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The impact of academic advising on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success

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**THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING ON GRADUATE STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

by

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A Thesis

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Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
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Thesis Chair: Andrew S. Tinnin, Ed.D.

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I would like to thank my parents, Tom and Lisa, for supporting me in every avenue I choose to pursue. Academically, professionally and personally, I have relied on them for reassurance and guidance, which was such an important factor in my choosing to pursue a graduate degree from Rowan University. My sister Jessica has been a strong voice in my life who made my relocation from Rhode Island to New Jersey possible, and I cannot express my gratitude to her in such few words. Lastly, my amazing fiancé Kellie has been a driving force for following my passion of working with students pursuing a higher education. This would not have been possible without her encouragement, and I am ecstatic to begin my professional career in higher education with her by my side. I love each and every one of you deeply, and I am eternally grateful for all of the support you have provided to me.

Abstract

Jason Salvatore
THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING ON GRADUATE STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS
2019-2020
Drew Tinnin, Ed.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The goal of this study was to analyze how graduate students perceive their own academic success in their degree programs, and how that success is related to their experience with their academic advisors. This quantitative study consisted of a 16 question Likert scale survey and was sent to 1,258 graduate students at Rowan University. The students invited to participate in this survey were in degree programs from various Rowan University academic colleges. The purpose of this thesis is to review how important academic advising is to graduate student mentalities at Rowan University regarding their own success academically. There has been a vast amount of research conducted on the graduate student population and the importance of academic advising field (Green, 2016; Applegate, 2012; Miller & Newman, 1996). However, there is minimal research that focuses on the graduate student perspective of academic advising, and how academic advising impacts their own success educationally. The results of this study will be shared the Department of Graduate Studies at Rowan University to provide insight into the graduate student perceptions regarding academic advising and how the population believes advising impacts their success.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Academic advising is an area of higher education that may have greater impact on the student success at any institution than is generally accepted by many professionals within the field. This study was intended to describe the need for further research into the impact of academic advising on graduate students' perceptions of their own academic success. Per my review of past literature, it can be concluded that there is minimal research on the overall effect of academic advising on graduate students, specifically academic advising's contribution to the academic success of graduate students.

The work of many researchers concludes that academic advising for all students is critical for both their retention and academic success (Fedynich & Bain, 2011; Gill, Russell & Rayfield, 2012; Miller & Newman, 1996; Lovitts and Nelson, 2000). Fedynich and Bain (2011) emphasize that academic advisors also a need to fill a mentor role for students to help them achieve their educational goals. Additionally, a study conducted by Lovitts and Nelson (2000) determines that the most influential factor that leads to graduate student persistence or attrition, is the relationship with an advisor. Even though research supports the fact that advising graduate students is important for academic success, I have yet to personally witness a graduate academic program emphasize advising for their students. This study will provide information on how important Rowan University graduate students feel academic advising is to their studies.

Statement of the Problem

There is a fair amount of literature that supports how important academic advising is for graduate students, and how a lack of academic advising for this population can lead to attrition (Applegate, 2012; Park, Berry, & Edwards, 2011; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Briefly mentioned earlier, the study done by Lovitts and Nelson (2000) used surveys to determine reasons as to why students do not complete their degree programs. Their data explicitly showed that the students who did not complete their degree had poor relationships with their advisors. Conversely, the students who did complete their degree programs reported excellent relationships with their advisors. There is precedent for institutions of higher education conducting surveys that determine graduate student satisfaction in their academic advising programs (Green, 2016). However, there is no publicly available research from Rowan University that analyzes if their graduate students are satisfied with their academic advising experience, or if academic advising is important to these students.

When an individual makes the choice to pursue a graduate degree, they do so with the intent of expanding their knowledgebase, gaining new skills, or pursuing a specific career path. While the classroom is the primary modality for learning material in a graduate program, guidance and mentorship have just as important of a role because graduate students want to learn from those with industry experience (Fedynich & Bain, 2011). This research led me to believe that not only should academic advising be a part of all graduate programs, it should be a focal point.

An academic advisor not only has the responsibility of telling a student what courses they should take, they should also be able to explain how a course will be beneficial to a student's personal and professional goals. NACADA, the Global Community for Academic Advising, has seven core values that all academic advisors should adopt to be successful in their role. These seven values are Caring, Commitment, Empowerment, Inclusivity, Integrity, Professionalism, and Respect (NACADA, 2017). Additionally, NACADA (2017) describes three core competencies for all academic advisors which are: Conceptual, Informational, and Relational. Conceptual focuses on the background of the academic advising profession, Informational is any specific knowledge an advisor must have for their specific role (institutional specific) and Relational refers to an advisor's people skills (NACADA, 2017). These values and competencies are intended to showcase how the organization at the forefront of academic advising practice emphasizes much more than just course registration guidance as a part of an academic advisor's role. While the literature emphasizes the importance of an advisor having these skills and backgrounds, there is not much literature on the impact it has at the graduate level specifically. This study prioritizes the graduate student perceptions of these skills with their advisors, but this is only the first step in determining the importance that an academic advisor for graduate students has the ability to do more than just assist with course registration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to understand how academic advising impacts the perceptions that graduate students at Rowan University have about their academic success using a predictive study method. There are 62 masters-level programs

