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**A STUDY OF THE 2014 FRESHMAN CONNECTION: ADVENTURE  
PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT  
AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY**

by  
Sabrina L. LoBue

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration  
at  
Rowan University  
May 6, 2015

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

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## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of the students whom I've come into contact with throughout my years at Rowan University. Each one has taught me something different about student affairs, student involvement, and even myself. Without them, I would not have found my passion for this field.*

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my appreciation to my boss, mentor, and friend, Constantine Alexakos. For without him, I may not have seen my own potential to enter this field of higher education. His belief in me keeps pushing me to be a better person each and every day. I cannot thank him enough for bringing me as a trip leader on the Freshman Connection: Adventure program in 2010 and sparking my interest in student affairs.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their continued support in my choice to continue my education. Having my parents, sister, boyfriend, and best friends to rely on for mental stability has been what has kept me going on this long journey.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Burton Sisco for sharing his knowledge throughout the past two years, his guidance, and of course, his continuous edits and support on this thesis.

## **Abstract**

Sabrina L. LoBue  
A STUDY OF THE 2014 FRESHMAN CONNECTION: ADVENTURE  
PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT  
AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY  
2014-2015  
Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education: Administration

The primary purpose of this study was to explore student involvement patterns and satisfaction of 40 participants of the Freshman Connection: Adventure program held by Rowan University in August of 2014. Data were collected from 33 subjects who participated in the survey, answering items on demographics, involvement, academic achievement, and the Freshman Connection: Adventure programs impact on their college experience. Data analysis suggested that students who participated in Freshman Connection: Adventure are widely involved on campus in different aspects. Data also suggested that the program gave students a positive outlook transitioning into college and gave them the necessary confidence to create long lasting friendships and positive influences at Rowan University. In regards to academic achievement, Freshman Connection participants reported that the program had low impact on their academic achievement.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

First year college students enter higher education with high expectations when it comes to academics and involvement, but struggle as they are still developing and adjusting to college. Students are unaware of the transition they are about to embark on. Theorists such as Arthur Chickering, Nancy Schlossberg, Alexander Astin, and George Kuh have developed theories and models that higher education professionals can use to better understand the development of college students. The first year of college is a new beginning for any student. Some struggle with the transition from high school and may suffer if they do not have the assistance needed from different administrators, faculty, or staff at their respective institutions.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a lack of research on programs as specific as Rowan University's Freshman Connection: Adventure program, as well as the results such programs have on the participating student's involvement. Research exists on Freshmen Experience seminar courses or First Year Experience Programs and their impact on student involvement, student retention, and graduation statistics; however, these programs differ greatly from Rowan's Freshman Connection program, as they are usually semester long and meet frequently with students enrolled. Freshman Connection: Adventure is restricted to only one week, off campus, for incoming freshmen to take part in activities such as white water rafting, zip lining, team building, and team competitions. The program provides upperclassmen leaders and student affairs professionals as mentors and leaders to the students during the program and through their college experience. There is a lack of

assessment data on Rowan's Freshman Connection: Adventure program that is leading to a lack of valuable data on the program and its impact on students' involvement at the institution. Current research done by the student affairs professionals involved in this program only covers the students' GPA after their first semester for the past couple of years, but does not include information on their programs of study or involvement on the campus. Additional information is available from a research study I conducted in 2013 on the 2012 Freshman Connection: Adventure participants (About OSA, 2014).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship among students participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program, and their academic or social involvement. This study looked at students' involvement on campus, both socially and academically, satisfaction, and the ways in which they were achieving academic success at Rowan University. The purpose was to determine if the Freshman Connection: Adventure program provided students with the necessary resources to transition into higher education and obtain a holistic collegiate experience. Based on my recommendations from my research study in 2013, I recommended additional research be conducted on future participants, therefore this study has fulfilled that recommendation.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study looked at a specific group of students who participated in the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure program. These students had already been given a pre- and post-assessment from administrators in the Office of Student Activities assessing if the program had improved their level of comfort in areas such as starting Rowan, self confidence, knowledge of Rowan, socialization and peer acceptance, and ability to work

in a team setting. Freshman Connection: Adventure brings a group of 40 students to West Virginia to embark on white water rafting, zip lining, and various team building exercises. Students are given the opportunity to form relationships with their peers and ask upperclassmen leaders and professional staff members any questions they may have about Rowan University. The results suggested that the trip increased their level of comfort in each area, but by conducting further research, I was be able to provide administrators with results on the program's impact on student involvement and academic achievement.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study was limited to the group of 40 students, the total population who attended the Freshman Connection: Adventure program in August of 2014.

Administering a questionnaire to this group of students was convenient due to my involvement in the Office of Student Activities (OSA). I am currently the Graduate Coordinator of Marketing and Special Events for OSA and planned the banquet for the Freshman Connection: Adventure participants near the end of their first semester at Rowan. The students were surveyed at this banquet; however, only students who returned the survey were considered subjects. This was a self-reporting survey; therefore, there is a possibility for inaccurate information, it is assumed that the information received was accurate.

It is possible for unintentional bias to influence the results of the survey, as I was one of the chaperones on the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure trip, in addition to working for the office. I administered the survey instrument and emphasized the need for unbiased, anonymous answers. Subjects were told to answer the survey honestly. A

potential for researcher bias exists, although minimal, due to my involvement with the Freshman Connection: Adventure program. It could lead the participants to sway their results in a positive manner.

### **Operational Definitions**

1. Academic Achievement: The level of motivation and attention one puts towards their academic coursework, resulting in a grade point average after the first semester at Rowan University (Fall 2012).
2. First Year Experience: A program offered by a college or university to provide first year students with the resources needed to transition into college life with the intent of achieving academic success.
3. Mentor: A student or faculty member who has gone through the experiences the mentee (student) is experiencing. They are available as resources for questions or advice when it comes to academics, involvement, and/or personal/professional development.
4. Office of Student Activities (OSA): An office within the division of Student Affairs at Rowan University. The Office of Student Activities plans and implements co-curricular programs for all students that are designed to stimulate personal development, create opportunities for student engagement, and contribute to building campus community through constant collaboration with campus partners (About OSA).
5. Retention: Continuing at Rowan University without dropping out of the University entirely, switching programs is not included when discussing retention.

6. Satisfaction: The feeling or emotion resulting from a positive experience.
7. Student Involvement: The level of participation a student makes, academically or socially at their college, in addition to attending courses; including but not limited to utilizing a professor's office hours, peer groups, going to the library, joining clubs and organization, being part of a sports team, holding positions, or working at an on campus job.
8. Student Development: The way in which students mature at college, which helps them succeed academically, socially, and professionally. Students develop at different rates and may graduate from college with a different level of development than their peers due to different experiences at their institution.
9. Transition: The shift from primary education (K – 12 schooling) to secondary education (traditional college years).

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the involvement patterns of selected Freshman Connection: Adventure participants who attended the 2014 program: actual and anticipated?
2. What do students report about their experience at Rowan University in terms of social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction?
3. What impact to their social involvement, academic involvement, or satisfaction do students attribute to involvement in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program at Rowan University?

4. Is there a significant relationship between involvement and academic achievement among the Freshman Connection: Adventure participants at Rowan University?

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter II provides a review of the scholarly literature which forms the basis of this study. It examines the identity development, transition, and involvement theories set by Chickering, Schlossberg, Astin, and Kuh. The report also provides an overview of freshmen experience programs and the impact the programs have on student development.

Chapter III includes the methodology and procedures that were used in the study. Forty students made up the convenience sample and were surveyed requesting biographical information, academic achievement, student involvement, and satisfaction at Rowan University. However, only 33 students chose to participate. Students were asked an open-ended question offering them the chance to state whether they believe participation in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program had an impact on their student involvement at Rowan University.

Chapter IV presents a profile of the sample, the findings from the survey instrument, and presents the information in the format of tables and narrative describing the data.

Chapter V concludes the study with a summary of the research and discusses the findings, renders conclusions, and offers suggestions for practice and further research.



## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Organization of the Review**

This study observed the students who participated in Rowan University's Freshman Connection: Adventure program from August 24 – 28, 2014. The study identified the students' preparedness for college prior to their participation in the program and evaluated the impact the program had on their involvement after their first three months at Rowan University, a mid-sized, public research institution in the mid-Atlantic region. The reason the study only observed the students involvement during their first three months is because they were surveyed on November 21, 2014.

The following literature review examines theories that relate to student development, student transition, and student involvement as well as specific studies on first year experience (FYE) programs and individual programs similar to the Freshman Connection: Adventure program at Rowan University. Students entering college for the first time deal with identity development and transition as they start a new chapter of their lives. Many students further their development and deal with the transitions through involvement with extra curricular activities at their institution.

#### **Student Development Theory**

When students enter college for the first time they begin deciding, for themselves, who they are. Chickering's theory is composed of seven vectors, which are not considered to be linear, he states "They are called vectors of development because each seems to

have direction and magnitude – even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than by a straight line” (Chickering & Reisser, 1991, p. 8). Students move through the vectors at different rates depending on their own development. Chickering's theory and research suggests that going to college does “make a difference to personality development” of young adults (pp. 320-321).

