerson, 2016; Herren, Cartmell, & Robertson, 2011). As the study results show, the fit of the student at the public two-year college was important, and the study population was influenced by self-accessible recruitment efforts, such as a campus visit, conversations with college staff, and the college website. The model and instrument developed for this study could serve as a base model for future research in both the four- and two-year context. Professionals from both contexts could review the model and adjust the instrument to allow one instrument to measure both two-year and four-year college choice. Developing a model that supports two- and four-year colleges could help researchers better understand both populations of students. While the levels of influence may be different in the different contexts, many of the factors related to choice are the

same. Utilizing one model for both settings would allow researchers to better understand and compare the factors that influence college choice within various college settings.

Policy Implications

A review of the free-tuition colleges reveals that these funding options are not, in fact, geared toward the population of students surveyed for this study. Based on this study, and many of the studies previously discussed, public two-year college students are older, are not right out of high school, are employed, and are enrolled in college part-time. However, the free-college programs presented in the literature review are geared toward recently graduated high school students. Studies like this one can therefore be used to help inform future policy. Understanding the demographics of the public two-year college student can help free-tuition policies be better structured for these students.

Implications for Future Research

This study extends the knowledge around what influences students' decisions to enroll in public two-year colleges. Future research should continue to investigate this student population and approach this research area from different perspectives. This section outlines potential directions for future research.

This study employed quantitative methods to determine the level of influence student characteristics had on the college-choice process; however, it did not take a quantitative approach to understanding what influenced a student's choice to enroll. Interviews and focus groups with this population of students may provide greater insights into how and why student characteristics influence the college-choice process. These conversations could lead to a deeper understanding of the influencers of college choice in general.

This study should be replicated to test reliability. Additionally, replicating the study with a larger population could allow for researchers to disaggregate by state, thereby allowing for policymakers to be better informed when developing or adjusting policies related to two-year free college. Currently, there is a mismatch between the students whom two-year colleges serve and who is actually attending two-year colleges. Additionally, marketing efforts could be adjusted based on these disaggregated findings.

The results of this survey suggest that African-American students are more influenced than Caucasian students by college characteristics, recruitment efforts, and opinions of others. 45 of 306 respondents of this study identified as African-American. This study should be repeated to include a larger sample of African-American students to determine if the study findings hold true. If these findings do hold true with a larger sample, practitioners could begin developing interventions for this population of students.

The survey instrument could be used in the four-year context to measure college choice. Open-ended questions could be added to the instrument to allow this population to add factors that influenced the four-year college choice decision. Thorough analysis of the data should be conducted to determine reliability of the instrument in this context, as well as help determine what factors should be added to the instrument to account for the four-year college student. A critique group of professionals from both the four- and two-year context could be called upon to review the data, which could further develop the instrument to examine college choice in both contexts.

Enrollment management professionals within a college could administer the study survey to current students to determine what influenced the decision to enroll. Proper data analysis would allow these professionals to put interventions in place to impact various

influencers. After the interventions are in place, the survey could be repeated to measure the impact of the interventions. The survey instrument would allow enrollment management professionals to have access to datasets that would help influence the impact of the interventions.

The instrument design also allows for various analyses to be conducted. Analyses could be conducted to identify factors that influence college choice, by age. This level of analysis would allow practitioners to develop targeted marketing campaigns.

Based on this research, practitioners could implement interventions designed to increase the level of influence on college choice of the four areas identified in this study. After the interventions are put in place, future studies could repeat the survey with new students to determine if the interventions impacted the level of influence within each area. This would most likely work best if a state or school deployed the survey and identified what attracted their students. Interventions could then be tailored specifically to their students and then implemented.

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APPENDIX A
FINAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENT



English ▼

Welcome to the research study!

We are interested in understanding factors that influence public two-year college choice. You will be presented with information relevant to college choice and asked to answer some questions about it. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 20 minutes to complete, and you will receive \$1.00 for your participation. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Tom Valentine at tvnj@uga.edu.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

I consent, begin the study

I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

>>

Did you begin your first semester at a public two-year college in the 2018-2019 academic year (i.e. Fall, 2019, Spring 2019, or Summer of 2019)?

Yes

No

Have you earned your high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)?

Yes

No



Think back to when you were deciding to attend college. Please rate how important each of the following factors were in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The opinions of parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of spouse/significant other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of other family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your high school teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your high school counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of past or current students at the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your current employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think back to when you were deciding to attend college. Please rate how important each of the following factors were in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat important	Very important
A visit to the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college's social media messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided on the college website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided on the college's printed materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The responsiveness of college staff to my questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information I received at a college fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ease of the admissions process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The safety and security of the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think back to when you were deciding to attend college. Please rate how important each of the following factors were in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The quality of the technology provided by the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The attractiveness of the college campus(es)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The accessibility of the college via public transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The excellent reputation of the faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The accessibility of faculty to their students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The positive academic reputation of the college in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college courses will transfer easily into a four-year college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think back to when you were deciding to attend college. Please rate how important each of the following factors were in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The high graduation rate of students the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The graduates of this college get good jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers fully online programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers online courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college serves a diverse student population	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think back to when you were deciding to attend college. Please rate how important each of the following factors were in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has affordable tuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has affordable fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers financial aid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college allows me to make payments directly to the college instead of taking out student loans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers the type of degree I need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college is a good fit for people like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What year were you born?

What is your gender?

What is your race/ethnicity?

Are you married or living in a marriage-like relationship?

Yes

No

How many children under the age of 18 are you responsible for?

How many adults, including parents and/or siblings, are you financially responsible for?

What is the highest degree of your mother?

High school diploma or GED equivalent

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree or higher

Don't know

Not applicable

What is the highest degree of your father?

High school diploma or GED equivalent

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree or higher

Don't know

Not applicable

What is your approximate total household income?

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 - \$19,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 - \$39,999

\$40,000 - \$49,999

\$50,000 - \$59,999

\$60,000 - \$69,999

\$70,000 - \$79,999

\$80,000 - \$89,999

\$90,000 - \$99,999

More than \$100,000

Approximately how many hours a week are you employed?

Are you a veteran or currently serving in the military?

Yes

No

What were your average grades in high school?

As

Bs

Cs

Ds

Fs

What is your current enrollment status?

Full-time

Part-time

In what semester **and** year did you first begin taking courses at your current public two-year college?

What type of award do you intend to earn from the college you are attending?

Associate's degree

Diploma

Certificate

None, intend to transfer

None, attending for skill development

Please select your primary area of study:

Arts and Sciences (programs such as Liberal Arts, General Studies, and Interdisciplinary Studies)

Business (programs such as Marketing, Business Management, Accounting)

Health Sciences (programs such as Nursing, Paramedicine, and Surgical Technology)

Information Technology (programs such as Networking, Programming, and Web Design)

Personal and Public Services (programs such as Cosmetology, Culinary, and Hospitality)

Public Safety (programs such as Criminal Justice and Fire Science Technology)

Technical/Skilled Trades (programs such as Automotive Technology, Construction, and Welding)

Other (please type in your area of study)

What is your tuition status?

In-state

Out-of-state

International

What state is your current college located in?

Alabama	Montana
Alaska	Nebraska
Arizona	Nevada
Arkansas	New Hampshire
California	New Jersey
Colorado	New Mexico
Connecticut	New York
Delaware	North Carolina
District of Columbia	North Dakota
Florida	Ohio
Georgia	Oklahoma
Hawaii	Oregon
Idaho	Pennsylvania
Illinois	Puerto Rico

Indiana	Rhode Island
Iowa	South Carolina
Kansas	South Dakota
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	Texas
Maine	Utah
Maryland	Vermont
Massachusetts	Virginia
Michigan	Washington
Minnesota	West Virginia
Mississippi	Wisconsin
Missouri	Wyoming

Please create and enter a unique survey completion code below. Your code should be in the following format: first and last initial, the name of an animal, and then two digits (i.e. smpenguin22). In order to receive payment, your completion code **CANNOT** be smpenguin22.

Please record a copy of the unique survey completion code you enter below. Return to the MTurk site to enter the code to verify your participation and receive payment. **Please note that work will be rejected if completion codes entered into the survey do not match those entered on the MTurk site.**



APPENDIX B

ITEM POOL DEVELOPMENT TRACKER

Identify Items	November 2017-February 2018
Past student review of items *** Add questions related to safety *** Add questions related to diversity *** Add question related to retention *** Add question related to accreditation status *** Add question related to licensure rate	February 2018
Methodologist review of items	February 2018
Expert review of items *** Add licensure pass rates *** Add relationship with other four-year *** Add referral by another college *** Add accessibility to transportation	March 2018
Survey class review of items *** Only have not applicable appear in questions where that could be an answer *** Reword testing question *** Allow sentences to run long (i.e. don't run over onto multiple lines)	March 2018
Methodologist review of items *** Work towards item pool refinement and ensure list exhausted	March 2018
Add other college study instrument questions to item pool	August 2018
Grouping of like survey items	September 2018
Reduce survey items to like items	September 2018
Methodologist review of items *** Construct redevelopment: direct advice, recruitment efforts, college characteristics, finances	October 2018
Sort items into appropriate constructs Expert review of items *** Items were thought to be matched to appropriate constructs	October – November 2018

Develop pilot survey Methodologist review of pilot survey ***Construct rework: direct advice of others to opinions of influencers ***Approval of pilot study	November – December 2018
Seek participants and deploy pilot study A	December 2018
Analyze pilot study A results ***Reword questions	January 2019
Seek participants and deploy pilot study B	May 2019
Analyze pilot study B results ***Reword Questions	
Instrument Finalized	June 2019

APPENDIX C
INITIAL ITEM POOL

	ECONOMIC	Financial resources to pay for college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
1	1A	How do you meet your college expenses? (Parents, employer, Spouse/Partner, scholarships/grants, loans, VA benefits, self, other sources – about half, more than half, all or nearly all)	Pace and Kuh
2	9A	Adequate financial aid is available for most students.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
3	10A	Billing policies are reasonable	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
4	11A	This college was selected because it has a payment plan.	SLM
5	12A	This college was selected because they take federal loans.	SLM
6	13A	This college was selected because they take private loans.	SLM
7	14A	Cost was a factor in my decision to enroll.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
8	15A	How heavily did cost influence your decision to enroll?	SLM
9	16A	Financial aid was a factor in my decision to enroll.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
10	20A	Receiving a scholarship	Hoyt & Brown
11	21A	Ease in obtaining financial aid/loans	Hoyt & Brown
12	23A	How much is costs	Lumina
13	24A	Cost to your family - how much you and your family would have to pay after grants and scholarships (if any) are subtracted from total college costs	College board
14	25A	Were either financial aid of college costs significant factors in your decision to enroll in the college you plan to attend?	College board
15	26A	Describe (numerically) how the college you are enrolled in compared to other colleges you considered in terms of financial aid amounts (1-5)	College board
16	27A	Total institutional price before financial aid	College board

	ECONOMIC	Financial resources to pay for college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
17	28A	Total cost to you and your family after grants and scholarships	College board
18	29A	Total dollar amount of financial aid offered	College board
19	30A	Portion of total financial aid that was scholarship or grant	College board
20	31A	Did you apply for financial aid at the college you attend?	College board
21	32A	Did you receive financial aid at the college you attend?	College board
22	33A	Availability of financial aid	SC
23	34A	Overall cost of attendance	SC
24	35A	Price of tuition	SC
25	36A	Prices of tuition and fees	SLM
26	37A	I was offered financial assistance	
27	38A	The cost of attending this college	CIRP
28	43A	Financial air information and services are readily available.	SRTC
29	44A	The application fee influenced my decision to attend.	SLM
30	45A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Cost, financial aid)	SRTC
31	46A	To what extent did each of the following factors impact you choice of college:	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
32	47A	Availability of scholarships	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
33	48A	Availability of loans	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
34	49A	Cost of attending college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
35	4A	What is the approximate income of your parents or guardians before taxes last year?	College board
36	5A	What was your approximate income before taxes last year?	College board
37	2A	During the semester, how many hours do you spend working for pay in a week?	Pace and Kuh
38	6A	Are you currently employed?	SLM
39	19A	Ability to work while attending school	Hoyt & Brown
40	3A	How far is the college from your home?	College board
41	18A	Ability to live at home or commute daily	Hoyt & Brown
42	22A	Work study opportunities	Hoyt & Brown
43	17A	The college provides support services for displaced homemakers	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)