(Rowan Global Graduate Programs, 2019) across nine disciplines at Rowan University. I am involved with two graduate programs currently, one being in a professional role and the other in a student role. Both of these programs do not have an official academic advisor position, but rather a program coordinator who acts in an academic advisor role for students. This thesis will assess if the current academic advising structure of the graduate programs at Rowan University lead to positive student reactions about their academic performance. There has been a study regarding graduate student perceptions of mattering at Rowan University (D'Angelo, 2010), but no studies have focused specifically on how academic advising impacts their academic success.

Significance of the Study

For certain graduate programs, academic success does not necessarily mean GPA or test scores. Academic success at the graduate-level can mean many different things, and that is left to the student's discretion. Academic success is a term that can be defined in multiple ways depending on the area of higher education attempting to define it. York, Gibson and Rankin (2015) created a table that summarizes the vast amount of academic success definitions across the literature. While many of the definitions focus on grades, there are additional common themes such as experience in courses, ability to achieve program goals, a student's ability to connect education and practice, etc. Due to the fluidity of this term, the person in the academic advisor role of a graduate program should prioritize the individual success of their students. Whether this means the academic advisor conducts outreach, schedules consistent meetings with students, or provides opportunities for students to ask specific questions beyond their class schedule, graduate-level advisors have a duty to help their students reach their goals.

The literature clearly describes academic advising as important to student success, so this thesis is intended to view this phenomenon through the lens of graduate students. While there are similar studies that focus on graduate student satisfaction and degree completion trends based on their academic advising experience, there is minimal literature attempting to learn how graduate students believe advisors impact their academic success. This study will provide insight into a graduate student's perspective, to determine the overall impact academic advising has on their individual academic success.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study assumed that all participating graduate-level programs have an academic advising structure of some sort. The staff and/or faculty members that act in an academic advisor role may not have this as an official title, but rather just a part of their administrative responsibilities. The primary limitation of this study is that the amount of survey responses received was not large enough to satisfy the assumptions of the statistical assumption for regression analyses. In Chapter 3, it will be explained that there are 12 independent variables being utilized in this study, and at least 10 data points for each independent variable is a statistical assumption. This assumption was not satisfied, so the results of this study do not provide accurate answers to my research questions.

An additional limitation of this study is that the results are isolated to the specific graduate programs within Rowan University and cannot be generalized for the entire graduate student population. A third limitation is that some graduate programs participating in this study may have a more effective (or ineffective) academic advising structure than others and if that graduate program has larger participation in the study

than another program, the results may be skewed. The final limitation is that I was unable to conduct research on the graduate student population in the College of Business or graduate students pursuing an Educational Services and Leadership degree at Rowan University. I have a professional role in the College of Business' Graduate Studies office, which would impact the results of the study. I am a current graduate student pursuing an Educational Services and Leadership degree as well, and wanted to ensure that my data is not affected by personal or professional relationships.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Advising: NACADA (2017) lists three components as part of academic advising. Curricular knowledge (program-specific knowledge), Pedagogy (how the advisor interacts with students), and Student Learning Outcomes (the result of academic advising).

2. Academic Success: This term can be interpreted in many different ways, but for the purposes of this study, Academic Success is defined as: self-reported grade point average, student fulfillment of personal educational goals, and the student's understanding of how the academic program affects their professional objectives.

3. Graduate Students: Students who are enrolled in a master's degree program will be participants in this study. Graduate students may refer to any post-bachelor's degree program, but for the purposes of this study, "Graduate Students" will only reference master's level students throughout this thesis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created with the intent to provide insight into the perceptions that graduate students have about their academic advising experience, and also provide data that can be used for future use.

1. Does the relationship quality between an academic advisor and a graduate student have an impact on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success at Rowan University?

2. What academic advisor qualities are most important to the perception of academic success by graduate students at Rowan University?

Overview of the Report

Chapter two details a review of the literature that is related to the overall importance of this study and why it is significant. This chapter includes four primary themes that emerged from the literature, as well as describes why academic advising is related to academic success.

Chapter three details the methodologies used in this study. In this chapter includes the context of the study, sample selection methods, data collection instrument and processes, and how the data will be analyzed.

Chapter four will consist of the overall findings from the graduate student survey. This chapter will also include my multiple regression analyses that connects student academic advising experiences with the perception of their academic success.