**The seven vectors.** The seven vectors are as follows; Developing Competence, Managing Emotions, Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence, Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, Establishing Identity, Developing Purpose, and Developing Integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). A student’s psychosocial development is just as important as physical or educational development. Each vector describes what aspect of their psychosocial development has been achieved based on their situation or changes that occur in their lives.

Students engaging in Developing Competence work on intellectual competence, physical competence, and interpersonal competence, and have reached this level when they have developed skills in all three categories. These three areas were compared, by Chickering and Reisser (1993), to a three-tined pitchfork. All three are required to achieve the total competence. These three areas relate to developing knowledge and skills, athleticism and overall wellness, and skills in communication and working with others, respectively.

When students have managed emotions, they have reached the ability to control their emotions and know when it is appropriate to express them. Emotions include, but are not limited to “anxiety, anger, depression, desire, guilt, and shame...rapture, relief, sympathy, yearning, worship, wonder, and awe” (Chickering, 1993, pp. 1-2). Moving

into a new environment can cause a plethora of new emotions and stresses on a student. Their ability to manage these emotions appropriately will have shown their ability to pass through this vector.

In the vector Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence, students focus on their interdependence and become aware of the importance of doing so. Chickering believes a key developmental step for students is “learning to function with relative self-sufficiency, to take responsibility for pursuing self-chosen goals, and to be less bound by others’ opinions” (p. 2). They slowly move from being dependent on parents, guardians, high school administrators, and guidance counselors to depending on themselves, being self-assured, and no longer needed reassurance. Students in college who begin making decisions for themselves have successfully moved through this vector.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships is established by understanding two main ideas, “tolerance and appreciation of differences [and] capacity for intimacy” (p. 3). Students have reached this vector when they have created an understanding and appreciation for the differences in others. They acknowledge that there are identities other than his or her own and realize it is important to build an understanding of these identities. In addition, students begin to form lasting friendships, both with friends and with intimate partners.

Establishing Identity involves

(1) comfort with body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and life-style, (5) sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, (6) self-acceptance and self-esteem, and

(7) personal stability and integration. (p. 3)

This vector is closely related with previous vectors. Once individuals understand their independence and begin forming interpersonal relationships based on intercultural and interpersonal tolerance, students can better understand and establish his or her own identity. Students do not need to achieve the previous vectors in order to establish their own identity, but they are closely related.

The sixth vector, Developing Purpose is achieved when students become aware of their personal and career goals they have set for themselves. Chickering believes most students have not figured out who they want to be yet, “While they may have clarified who they are and where they came from, they have only the vaguest notion of who they want to be” (p. 4). Most students achieve this while in school because it requires them to set and develop their vocational goals, for most, the reason they have entered higher education. It is important to remember that no matter what, students achieve the goals and purpose they set out to achieve.

The last vector, Developing Integrity includes "interpreting experience, guiding behavior, and maintaining self-respect" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 51). Students are aware of both their interests and the interests of others. The same rationale goes for values and actions; students will have an understanding for their own and for others. This theory outlines the student's developmental process they encounter during their years at college and sometimes beyond.

**Key influences.** In addition to the seven vectors, Chickering and Reisser (1993) established seven factors that Chickering titled Key Influences for Student Development. These are environmental influences that impact how a student develops. Many of these

influences are introduced at orientation programs as students adjust to their new environment. These factors affect a student's identity development and their progression through the seven vectors. Institutional Objectives; these are the objectives put into place by a student's institution that form the programs the students are involved in. Institutional Size affects a student's experience on campus, whether they are attending a large Division I school or a smaller two-year community college. Student Faculty Relationships have an impact on one's development. Curriculum and Teaching are the next two influences and go hand-in-hand with each other. Curriculum and teaching need to be differentiated for students of different learning styles or levels of learners. Kolb's theory of experiential learning describes the need for professionals to be aware of students' learning styles and provide techniques of teaching for all learners (Kolb, 1984). Friendships and Student Communities play a vital role in a student's development. The people whom students choose to surround themselves with play an important role in their development as well. The last key influence, Student Development Programs and Services, which will be discussed in greater length throughout this research study, shows that faculty and students affairs professionals make an impact on a student's development as well. They help develop the "whole student" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 427).

### **Transition Theory**

The transition from high school to college is a vital moment in any student's life. Schlossberg (1984) outlines adult transitions in her theory, examining the transitions adults make from one stage of their life to another. A transition has been defined as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 33). For the purpose of this

literature review, it can be assumed that “transition” is referring to a traditional student transitioning from high school to college. Evans et al. (2010) identify three variables that affect adaptation to a situation according to Schlossberg; perceptions, environmental characteristics, and personal characteristics. According to Schlossberg, a student’s graduation from high school and entrance into college will be considered an anticipated transition because it is predictable. Other types of events include unanticipated or non-events. Each student entering college has a different transition based on the context of the situation or the impact that the transition is making on his/her life.

Within Schlossberg’s theory, the “four Ss” are outlined; Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies. In Situation, what triggered the transition, the timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience, concurrent stress, or assessment can be a factor. These factors are what make up the characteristics of each individual situation, affirming that many students’ situations differ based on their respective factors. In Self, personal and demographic characteristics are factored along with psychological resources to assist the student or adult in the transition. Within Support, three factors are considered; type, function, and measurement. For the purposes of college students, Support would refer to academic or social support and can come from families, peers, advisors, and employers. The final “S,” Strategies, refers to how students handle the situation, do they modify, control, or aid in managing stress (Schlossberg, 1984). Higher education professionals can use Schlossberg’s theory to assist students entering their institution. This literature review will later examine extended orientation or wilderness adventure programs and their impact on a student’s transition into college.

## **Involvement Theory**

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement was created for educators and higher education professionals working directly with students. Involvement is "a construct that should not be either mysterious or esoteric" (Astin, 1984, p. 518). Astin defines student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Two students can be in the same program, take the exact same classes with the same professors, but result in two different experiences based on their involvement. Astin's theory discusses how the students' development and the environmental factors forced upon them affect their experience and involvement in college. A student's involvement will improve his or her academic experiences and thus, result in a better college experience. This is the rationale behind first year experience programs. Astin focuses on the behavior that the students implement outside of the classroom, including activities they participate in, clubs or extracurricular activities they join, events they partake in, and the like. He acknowledges that motivation is a key factor, but focuses on the physical environment and interactions the students choose to take part in.

Astin's theory has five postulates, or claims, rather than stages or processes. They are as follows;

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. The objects may be highly generalized (the student experience) or highly specific (preparing for a chemistry examination).

2. Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in different objects and different times.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features. The extent of a student's involvement in academic work, for instance, can be measured quantitatively (how many hours the student spends studying) and qualitatively (whether the student reviews and comprehends reading assignments or simply stares at the textbook and day-dreams).
4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (1984, p. 519)

Involvement theory implies that if a student is motivated to take an active role in his or her education and to acquire the help or assistance needed to reach full development, then students will thrive and have a positive experience at their institution.

Student involvement theory shows that students have automatic benefits based on the environmental factors of their education and extra curricular activities. Where a student lives affects his or her ability to get involved. Students living on-campus, versus commuters are more likely to get involved because of their proximity to school. They live on campus, verse the commuters who must go out of their way to come back and participate. Aside from academics, students can get involved in Greek Life, inter-



collegiate sports, intramurals, clubs and organizations, student government, honors programs, and on campus jobs.

Kuh (1995) expands on Astin's Theory of Involvement and discusses students becoming active at college due to motivation and taking advantage of what is around them. Kuh discusses the importance of "The Other Curriculum," the learning and experiences that students gain from being involved in entities outside of the classroom. Participation in such activities enhances students' "social competence, autonomy, confidence, self-awareness, and appreciation for human diversity" (Kuh, 1995, p. 124). Kuh believes that the experiences students may gain outside of the classroom will effect both their educational and personal development. Kuh interviewed students from multiple institutions about their out-of-classroom experiences and how they used these experiences to develop personally. Students spoke on their involvement or roles in areas such as leadership, peer interaction, academic activities, faculty contact, work, and travel. These experiences provided students with the ability to affirm leadership skills, solidify career goals, substantiate content they were learning in the classroom, provide extra contact with faculty, develop time management skills, develop self awareness and self efficacy, and to develop an interest in humanity (Kuh, 1995).

### **First Year Experience Programs**

Some students have opportunities to participate in first year experience (FYE) programs to aid in their academic and social development at their institution. These programs serve as an excellent transition to their college years. Many institutions establish such programs to assist in their student's development and to improve retention and graduation rates. In 2009, Anderson researched students who were involved in FYE

programs and their satisfaction and academic performance. Students entering specific learning communities will foster a sense of community since they are taking the same courses and may be interested in participating in extra-circular activities together. Students may also be involved in learning communities because of a specific value or interest they share (Anderson, 2009). Anderson used pre- and post- assessments along with interviews to examine students who participated in the FYE program offered at a Mid-Atlantic Catholic University. Anderson's interest was in the students' academic performance and persistence after their involvement in the FYE program. Her research showed that students who received mentoring from the FYE program benefited greatly and had an overall satisfaction. The findings of this study will benefit other institutions that choose to instate FYE programs. The findings remained positive showing that participation benefited the students who participated in the FYE program which Anderson examined.