	ECONOMIC	Financial resources to pay for college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
44	8A	Child care facilities are available on campus	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
45	7A	Where is your current residence? Residence hall, own house, rent room or apartment off campus, parent's home, military quarters, other	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)

	SOCIOLOGICAL	Cultural and environmental factors; influence of others	
	Item Code	Item	Source
46	1B	How supportive was your family about your decision to attend a two-year college?	SLM
47	2B	How supportive were your friends about your decision to attend a two-year college?	SLM
48	20B	Parent(s) felt it was the best choice	Hoyt & Brown
49	21B	Teacher of counselor recommend it	Hoyt & Brown
50	27B	Opinions of my parents or guardians	College board
51	28B	Opinions of my guidance counselor	College board
52	29B	Opinions of my high school teacher(s)	College board
53	30B	Opinions of my friends	College board
54	31B	Opinions of my employer	College board
55	42B	Recommendation from a friend	SC
56	43B	Recommendation from a neighbor	SC
57	44B	Recommendation from a teacher of counselor	SC
58	45B	Recommendation from a church	SC
59	46B	Recommendation from spouse	SC
60	47B	Recommendation from workplace	SC
61	54B	My parents wanted me to come here	CIRP
62	55B	My relatives wanted me to come here	CIRP
63	56B	My teacher advised me	CIRP
64	57B	High school counselor advised me	CIRP
65	58B	Private college counselor advised me	CIRP
66	60B	Did your parents play a part in your decision to attend?	CIRP
67	61B	Did your friends play a part in your decision to attend?	CIRP
68	62B	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? (Employer, friend, high school staff, relative/family member, college faculty,	SRTC

	SOCIOLOGICAL	Cultural and environmental factors; influence of others	
	Item Code	Item	Source
		college recruiter, college staff, current or former college student	
69	52B	Parents/family want me to attend this college	SC
70	3B	What is the highest education level of your mother?	SLM
71	4B	What is the highest education level of your father?	SLM
72	5B	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: Affordable tuition Affordable tuition College location is close to my home College location allows me to combine work and college College responsiveness Because I was refused admission at another college	Mbawuni & Nimako
73	6B	How much did each of the following influence your college choice: College tour guide Current students attending the college College fair Career fair College tour	Simones & Soares
74	8B	Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
75	37B	Variety of courses	College board
76	14B	Availability of my program/major	Hoyt & Brown
77	11B	The business offices is open during hours which are convenient for most students.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
78	15B	Variety of course offering times (night, internet, weekend, etc.).	Hoyt & Brown
79	39B	Class scheduling	SC
80	51B	Class size	SC
81	16B	Small class size	Hoyt & Brown
82	13B	The opportunity to play sports influenced my decision to enroll.	SLM

	SOCIOLOGICAL	Cultural and environmental factors; influence of others	
	Item Code	Item	Source
83	36B	Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, debate, drama, music, etc.)	College board
84	19B	Athletic programs offered	Hoyt & Brown
85	38B	Athletic programs in which you would like to participate	College board
86	48B	Opportunity to participate in athletics and sports	SC
87	40B	Required by job	SC
88	41B	Improve job skills	SC
89	32B	Opinions of my potential employers	College board
90	63B	To improve my employment opportunities	Lumina
91	24B	How many graduates find full-time employment in the field after graduation	SLM
92	53B	Job advancement	SC
93	59B	The college graduates get good jobs	CIRP
94	12B	The availability of student organizations influenced my decision to enroll.	SLM
95	9B	The college has a Veteran's Services program	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
96	49B	Availability of student services	SC
97	50B	Availability of remedial courses	SC
98	34B	Quality of on-campus housing	College board
99	7B	How often to you recommend your current college to family or friends?	Interact media
100	10B	Students are made to feel welcome at this school.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
101	17B	Type of institution (two-year college)	Hoyt & Brown
102	18B	Friends attending	Hoyt & Brown
103	22B	Parents attended school there	Hoyt & Brown
104	23B	Living away from home	Hoyt & Brown
105	25B	Where it is located	Lumina
106	35B	Ease of getting home	College board
107	1CL	Convenient location	Class
108	26B	The average percentage of students who graduate	Lumina
109	33B	Attractiveness of campus	College board
110	64B	To make more money	Lumina
111	65B	To get a good job	Lumina
112	66B	My parents wanted me to go	Lumina

	SOCIOLOGICAL	Cultural and environmental factors; influence of others	
	Item Code	Item	Source
113	67B	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Search based information on the internet	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
114	68B	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? School counselors	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
115	69B	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? School teachers	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
116	70B	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Parents and family	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
117	71B	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Friends and peers	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
118	72B	To what extent did each of the following factors impact you choice of college:	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
119	73B	Prestige of items sports programs	CIRP
120	74B	Availability of sports programs	CIRP
121	75B	Availability of cultural programs	CIRP
122	4CL	Someone urged me to go	Class
123	5CL	My parents expected me to go to college	Class
124	6CL	Someone urged me to go	Class
125	7CL	Parents felt it was the best choice	Class

	PSYCHOLOGICAL	Internal attitudes and mental process that motivate	
	Item Code	Item	Source
126	4C	Transferability of courses to other colleges was a factor in choosing to attend a two-year college	SLM
127	22C	Do you plan on transferring to another college?	SLM
128	25C	So I can transfer to a 4-year college	SC
129	40D	Does the college have a transfer/articulation agreement with local colleges/universities?	Past Student
130	7C	Which category represents your average grades in high school?	College board

	PSYCHOLOGICAL	Internal attitudes and mental process that motivate	
	Item Code	Item	Source
131	8C	Which category represents your average grades in college?	SLM
132	17C	The availability of alternate admission testing (COMPASS, Accuplacer, Institutional Admit SAT, etc.) influenced my decision in applying to this college	SLM
133	19C	Admissions policy	Hoyt & Brown
134	23C	College is close to home.	SC
135	24C	I can live at home.	SC
136	34C	I wanted to live close to home	CIRP
137	26C	College is close to job	SC
138	32C	Get away from home	SC
139	27C	Availability of online course	SC
140	36C	Ability to take online course	CIRP
141	28C	Shorter time to finish	SC
142	9C	When choosing to attend this two-year college, college size/student enrollment influences my decision	Brokemeier
143	18C	The size of the college influenced my decision to apply.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
144	35C	I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	CIRP
145	1C	Before applying to a two-year college, I believed a two-year college would be a good fit for me	SLM
146	2C	Since beginning coursework at a two-year college, I believe two-year college is a good fit for me	SLM
147	3C	Developing vacation and occupational competence was a motivating factor in choosing to attend a two-year college	Pace and Kuh
148	29C	Succeed in career	SC
149	33C	Preparation for career	SC
150	30C	Better opportunity for children	SC
151	31C	Be well off financially	SC
152	15C	How closely is your job related to the training you are receiving?	CTC Grad Survey
153	12C	I always knew I would attend college.	SLM
154	13C	I believe I will graduate from college.	SLM

	PSYCHOLOGICAL	Internal attitudes and mental process that motivate	
	Item Code	Item	Source
155	14C	I enrolled at this college because I knew I would have employment opportunities upon completing my program.	SLM
156	20C	Including the college you are enrolled at, how many institutions did you apply to?	College board
157	21C	Including the college you are enrolled at, how many of these colleges were you admitted to?	College board
158	5C	On a scale of 1-5, how well do you like college?	Pace and Kuh
159	6C	If you could start over, would you attend the same two-year college you are currently attending?	Pace and Kuh
160	10C	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did each of the following factors influence your decision in enrolling at this college? Better job opportunities Job advancement with current employer Gain general knowledge Take class for specific interest Friends were enrolled Family members were enrolled	Brokemeier
161	11C	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did each of the following factors influence your decision in enrolling at this college Cost Availability of financial aid Academic reputation Size of Institution Recommendations from family Geographic setting Campus appearance Personalized attention prior to enrollment	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
162	16C	Where did your current college rank in your overall college choices?	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
163	37C	The percentage of students that graduate from this college	CIRP

	PSYCHOLOGICAL	Internal attitudes and mental process that motivate	
	Item Code	Item	Source
164	38D	How many years do you expect it will take you to graduate from this college? (1-6 or do not plan to graduate from this college)	CIRP
165	39D	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Size of institution, geographic setting, campus appearance, opportunity to play sports, recommendations from family/friends)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
166	41D	How safe are the neighborhoods surrounding the campus?	Past Student
167	42D	To learn more about a favorite topic or area of interest	Lumina
168	43D	To become a better person	Lumina
169	44D	To improve my self confidence	Lumina
170	45D	To learn more about the world	Lumina
171	46D	To make a better life for my children	Lumina
172	47D	To set an example for my children	Lumina
173	48D	To meet new people	Lumina
174	49D	To what extent did each of the following factors impact you choice of college: Location close to where I live	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
175	50D	Attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of college	CIRP
176	2CL	Going to this college offers opportunity	Class

	RECRUITMENT	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll	
	Item Code	Item	Source
177	1D	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: College publications (catalogs, brochures, etc.) College website Communications about financial aid Electronic communication with the college Campus visit Contact with the college after you were admitted Contact with faculty from the college Contact with students who attended the college	College board

	RECRUITMENT	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll	
	Item Code	Item	Source
178	2D	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Billboards Television Ads Radio Ads Facebook Ads Twitter Ads	SLM
179	3D	Where have you recently seen or heard an ad for your college? Direct mail Public transit Restaurant Email At the movies On the radio TV commercial Online Newspaper Billboard Haven't seen any	Interact Media
180	4D	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? College website On-campus visit/tour Local high school Newspaper Direct mail Television ad Billboard Social Media Online ad	Interact Media

	RECRUITMENT	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll	
	Item Code	Item	Source
181	5D	When streaming music, what is your most used source? Amazon prime Apple music Google Play Music iHeartRadio Pandora Slacker radio Spotify Sound Cloud Other I don't stream music	Interact Media
182	28D	What is your primary source for obtain location information/news? (Newspaper - hard copy, newspaper-digital, podcasts, search engines, television, social media, radio	SRTC
183	29D	Which music streaming service(s) do you listen to most often? (None, Pandora, YouTube, iHeart Radio, Slacker Radio, iTunes, Spotify, Other	SRTC
184	30D	What Social Media do you most frequently use (select all that apply): Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Other	SRTC
185	31D	Which forms of digital advertising do you feel in most trustworthy? (Select all that apply): Banner ads, e-mail, search engine ads, social media ads, YouTube	SRTC
186	34D	Which of the following sources did you use to obtain information about the college: New articles, instructors, social media, college website, catalog/student handbook, on-campus information sessions	SRTC
187	7D	Admissions counselors respond to prospective students in a timely manner	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
188	19D	Contact with the college after you were admitted	College board
189	20D	Contact with faculty from the college	College board
190	21D	Contact with graduates of the college	College board
191	40D	A visit to this campus	CIRP

	RECRUITMENT	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll	
	Item Code	Item	Source
192	24D	Information provided by a staff or faculty members at this college	SC
193	22D	Contact with students who attend the college	College board
194	25D	Frequent contact with faculty	SC
195	6D	How did you hear about your current college? Word of mouth, website, social media, advertising, high school visit, referred by governmental/community agency	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
196	17D	Visit to the campus	College board
197	18D	On-campus interview with the admission staff	College board
198	27D	A visit to the campus	CIRP
199	8D	Impressions from campus visit or other personal contacts	Hoyt and Brown
200	23D	Materials provided by the college	SC
201	32D	The marketing materials I received were helpful in making my decision to attend this college and assisted in my program choice.	SRTC
202	12D	College publications (catalogs, brochures, etc.)	College board
203	9D	Visits by admission staff at your high school	College board
204	10D	Visits by admission staff at a state of government agency	SLM
205	11D	College-sponsored meetings in your home area	College board
206	33D	Recruitment efforts were helpful in making my decision to attend this college.	SRTC
207	13D	College videos	College board
208	14D	College website	College board
209	41D	Information for a website	CIRP
210	38D	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? College website	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
211	39D	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? College fair	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
212	15D	Communications about financial aid (not the aid decision)	College board

	RECRUITMENT	College efforts to encourage a student to apply and enroll	
	Item Code	Item	Source
213	16D	Electronic communication with the college	College board
214	26D	The athletic department recruited me	CIRP
215	35D	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Personalized attention prior to enrollment)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
216	36D	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Websites dedicated to college admissions	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
217	37D	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Printed materials from the college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
218	42D	Admitted early decision and/or early action	CIRP