Chapter five summarizes and synopsizes the results by connecting all findings. This section will also detail recommendations for future research and provide useful information for Rowan University.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Academic advising is an area of higher education where plenty of research has been conducted regarding its impact on the college student experience. However, much of the past academic advising literature focuses on undergraduate students, which is why this review will cover how academic advising relates to the graduate student population. Four themes appeared throughout the literature review, which are: positive student experiences with academic advising, negative student experiences with academic advising, the various perceptions of graduate student advising, and degree program delivery format as that is an important related variable. This review of literature will analyze these four themes and their overall contribution to the concept of graduate student academic advising.

Positive Advising Experiences

Academic advisors are intended to be more than just counselors on curriculum and registration, they must also fill a mentoring role (Fedynich & Bain, 2011). Graduate students join degree programs in hopes of not only learning the coursework, but also connecting with individuals that have experience in the field of interest (Fedynich & Bain, 2011). Academic or faculty advisors have a responsibility to be strong communicators, assist with degree planning, be empathic, and provide insight about the professional area they will be pursuing (Gill et al., 2012).

Two original studies were conducted that focused specifically on graduate students from specific programs. These studies both used surveys to understand how graduate students felt about their academic and faculty advisors. Conclusions from both articles were similar, in that the students involved in each study rated and described their advising experiences as academically and professionally beneficial (Gill et al., 2012; Miller & Newman, 1996).

The student population that participated in these two studies emphasized that one of their advisor's strongest qualities was their ability to advise them on professional aspects within their field of study (Gill et al., 2012; Miller & Newman, 1996). These studies affirm the conclusions by Fedynich and Bain (2011), which was that mentoring by an academic or faculty advisor can create an incentive for students to complete or join a program. Academic advising does not have a universal structure, as all graduate level programs typically have their own advising structure (Green, 2016). Not all advising structures in graduate-level programs will put emphasis on an advisor playing the mentoring role, which can be a reason for the various retention issues in graduate programs across the United States (Fedynich & Bain, 2011). While the individual studies in this subsection describe positive student experiences with advising, the authors state how their findings should only be considered for the institutions that participated in their studies (Gill et al., 2012; Miller & Newman, 1996). The multiple framework types of graduate student academic advising appear to be the reason why students have different experiences, which leads me into the next theme, negative student experiences.

Negative Advising Experiences

Academic and faculty advisors at the graduate level do not approach the practice of advising the same way, which is what results in some students being dissatisfied with their experiences (Barnes, Wolfe, Chard, Stassen, & Williams, 2011). Some of the negative interactions that students may have with advisors include a lack of interpersonal skills, empathy, lack of advising background, and lack of understanding of their institution's program curriculums (Green, 2016; McCuen, Akar, Gifford, & Srikantaiah, 2009). Students may be content with the positive attitudes and concerns for their success, but advisors can sometimes lack the ability to be sensitive towards a student's limited knowledge or experience in an area (McCuen et al., 2009). This lack of concern can create a tenser relationship between an advisor and student, which then limits the effectiveness of the interactions moving forward (McCuen et al., 2009).

Lacking interpersonal skills are also prevalent in the negative experiences that students have (Green, 2016). Interpersonal skill issues are less about ineffective professional development for academic and faculty advisors, and more about the types of individuals that are assigned to these roles. Although lacking interpersonal skills may have been a popular response by the students in the study by Green (2016), this quality can be attributed to the specific conditions at the institution where the study took place. This is where the idea of varying advising frameworks becomes more noticeable, as the negative student response in this study contradicts that of the positive student experiences that were previously mentioned. All advising programs will have differing points of emphasis, which need to be strategically selected based on the student population within each graduate program (Barnes et al., 2011). Using surveys to assess the expectations that

students have of their relationship with their advisor allows the program administration to determine how the advising framework and professional development of their advisors needs to be structured (Barnes et al., 2011; Green, 2016). Surveys and restructuring of advising programs are useful when trying to improve the graduate student experience. Before changes can be made however, the perceptions that administrators and faculty have about graduate-level academic advising must first be analyzed.

Perceptions of Graduate Student Advising

The attitudes that faculty and administrators in a graduate program have towards advising are essential to determining how an individual program will handle their own advising structure (Barnes et al., 2011). There was limited literature on studies regarding faculty and administrator perceptions of advising from individual graduate programs. Generally speaking, faculty and administrative staff believe advising is crucial to student retention and success at the graduate level (Myers & Dyer, 2005). Interestingly enough, many faculty believe they are adequately prepared to advise graduate students, while administrative staff are of the opinion that faculty must consistently pursue professional development for advising (Myers & Dyer, 2005). Faculty and administrative individuals also believe academic advising abilities should be considered in tenure decisions, but that is not presently the case (Myers & Dyer, 2005). At the graduate level, academic advising can become non-existent very easily if the framework for advising is purely prescriptive. This is why a process for consistent evaluation of the quality of academic advising must be considered, to ensure that faculty's expectations of their advisor roles are considered in conjunction with the expectations of the students (Roberts, 1993).