Similar to Rowan University's Freshman Connection: Adventure program and the program Anderson (2009) focused her study on, George Washington University in Washington DC holds an Adventure Bound program with various options for incoming freshmen. Adventure Bound is a FYE program with six options ranging from whitewater adventures in West Virginia, oceanic adventures in Virginia Beach, and Grand Canyon adventures in Arizona (Adventure Bound, 2014). This program also prepares students for college life by transitioning their experience with the mentorship of upperclassmen leaders. A student who attended the GWilderness trip in 2012 explained her experience as the pivotal point that finally made her feel like a college student. She said, "Before we had even met our roommates, we had a unique community of people that we had climbed

cliffs with, rowed rafts with... I discovered that GW was going to be a place where this community would lead me to succeed” (Adventure Bound, 2014, GWilderness section, para. 2). Another student who participated in the program in 2013 described it as helping her realize how much having a support system on campus will help her succeed. This program in particular can be most comparable to Rowan University’s Freshman Connection: Adventure program as both programs visit ACE Adventure Resort in Minden, West Virginia. No study has been conducted on the students who participated in Adventure Bound at George Washington University, but the self reported experiences can be compared to those of students who participated in Rowan University’s program.

Orientation programs set students on a path to prepare them for their continued success at their respective institution. Gass (1987) explored the effects that wilderness orientations programs had on students’ grade point average, retention, and success at the University of New Hampshire. Programs such as these help students develop while they are in school (Gass, 1987). Gass (1987) explored wilderness program similarities to other orientation programs but emphasized their ability to assist in the transition to college for students. Programs such as the one in Anderson’s (2009) study, Adventure Bound at George Washington University, and the wilderness orientation program at the University of New Hampshire prepare students for the transition to college. As Schlossberg (1984) explained, the transition to college is an anticipated transition that students may need assistance in. Taking students out of their element, such as on an outdoor adventure trip, into a situation that forces them to bond, create long lasting friendships, and depend on the mentorship of upperclassmen leaders eases the transition into the new journey they are about to embark on.

First Year Experience programs are built on Chickering, Schlossberg, Astin, and Kuh's theories. Rowan University's Freshman Connection: Adventure program provides this type of experience to students with the intent of providing students with the knowledge and resources to help them develop academically and socially as they enter college life. A student affairs professional and upperclassmen leaders, who have gone through the programs themselves, lead the Freshman Connection program. These leaders serve as mentors for the incoming freshmen students and a resource for them as they continue their experience at Rowan University. The Freshman Connection: Adventure trip runs out of the Office of Student Activities. One of their core values is Student Development; they are "dedicated to creating an environment that is conducive to student learning, leadership, self-discovery, and social growth by creating opportunities for engagement with other students, faculty, and staff outside of the classroom" (About OSA, 2014). The Freshman Connection: Adventure program provides these opportunities for students to grow and develop.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Rowan University's Freshman Connection: Adventure program intends to help transition the incoming freshmen to college life. Theories such as student development theory, transition theory, and involvement theory assist higher education professionals in helping students adjust to their new environment and role as a college student. The use of first year experience programs has been a successful tool in aiding students in positive behavior at their institution as suggested by the literature (Gass, 1987). First year experience programs are few and far between but have impacted students successfully for those who have participated. The research on the topic is limited, therefore the following

study examines Rowan's Freshman Connection: Adventure program and provides findings on student involvement based on the 40 students who participated in the program and study.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Context of the Study**

This study was conducted on Rowan's main campus, located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University is a public research institution with approximately 14,778 students enrolled, based off of the information from the 2014 – 2015 academic year. With over 150 degree offering programs, Rowan University has small class sizes, the average being 22 students. There is a 17:1 ratio for student to faculty members. Rowan offers over 200 Study Abroad programs. The University has 130 clubs and organizations and 28 Greek Life organizations to join. In addition to organizations, Rowan has eight men's and ten women's varsity sports competing on a NCAA Division III level, 43 intramural sports, and 43 organized club sports programs. Rowan does not utilize teaching assistants to teach classes, only professors or adjunct instructors. In fact, 81% of the faculty members have at least a doctorate/terminal degree (Fast Facts).

Rowan's mission, found on the university website, describes how the University emphasizes collaboration, learning, and community service. The mission reads as follows,

A leading public institution, Rowan University combines liberal education with professional preparation from the baccalaureate through the doctorate. Rowan provides a collaborative, learning-centered environment in which highly qualified

and diverse faculty, staff, and students integrate teaching, research, scholarship, creative activity, and community service. Through intellectual, social and cultural contributions, the University enriches the lives of those in the campus community and surrounding region. (About Rowan)

Rowan urges students to expand their learning beyond completing the course requirements. Rowan has an extensive library with an interlibrary loan program, an academic success center with daily tutoring hours, music, computer, and technology labs, and a division of student affairs to provide learning and development outside of the classroom.

### **Population and Sample**

The intended population for this study was the group of students from the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure program. There were 40 students who participated, 17 females and 23 males, all of whom were in their first semester of their freshman year at Rowan University when surveyed. This population was a convenience sample because I was able to distribute the survey when they attended the Freshman Connection: Adventure banquet on November 21, 2014. For students who could not attend the banquet, I asked them to come to my office in the Student Center to take the survey. This was a total population study since I was able to take attendance at the banquet and ensure everyone had the opportunity to take the survey, regardless of his or her attendance.

### **Instrumentation**

There is a lack of research on the topic of freshmen experience programs, making it difficult to find survey instruments similar to what was needed for this study. Anderson (2009) produced a study on first year experience programs for her dissertation. Parts of

Anderson's survey instrument were used in the instrumentation for this study. Anderson's survey instrument is included for reference as Appendix A. Permission to use the survey questions and reproduce the survey instrument in the appendices was received via email. The email is attached as Appendix B for reference. The survey instrument that was created for use in this study is attached as Appendix C. Participants received the survey and read the purpose for collecting these data. In addition, participants read that by completing the survey, they were agreeing to voluntarily participate in the study and hereby had given consent for the results of the survey to be used in this research. Participants were given contact information of the principal investigator and co-investigator of the study if they had any questions or concerns.

The survey did not ask the participants to reveal identifying characteristics such as Rowan Banner ID or name. The survey remained completely anonymous. Participants were asked for demographic information such as gender, age, and race. In addition, participants were asked to list their expected date of graduation, GPA, and college enrollment along with plans for continued education. The purpose of this study was to examine the involvement patterns of the students participating in this study. The survey asked subjects to identify their current employment and hours per week in which they work. In addition, they were asked to identify their academic involvement and consider how many times they had visited their academic advisor since being at Rowan. Similar to Anderson's survey, the subjects were asked to check off their participation in extra curricular activities and how many hours per week they spent on homework, volunteering, exercising, and/or extracurricular activities.



Subjects completed the survey by indicating if they disagreed or agreed with statements involving their comfort or ability to do certain tasks at Rowan; making friends, joining clubs, getting along with roommates, and the like. These items were applied with a Likert scale ranging across Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree with values from 1 to 5 respectively. The next section repeated these statements, but asked the participants to indicate if they believed their participation with the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contributed to their ability to do those specific tasks. This scale ranged across No Impact, Low Impact, Medium Impact, and High Impact with values of 1 to 4 respectively. Finally, subjects were given an open-ended question to explain in what ways participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contributed to their academic or social involvement at Rowan University.

Prior to surveying the students, I submitted an electronic Institutional Review Board (eIRB) form to ensure my survey could be sent out to human subjects, which was later approved by the IRB. The notice of approval is attached as Appendix D. The survey was also tested for face validity by asking a pilot test group to take the survey and make any modifications necessary. Using Anderson's survey items speaks to the validity of the survey. Upon completing the first draft of the survey instrument, I administered it to the upperclassmen Freshman Connection: Adventure leaders. This was a small group of 5 students who participated in the program as a freshman, and have led it as an upperclassman in either 2012, 2013, and 2014. These students worked in the Office of Student Activities and therefore were also a convenience sampling. These students piloted the survey and assisted me in finding errors or identifying any questions that may

be found confusing for the students, to test for additional validity. A Cronbach Alpha was calculated for items 20 – 29 of the survey instrument to test for internal consistency and reliability. An Alpha coefficient with a value of .70 or greater is considered internally consistent or a reliable instrument. After running the Cronbach Alpha test on the survey instrument, an Alpha coefficient of .849 was returned, meaning the survey instrument is considered reliable.