	REPUTATION	Beliefs and opinions about the college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
219	2E	How important was each college characteristic in the choice to attend your current college? Academic reputation Quality of academic facilities Attractiveness of campus Cost to your family (amount to pay after grants and scholarships) Availability of academic/technical programs	College board
220	8E	The institution has a good reputation within the community	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
221	22E	Reputation of institution	SC
222	24E	This college has a very good academic reputation	CIRP
223	25E	This college has a good reputation for its social activities	CIRP
224	26E	Rankings in national magazines	CIRP
225	29E	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Academic reputation)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
226	14E	Overall academic reputation	College board
227	10E	Classes deal with practical experiences and problems	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
228	11E	Quality of program in your intended major.	Hoyt and Brown

	REPUTATION	Beliefs and opinions about the college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
229	12E	Quality of Faculty	College board
230	13E	Quality of majors of interest to you	College board
231	15E	Quality of academic facilities (library, laboratories, computers, etc.)	College board
232	21E	Academic programs offered	SC
233	9E	The college has a high job placement rate.	SLM
234	20E	Job placement rate	SC
235	5E	The college is safe and secure for all students	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
236	18E	Campus safety	SC
237	36E	How safe is the campus?	Past Student
238	37E	What is the crime rate on campus?	Past Student
239	34E	Is the college accredited?	Past Student
240	35E	Are specific programs accredited?	Past Student
241	38E	What are the specific programs licensure/certification pass rates?	Past Student
242	6E	Internships or practical experiences are available for my program.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
243	7E	The college's lab and facilities are kept up to date.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
244	15E	Quality of academic facilities (library, laboratories, computers, etc.)	College board
245	28E	The classroom/lab/shops are adequate to meet the course instructional requirements and my education/training needs.	SRTC
246	19E	Childcare options	SC
247	16E	Academic services provided	SC
248	23E	College has good facilities/equipment	SC
249	3E	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did you rely on each of the following to help you with your college selection process Facebook Instagram Email Twitter Snapchat LinkedIn	SLM
250	27E	Information from a website	CIRP
251	17E	Accessibility facilities	SC
252	30E	What is the college's student/faculty ratio	Past Student

	REPUTATION	Beliefs and opinions about the college	
	Item Code	Item	Source
253	31E	How diverse is the student population?	Past Student
254	32E	What is the college's male/female ratio?	Past Student
255	33E	What is the college's retention rate?	Past Student
256	1E	In considering your choices for colleges to attend, where did the college you are attending rank in your overall choices?	SLM
257	4E	Would you recommend your current college to others?	CTC Grad Survey
258	39E	To what extent did each of the following factors impact you choice of college:	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
259	40E	Campus facilities	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
260	41E	Prestige of its academic programs	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
261	42E	Academic ranking of the college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
262	43E	Challenging curriculum	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
263	44E	Promises monetarily rewarding careers	CIRP
264	45E	Athletic department recruited me	CIRP
265	3CL	Most people graduate from this college	Class

	MISC	Miscellaneous	
	Item Code	Item	Source
266	3F	Gender	College board
267	9F	What is your gender	
268	28F	Gender	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
269	7F	Parents' income Racial/ethnic background	College board
270	13F	Race	
271	30F	Ethnicity/Race	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
272	6F	Distance from home	College board
273	14F	How far is the college from your home?	
274	36F	Current residence (residence hall, own house, rent room or apartment off campus, parent's home, other)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
275	1F	What program level are you currently enrolled in? Degree, Diploma, Certificate, None	SLM
276	19F	Are you currently enrolled in remedial support classes or have you been enrolled in them in the past at this college?	SLM
277	31F	Current enrollment status (day, evening, weekend)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI

	MISC	Miscellaneous	
	Item Code	Item	Source
278	32F	Current class load (full-time, part-time)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
279	25F	How many credit hours are you taking this semester? (0-5; 6-8; 9-11; 12-15; 16 or more)	SRTC
280	33F	Current GPA (no credit earned, 1.99 or below, 2.0-2.49, 2.5-2.99, 3.0-3.49, 3.5 or higher)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
281	34F	Educational goal (associate degree, vocational/technical program, transfer to another institution, certification (initial or renewal), self-improvement, job-related training, other)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
282	20F	Highest academic degree planned: None, Vocational Certificate, Associate's, Bachelor's Master's Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, DO, DDS, DVM, JD, BD, MDIV, other)	CIRP
283	21F	Highest academic degree planned at this college: None, Vocational Certificate, Associate's	CIRP
284	15F	Receive a: certificate	SC
285	16F	Receive an: Associate's	SC
286	17F	Transfer	SC
287	22F	Select your highest level of education: GED, High School graduate, associate degree, bachelor degree, master degree	CIRP
288	26F	If you are currently employed, how many hours per week do you spend working on a job while taking classes? (none - not employed, 1-10, 11-20, 21-31, 32-40)	SRTC
289	35F	Employment (full-time off campus, part-time off campus, full-time on campus, part-time on campus, not employed)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
290	2F	The availability of computer labs influenced my decision to enroll	SLM
291	11F	Which of the following categories best represents your grades in the last college you attended?	
292	10F	Which of the following categories best represents you average grades in high school?	
293	4F	Grades	College board
294	5F	Test scores	College board

	MISC	Miscellaneous	
	Item Code	Item	Source
295	8F	Age	College board
296	29F	Age (18 and under, 19 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 and over)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
297	12F	What college admission test(s) did you take?	
298	18F	Military status (none; ROTC, cadet, or midshipman at a service academy; in active duty, reserves, or national guard; a discharged veteran no serving in active duty, reserves, or national guard)	CIRP
299	23F	Are you satisfied with your decision to attend?	CIRP
300	24F	Primary program of study	SRTC
301	37F	Residence classification (in-state, out-of-stat, international (no U.S. citizen)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
302	38F	Physical disability or diagnosed learning disability? (yes, no)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
303	39F	When I entered this institution, it was my (1st, 2nd, 3rd choice)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
304	40F	Is there a feasible public transportation available?	Past Student
305	27F	The application/admission process were easy to follow.	SRTC

APPENDIX D
 PROTOTYPE A

LAUNCHED WINDOW:

Welcome to the College Choice survey!

Students select colleges for a wide number of reasons. We know that different reasons are important to different students. As we continually try to improve college opportunities to students like you, we would like to know what reasons were most important to your college choice process. This survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The answers you provide will be kept in the strictest of confidentiality. Please lick 'Next' to begin.

How important were each of the following factors in regards to your decision to enroll at your current college?

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
1.	The college was affordable.				
2.	The college offered a tuition payment plan.				
3.	The college offered federal financial aid.				
4.	The college is located close to my home.				
5.	The graduates of the college get good jobs.				

How important were each of the following factors in regards to your decision to enroll at your current college?

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremel y Important
6.	The opinions of my friends.				
7.	The size of the classes.				
8.	The availability of on-campus college placement testing.				
9.	The availability of on-campus housing.				
10.	The availability of courses offered in the evening.				
11.	The availability of courses offered on the weekend.				
12.	The availability of online courses.				
13.	The ability to develop vocational/occupational skill.				
14.	Information provided via the college's website.				
15.	Information provided via the college's social media.				
16.	Information that was mailed to your home.				
17.	Reputation of the college.				
18.	Quality of the programs.				

How important were each of the following factors in regards to your decision to enroll at your current college?

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
19.	Quality of the programs.				
20.	Academic programs offered.				
21.	I believed that a two-year college would be a good fit for me.				

Additional questions:

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not Applicable
1.	The college offers courses that transfer to other colleges.					
2.	The opinions of my high school teacher.					
3.	The opinions of my high school counselor.					
4.	The opinions of my employer.					
5.	Visits by college staff to your high school.					
6.	Visits by college state to a state or government agency.					
7.	Your visits to the college.					
8.	Job placement rates of graduates.					

Additional questions:

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not Applicable
9.	Availability of childcare.					

APPENDIX E

PROTOTYPE B

LAUNCHED WINDOW:

Welcome to the College Choice survey!

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey. This survey will take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The answers you provide will be kept in the strictest of confidentiality. Please lick 'Next' to begin.

How important were each of the following factors in your decision to enroll at your current college?

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not Applicable X means would show for that question
1.	The college was affordable.					
2.	The college offered a tuition payment plan.					
3.	The college offered federal financial aid.					
4.	The college is located close to my home.					
5.	The graduates of the college get good jobs.					
6.	The college offers courses that transfer to other colleges.					
7.	The opinions of my friends.					
8.	The opinions of my high school teacher.					X
9.	The opinions of my high school counselor.					X
10.	The opinions of my employer.					X
11.	The size of the classes.					

How important were each of the following factors in your decision to enroll at your current college?

		Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not Applicable X means would show for that question
12.	The availability of on-campus college placement testing (COMPASS, Accuplacer, Intuitional Admit SAT, etc..)					
13.	The availability of on-campus housing.					
14.	The availability of courses offered in the evening.					
15.	The availability of courses offered on the weekend.					
16.	The availability of online courses.					
17.	The ability to develop vocational/occupational skill.					
18.	Visits by college staff to your high school.					X
19.	Visits by college state to a state or government agency.					X
20.	Your visits to the college.					X
21.	Information provided via the college's website.					
22.	Information provided via the college's social media.					
23.	Information that was mailed to your home.					
24.	Reputation of the college.					
25.	Quality of the programs.					
26.	Quality of the faculty.					
27.	Job placement rates of graduates.					
28.	Academic programs offered.					
29.	Availability of childcare.					X
30.	I believed that a two-year college would be a good fit for me.					

Demographics:	
What year were you born?	Dropdown years
Gender:	Typed, open answer
Race:	White Black of African American Asian America Indian and Alaska Native Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Other Race
What is your race/ethnicity:	Typed, open answer
Two-year college state:	Dropdown state
Veteran Status:	Active Retired
How many credits are you currently enrolled in:	Drop down numbers
Which of the following apply to your current living situation (check all that apply)?	<input type="checkbox"/> I live alone <input type="checkbox"/> I live with other students <input type="checkbox"/> I live with roommates who are not students <input type="checkbox"/> I live with parents(s), relative(s), or guardian(s) <input type="checkbox"/> I live with a husband/wife/domestic partner/significant other <input type="checkbox"/> I live with my child/children.
Are you a dependent? If yes, Approximate household income:	\$0-\$24,999 \$25,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000-\$99,999 over \$100,000
If you are independent, Approximate household income:	\$0-\$24,999 \$25,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000-\$99,999 over \$100,000

APPENDIX F
FINAL ITEM POOL

Variable Category	Number of Items	% of pool
Green = College Characteristics	226	37%
Pink = Direct Advice of Others	61	10%
Orange = Comfort/Convenience/Familiarity	49	8%
Yellow = Direct Recruitment Action	93	15%
Blue = Financial Aid/Cost	61	10%
Purple = Potential Employment/Better Life	14	2%
Grey = Background	50	8%
White = leftovers	50	8%
Total Items	604	

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
1A	Athletic programs offered	Hoyt and Brown
2A	Athletic programs in which you would like to participate	College Board
3A	Opportunity to participate in athletics and sports	University of Texas at Austin
4A	Knowing you would be able to play a sport (intramural)	Lipman Hearne
5A	Knowing that you would be able to play a sport (intercollegiate)	Lipman Hearne
6A	Availability of sports programs	CIRP
7A	Opportunity to participate in athletics and sports	SC
8A	Prestige of items sports programs	CIRP
9A	Prominent intercollegiate athletics	UC Davis
10A	The success of its athletics teams	Lipman Hearne