### **Data Collection**

After all the revisions were made, I surveyed the students at their reunion banquet on November 21, 2014. All students who attended the trip in August 2014 were invited to the banquet held in the Chamberlain Student Center Owl's Nest. I asked students to participate in the survey and then distributed it to each student. The introduction to the survey explained that it would take approximately 10 minutes to complete and would be completely anonymous. Participation in the survey acted as their consent for the results to be used in the research for this study. Attendance was kept at the banquet and if any student should not attend, I was able to follow up via email and ask each to come to my office to complete the survey, this way all students who attended the program were given the opportunity to take the survey. To preserve anonymity, I asked them to put it in the envelope containing the additional completed surveys without telling me where in the pile they placed it. Only students who attended the Freshman Connection: Adventure program received an invitation to the banquet, therefore, all students who received the survey had participated in the summer 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure program.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. I examined the students' participation in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program (independent variable) and the students' involvement on campus (dependent variable). Demographics were analyzed and tables were computed to analyze students' involvement both academically and socially. The open-ended question and comments were also collected to see if the students believed that participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contributed to their academic and social involvement and satisfaction since being at Rowan University. Using SPSS, frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were calculated and presented in the form of tables and narrative analysis. The results from the open-ended question were analyzed for common and divergent themes. The results from the open-ended question were typed up and attached as Appendix E to this research study. All data were examined and reproduced in tables in Chapter IV, Findings.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

#### **Profile of the Sample**

The subjects in this study consisted of 40 freshmen students from the 2014 Freshman Connection Adventure program at Rowan University. A total population survey was created and all 40 participants were invited to take the survey instrument. The sampling for this study was a total population and convenience sample. All students who participated in the Freshman Connection program were invited to a banquet on November 21, 2014 where they were administered the survey. If any student was unable to make the banquet, he/she was invited to pick up a copy of the survey in my office and participate. An initial email was sent out explaining that they would receive the survey instrument at the banquet and that participation was optional and their results would remain anonymous. A total of 33 students participated in the survey, yielding an 82.5% response rate. Seventeen males and 16 females completed the survey. All subjects who participated were freshmen at Rowan University and reported being 18 or 19 years of age. Thirty-two subjects reported their race as white while one subject reported his or her race as Asian/Pacific Islander. Table 4.1 represents the gender, age, and race of the subjects.

Table 4.1

*Demographics for Freshman Connection: Adventure Participants (N=33)*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	17	51.5
Female	16	48.5
Total	33	100
<b>Age</b>		
18	25	75.8
19	8	24.2
Total	33	100
<b>Race</b>		
White	32	97.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	3.0
African American	0	0
Hispanic	0	0
Native American	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	33	100

### **Analysis of the Data**

**Research question 1.** What are the involvement patterns of selected Freshman Connection: Adventure participants who attended the 2014 program: actual and anticipated?

Subjects were asked to report their involvement patterns for their first semester of freshmen year along with their anticipated involvement for their second semester. Table 4.2 represents the overall student involvement from the subjects for first semester (fall

2014) compared to their anticipated involvement in their second semester (spring 2015). It is important to remember when analyzing the data, that at the time the subjects took this survey, their second semester had not occurred. The subjects answered the questions based on their intentions to involve themselves with various extra-curricular activities. Table 4.2 shows the most involvement in the following areas during the fall semester; SGA Chartered Clubs with eight subjects (24.2%), Volunteerism with eight subjects (24.2%), and Academic Clubs or Organizations with 16 subjects (48.5%). The areas which showed a significant increase in involvement into the spring semester were Greek Life, which increased from five subjects (15.2%) to 10 subjects (30.3%), Intramural Sports, which increased from five subjects (15.2%) to 11 subjects (33.3%), and Volunteerism, which increased from eight subjects (24.2%) to 16 students (48.5%).

Table 4.2

*Comparison of Campus Involvement for Fall 2014 and Anticipated Involvement in Spring 2015 (N=33)*

	Fall 2014		Anticipated Spring 2015	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Student Government Association (SGA)	2	6.1	5	15.2
SGA chartered Club or Organization	8	24.2	6	18.2
Greek Life	5	15.2	10	30.3
Intercollegiate Athletics	2	6.1	3	9.1
Intramural Sports	4	12.1	11	33.3
Club Sports	5	15.2	8	24.2
Volunteerism	8	24.2	16	48.5
Academic Clubs or Organizations	16	48.5	17	51.5
Academic Research Projects	0	0.0	2	6.1
None of the Above	6	18.2	3	9.1

Subjects were asked to indicate the amount of hours they spent on homework or studying, volunteering, exercising, volunteering with SGA chartered Clubs or Organizations (Orgs), playing sports (varsity, intramural, or club), or volunteering with academic clubs or organizations per week. Table 4.3 indicates the amount of hours spent on each activity per week. The subjects could choose from 0 hours, 1 – 5 hours, 6 – 10 hours, 11 – 15 hours, or 16 or more hours. For the amount of time spent on homework or studying, the majority of subjects (57.6%) chose the option, 6 – 10 hours. Twenty subjects (60.6%) reported that they do not participate in volunteer work, making 0 hours the majority option for participants. Seventeen subjects (51.5%) reported exercising an average of 1 – 5 hours per week. The majority of subjects (72.7%) reported spending zero

hours per week with SGA chartered clubs or organizations. The majority of subjects (66.7%) reported spending zero hours per week involved with sports. Finally, the majority of subjects (51.5%) reported spending zero hours per week with academic clubs or organizations.

Table 4.3

*Hours Per Week Spent On Each Activity (N=33)*

	0		1 – 5		6 – 10		11 – 15		16 or More	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
SGA Chartered Clubs or Orgs	24	72.7	8	24.2	1	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sports	22	66.7	7	21.2	3	9.1	1	3.0	0	0.0
Volunteer Work	20	60.6	10	30.3	2	6.1	1	3.0	0	0.0
Academic Clubs or Orgs	17	51.5	13	39.4	1	3.0	2	6.1	0	0.0
Exercising	5	15.2	17	51.5	8	24.2	3	9.1	3	9.1
Homework/ Studying	0	0.0	8	24.2	19	57.6	5	15.2	1	3.0

The survey instrument also asked subjects to indicate if they held a job either on or off campus. Table 4.4 indicates the hours per week that subjects work. Out of the 33 subjects surveyed, 29 (87.9%) reported not having a job either on or off campus. Out of the four subjects (12.1%) who reported having a job, one (3.0%) reported not working for



pay, on average, one (3.0%) reported working 1 – 5 hours per week, one (3.0%) reported working 16 – 20 hours per week, and one (3.0%) reported working 21 – 25 hours per week.

Table 4.4

*Hours Per Week Students Work (N=33)*

	<i>f</i>	%
0 Hours	30	90.9
1 – 5 Hours	1	3.0
6 – 10 Hours	0	0.0
11 – 15 Hours	0	0.0
16 – 20 Hours	1	3.0
21 – 25 Hours	1	3.0
More than 25 Hours	0	0.0
Total	33	100

**Research question 2.** What do students report about their experience at Rowan University in terms of social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction?

The survey instrument listed 10 statements pertaining to social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction. Subjects were asked to indicate their responses by marking their agreement with the statement. These questions were based on a Likert scale and had possible answers of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. The answers were given a value of 1 to 5, respectively. Table 4.5 reports the first factor grouping; the students’ reported perceptions on social involvement. The table is organized from highest to lowest level of agreement based on the mean score. The statement that produced the highest mean score was “I feel comfortable making

friends at Rowan” with a score of 4.55. Out of the 33 subjects, two (6.1%) chose to respond with Neutral, 11 (33.3%) responded with Agree, and 20 (60.6%) responded with Strongly Agree. The statement that received the lowest mean score was “In addition to my school work, I have time for extra-curricular activities” with a score of 3.97. One subject (3.0%) reported Strongly Disagree, two (6.1%) reported Disagree, six (18.2%) reported Neutral, 12 (36.4%) reported Agree, and 12 (36.4%) reported Strongly Agree.

Table 4.5

*Students’ Perceptions on Social Involvement at Rowan University (N = 33)*  
*(Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5)*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I feel comfortable making friends at Rowan <i>M=4.55, SD=.617</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	6.1	11	33.3	20	60.6
I get along with my roommates and/or suitemates <i>M=4.27, SD=.944</i>	1	3.0	1	3.0	2	6.1	13	39.4	16	48.5
I feel comfortable joining a new club or organization <i>M=4.21, SD=.857</i>	0	0.0	1	3.0	6	18.2	11	33.3	15	45.5
In addition to my school work, I have time for extra-curricular activities <i>M=3.97, SD=1.045</i>	1	3.0	2	6.1	6	18.2	12	36.4	12	36.4

Table 4.6 reports the second factor grouping; the students' reported perceptions on academic involvement. The table is organized from highest to lowest level of agreement based on the mean score. Three statements were provided pertaining to academic involvement. The statement that produced the highest mean score was "If needed, I will make an appointment with my advisor to discuss my program of study" with a score of 4.42. Two subjects (6.1%) reported Neutral, 15 (45.5%) reported Agree, and 16 (48.5%) reported Strongly Agree. The statement "I can balance school and any other responsibilities I have" received the lowest mean score for this set of statements with a score of 3.97. One subject (3.0%) reported Disagree, six (18.2%) reported Neutral, 19 (57.6%) reported Agree, and seven (21.2%) reported Strongly Disagree.

Table 4.6

*Students' Perceptions on Academic Involvement at Rowan University (N = 33)*  
*(Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5)*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
If needed, I will make an appointment with my advisor to discuss my program of study <i>M=4.42, SD=.614</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	6.1	15	45.5	16	48.5
I feel comfortable going to my professor for extra help <i>M=4.18, SD=.769</i>	0	0.0	1	3.0	4	12.1	16	48.5	12	36.4
I can balance school and any other responsibilities I have <i>M=3.97, SD=.728</i>	0	0.0	1	3.0	6	18.2	19	57.6	7	21.2

Table 4.7 reports the third and final factor grouping; the students' reported perceptions on satisfaction. The table is organized from highest to lowest level of agreement based on the mean score. There were three statements pertaining to satisfaction. The statement "I plan on continuing my education at Rowan in the fall" received the highest mean score with 4.76. One subject (3.0%) reported Neutral, six (18.2%) reported Agree, and 26 (78.8%) reported Strongly Agree. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I am satisfied with my grades I have received while at Rowan" with a score of 3.55. Two subjects (6.1%) reported Disagree, 16 (48.5%) reported Neutral, 10 (30.3%) reported Agree, and five (15.2%) reported Strongly Agree.

Table 4.7

*Students' Perceptions on Satisfaction at Rowan University (N = 33)*  
*(Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5)*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I plan on continuing my education at Rowan in the fall <i>M=4.76, SD=.502</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.0	6	18.2	26	78.8
I enjoy being at Rowan <i>M=4.67, SD=.540</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.0	9	27.3	23	69.7
I am satisfied with my grades I have received while at Rowan <i>M=3.55, SD=.833</i>	0	0.0	2	6.1	16	48.5	10	30.3	5	15.2

**Research question 3.** What impact to their social involvement, academic involvement, or satisfaction do students attribute to involvement in the Freshman Connection: Adventure Program at Rowan University.

The next set of items on the survey instrument repeated the previous campus experiences, but asked subjects to rate the impact they believed Freshman Connection: Adventure had on their social involvement, academic involvement, or satisfaction. The tables are broken up by factor groupings again. Table 4.8 lists the responses for the factor grouping social involvement. Subjects marked whether they believed Freshman Connection: Adventure had no impact, low impact, medium impact, or high impact on their social involvement at Rowan University. The choices were given a value of 1 to 4 respectively.

When the subjects were asked if they “believed Freshman Connection had an impact on their ability to make friends at Rowan University,” there was a mean score of 3.64, the highest mean score out of all 10 items. One subjects (3.0%) reported low impact, 10 subjects (30.3%) reported medium impact, and 22 subjects (66.7%) reported high impact. The statement in the category of social involvement, which received the lowest mean score, was “I believe Freshman Connection had an impact on my ability to get along with my roommates and/or suitemates.” The mean score was 2.76. Four subjects (12.1%) said Freshman Connection had no impact, eight (24.2%) reported low impact, 13 (39.4%) reported medium impact, and eight (24.2%) reported high impact.

Table 4.8

*Students' Perceptions on Freshman Connection's Impact on Social Involvement at Rowan University (N=33)*

*(No Impact = 1, Low Impact = 2, Medium Impact = 3, High Impact = 4)*

	No Impact		Low Impact		Medium Impact		High Impact	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to make friends at Rowan University <i>M=3.64, SD=.549</i>	0	0.0	1	3.0	10	30.3	22	66.7
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to join new clubs or orgs <i>M=2.91, SD=.879</i>	2	6.1	8	24.2	14	42.4	9	27.3
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to make time for extra-curricular activities <i>M=2.79, SD=.857</i>	2	6.1	10	30.3	14	42.4	7	21.2
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to get along with my roommates and/or suitemates <i>M=2.76, SD=.969</i>	4	12.1	8	24.2	13	39.4	8	24.2

In regards to academic involvement, participants were given four statements to rate. The results are reported in Table 4.9. The statement that received the highest mean score was “I believe FC had an impact on my ability to balance school and other responsibilities I have” with a score of 2.48. The statement which received the lowest mean score was “I believe FC had an impact on my grades I have received while at

Rowan” with a score of 2.27. Eight subjects (24.2%) reported no impact, 11 subjects (33.3%) reported low impact, 11 subjects (33.3%) reported medium impact, and three subjects (9.1%) reported high impact.

Table 4.9

*Students’ Perceptions on Freshman Connection’s Impact on Academic Involvement at Rowan University (N=33)*  
*(No Impact = 1, Low Impact = 2, Medium Impact = 3, High Impact = 4)*

	No Impact		Low Impact		Medium Impact		High Impact	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to balance school and other responsibilities I have <i>M=2.48, SD=.870</i>	4	12.1	13	39.4	12	36.4	4	12.1
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to go to my professor for extra help <i>M=2.42, SD=.902</i>	5	15.2	13	39.4	11	33.3	4	12.1
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to make appointments with an advisor to discuss my program of study <i>M=2.33, SD=1.051</i>	9	27.3	9	27.3	10	30.3	5	15.2
I believe FC had an impact on my grades received while at Rowan <i>M=2.27, SD=.944</i>	8	24.2	11	33.3	11	33.3	3	9.1

The final factor grouping, satisfaction, was determined by analyzing two statements. The statement “I believe Freshman Connection had an impact on my ability to enjoy my time at Rowan” received the highest mean score, 3.64. Twelve subjects (36.4%) reported medium impact and 21 subjects (63.6%) reported high impact. The statement, “I believe Freshman Connection had an impact on my decision to stay at Rowan for the upcoming academic year” received the lower mean score, 3.21. Two subjects (6.1%) reported no impact, four subjects (12.1%) reported low impact, 12 subjects (36.4%) reported medium impact, and 15 subjects (45.5%) reported high impact.

Table 4.10

*Students’ Perceptions on Freshman Connection’s Impact on Satisfaction at Rowan University (N=33)*  
*(No Impact = 1, Low Impact = 2, Medium Impact = 3, High Impact = 4)*

	No Impact		Low Impact		Medium Impact		High Impact	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I believe FC had an impact on my ability to enjoy my time at Rowan <i>M=3.64, SD=.489</i>	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	36.4	21	63.6
I believe FC had an impact on my decision to stay at Rowan for the upcoming academic year <i>M=3.21, SD=.893</i>	2	6.1	4	12.1	12	36.4	15	45.5

Subjects also reported how they believed participating in Freshman Connection: Adventure program contributed to their social or academic involvement through the final



item on the survey instrument. Survey item 40 was an open-ended question which asked subjects “In what way(s) did participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contribute to your academic or social involvement at Rowan University?” The responses from this question have been typed up and are attached as Appendix E. After analyzing the responses, a majority of subjects reported that the Freshman Connection: Adventure program attributed to their ability to make friends at Rowan University. At least five subjects (15.2%) reported that the program attributed to their ability to get involved on campus. At least seven subjects (21.2%) reported that the program has attributed to their confidence at Rowan University. Easing their transition into college was a reoccurring theme reported by at least four subjects (12.1%).

**Research question 4.** Does involvement lead to academic achievement?

Subjects were asked to report additional information on the survey instrument that would lead to data on academic achievement. Subjects were asked to report their expected date of graduation. This information is presented in Table 4.11. One subject (3.0%) reported that he or she will graduate in Spring 2017, 29 subjects (87.9%) reported an expected graduation date of Spring 2018, one subject (3.0%) reported an expected graduation date of Fall 2018, and one subject (3.0%) reported an expected graduation date of Spring 2019.

Table 4.11

<i>Expected Date of Graduation (n=32)</i>		
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Spring 2017	1	3.0
Spring 2018	29	87.9
Fall 2018	1	3.0
Spring 2019	1	3.0
Total	33	97.0

Subjects reported their anticipated GPA for their first semester at Rowan University, fall 2014. The results are reported in Table 4.12. Twenty-eight students (84.8%) of participants reported a GPA; the remaining five subjects (15.1%) chose not to report a GPA. The mean GPA anticipated for fall 2014 was 3.38. The minimum GPA reported was a 3.00 and the maximum GPA reported was a 4.0. A 3.00 was the highest reported GPA with 8 subjects (28.6%).

Table 4.12

<i>Anticipated GPA for Fall 2014 (n=28)</i>		
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
3.00	8	28.6
3.30	3	9.1
3.70	3	9.1
3.80	3	9.1
3.20	2	6.1
3.40	2	6.1
3.50	2	6.1
4.00	2	6.1
3.10	1	3.0
3.33	1	3.0
3.60	1	3.0
Total	28	84.8

Subjects were asked to report any plans for further education after completion of their current program. These results are reported in Table 4.13. All 33 subjects participated in this question, while only four (12.1%) reported that they did not plan to continue their education. The remaining 29 (87.9%) reported either continuing with a certificate, additional Bachelor's degree, Master's Degree, or Doctorate. The most common response was Master's degree with 20 subjects (60.6%) marking this option.