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
11A	The opportunity to play sports influenced my decision to enroll.	SLM
12A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? opportunity to play sports	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
13A	What is the crime rate on campus?	Past Student
14A	How safe are the neighborhoods surrounding the campus?	Past Student
15A	Campus is safe for all students	UC Davis
16A	The college is safe and secure for all students	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
17A	Safety	Hoyt and Brown
18A	How safe is the campus?	Past Student
19A	Campus safety	University of Texas at Austin
20A	Campus safety	SC
21A	Quality & availability of on-campus housing	UC Davis
22A	Quality of on-campus housing	College Board
23A	Quality of on-campus housing	ABQ
24A	Knowing that you could live on campus	Lipman Hearne
25A	Availability of housing	Hoyt and Brown
26A	Quality of Faculty	College Board
27A	Quality of faculty	UC Davis
28A	Reputation of faculty	University of Texas at Austin
29A	Frequent contact with faculty	University of Texas at Austin
30A	Chance to meet with faculty outside of class	University of Texas at Austin
31A	Knowing that faculty truly advise/mentor students	Lipman Hearne
32A	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Contact with faculty from the college	College Board
33A	Opportunities to do research with faculty	Lipman Hearne
34A	Faculty are accessible to students	UC Davis
35A	Quality of the faculty/faculty/s commitment to teaching	Hoyt and Brown
36A	The student to faculty ratio	Lee and Chatfield
37A	What is the college's student/faculty ratio	Past Student
38A	Quality of majors of interest to you	College Board
39A	Quality of majors that interest you	UC Davis
40A	Quality of program of your intended major	Hoyt and Brown
41A	Quality of academic facilities (library, laboratories, computers, etc.)	College Board
42A	Challenging curriculum	Granitz, Chen, Kohli

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
43A	Overall academic reputation	College Board
44A	Prestige of its academic programs	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
45A	How important was each college characteristic in the choice to attend your current college? Quality of academic facilities	College Board
46A	Quality of academic facilities (library, laboratories, etc.)	ABQ
47A	The classroom/lab/shops are adequate to meet the course instructional requirements and my education/training needs.	SRTC
48A	College has good facilities/equipment	University of Texas at Austin
49A	The quality of the library	Lee and Chatfield
50A	High-quality non-academic facilities	Lipman Hearne
51A	Quality of academic facilities (library, laboratories, computers, etc.)	UC Davis
52A	College has good facilities/equipment	SC
53A	Wired/technology advanced classrooms	Lipman Hearne
54A	The college's lab and facilities are kept up to date.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
55A	Campus facilities	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
56A	The availability of computer labs influenced my decision to enroll	SLM
57A	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: best school for this field/degree,	TICUA
58A	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: exactly the program you wanted,	TICUA
59A	Availability of my program/major	Hoyt & Brown
60A	Availability of majors that interest you	ABQ
61A	Availability of cultural programs	CIRP
62A	Availability of special programs for academically talented students	Hoyt and Brown
63A	Availability of special academic programs (independent study, honors programs, etc.)	ABQ
64A	An honors program	Lipman Hearne
65A	The presence of an honors program	Lee and Chatfield
66A	Are specific programs accredited?	Past Student
67A	Availability of your major/program of study	Hoyt and Brown
68A	That the curriculum provides a broad liberal arts rather than a deep, career-specific education	Lipman Hearne
69A	Knowing that you would be able to pursue a specific area of study	Lipman Hearne
70A	A wide variety of majors and courses	Lipman Hearne
71A	Availability of internships & practical work experiences	UC Davis

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
72A	Availability of majors that interest you	UC Davis
73A	Primary program of study	SRTC
74A	Reputation of institution	SC
75A	This college has a very good academic reputation	CIRP
76A	How important was each college characteristic in the choice to attend your current college? Academic reputation	College Board
77A	Academic programs offered	University of Texas at Austin
78A	Classes deal with practical experiences and problems	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
79A	To learn more about a favorite topic or area of interest	Lumina
80A	Variety of courses	College Board
81A	College guide ranking	UC Davis
82A	Academic reputation	ABQ
83A	Academic ranking of the college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
84A	The institution has a good reputation within the community	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
85A	This college has a very good academic reputation	CIRP
86A	Quality reputation of the school	Hoyt and Brown
87A	The academic reputation of institution	Lee and Chatfield
88A	Overall academic reputation	UC Davis
89A	Reputation of institution	University of Texas at Austin
90A	Before you picked your current school, did you learn about colleges and programs for the following sources: Interactive websites that allow people to rank and compare college according to personal priorities	TICUA
91A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Academic reputation)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
92A	How important was each college characteristic in the choice to attend your current college? Availability of academic/technical programs	College Board
93A	Academic programs offered	SC
94A	I was admitted through an Early Action or Early decision program	CIRP
95A	Prestigious reputation of the college/university	Lipman Hearne
96A	Quality of social life	ABQ
97A	This college has a good reputation for its social activities	CIRP
98A	School traditions, activities, or social scene	Hoyt and Brown
99A	That there are fraternities and/or sororities on campus	Lipman Hearne
100A	Availability of sororities/fraternities or other clubs and organizations	Hoyt and Brown

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
101A	Access to off-campus cultural and recreational opportunities	ABQ
102A	Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities	ABQ
103A	on-campus cultural & recreational opportunities	UC Davis
104A	off-campus cultural & recreational opportunities	UC Davis
105A	Knowing that there were clubs and activities that interested you	Lipman Hearne
106A	Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, debate, drama, music, etc.)	College Board
107A	The availability of student organizations influenced my decision to enroll.	SLM
108A	This college has a good reputation for its social activities	CIRP
109A	Committed to community service/volunteering	Lipman Hearne
110A	Knowing that the college is committed to environmental sustainability and/or green initiatives	Lipman Hearne
111A	Availability of recreational facilities on campus	ABQ
112A	I enrolled at this college because I knew I would have employment opportunities upon completing my program.	SLM
113A	How many graduates find full-time employment in the field after graduation	SLM
114A	The college graduates get good jobs	CIRP
115A	Job placement rate	University of Texas at Austin
116A	Job placement rate	SC
117A	The college has a high job placement rate.	SLM
118A	This college's graduates get good jobs	CIRP
119A	How well the college's graduates do getting a good job immediately after graduating.	Lipman Hearne
120A	The average percentage of students who graduate	Lumina
121A	Graduates get jobs in their chosen fields	UC Davis
122A	Child care facilities are available on campus	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
123A	Child care options	University of Texas at Austin
124A	Childcare options	SC
125A	Transfer	SC
126A	Do you plan on transferring to another college?	SLM
127A	So I can transfer to a 4-year college	SC
128A	Does the college have a transfer/articulation agreement with local colleges/universities?	Past Student
129A	Transferability of courses to other colleges was a factor in choosing to attend a two-year college	SLM
130A	Did transferring credit or received credit play an important role in your decision to enroll? (Yes, it was	TICUA

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
	important, no, it wasn't important, I'm glad I received credit, but it wasn't important, don't know.	
131A	So I can transfer to a 4-year college	University of Texas at Austin
132A	Educational goal (associate degree, vocational/technical program, transfer to another institution, certification (initial or renewal), self-improvement, job-related training, other)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
133A	Transfer to another college before graduating	CIRP
134A	Availability of remedial courses	SC
135A	Have you had, or do you feel you will need, any special tutoring or remedial work in any of the following subjects: English, Reading, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Foreign Language, Writing	CIRP
136A	Availability of remedial courses	University of Texas at Austin
137A	Are you currently enrolled in remedial support classes or have you been enrolled in them in the past at this college?	SLM
138A	Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
139A	Ability to take online course	CIRP
140A	Class scheduling	University of Texas at Austin
141A	Class scheduling	SC
142A	Variety of course offering times (night, internet, weekend, etc.).	Hoyt & Brown
143A	Availability of online course	SC
144A	Availability of online courses	University of Texas at Austin
145A	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: admission requirements easier to meet/that is where I got accepted	TICUA
146A	The availability of alternate admission testing (COMPASS, Accuplacer, Institutional Admit SAT, etc.) influenced my decision in applying to this college	SLM
147A	Test scores	College Board
148A	The application/admission process were easy to follow.	SRTC
149A	Admissions policy	Hoyt and Brown
150A	Small class size	Hoyt & Brown
151A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? Size of institution	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
152A	Class size	SC

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
153A	When choosing to attend this two-year college, college size/student enrollment influences my decision	Brokemeier
154A	I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	CIRP
155A	The sizes of the classes	Lee and Chatfield
156A	The total number of students	Lee and Chatfield
157A	Attending a small school (<4,000 students)	Hoyt and Brown
158A	Class size	University of Texas at Austin
159A	The size of the college influenced my decision to apply.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
160A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? campus appearance	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
161A	Attractiveness of campus	ABQ
162A	Attractiveness of campus	College Board
163A	Comfortable, friendly campus community	UC Davis
164A	How important was each college characteristic in the choice to attend your current college? Attractiveness of campus	College Board
165A	The physical appearance of the campus	Lee and Chatfield
166A	A traditional-looking college campus	Lipman Hearne
167A	Internships or practical experiences are available for my program.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
168A	The availability of career-related internships or coops	Lipman Hearne
169A	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Contact with the college after you were admitted	College Board
170A	Students received individual guidance & attention	UC Davis
171A	Contact with the college after you were admitted	ABQ
172A	Personal attention to students	ABQ
173A	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: College responsiveness	Mbawuni & Nimako
174A	Contact with graduates of the college	College Board
175A	Contact with students who attend the college	College Board
176A	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Contact with students who attended the college	College Board
177A	Current students	Lee and Chatfield
178A	Current student	Lipman Hearne
179A	Admitted-student program	Lipman Hearne
180A	Availability of student services	University of Texas at Austin

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
181A	Academic services provided	University of Texas at Austin
182A	The business offices is open during hours which are convenient for most students.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
183A	Guidance counselors at individual colleges	TICUA
184A	Financial aid advisors	TICUA
185A	Student health center	Lee and Chatfield
186A	The college has a Veteran's Services program	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
187A	Academic services provided	SC
188A	Accessibility facilities	SC
189A	Work study opportunities	Hoyt & Brown
190A	The opportunity for work study at this institution	Lee and Chatfield
191A	Price of tuition	University of Texas at Austin
192A	The college provides support services for displaced homemakers	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
193A	Availability of student services	SC
194A	The percentage of students that graduate from this college	CIRP
195A	What is the college's retention rate?	Past Student
196A	Type of institution (two-year college)	Hoyt & Brown
197A	Receive a: certificate	SC
198A	Shorter time to finish	SC
199A	Shorter time to finish	University of Texas at Austin
200A	Religious considerations	Hoyt and Brown
201A	Attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of college	CIRP
202A	The ethnic composition	Lee and Chatfield
203A	Racially & ethnically diverse student body	UC Davis
204A	How diverse is the student population?	Past Student
205A	What is the college's male/female ratio?	Past Student
206A	Get away from home	SC
207A	Current residence (residence hall, own house, rent room or apartment off campus, parent's home, other)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
208A	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? geographic setting	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
209A	Surrounding (neighborhood, town or city)	ABQ
210A	The proximity of this institution to my home	Lee and Chatfield
211A	That it is located in or near a major city	Lipman Hearne
212A	Campus location	University of Texas at Austin
213A	Wanted to get away from home	CIRP

Item Code	Item	Source
COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS		
214A	Living away from home	Hoyt & Brown
215A	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: this school gave me the most credit for previous work or experienced	TICUA
216A	Prior credits taken/awarded at the school	Hoyt and Brown
217A	Preparation for career	SC
218A	Improve job skills	University of Texas at Austin
219A	Required by job	University of Texas at Austin
220A	Is the college accredited?	Past Student
221A	Knew more about it than other schools	Hoyt and Brown
223A	Accessible facilities	University of Texas at Austin
224A	Campus climate	University of Texas at Austin
225A	What are the specific programs licensure/certification pass rates?	Past Student
226A	Promises monetarily rewarding careers	CIRP

COMFORT/CONVENIENCE/FAMILIARITY		
1B	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: Convenience/location	TICUA
2B	Campus is close (enough) to home	UC Davis
3B	College is close to home.	University of Texas at Austin
4B	College is close to job	University of Texas at Austin
5B	I can live at home.	University of Texas at Austin
6B	Where it is located	Lumina
7B	Are you a resident of the state in which the college is located?	ABQ
8B	How far is your home from the college? Less than 50 miles, 51-100 miles, 101-300 miles, 301-500 miles, more than 500 miles	ABQ
9B	How many miles is this college from your permanent home?	CIRP
10B	I wanted to live near home	CIRP

11B	Ability to live at home or commute daily	Hoyt and Brown
12B	Living away from home	Hoyt and Brown
13B	Ability to commute home on weekends	Hoyt and Brown
14B	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: College location is close to my home	Mbawuni & Nimako
15B	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: College location allows me to combine work and college	Mbawuni & Nimako
16B	Ability to work while attending school	Hoyt & Brown
17B	Distance from home	College Board
18B	How far is the college from your home?	
19B	Ability to live at home or commute daily	Hoyt & Brown
20B	I can live at home.	SC
21B	College is close to job	SC
22B	I wanted to live close to home	CIRP
23B	Ease of getting home	College Board
24B	How far is the college from your home?	College Board
25B	That it is near your hometown	Lipman Hearne
26B	Is there a feasible public transportation available?	Past Student
27B	To what extent did each of the following factors impact your choice of college: Location close to where I live	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
28B	Ability to work while attending school	Hoyt and Brown
29B	How closely is your job related to the training you are receiving?	CTC Grad Survey
30B	Job advancement	SC
31B	College is close to home.	SC
32B	Friends attending	Hoyt & Brown
33B	Parents attended school there	Hoyt & Brown
34B	Parents/family want me to attend this college	SC
35B	Friends attending school there	Hoyt and Brown
36B	Other relatives/friends attended school there	Hoyt and Brown
37B	Parent(s) felt it was the best choice	Hoyt and Brown
38B	You felt like you were a good fit at the college	Lipman Hearne
39B	Family member attended the college	Lipman Hearne
40B	College friend	Lipman Hearne
41B	How supportive were your friends about your decision to attend a two-year college?	SLM
42B	How supportive was your family about your decision to attend a two-year college?	SLM
43B	I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	CIRP
44B	Work student or part-time employment opportunities at the school	Hoyt and Brown
45B	General campus setting (urban, rural, beach, mountains, etc.)	UC Davis
46B	Campus is located in a specific city or area of interest	UC Davis

47B	Before applying to a two-year college, I believed a two-year college would be a good fit for me	SLM
48B	Since beginning coursework at a two-year college, I believe two-year college is a good fit for me	SLM
49B	Be well off financially	SC

DIRECT ADVICE OF OTHERS		
1C	Parent(s) felt it was the best choice	Hoyt & Brown
2C	Opinions of my parents or guardians	College Board
3C	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? recommendations from family/friends	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
4C	My relatives wanted me to come here	CIRP
5C	Did your parents play a part in your decision to attend?	CIRP
6C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? relative/family member	SRTC
7C	My parents wanted me to go	Lumina
8C	My parents wanted me to come here	CIRP
9C	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Parents and family	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
10C	Parents	Lipman Hearne
11C	Friends, family or colleagues	TICUA
12C	Parents/family want me to attend this college	University of Texas at Austin
13C	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did each of the following factors influence your decision in enrolling at this college Recommendations from family	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
14C	In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons: my parents wanted me to go	CIRP
15C	Recommendation from spouse	SC
16C	Recommendation from spouse	University of Texas at Austin
17C	Recommendation from a friend	University of Texas at Austin
18C	HS friend	Lipman Hearne
19C	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Friends and peers	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
20C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? Friend	SRTC

21C	Did your friends play a part in your decision to attend?	CIRP
22C		
23C	Opinions of my friends	College Board
24C	Teacher of counselor recommend it	Hoyt & Brown
25C	Opinions of my guidance counselor	College Board
26C	Recommendation from a teacher of counselor	SC
27C	Recommendation from a friend	SC
28C	Opinions of my high school teacher(s)	College Board
29C	My teacher advised me	CIRP
30C	High school counselor advised me	CIRP
31C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? high school staff	SRTC
32C	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? School counselors	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
33C	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? School teachers	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
34C	My teacher advised me	CIRP
35C	High School counselor advised me	CIRP
36C	Teacher or counselor recommended it	Hoyt and Brown
37C	HS teacher/counselor	Lipman Hearne
38C	High school guidance counselors	TICUA
39C	Recommendation from a teacher or counselor	University of Texas at Austin
40C	Opinions of my employer	College Board
41C	Opinions of my potential employers	College Board
42C	Recommendation from workplace	University of Texas at Austin
43C	An employer	TICUA
44C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? (Employer	SRTC
45C	Recommendation from workplace	SC
46C	Required by job	SC
47C	Recommendation from a neighbor	SC
48C	Recommendation from a neighbor	University of Texas at Austin
49C	Recommendation from a church	University of Texas at Austin
50C	Recommendation from a church	SC
51C	Private college counselor advised me	CIRP
52C	Faculty member	Lipman Hearne

53C	College advisor	Lee and Chatfield
54C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? College faculty	SRTC
55C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? college recruiter	SRTC
56C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? college staff	SRTC
57C	Who primarily influenced your decision to attend? current or former college student	SRTC
58C	Alum	Lipman Hearne
59C	Other recommendation	University of Texas at Austin
60C	A mentor/role model encourage me to go	CIRP
61C	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: someone recommended it	TICUA

POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT/BETTER LIFE		
1D	To improve my employment opportunities	Lumina
2D	To make more money	Lumina
3D	To get a good job	Lumina
4D	To be able to get a better job	CIRP
5D	To be able to make more money	CIRP
6D	To get training for a specific career	CIRP
7D	opportunity to have a well-paying job/expectation of high salary	Lee and Chatfield
8D	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did each of the following factors influence your decision in enrolling at this college? Better job opportunities	Brokemeier
9D	On a scale of 1-10 (1 being high desire to attend, 10 being least desire to attend), how much did each of the following factors influence your decision in enrolling at this college? Job advancement with current employer	Brokemeier
10D	Succeed in career	SC
11D	Better opportunity for children	SC
12D	To make a better life for my children	Lumina
13D	To set an example for my children	Lumina
14D	Which of these best describes the main reason you are pursuing a degree/certificate/diploma? To get ahead in your current job or career, to get a different kind of job or career, to get a good education and learn about the world, none of these, don't know.	TICUA

DIRECT RECRUITMENT ACTION		
1E	Visit to the campus	College Board
2E	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Campus visit	College Board
3E	A visit to the campus	CIRP
4E	A visit to this campus	CIRP
5E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? On-campus visit/tour	Interact Media
6E	How much did each of the following influence your college choice: College tour guide	Simones & Soares
7E	How much did each of the following influence your college choice: College tour	Simones & Soares
8E	Campus visit	ABQ
9E	A visit to the campus	CIRP
10E	Which information sources influence the enrollment decision: Tour	Lipman Hearne
11E	Open house	Lipman Hearne
12E	On-campus interview with the admission staff	College Board
13E	Impressions for a campus visit or other personal contacts	Hoyt and Brown
14E	Information from a website	CIRP
15E	Website	Lipman Hearne
16E	College website	ABQ
17E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? College website	Interact Media
18E	College search website	Lipman Hearne
19E	Information for a website	CIRP
20E	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Websites dedicated to college admissions	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
21E	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? College website	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
22E	Information from a website	CIRP
23E	Individual college websites	TICUA
24E	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: College website	College Board

25E	College website	College Board
26E	College publications (catalogs, brochures, etc.)	College Board
27E	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: College publications (catalogs, brochures, etc.)	College Board
28E	Materials provided by the college	SC
29E	What is your primary source for obtain location information/news? (Newspaper - hard copy, newspaper-digital, podcasts, search engines, television, social media, radio	SRTC
30E	The marketing materials I received were helpful in making my decision to attend this college and assisted in my program choice.	SRTC
31E	Recruitment efforts were helpful in making my decision to attend this college.	SRTC
32E	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Printed materials from the college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
33E	College publications (catalogs, brochures, etc.)	ABQ
34E	Financial aid brochure	Lipman Hearne
35E	Admissions viewbook	Lipman Hearne
36E	Department brochure	Lipman Hearne
37E	Guidebook	Lipman Hearne
38E	Books with information on colleges and programs	TICUA
39E	Materials provided by the college	University of Texas at Austin
40E	Information provided by a staff or faculty members at this college	University of Texas at Austin
41E		
42E	College recruited who promote and market their school	TICUA
43E	HS visit	Lipman Hearne
44E	Contact with faculty from the college	ABQ
45E	Contact with students who attend the college	ABQ
46E	Admissions counselors respond to prospective students in a timely manner	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
47E	Impressions from campus visit or other personal contacts	Hoyt and Brown
48E	Info session	Lipman Hearne

49E	Sit in on class	Lipman Hearne
50E	Summer session	Lipman Hearne
51E	Visits by admission staff at your high school	College Board
52E	Athletic department recruited me	CIRP
53E	Contact with faculty from the college	College Board
54E	Information provided by a staff or faculty members at this college	SC
55E	Frequent contact with faculty	SC
56E	How much did each of the following influence your college choice: Current students attending the college	Simones & Soares
57E	Phone call from college	Lipman Hearne
58E	Info session	Lipman Hearne
59E	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Communications about financial aid	College Board
60E	Electronic communication with the college	College Board
61E	Rate the quality of information provided to you by the college for the following sources: Electronic communication with the college	College Board
62E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Social Media	Interact Media
63E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Online ad	Interact Media
64E	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? Search based information on the internet	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
65E	Electronic communication with the college	ABQ
66E	Email from college	Lipman Hearne
67E	Insider/P2P site	Lipman Hearne
68E	Institution's Facebook/MySpace page	Lipman Hearne
69E	Which forms of digital advertising do you feel in most trustworthy? (Select all that apply): Banner ads, e-mail, search engine ads, social media ads, YouTube	SRTC
70E	Which of the following sources did you use to obtain information about the college: New articles, instructors, social media, college website, catalog/student handbook, on-campus information sessions	SRTC

71E	College videos	College Board
72E	How important were the following sources of information to your college choice decision process? College fair	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
73E	How much did each of the following influence your college choice: College fair	Simones & Soares
74E	College fair	Lipman Hearne
75E	Rankings in national magazines	CIRP
76E	College ranking magazine	Lipman Hearne
77E	Letter to parents	Lipman Hearne
78E	How did you hear about your current college? Word of mouth, website, social media, advertising, high school visit, referred by governmental/community agency	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
79E	Billboard/other advertising	Lipman Hearne
80E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Billboard	Interact Media
81E	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Billboards	SLM
82E	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Television Ads	SLM
83E	Television commercials, billboards, or other ads	TICUA
84E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Television ad	Interact Media
85E	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Facebook Ads	SLM
86E	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Twitter Ads	SLM
87E	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Personalized attention prior to enrollment)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
88E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Local high school	Interact Media
89E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Newspaper	Interact Media

90E	Which method would have the most impact, if you were a potential student? Direct mail	Interact Media
91E	How much did the following medias influence your decision to research a college: Radio Ads	SLM
92E	Paid consultant	Lipman Hearne
93E	Contact with the college after you were admitted	College Board

FINANCIAL AID/COST		
1F	Not offered aid at first choice	CIRP
2F	Could not afford first choice	CIRP
3F	Not offered aid by my first choice	CIRP
4F	Cost was a factor in my decision to enroll.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
5F	How heavily did cost influence your decision to enroll?	SLM
6F	How much is costs	Lumina
7F	Cost to your family - how much you and your family would have to pay after grants and scholarships (if any(are subtracted from total college costs	College Board
8F	Total institutional price before financial aid	College Board
9F	Total cost to you and your family after grants and scholarships	College Board
10F	Overall cost of attendance	SC
11F	Price of tuition	SC
12F	Prices of tuition and fees	SLM
13F	The cost of attending this college	CIRP
14F	Cost of attending college	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
15F	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: Affordable tuition	Mbawuni & Nimako
16F	Cost to your family - how much you and your family would have to pay after grants and scholarships (if any(are subtracted from total college costs	ABQ
17F	The cost of attending this college	CIRP
18F	Cost of tuition	Hoyt and Brown
19F	Overall cost of attendance	University of Texas at Austin
20F	The current economic situation significantly impacted my college choice.	CIRP