Table 4.13

*Plans to Continue Education After Completion of Current Program (N=33)*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Certificate	4	12.1
Additional Bachelor's degree	3	9.1
Master's Degree	20	60.6
Doctorate	4	12.1
Not continuing education	4	12.1

## Chapter V

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

This study was designed to determine involvement patterns among the students who participated in Rowan's Freshman Connection: Adventure program in August of 2014. The study looked at the participants to determine if there was connection between their participation in the pre-college program and their social involvement and academic achievement at Rowan University. The study sought to examine the subjects' reported experiences at Rowan University in terms of social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction and what impact Freshman Connection: Adventure had on such experiences.

The survey instrument used was based on Anderson's survey she used in her dissertation, *Freshman Retention: The Impact of a First Year Experience Program on Student Satisfaction and Academic Performance* (2009). The survey instrument I created collected background demographics, expected graduation dates, GPA, college enrollment, plans to continue education, employment information, on-campus involvement, and satisfaction levels on various topics pertaining to social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction. The final portion of the survey was an open-ended question asking subjects to explain in what ways the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contributed to their academic or social involvement at Rowan University, if at all.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

The results of this study showed that the subjects who participated in the survey were involved in many different aspects of college life, but did not necessarily involve themselves in a plethora of activities, a common case of first year students. Subjects were asked to report their current involvement in the fall semester and their anticipated involvement for the spring semester. The highest levels of involvement were seen in areas of academic club involvement, SGA chartered clubs or organizations, and volunteerism for the fall semester. An increase in involvement was projected for the spring for both academic club involvement and volunteerism, but SGA chartered club or organization involvement is anticipated to drop by 6.1%. Other areas that would see an increase in involvement by the spring semester included Student Government Association, Greek life, intercollegiate athletics, intramural sports, club sports, and academic research projects. Six subjects (18.2%) reported not being involved in any of the listed activities for the fall semester, but only three subjects (9.1%) anticipated not being involved in any of the listed activities for the spring semester. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984) explained that students who seek to get involved on campus would reap the benefits in multiple areas. The data reported show that 27 subjects (81.9%) participated in at least one of the listed activities. Nine subjects (27.2%) reported that the Freshman Connection: Adventure program had a high impact on their ability to join new clubs or organizations. These students who are getting involved, as Astin (1984) stated, will reap the benefits in multiple areas.

A majority of subjects surveyed (87.9%) did not hold a job either on or off campus. The low participation in employment could be due to the fact that the subjects

were surveyed in their first semester of college, before they had the opportunity to apply for employment. However, the low participation could be what allowed for involvement in other areas, such as academics and extra-curricular activities.

Subjects were asked to evaluate various experiences on campus related to social involvement, academic involvement, and satisfaction and were then asked those statements again, but to evaluate whether they believe they contributed their success in those areas to their participation in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program. A majority of subjects (66.7%) believed Freshman Connection: Adventure had an impact on their ability to make friends at Rowan University. A majority of students (63.6%) also reported that they attributed participation in the program to their ability to enjoy their time at Rowan University. Enjoying time at college influences ones motivation to get involved and engaged on campus.

Finally, subjects were asked an open-ended question to explain in what way(s) did participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contribute to their academic or social involvement at Rowan University. Responses collected were mainly positive. Common themes included ability to form relationships, get involved, build confidence, and transition into college. One subject portrayed three out-of-four of these themes by stating, “Freshman Connection made me become very comfortable about starting my first year at Rowan. Meeting new people and growing the bonds made me want to consider joining clubs and getting involved on campus” (Participant #7). The only negative response was given by a subject who felt that the trip did not attribute to personal academic performance, by noting,

By participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure trip, I felt more

comfortable in my transition to college. I made more friends than I expected to and still hang out with a close group of people now. I also liked that I was already moved into my dorm before everyone else! I don't think this trip had a significant effect on my academic involvement at Rowan University. (Participant #17)

However, there was one subject who believed the trip did affect his or her academic performance, saying,

The Freshman Connection: Adventure trip contributed immensely to my social involvement at Rowan University. The program allowed me to branch out and open up to people I normally wouldn't, and because of that, I've met my two best friends. The program also allowed me to talk to older Rowan students and gain insight on how to deal with academics. (Participant #18)

The remaining of the open-ended responses are provided in Appendix E, each subject's response is indicated by a number based on when they submitted their survey, to ensure participants remained anonymous. The remainder of comments further explored the theme of friendship and the opportunity the trip provided to students to make friends prior to their freshman year even beginning. An additional theme explored was impact the Freshman Connection: Adventure program made on the student's transition into college. The results from this item on the survey instrument support Schlossberg's (1984) theory on adult transition, particularly the Support aspect of the "four Ss".

In regards to academic achievement, the study asked for subjects to report their anticipated fall 2014 GPA. The average anticipated GPA for the fall semester was a 3.38. A high percentage of subjects (87.9%) reported that they will be continuing their education, with an additional degree or certificate, upon the completion of their current

program of study. Over 60% of subjects reported that they plan to pursue a Master's Degree after completion of their current program of study.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this study indicated that the students who participated in Freshman Connection: Adventure are provided with opportunities to make long lasting friendships, gain an upperclassmen and professional support system, and are encouraged to get involved with other aspects of involvement on campus, such as Greek life, intramural sports, and clubs or organizations. Based on the findings of this study, I conclude that the subjects enjoyed Freshman Connection: Adventure overall, but did not discuss that they attributed their participation in the program with academic achievement. Freshman Connection: Adventure applies to Kuh's (1995) expansion on Astin's theory of involvement. Freshman Connection: Adventure also represents one of the "other Curriculum's" Kuh discussed. Students participated in experiences, which promoted social competence, autonomy, confidence, self-awareness, and appreciation from human diversity, as cited in Kuh's 1995 publication of "The Other Curriculum." In a subject's response to the open-ended question on the survey, he/she mentioned the bonfire activity and connected the activity to self-awareness and appreciation of their peers, similar to Kuh's appreciation from human diversity. The activity allowed them to express their fears of starting college and connect their fears with those of their peers. The student mentioned, "The bonfire [activity] has really opened my eyes to accepting peoples struggles and has connected us greatly" (Participant # 16). This bonfire activity and a majority of the Freshman Connection: Adventure program related to Schlossberg's theory of adult transition. The "four Ss" previously outlined in the literature review were



Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies. The Freshman Connection: Adventure program focuses heavily on Support, providing incoming freshmen with upperclassmen and staff leaders to help guide their transition into Rowan University.

The results from this study suggested that subjects were overall satisfied with their participation in the Freshman Connection Adventure program and stated that it led to an overall satisfying college experience, especially within the realm of making friends and building relationships. The Office of Student Activities provides the Freshman Connection: Adventure program as an opportunity for incoming freshmen to meet new people also entering Rowan, move in to their room assignments early, take a step out of their comfort zone while participating in activities such as White Water Rafting and Zip-lining, and develop a relationship with upperclassmen leaders and professional staff members. The findings from this study suggest that the trip has successfully provided students with self-confidence and an easier transition into their first year of college.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Examine similar programs to find a way to expand involvement in first semester freshmen in multiple areas.
2. Equally encourage students to pursue social and academic involvement upon returning from the program.
3. Create monthly meetings for the Freshman Connection: Adventure participants to discuss transition progress, involvement, and academic achievement.

Upperclassmen leaders and professional staff members should continue to be a resource for the students throughout their first year at Rowan University.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Conduct further research on short-term first year experience programs that provide students with opportunities to get involved in extra-curricular activities.
2. Examine past years participants of the Freshman Connection: Adventure program in addition to the current year's participants.
3. Modify the survey instrument:
  - a. Eliminate questions 6, 10, & 11, as they did not relate specifically to any of the research questions, the data were not used.
  - b. Modify questions 14 to reproduce the same variables as in question 13 for consistency purposes.
  - c. Re-number the questions. Questions 14 – 19 should be 14a – 14f, questions 20 – 29 should be 15a – 15j, and questions 30 – 39 should be 16a – 16j.
  - d. Define participation in question 12. I believe some students thought participation might mean attending an event held by Athletics rather than participating on the team.
4. Survey the subjects in the spring semester of their freshmen year, so academic data from the fall semester can be accurately provided and not anticipated.