21F	Do you have concern about your ability to finance your college education? (None, Some, Major)	CIRP
22F	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: affordability	TICUA
23F	The tuition cost was affordable	Lipman Hearne
24F	Did you apply for financial aid at the college you attend?	College Board
25F	"Out-of-pocket" cost of attendance (after financial aid, scholarships, etc.)	UC Davis
26F	Financial aid offered	University of Texas at Austin
27F	Communications about financial aid	ABQ
28F	Was financial aid or the cost of living a significant factor in your decision to enroll in the college? Yes/No	ABQ
29F	Did you apply for need-based financial aid?	ABQ
30F	Were you offered need-based financial aid?	ABQ
31F	Where you offered a non-need-based scholarship by the college in recognition of your athletic, musical, artistic, or academic talent?	ABQ
32F	Did your financial aid packages include: Grants or scholarships	ABQ
33F	One of more student loans	ABQ
34F	A work package or campus job?	ABQ
35F	How much of your first year's educational expenses (room, board, tuition, and fees) do you expect to cover from each of the sources listed: Family recourses, My own resources, Aid which need not be repaid, Aid with must be repaid, other than above (Non, Less than 1k, 1k-2,999, 3k-5999, 6k-9999, 10k+)	CIRP
36F	I was offered financial assistant	CIRP
37F	Receiving a scholarship	Hoyt and Brown
38F	Ease in obtaining financial aid/loans	Hoyt and Brown
39F	The scholarships I received from this institution	Lee and Chatfield
40F	The scholarships I received from outside this institution	Lee and Chatfield
41F	How important were the following factors in your decision to enroll here? (Cost, financial aid)	SRTC
42F	Availability of scholarships	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
43F	Availability of loans	Granitz, Chen, Kohli
44F	Adequate financial aid is available for most students.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)

45F	Did you receive financial aid at the college you attend?	College Board
46F	Availability of financial aid	SC
47F	I was offered financial assistance	
48F	Financial aid was a factor in my decision to enroll.	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
49F	How do you meet your college expenses? (Parents, employer, Spouse/Partner, scholarships/grants, loans, VA benefits, self, other sources – about half, more than half, all or nearly all)	Pace and Kuh
50F	Receiving a scholarship	Hoyt & Brown
51F	Ease in obtaining financial aid/loans	Hoyt & Brown
52F	Were either financial aid or college costs significant factors in your decision to enroll in the college you plan to attend?	College Board
53F	Total dollar amount of financial aid offered	College Board
54F	Portion of total financial aid that was scholarship or grant	College Board
55F	Your scholarship award	Lipman Hearne
56F	This college was selected because they take federal loans.	SLM
57F	This college was selected because they take private loans.	SLM
58F	Communications about financial aid (not the aid decision)	College Board
59F	Financial aid information and services are readily available.	SRTC
60F	The application fee influenced my decision to attend.	SLM
61f	Describe (numerically) how the college you are enrolled in compared to other colleges you considered in terms of financial aid amounts (1-5)	College Board

BACKGROUND/DEMOGRAPHICS		
1G	Which of the following categories best represents your average grades in high school?	
2G	Grades	College Board
3G	Which category represents your average grades in college?	SLM
4G	What was your average grade in high school?	CIRP
5G	What is the highest education level of your father?	SLM
6G	What is the highest education level of your mother?	SLM
7G	Physical disability or diagnosed learning disability? (yes, no)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
8G	I always knew I would attend college.	SLM
9G	What college admission test(s) did you take?	
10G	Race	
11G	What program level are you currently enrolled in? Degree, Diploma, Certificate, None	SLM

12G	Highest academic degree planned: None, Vocational Certificate, Associate's, Bachelor's Master's Ph.D., Ed.D., MD, DO, DDS, DVM, JD, BD, MDIV, other)	CIRP
13G	When I entered this institution, it was my (1st, 2nd, 3rd choice)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
14G	Gender	College Board
15G	What is the approximate income of your parents or guardians before taxes last year?	College Board
16G	What was your approximate income before taxes last year?	College Board
17G	How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to attend a two-year college: Because I was refused admission at another college	Mbawuni & Nimako
18G	Which category represents your average grades in high school?	College Board
19G	Parents' income Racial/ethnic background	College Board
20G	Age	College Board
21G	What is your gender	
22G	Including this college, how many institutions did you apply to?	ABQ
23G	Including this college, how many institutions were you admitted to?	ABQ
24G	From what kind of high school did you graduate?	CIRP
25G	Citizen status (U.S. citizen, permanent resident (green card), neither	CIRP
26G	To how many other colleges did you apply for admissions this year?	CIRP
27G	Are you parents: Both alive and living with each other, both alive, divorce or living apart, one or both deceased?	CIRP
28G	What is the highest level of formal education obtain by your parents (mark one for each column - Mother/Father), Grammar school or less, some high school, high school graduate, postsecondary school other than college, some college, college degree, some graduate school, graduate degree)	CIRP
29G	Military status (none; ROTC, cadet, or midshipman at a service academy; in active duty, reserves, or national guard; a discharged veteran no saving in active duty, reserves, or national guard	CIRP
30G	Select your highest level of education: GED, High School graduate, associate degree, bachelor degree, master degree	CIRP
31G	How many credit hours are you taking this semester? (0-5; 6-8; 9-11; 12-15; 16 or more)	SRTC
32G	If you are currently employed, how many hours per week do you spend working on a job while taking classes? (none - not employed, 1-10, 11-20, 21-31, 32-40)	SRTC

33G	Gender	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
34G	Age (18 and under, 19 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 and over)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
35G	During the semester, how many hours do you spend working for pay in a week?	Pace and Kuh
36G	Ethnicity/Race	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
37G	Current GPA (no credit earned, 1.99 or below, 2.0-2.49, 2.5-2.99, 3.0-3.49, 3.5 or higher)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
38G	Residence classification (in-state, out-of-stat, international (no U.S. citizen)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
39G	Are you enrolled as a part-time or fulltime student?	CIRP
40G	Please select your current enrollment status: Enrolled and pursuing a certificate or degree, enrolled but not pursuing a certificate or degree, don't know, not currently enrolled	TICUA
41G	Are you a fulltime or part-time student	TICUA
42G	Current enrollment status (day, evening, weekend)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
43G	Current class load (full-time, part-time)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
44G	Employment (full-time off campus, part-time off campus, full-time on campus, part-time on campus, not employed)	Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI
45G	How many years do you expect it will take you to graduate from this college? (1-6 or do not plan to graduate from this college)	CIRP
46G	Are you currently employed?	SLM
47G	Where is your current residence? Residence hall, own house, rent room or apartment off campus, parent's home, military quarters, other	Ruffalo Noel Levitz (SSI)
48G	Are you looking to graduate with a certificate or an associate's degree, or are you taking classes but not looking to graduate from this school? Certificate, associate's degree, taking classes but not looking to graduate from this school, don't know	TICUA
49G	At your current institution, have you transferred course credit, received credit for previous work experience, or taken a test to receive course credit? Transferred course credit, received credit for previous work experience, took a test to receive course credit, no, don't know.	TICUA
50G	Are you taking your classes - all online, mostly online, half and half in the classroom, mostly in the classroom, all in the classroom, don't know.	TICUA

DO THEY FIT SOMEWHERE		
1?	I believe I will graduate from college.	SLM
2?	Where did your current college rank in your overall college choices?	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
3?	Receive an: Associate's	SC
4?	In considering your choices for colleges to attend, where did the college you are attending rank in your overall choices?	SLM
5?	Including the college you are enrolled at, how many institutions did you apply to?	College Board
6?	Including the college you are enrolled at, how many of these colleges were you admitted to?	College Board
7?	Highest academic degree planned at this college: None, Vocational Certificate, Associate's	CIRP
8?	Are you satisfied with your decision to attend?	CIRP
9?	Which music streaming service(s) do you listen to most often? (None, Pandora, YouTube, iHeart Radio, Slacker Radio, iTunes, Spotify, Other	SRTC
10?	What Social Media do you most frequently use (select all that apply): Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Other	SRTC
11?	Developing vacation and occupational competence was a motivating factor in choosing to attend a two-year college	Pace and Kuh
12?	Improve job skills	SC
13?	To become a better person	Lumina
14?	To improve my self confidence	Lumina
15?	To learn more about the world	Lumina
16?	To meet new people	Lumina
17?	Would you recommend your current college to others?	CTC Grad Survey
18?	On a scale of 1-5, how well do you like college?	Pace and Kuh
19?	When streaming music, what is your most used source? Amazon prime Apple music Google Play Music iHeartRadio Pandora Slacker radio Spotify Sound Cloud Other I don't stream music	Interact Media
20?	If you could start over, would you attend the same two-year college you are currently attending?	Pace and Kuh
21?	How often to you recommend your current college to family or friends?	Interact media

22?	Since leaving high school, have you ever taken courses, whether for credit or not for credit, at any other institution (university, 4 or 2 year college, technical, vocational, or business school)?	CIRP
23?	Is this college your: first choice, second choice, third choice, less than third choice	CIRP
24?	What is the highest academic degree that you intend to obtain? None, vocational certificate, Associate (A.A. or equivalent) Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Ph.D. or Ed.D., MD., D.O., DDS, DVM, JD, BD, MDIV, Other	CIRP
25?	To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	CIRP
26?	There was nothing Better to do	CIRP
27?	To make me a more cultured person	CIRP
28?	To learn more about the things that interest me	CIRP
29?	To prepare myself for graduate or professional school	CIRP
30?	To find purpose in life	CIRP
31?	How would you characterize your political views: Far left, liberal, middle of the road, conservative, far right	CIRP
32?	What is your best guess as to the chance that you will: get a job to help pay for college expenses	CIRP
33?	Change major field	CIRP
34?	Change career choice	CIRP
35?	Participate in student government	CIRP
36?	Work full-time while attending college	CIRP
37?	Join a fraternity or a sorority	CIRP
38?	Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	CIRP
39?	Make at least a "B" average	CIRP
40?	Participate in student protests or demonstrations	CIRP
41?	Be satisfied with your college	CIRP
42?	Participate in volunteer of community service work	CIRP
43?	Seek personal counseling	CIRP
44?	Communicate regularly with you professors	CIRP
45?	Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group	CIRP
46?	Participate in student clubs/groups	CIRP
47?	Strengthen your religious beliefs/conviction	CIRP
48?	Participate in a study abroad program	CIRP
49?	The classes I took in high school	Lee and Chatfield
50?	What is the main reason why you chose this school rather than some other school for your studies: , don't know.	TICUA

APPENDIX G

PILOT STUDY A ITEMS

*Student Characteristics Survey Items—Pilot Study A*Item Language:

What year were you born?

What is your gender?

What is your race/ethnicity?

Are you married or living in a marriage-like relationship?

How many children under 18 are you responsible for?

What is your age?

What is your sex?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your marital status?

How many children are you responsible for?

What is the highest level of school your mother completed or the highest degree she received?

What is the highest level of school your father completed or the highest degree he received?

What is your household's annual income before taxes?

How many hours a week are you employed?

Are you a Veteran or currently serving in the military?

What were your average grades in high school?

What is your current enrollment status?

*Opinions of Others Survey Items—Pilot Study A*Item Language:

Opinions of parents or guardians.

Opinions of spouse/significant other.

Opinions of other family members.

Opinions of friends.

Opinions of your high school teacher.

Opinions of your high school counselor.

Opinions of past or current students at the college.
Opinions of your employer.

College Recruitment Efforts Survey Items—Pilot Study A

Item Language:

A visit to the college.
The college's social media messages.
The information provided in a television or radio commercial.
The information provided on the college website.
The information provided on the college's printed materials.
The college staff was responsive to my questions.
Information I received at a college fair.
The admissions process was clear.

College Characteristics Survey Items—Pilot Study A

Item Language:

The college is safe and secure for all students.
The college has good technology.
The college has an attractive campus.
The college is accessible via public transportation.
The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life.
The faculty have an excellent reputation.
The faculty are accessible to their students.
The college has a good academic reputation in my community.
The college offers the type of degree I need.
The college offers courses that will transfer easily into a four-year college.
The college has a high graduation rate.
The graduates of this college get good jobs.
The college offers online courses.
The college offers fully online programs.
The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace.
The college awards me the opportunity to participate in sports.
The college serves a diverse student population.
The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities.
The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges.
The college has a good reputation in the community.
The college is a good fit for people like me.

*Financial Factors Survey Items—Pilot Study A*Item Language:

The college has affordable tuition.

The college has affordable fees.

The college offers financial aid.

The college offers a tuition repayment program. (Note: this item was excluded from the survey results, as discussed in Chapter 3.)

APPENDIX H
PILOT STUDY A INSTRUMENT

2. Opinions of Others

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
Opinions of parents or guardians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of spouse/significant other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of other family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of your high school teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of your high school counselor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of past or current students at the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of your employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Recruitment Efforts

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
A visit to the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college's social media messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided in a television or radio commercial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided on the college website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided on the college's printed materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college staff was responsive to my questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information I received at a college fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The admissions process was clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. College Characteristics

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
The college is safe and secure for all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has good technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has an attractive campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college is accessible via public transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The faculty have an excellent reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The faculty are accessible to their students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has a good academic reputation in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The college offers the type of degree I need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers courses that will transfer easily into a four-year college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has a high graduation rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The graduates of this college get good jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers online courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers fully online programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college awards me the opportunity to participate in sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The college serves a diverse student population

The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities

The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges

The college has a good reputation in the community

The college is a good fit for people like me

5. What is your age?

- Under 19
- 20-23
- 24-29
- 30-39
- 40-55
- Over 55

6. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Prefer not to answer

7. What is your ethnicity?

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Prefer not to answer

8. What is your marital status?

- Not married
- Married or common-law
- In a relationship
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed

9. How many children are you responsible for?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 or more

10. What is the highest level of school your mother completed or the highest degree she received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree
- Don't know

11. What is the highest level of school your father completed or the highest degree he received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree
- Don't know

12. What is your household's annual income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- Between \$10,000 and \$19,999
- Between \$20,000 and \$29,999
- Between \$30,000 and \$39,999
- Between \$40,000 and \$49,999
- Between \$50,000 and \$59,999
- Between \$60,000 and \$69,999
- Between \$70,000 and \$79,999
- Between \$80,000 and \$89,999
- Between \$90,000 and \$99,999
- Over \$100,000
- Don't know

13. How many hours a week are you employed?

- 0
- 1-9
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40 or more

14. Are you a Veteran or currently serving in the military?

- Yes
- No

15. What were your average grades in high school?

- A
- B
- C
- D
- F

16. What is your current enrollment status?

- Full-time
- Part-time

17. What is your tuition rate?

- In-state tuition rate
- Out-of-state tuition rate
- International tuition rate

18. What state is your current two-year college located in?

Prev

Done

Powered by



See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

APPENDIX I

SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION REQUEST

 **Stephanie Meyer** shared a link to the group: Momma's Meals. ⋮
December 20, 2018 at 11:19 AM · 📷

🍷 and Admin approved! Survey help!

Ladies, I am so close to entering the final phase of my Ph.D. journey! I am hoping that some of you may be able to help with my pilot study. I am seeking to identify what factors impact public two-year college choice. I hope to survey students who just finished their first semester at a public two-year college OR students who will enter into a public two-year college in the spring of 2019. If this description fits you, would you please consider participating in an anonymous survey via the link below? OR, if you have children, nieces, nephews, friends, siblings, significant others (anyone 😊) that this description fits, I would be so grateful if you would share the link with them. Thank you very much for considering participating or sharing the link!



SURVEYMONKEY.COM i

Can you spare a few moments to take my survey?

Please take the survey titled "Public Two-year College Choice Survey". Your feedback is important!

  Siri L. Hirth and 3 others 5 Comments

 Like Comment

Stephanie Meyer

December 29, 2018 at 8:41 AM · ▼

Survey help! I am so close to entering the final phase of my Ph.D. journey! Hoping that some of you or your kids or nieces, nephews, friends, etc. might be able to help me out with my pilot study. I am seeking to identify what factors impact public two-year college choice. I hope to survey students who just finished their first semester at a public two-year college OR students who will enter into a public two-year college in the spring of 2019. If this description fits you, would you please consider participating in an anonymous survey via the link below? OR, if you have children, nieces, nephews, friends, siblings, significant others (anyone 😊) that this description fits, I would be so grateful if you would share the link with them. Thank you very much for considering participating or sharing the link!

SURVEYMONKEY.COM

Can you spare a few moments to take my survey?

Please take the survey titled "Public Two-year College Choice Survey". Your feedback is important!

7

6 Comments 12 Shares

Like

Comment

Share

APPENDIX J

PILOT STUDY A TO PILOT STUDY B QUESTION REVISIONS

Pilot A Question	Pilot Study B Question	Rationale
Opinions of parents or guardians	The opinions of parents or guardians	Added “the” to create statements for this question
Opinions of spouse/significant other	The opinions of spouse/significant other	Added “the” to create statements for this question
Opinions of other family members	The opinions of other family members	Added “the” to create statements for this question
Opinions of friends	The opinions of friends	Added “the” to create statements for this question
Opinions of your high school teacher	The opinions of your high school teachers	Added “the” to create statements for this question, made plural as could be more than one teacher
Opinions of your high school counselor	The opinions of your high school counselors	Added “the” to create statements for this question, made plural as could be more than one counselor
Opinions of past or current students at the college	The opinions of past or current students at the college	Added “the” to create statements for this question
Opinions of your employer	The opinions of your current employer	Added “the” to create statements for this question
The information provided in a television or radio commercial	Deleted from survey.	Very few participants reported to be influenced by this item.
The college staff was responsive to my questions	The responsiveness of college staff to my questions	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like

Pilot A Question	Pilot Study B Question	Rationale
The admissions process was clear	The ease of the admissions process	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college is safe and secure for all students	The safety and security of the college	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college has good technology	The quality of the technology provided by the college	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college has an attractive campus	The attractiveness of the college campus(es)	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college is accessible via public transportation	The accessibility of the college via public transportation	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The faculty have an excellent reputation	The excellent reputation of the faculty	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The faculty are accessible to their students	The accessibility of faculty to their students	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college has a good academic reputation in my community	The positive academic reputation of the college in my community	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college has a high graduation rate	The high graduation rate of students the college	Changed to reflect the feel of the other questions in the survey – more statement-like
The college awards me the opportunity to participate in sports	The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports	“Gives” reads better than “awards”
What is your age?	What year were you born?	Allowed participants to list specific age instead of being grouped in a range

Pilot A Question	Pilot Study B Question	Rationale
What is your sex?	What is your gender?	Changed verbiage to gender and made this answer a text entry to be inclusive
What is your ethnicity?	What is your race/ethnicity?	Changed to include “race” and made this answer a text entry
What is your marital status?	Are you married or living in a marriage-like relationship?	Changed to a yes/no option as the financial impact of relationship-status would be the same
How many children are you responsible for?	Same question, text entry for answer.	Allowed participant to answer precise number
How many hours a week are you employed?	Same question, text entry to answer	Allowed participant to answer precise number

APPENDIX K

PILOT STUDY B INSTRUMENT



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

English ▼

Welcome to the research study!

We are interested in understanding factors that influence public two-year college choice. You will be presented with information relevant to college choice and asked to answer some questions about it. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 20 minutes to complete, and you will receive \$1.00 for your participation. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Tom Valentine at tvnj@uga.edu.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

I consent, begin the study

I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

>>



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

English ▼

Did you begin your first semester at a public two-year college in the Spring of 2019?

Yes

No

>>

Have you earned your high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)?

Yes

No

>>

For each question, please think back to how important each factor was in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college and answer accordingly.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The opinions of parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of spouse/significant other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of other family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your high school teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your high school counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of past or current students at the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The opinions of your current employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For each question, please think back to how important each factor was in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college and answer accordingly.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The quality of the technology provided by the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The attractiveness of the college campus(es)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The accessibility of the college via public transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college location allows for minimal disruption to my personal and/or working life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The excellent reputation of the faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The accessibility of faculty to their students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The positive academic reputation of the college in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college courses will transfer easily into a four-year college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For each question, please think back to how important each factor was in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college and answer accordingly.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The high graduation rate of students the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The graduates of this college get good jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers fully online programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers online courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The class schedule allows me to meet the demands of my family and/or workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college gives me the opportunity to participate in sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college serves a diverse student population	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers a variety of extracurricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For each question, please think back to how important each factor was in your decision to enroll at your current public two-year college and answer accordingly.

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The college offers good support for students who have academic challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has affordable tuition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has affordable fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers financial aid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers a tuition repayment program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college offers the type of degree I need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college is a good fit for people like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What year were you born?

What is your gender?

What is your race/ethnicity?

Are you married or living in a marriage-like relationship?

Yes

No

How many children are you responsible for?

How many parents or siblings are you responsible for?

What is the highest degree of your mother?

High school diploma or GED equivalent

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree or higher

Don't know

Not applicable

What is the highest degree of your father?

High school diploma or GED equivalent

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree or higher

Don't know

Not applicable

What is your approximate total household income?

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 - \$19,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 - \$39,999

\$40,000 - \$49,999

\$50,000 - \$59,999

\$60,000 - \$69,999

\$70,000 - \$79,999

\$80,000 - \$89,999

\$90,000 - \$99,999

More than \$100,000

Approximately how many hours a week are you employed?

Are you a veteran or currently serving in the military?

Yes

No

What were your average grades in high school?

As

Bs

Cs

Ds

Fs

What is your current enrollment status?

Full-time

Part-time

In what semester **and** year did you first begin taking courses at your current public two-year college?

What type of award do you intend to earn from the college you are attending?

Associate's degree

Diploma

Certificate

None, intend to transfer

None, attending for skill development

What is your tuition status?

In-state

Out-of-state

International

What state is your current college located in?

Alabama	Montana
Alaska	Nebraska
Arizona	Nevada
Arkansas	New Hampshire
California	New Jersey
Colorado	New Mexico
Connecticut	New York
Delaware	North Carolina
District of Columbia	North Dakota
Florida	Ohio
Georgia	Oklahoma
Hawaii	Oregon
Idaho	Pennsylvania
Illinois	Puerto Rico
Indiana	Rhode Island
Iowa	South Carolina

Kansas	South Dakota
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	Texas
Maine	Utah
Maryland	Vermont
Massachusetts	Virginia
Michigan	Washington
Minnesota	West Virginia
Mississippi	Wisconsin
Missouri	Wyoming

Please create and enter a unique survey completion code below. Your code should be in the following format: first and last initial, the name of an animal, and then two digits (i.e. smpenguin22).

Please record a copy of the unique survey completion code you enter below. Return to the MTurk site to enter the code to verify your participation and receive payment. **Please note that work will be rejected if completion codes entered into the survey do not match those entered on the MTurk site.**



APPENDIX L

PILOT STUDY B AMAZON MTURK ADVERTISEMENT

Survey Link Instructions (Click to expand)

Dear MTurk Workers,

The purpose of this university-based survey is to understand what factors influence public two-year college choice. This survey has 58 items which were drawn from scholarly research. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes for you to complete.

If you have previously completed this survey (May 21, 22, 23), please do not complete again. Only one submission per HIT worker will be reviewed for payment.

If you currently reside in the United States and were enrolled in your first semester in the Spring of 2019 at a public two-year college (such as a community college or technical college) located in the United States, you can participate in the survey after you pass a qualifications test. You will have to confirm that this is your first semester attending a public two-year college in the United States.

The reward for participating in the survey is \$0.75. You will only be paid once you complete the entire survey with correct answers to attention check items. The researcher reserves the right to deny payment for surveys taking less than 500 seconds to complete. The researcher also reserves the right to deny payment if the IP address of the completed survey is located outside of the United States. The researcher will deny payment for any HIT worker who has previously completed this survey (May 21, 22, or 23).

Go to link (will appear after you accept the HIT). Further instructions will be provided once you accept the HIT and answer all the questions.

Note the unique survey completion code found at the end of the survey which you will need to complete the HIT. You will need to paste the survey code into the box below.

Make sure to leave this window open as you complete the survey. When you are finished, you will return to this page to paste your unique survey completion code into the box.

APPENDIX M
PILOT STUDY B RESULTS REPORT

Pilot Study B Results

The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the data collection procedure was sufficient and to test the adequacy of the instrument. The instrument had been tested in Pilot A, but utilized the SurveyMonkey platform. For the final study, I deemed Amazon MTurk to be a more efficient means to reach participants from across the nation. Hence, it made sense to conduct the pilot within the Amazon MTurk platform to ensure I knew how to work within the platform.

Ads were placed within Amazon MTurk to recruit participants. Appendix L contains a screenshot of the ad that was placed. In short, the ad sought participants who first enrolled at their two-year college in the Spring of 2019. Additionally, their college needed to be located in the United States.

A total of 113 participants responded, with 50 of the participants being qualified to participate in the study. The data (n=50) was collected through Qualtrics™ and the data was downloaded as a dataset for SPSS. The data was analyzed and reports were run with mean scores and standard deviations, correlations among survey measures and constructs, and coefficient alphas. Additionally, as shown in Figure M.1, histograms for each scale were produced to exam distribution.

Distributions of the scales showed that the survey items captured differences between individual respondents. The items in the scales used three data points (Not Important at All, Somewhat Important, Very Important). Figure M.1 offers a visual representation of the scales.