5. Conduct a longitudinal study and survey the students again in their senior year of college.

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## Appendix A

### Anderson's (2009) Survey Instrument

First-Year College Success Program  
FINAL SURVEY

Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Since mid September, how many times has your Mentor contacted you through each of these methods? *(Please fill in a 0 for any of the methods your mentor hasn't used)*

Email	_____
One on One	_____
In Class (Group)	_____
Phone	_____

- II. Since mid September, how many times have you contacted your Mentor through each of these methods? *(Please fill in a 0 for any of the methods your mentor hasn't used)*

Email	_____
One on One	_____
In Class (Group)	_____
Phone	_____

- III. Using the table below, describe how you felt during the contact with your Mentor? *(Please place an X on the continuum that most accurately represents your experience.)*

The contact with my Mentor was:

Very Comfortable	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	Uncomfortable
Friendly	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	Unfriendly
Helpful	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	Not Helpful
Timely	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	Untimely
Intrusive	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	Non-intrusive

IV. Which, if any, of the following services or programs has your Mentor recommended? *(Please check)*

Academic Advising \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Enhancement \_\_\_\_\_

Career Center \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Aid \_\_\_\_\_

Library Services \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar's Office \_\_\_\_\_

Student Services \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

None \_\_\_\_\_

V. Which services or programs have you participated in? *(Please check)*

Academic Advising \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Enhancement \_\_\_\_\_

Career Center \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Aid \_\_\_\_\_

Library Services \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar's Office \_\_\_\_\_

Student Services \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

None \_\_\_\_\_

We are interested in how you think you spent your time during your freshman year.

- VI. How many hours per week did you do the following:
- |   | Number of Hours |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Work   | _____           |
| 2. Holy Family Division II Sports                           | _____           |
| 3. Social Activities  | _____           |
| 4. Intramural Sports/Recreational Sporting Activities       | _____           |
| 5. Work on Course Readings & Assignments                    | _____           |
| 6. Work in a student organized study group                  | _____           |
| 7. Work on Collaborative Group Projects Assigned in Classes | _____           |
| 8. Participate in Community Service (Service Learning)      | _____           |

VII. In the blanks below, please list the courses in which you are currently enrolled. *Do not list the Freshman Success Course.* Also indicate the grade you expect to earn in each course and how much time you spent studying.

	How many hours per week did you spend studying for each course?	
Courses I'm Taking	Grade Expected	
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

VIII. Do you have a Major? \_\_\_\_ 1. No \_\_\_\_ 2. Yes  
 If so, what is your Major? \_\_\_\_\_



IX. Have you changed your Major? \_\_\_1. No \_\_\_2. Yes  
 If so, what was your Major? \_\_\_\_\_

X. Using the following scales, how do you characterize your experiences with Service Learning at Holy Family University. (Please place an X on the continuum that most accurately represents your experience.)

Service Learning experience at Holy Family was:

Rewarding	___	___	___	___	___	Unrewarding
Satisfying	___	___	___	___	___	Unsatisfying
Worth your time	___	___	___	___	___	Waste of time
Interesting	___	___	___	___	___	Uninteresting
Busy Work	___	___	___	___	___	Productive Work
Uninformative	___	___	___	___	___	Informative
Fun	___	___	___	___	___	Tedious

XI. Do you plan to continue volunteering with this organization?  
 \_\_\_1. No \_\_\_2. Yes

XII. In general, how would you describe your experience with the First-Year Success Program? (Please place an X on the continuum that most accurately represents your experience.)

My experience with the First-Year Success Program was:

Informative	___	___	___	___	___	___	Uninformative
Useful	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not Useful
Helpful	___	___	___	___	___	___	Not Helpful
Interesting	___	___	___	___	___	___	Uninteresting
Relevant	___	___	___	___	___	___	Irrelevant

XIII. Please check the boxes of the Workshop Series you attended.

Workshop Series (Fall 2007)

<b>1. Making Money</b>	<b>2. Major Fit ?#!</b>	<b>3. The Day After the Shopping Spree</b>	<b>4. \$ \$ \$</b>
<b>5. 101 Ways to Get Involved</b>	<b>6. Co-op Experience</b>	<b>7. Movin' and Grooving</b>	<b>8. Opportunity of a Life Time</b>
<b>9. Been There... Done That</b>	<b>10. R-U-READY-2-REGISTER</b>	<b>11. Sex, Drugs and Alcohol</b>	<b>12. Truly Living the Mission</b>
<b>13. Who's Who? What's What?</b>	<b>14. What's Your Type? (Myers Briggs)</b>	<b>15. Don't Be Afraid of the Dark</b>	<b>16. Acting Up, Feeling Down, and Fooling Around</b>
<b>17. G.P.S. on your G.P.A.</b>	<b>18. Lunch with the Deans and Sister Maureen</b>	<b>19. Love Thy Neighbor</b>	<b>20. The Game of Jobs</b>
<b>21. Mission Possible-Spirituality</b>	<b>22. Lunch with the President</b>	<b>23. Honesty – the Best Policy</b>	

XIV. Please rank (1, 2, 3) your top three workshops. (1 being the most valuable)

Workshop Number      Ranking

\_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_

XV. Please rank (6, 7, 8) your least favorite three workshops. (8 being the least valuable)

Workshop Number      Ranking

\_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_                  \_\_\_\_\_

XVI. Please write any comments about the workshops below?

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XVII. Did you experience any problems with: *(Please check any appropriate selections)*

- Time Management
- Reading Assignments
- Concentration in Class
- Studying

Other *(Identify)*: \_\_\_\_\_

XVIII. Holy Family University provides a variety of services to support students while they are in college. Using the initials for each building, please indicate where you would go for each of the following services. Buildings: Holy Family Hall (HFH), Campus Center (CC), & Nursing Building (NEB). If you don't know, use (DK).

- 1. Registration
- 2. Financial Aid
- 3. Counseling Center
- 4. Health Care Services
- 5. Academic Advising

XIX. Please list Holy Family University's Core Values

- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_

XX. In your opinion, how could Holy Family improve the First-Year Success Program?

XXI. Do you plan on returning to Holy Family for the Spring semester?

\_\_\_ 1. No \_\_\_ 2. Yes

If not, what are you plans? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you leaving Holy Family? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank-you! Your participation in this survey is much appreciated.

## Appendix B

### Permission to use Anderson's (2009) Survey Instrument

Thursday, February 19, 2015 at 10:23:03 PM Eastern Standard Time

**Subject:** RE: Graduate Thesis - permission to use your dissertation survey instrument  
**Date:** Sunday, October 5, 2014 at 9:47:50 AM Eastern Daylight Time  
**From:** Elizabeth Anderson  
**To:** LoBue, Sabrina Leana

Hello Sabrina

Yes, that is fine. You have my permission to use my survey questions. I wish you well in your academic endeavor.

Take care,

Liz Anderson.

Dr. Elizabeth G. Anderson

Associate Dean for Institutional Research  
and Academic Assessment  
Wilson College  
(717) 264-4141 x3408  
[elizabeth.anderson@wilson.edu](mailto:elizabeth.anderson@wilson.edu)

-----Original Message-----

From: LoBue, Sabrina Leana [<mailto:lobue@rowan.edu>]  
Sent: Sat 10/4/2014 8:42 PM  
To: Elizabeth Anderson  
Subject: Graduate Thesis - permission to use your dissertation survey instrument  
Ms. Anderson,

I hope this email finds you well and that you are indeed the author of Freshmen Retention: The Impact of a First Year Experience Program on Student Satisfaction and Academic Performance (2009). I am currently working on my graduate thesis titled First Year Experience Programs: A Study of the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure Participants and Their Involvement at Rowan University.

I was hoping to receive permission to use some of your survey questions from Appendix B of your dissertation in my survey instrument. I would most definitely cite your work and include your survey instrument as one of my appendices so readers can identify the original source.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

--

Sabrina LoBue  
Graduate Coordinator | Office of Student Activities  
Chamberlain Student Center | Suite 117  
Rowan University | 201 Mullica Hill Road | Glassboro, NJ 08028  
T: 856-256-4876 | F: 856-256-5635 | [www.rowan.edu/studentactivities](http://www.rowan.edu/studentactivities)

## Appendix C

### Survey Instrument

#### **A Study of the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure Participants and Their Involvement at Rowan University**

The purpose of this survey is to obtain any information on the results of participation in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program and student involvement at Rowan University. You are receiving this survey because you were a participant in the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure program. In order to participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this paper survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. The results from this survey are completely anonymous. It should only take about ten minutes to fill complete. The results from this survey will be used in my graduate thesis as a requirement for the Higher Education: Administration Master's program at Rowan University. Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information.

If you have any questions about this survey or the study, feel free to contact myself (lobue@rowan.edu or 856-256-4876), or my program advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco (Sisco@rowan.edu).