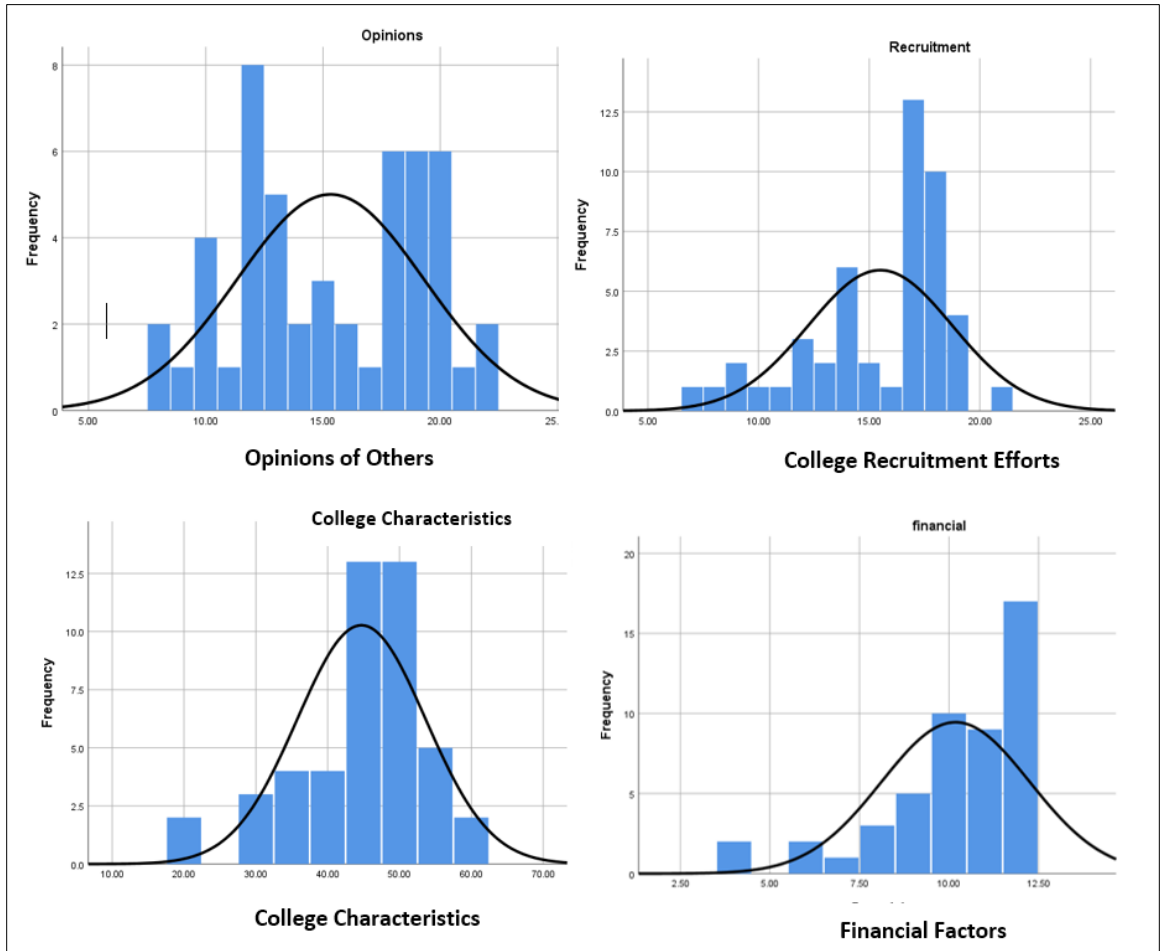


Figure M.1. Distribution of scales (Pilot B).

Additionally, Reliability coefficients reinforced strong reliabilities of the scales, as depicted in Table M.1.

Table M.1

Distribution and Reliability of Key Measures (Pilot B)

Scale	Number of Items	M	SD	Mean Item Mean	Alpha
Construct					
Opinions of others	8	1.9	4.0	15.3	.82
College recruitment efforts	7	2.2	3.2	15.5	.76
College characteristics	19	2.2	8.4	42.7	.90
Financial Factors	4	2.5	2.1	10.2	.77
Total	38				

The instrument used for Pilot B performed well. Additionally, this instrument allowed for participants to self-disclose or self-identify characteristics that often leave individuals out. Allowing participants to type in their race and gender, as opposed to forcing them to select options, created diversity within the Pilot Study B Sample. Table M.2 reflects that one participant identified as “queer”.

Table M.2

Gender Identification (Pilot B)

Gender	Frequency
Female	16
Male	33
Genderqueer	1

Table M.3 displays the race that participants self-identified. While we may have an opinion of what race(s) are the same in Table M.3, had we not allowed participants to self-identify, they would have ended up in an “other” category, which can leave the participant feeling negatively about how they identify.

Table M.3

Race Identification (Pilot B)

Race	Frequency
African American	1
american	1
asian	1
Asian	3
biracial	1
black	1
Black	1
black american	1
caucasian	1
Caucasian	2
Hisbonic	1
hispanic	2
Hispanic	1
hispano	1
middle eastern	1
mixed	1
Mixed	1
Native American	1
Puertorican	1
white	15
White	9
WHITE	2
White Hispanic	1

Table M.4 shows the geographical locations of the participants colleges. I set out to conduct a national study and these responses show that utilizing Amazon MTurk will allow me to reach participants at a national level.

Table M.4

Location of College (Pilot B)

State	Frequency
Alaska	1
California	7
Connecticut	1
Florida	3
Georgia	2
Illinois	1
Kansas	1
Minnesota	2
Missouri	2
Nevada	3
New Jersey	2
New York	6
North Carolina	2
Ohio	1
Oregon	1
Pennsylvania	2
Puerto Rico	1
Rhode Island	2
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	7
Vermont	2

Based on this analysis, it was decided that the four constructs performed well and were acceptable in terms of variance and reliability. Additionally, the data collection procedure was effective in delivery and receiving the data. This instrument was used for the main study with the following minor revisions:

Pilot B Question	Final Survey Question	Rationale
The college offers a tuition repayment plan.	The college allows me to make payments directly to the college instead of taking out student loans.	This item correlated at less than an ideal level. The question was reworded for clarity.
How many children are you responsible for?	How many children under the age of 18 are you responsible for?	These two questions had responses that led the researcher and methodologist to believe that children over the age of 18 may have been reported as a child.
How many parents or siblings are you responsible for?	How many adults, including parents and/or siblings are you financially responsible for?	

APPENDIX N

FINAL STUDY AMAZON MTURK ADVERTISEMENT

Survey Link Instructions (Click to expand)

Dear MTurk Workers,

The purpose of this university-based survey is to understand what factors influence public two-year college choice. This survey has 58 items which were drawn from scholarly research. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes for you to complete.

If you completed this survey between May 21 and May 23, please do not complete this survey. Kindly, only one submission per HIT worker.

If you currently reside in the United States and enrolled in your first semester at your current public two-year college in the 2018-2019 academic year (i.e. Fall 2018, Spring 2019, or Summer 2019 semester) and the public two-year college is located in the United States, you can participate in the survey after you pass a qualifications test. You will have to confirm that that you enrolled at your current two-year college, located in the United States, in the 2018-2019 academic year and you will have to confirm that you have earned your high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED).

The reward for participating in the survey is \$1.00. You will only be paid once you complete the entire survey with correct answers to attention check items. The researcher reserves the right to deny payment for surveys taking less than 300 seconds to complete. The researcher also reserves the right to deny payment if the IP address of the completed survey is located outside of the United States. Additionally, if you completed this survey between May 21 and May 23, the researcher reserves the right to deny payment.

Go to link (will appear after you accept the HIT). Further instructions will be provided once you accept the HIT and answer all the questions.

Note the unique survey completion code found at the end of the survey which you will need to complete the HIT. You will need to paste the survey code into the box below.

Make sure to leave this window open as you complete the survey. When you are finished, you will return to this page to paste your unique survey completion code into the box.

APPENDIX O
INFORMED CONSENT

This is notification of implied consent for the research study titled *Navigating the Unknowns of Public Two-Year College Choice*. The purpose of this research is to understand the factors that influence student public two-year college choice. This research activity is being conducted by the individual listed below, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Valentine. Results of this study may be published. The information you provide will be used for scholarly publications and other various formal and informal reports.

Stephanie Meyer
Study Director
University of Georgia
2651 Shadow Woods Circle
Marietta, Georgia 30062
404-368-8258
slmeyer@uga.edu

As a participant in this study, you will complete a 40 question online survey about factors that may have influenced your college choice. The survey will take no more than twenty minutes to complete. There are no foreseen risks to your participation. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time, without penalty. You may also skip questions that you feel uncomfortable answering.

All of your responses will be confidential and not be associated with your name or email address; however, a unique number will be assigned to each respondent through the use of a “cookie” that has no meaning outside of the survey website. If necessary, this will allow each respondent to return to an incomplete survey and be taken directly to the point of exit. The survey is complete and submitted when you select “submit survey” at the end. If the survey remains incompletely, it cannot be accessed by the researcher and the answers will not be used as part of the study.

Please note the following:

The survey software transfers data in an encrypted format. However, internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. Once the completed survey is received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be followed. In addition, only summary data will be reported. When we publish our findings, we will report our findings based on groups, no on individuals.

In addition, given that communication via the Internet is riskier in regards to privacy, if you prefer, you can open a pdf version of the survey instrument located at [file link], completed by hand, and then submit via U.S. mail to the address above.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask now or at a later date. You may contact Stephanie Meyer, Study Director, at 404-368-8258 or slmeyer@uga.edu. Please feel free to contact Dr. Thomas Valentine at the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, The University of Georgia, 317 River’s Crossing, Athens, Georgia 30602-4811, via telephone at (706) 542-2217, or via email at tvnj@uga.edu.

Thank you for your help with this important research.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to IRB Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia, 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Select “yes” to continue this survey and “no” to end the survey.

APPENDIX P

REJECTION FROM STUDY EMAIL

G*** D****<mturk-noreply@amazon.com> Wed, Jun 19, 4:24 PM

to me

Message from **G***** D***** (g*****@outlook.com)

Worker ID: *****

HIT Title: Answer a survey about two year college choice

HIT Description: The purpose of this study is to understand public two-year college choice. In order to participate, Spring 2019 or Summer 2019 must have been your first semester enrolled in a public two-year college.

HIT ID: *****

Why did you reject my work for not providing a unique code? My worker ID is a unique code as I am the only one that has that code. There fore it is unique. I use this as my unique code when called upon because it makes it easier to confirm it should me work get rejected unjustly such as now.

Greetings from Amazon Mechanical Turk,

The message above was sent by an Amazon Mechanical Turk user.

Please review the message and respond to it as you see fit.

Sincerely,

Amazon Mechanical Turk

<https://requester.mturk.com>

Stephanie Meyer <twoyearcollegechoice@gmail.com> Wed, Jun 19, 5:33 PM

to **George**

George -

There were specific instructions for creating a unique survey completion code. The instructions were to put your first and last initial, and animal, and then a number. smpenguin22 was provided as an example.

Out of the 112 submissions received, 4 have not followed these instructions. I am using this data for academic research and had attention checks, as indicated before the survey was started.

Thanks for your interest.

APPENDIX Q

REVERSED REJECTION FROM STUDY EMAIL

Z* H***** <mturk-noreply@amazon.com>** Fri, Jun 21, 9:35 AM

to me

Message from Z*** H***** (e*****@yahoo.com)

Worker ID: *****

HIT Title: Answer a survey about two year college choice

HIT Description: The purpose of this study is to understand public two-year college choice. In order to participate, Spring 2019 or Summer 2019 must have been your first semester enrolled in a public two-year college.

HIT ID: *****

I am fairly certain that I answered this question. Please reverse this rejection. If the question was honestly missed, the semester/year is Spring 2019

Greetings from Amazon Mechanical Turk,

The message above was sent by an Amazon Mechanical Turk user.
Please review the message and respond to it as you see fit.

Sincerely,
Amazon Mechanical Turk
<https://requester.mturk.com>

Stephanie Meyer <twoyearcollegechoice@gmail.com> Fri, Jun 21, 9:42 AM

to **Zack**

Zack -

Thank you for reaching out. You had listed 2010 as your first term but I can see where you may have hit the 0 instead of the 9. I have updated your data and approved. Best of luck for your future.