**1. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- I prefer not to answer

**2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.**

**3. What is your race?**

- White
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian/ Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. When is your expected date of graduation? \_\_\_\_\_**

Ex: Fall 2014

**5. What is your anticipated G.P.A for the Fall 2014 semester? \_\_\_\_\_**

Ex: 3.5

**6. What college are you enrolled?**

Check all that apply

- College of Communication and Creative Arts
- College of Education
- College of Engineering
- College of Health Sciences
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Performing Arts
- Rhorer College of Business
- College of Science and Mathematics

**7. Do you plan to continue your education with any of the choices below, after you complete your current program?**

- Certificate
- Additional Bachelor's degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Are you currently employed?**

- I am only employed on campus
- I am only employed off campus
- I am employed on and off campus
- I am neither employed on nor off campus

**9. How many hours per week do you work for pay, on average?**

- I do not work
- 1 – 5 hours
- 6 – 10 hours
- 11 – 15 hours
- 16 – 20 hours
- 21 – 25 hours
- More than 26 hours

**10. How many times have you met with your academic advisor since being accepted to Rowan University?**

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

**11. Have you met with a professor during his or her office hours this year? If so, how many times have you met with them?**

- I have not met with a professor this year.
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four times
- Five or more times

**12. Have you participated in any of the following extra curricular activities this semester?**

Check all that apply

- Student Government Association (SGA)
- SGA chartered club or organization
- Greek Life
- Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA)
- Intramural Sports
- Club Sports
- Volunteerism
- Academic clubs or organizations
- Academic research projects
- I have not participated in any of the above activities



**13. Do you plan to participate in any of the following extra curricular activities next semester?**

Check all that apply

- Student Government Association (SGA)
- SGA chartered club or organization
- Greek Life
- Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA)
- Intramural Sports
- Club Sports
- Volunteerism
- Academic clubs or organizations
- Academic research projects
- No, I do not plan to participate in any of the above activities

**14 – 19. Indicate how many hours you spend on the following activities by marking the corresponding circle.**

	0 hours	1-5 hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	16 or more hours
Homework / Studying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SGA clubs or organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports (intramural, club or varsity)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic clubs or organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**20 – 29. Please indicate your response by marking the corresponding circle.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel comfortable making friends at Rowan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable joining a new club or organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable going to my professor for extra help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If needed, I will make an appointment with my advisor to discuss my progress in my program of study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In addition to my school work, I have time for extra-curricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being at Rowan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my grades I have received while at Rowan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get along with my roommates and/or suitemates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can balance school and any other responsibilities I have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan on continuing my education at Rowan in the Fall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**30 – 39. Indicate whether you believe your involvement in the Freshman Connection (FC): Adventure program had an impact on your ability to do each of the following:**

	No Impact	Low Impact	Medium Impact	High Impact
Making friends at Rowan University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joining a new club or organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to a professor for extra help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making appointments with an advisor to discuss progress in my program of study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making time for extra curricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My enjoyment at Rowan University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My grades I have received while at Rowan University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to get along with my roommates and/or suitemates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balancing school and any other responsibilities I have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decision to stay at Rowan University in the upcoming academic year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**40. In what way(s) did participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contribute to your academic or social involvement at Rowan University? Please explain and provide examples.**

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## Appendix D

### eIRB Notice of Approval

**DHHS Federal Wide Assurance**

**Identifier:** FWA00007111

**IRB Chair Person:** Harriet Hartman

**IRB Director:** Sreekant Murthy

**Effective Date:** 11/15/2014

### eIRB Notice of Approval

#### STUDY PROFILE

**Study ID:** [Pro2014000153](#)

**Title:** A Study of the 2014 Freshman Connection: Adventure Participants and Their Involvement at Rowan University

<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Burton Sisco	<b>Study Coordinator:</b>	
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>	Sabrina LoBue	<b>Other Study Staff:</b>	There are no items to display
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Department Funded	<b>Approval Cycle:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Risk Determination:</b>	Minimal Risk	<b>Device Determination:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Review Type:</b>	Exempt	<b>Exempt Category:</b>	2
<b>Subjects:</b>	40		

#### CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

<b>Submission Type:</b>	Research Protocol/Study	<b>Submission Status:</b>	Approved		
<b>Approval Date:</b>	11/17/2014	<b>Expiration Date:</b>	Not Applicable		
<b>Pregnancy Code:</b>	No Pregnant Women as Subjects Not Applicable	<b>Pediatric Code:</b>	Not Applicable No Children As Subjects	<b>Prisoner Code:</b>	Not Applicable No Prisoners As Subjects
<b>Protocol:</b>	Appendix A Protocol Appendix B	<b>Consent:</b>	There are no items to display	<b>Recruitment Materials:</b>	Survey Email.docx

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**\* IRB APPROVAL IS GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE STIPULATION(S) THAT:**

**\* Study Performance Sites:**

Glassboro Campus                      Chamberlain Student Center - Owl's Nest 201 Mullica Hill Road Glassboro, NJ,  
08028

There are no items to display

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**ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2. **Continuing Review:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
3. **Expiration of IRB Approval:** If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: **All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.**
4. **Amendments/Modifications/Revisions:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.
5. **Unanticipated Problems:** Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:<http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
6. **Protocol Deviations and Violations:** Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:<http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
7. **Consent/Assent:** The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.
8. **Completion of Study:** Notify the IRB when your study has been stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor or the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application or final report.
9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.
10. **Letter Comments:** *There are no additional comments.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipients(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.

## Appendix E

### Open Ended Survey Results

#40: In what way(s) did participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure program contribute to your academic or social involvement at Rowan University?

1. It allowed me to start the year with a good group of people. I already knew I could find people to spend time with at the beginning of the school year when other people were still searching for friends. Even after the trip, I still primarily spend time with people I met through Freshman Connection. Having other people to do things with has encouraged me to join more activities.
2. It created a friend group that made it easy to get right into the college experience. Made me very outgoing.
3. It contributed to me feeling more comfortable starting in a new place and meeting a lot of new friends.
4. Gave me a group of friends to start off with at Rowan and to fall back on.
5. Due to the Freshman Connection program I was able to start off the year with more friends than anticipated.
6. Being on the trip has made me gain my best friends. They have opened me up to new friends throughout different buildings. Many people have helped me doing my homework and being able to go to them for help is good feeling! Loved the trip, loved all of our leaders!
7. Freshman Connection made me become very comfortable about starting my first year at Rowan. Meeting new people and growing the bonds made me want to consider joining clubs and getting involved on campus.
8. I made lots of friends on the trip and stay in contact afterwards to keep them as good friends. Going into college with 40 friends made a big impact.
9. Through the FC trip I met most of my friends here at Rowan. We bonded on the trip and over the last 3 months that friendship has only grown. I almost did not go on the trip. I would have been lost if I had not gone on the trip and met those people.
10. It allowed me to make friends before the school year began, that I still now have.
11. Freshman Connection helped me to meet new people and be more comfortable with the college experience. I learned to try new things even when I'm not sure I want to do something.
12. Freshman Connection made the transition to college so much easier because I gained 39 other friends. It made me feel so much more confident meeting other people here at Rowan. I am still friends with many of the people going on the trip today. I would definitely recommend going on the trip to all incoming freshman.
13. It has helped me to make friends more easily and have more confidence to talk to my professor when I need help.
14. The Freshman Connection Adventure Program helped me adjust to college life a lot easier. It also introduced me to new friends. It made me feel more comfortable in new situations.

15. Having to trust your safety on the ziplines and rafts with new people forced me to trust new people. Plus, everything was so beautiful there. The trip definitely gave me more self confidence.
16. It has increased my ability to be comfortable around other people and has given me a group of amazing people that support me as I go on with school. The bonfire [activity] has really opened my eyes to accepting people's struggles and has connected us greatly.
17. By participating in the Freshman Connection: Adventure trip, I felt more comfortable in my transition to college. I made more friends than I expected to and still hang out with a close group of people now. I also liked that I was already moved into my dorm before everyone else! I don't think this trip had a significant effect on my academic involvement at Rowan University.
18. The Freshman Connection: Adventure trip contributed immensely to my social involvement at Rowan University. The program allowed me to branch out and open up to people I normally wouldn't, and because of that, I've met my two best friends. The program also allowed me to talk to older Rowan students and gain insight on how to deal with academics.
19. I think it impacted my decision to join clubs and had a small impact on making friends here.
20. It helped me see how Rowan has nice people, it was easier making new friends after.
21. The FC program has shown me that it is okay to be yourself, because people will accept who you are.
22. It has opened me up and made it easier to become and make friends.
23. Made me able to branch out and try new things.
24. It set up a strong social base that connected me to people I wouldn't have been connected to. Without the connection trip, I would have been lonely and stayed in my room alone most the time.
25. It didn't contribute in any way academically, but it gave me a huge opportunity to become the person I want to be.
26. Helped me in making lots of friends.
27. It really helped me become comfortable with people I didn't know. It prepared me for the beginning of college and all of the new things I would have to face.
28. I was extremely shy, and going on this trip really helped me open up and try to make new friends. Overall, it helped me become a more confident person.
29. Since I participated in Freshman Connection, I enjoyed having friends and making friends seemed easier and help extend my social life.
30. I made great friends that are fun and supportive.
31. Having such a close knit friend group from the trip ensured that if I wanted to get involved in anything on campus, I would have at least 2 or 3 people backing me. As a group, we've been to nearly every movie and several off campus trips.

32. It gave me a strong pool of friends to start off the school year with. It also gave me confidence to talk to people because I realized how wonderful everyone was here and how upperclassmen don't treat you as "freshman" as they did in high school. I'm very happy here and am so happy I came to Rowan and went on [Freshman Connection Adventure]!
33. FC helped me to make friends and create a support system that I can fall back on in times of need and success. My friends are 80% the reason I love college so much.