One of the more interesting concepts involved in academic advising for graduate students is the lack of diversity and lack of access (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000; Noy & Ray, 2012). Gender and race can possibly cause a systematic disadvantage for some individuals in the quality of advising or mentorship that they receive (Noy & Ray, 2012). This does not necessarily indicate racism or sexism on part of the academic or faculty advisors, but more that there may be a perception by some student populations that their relationship with an advisor is negatively affected due to their race, gender or sex (Noy & Ray, 2012). The student type that most frequently had this negative perception of their advising relationship were Black women, while White men typically perceive having a stronger relationship with their advisor or mentor at similar institutions (Noy & Ray, 2012). Some of the factors considered in this advisor/advisee relationship are emotional support and professional guidance (Noy & Ray, 2012). A lack of diversity in graduate-level advisor or faculty advisor roles can also be considered a reason for this perceived disadvantage by students (Roberts, 1993; Noy & Ray, 2012). Future research should consider how faculty and staff perceive the role that race and gender play in graduate student advising, as there is a need to assess a possible divide in the attitudes towards the role race and gender play between advisors and students.

One of the final trends that arose during my review of the literature is that Ph.D. students may need to be considered their own population of students, as opposed to just as part of the graduate-level student population (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). For the purposes of this review, Ph.D. students and masters level students are both considered graduate-level students. Nyquist and Woodford (2000) conducted interviews with 365 stakeholders of Ph.D. degrees such as employers of industries that require a Ph.D.,

graduate-level faculty and administrative staff, and graduate students themselves. The result of these interviews was less about their specific experience with the advising and mentoring of Ph.D. students, and more about the vision they see for mentoring in future Ph.D. programs (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). Future research must take into consideration how Ph.D. students are impacted by the quality of their advising and mentoring, so that the quality of these degree programs is not compromised.

Importance of Program Format

Many graduate-level programs have been created to offer fully online degrees, which means this population of students needs to be considered when creating an advising structure (Harker Martella, 2017). There is a very little research about how online students respond to academic advising and what their preferences are. Harker Martella (2017) conducted one of the only studies for this population of graduate students. The online students that participated in this study are from four different institutions, but the author's result was highly conclusive. These students determined that they prefer an advisor/advisee relationship that is prescriptive and more content-based (Harker Martella, 2017). While the literature discussed earlier in this review highlights how mentorship is critical for student retention and the relationship between an advisor and advisee, online graduate students are typically a different type of student. Since many online graduate students work full-time and know what their intentions for the graduate degree are, they prefer an advisor who helps them complete their degree while taking into consideration their preferences.

As mentioned previously, retention is the primary concern for many graduate-level programs, and advising has the potential to positively or negatively affect that statistic (Fedynich & Bain, 2011). Lehan, Hussey and Shriner (2018) conducted an original study about the effect of academic coaching on retention rates of online graduate students. While academic advisors play many different roles for students, academic coaching is not typically one of them. The results of this study, which concluded that there is a connection between academic coaching and online graduate student retention, create the concept that individualized support influences graduate student retention (Lehan et al., 2018). Academic coaching and academic advising are both considered specialized student support, and since there is literature about a positive connection between coaching and retention, future research must consider how academic advising relationships with online graduate students impacts retention.

Literature Review Summary

Academic advising for graduate students is very complex, as the student types involved in graduate programs vary considerably. Some programs embrace the importance of being a mentor and fully supporting their students while in an advisor role, while other programs prefer to keep advising as a curricular guidance tool. There is a fair amount of both positive and negative student experiences, so it is unclear if the consensus of graduate students is that academic advising is beneficial and/or effective. Many of the studies included in this review focus on individual institutions or multiple institutions within a specific area, which is why future research must eventually conduct a national study on this area. Future research must also consider the differences in advising experiences between online and on-campus graduate students, as well as how graduate

advising impacts retention. While many authors conclude that student success and retention are the main benefactors of academic advising, there is little research on this exact topic. Analyzing these variables is a vital step in learning how student retention is impacted by advising, as well as how their perceptions of advising impacted their ability to persist semester-to-semester. This review of literature recognizes that much of the current research is tailored towards the institutions involved in each study, but the overall results create an initial opinion on where the area of graduate student academic advising currently stands.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University. Rowan is a public research university located in Glassboro, New Jersey. According to Rowan Fast Facts (2018), Rowan has around 2,200 graduate students and a student-faculty ratio of 17:1. Per Rowan Global Graduate Programs (2019), there are 62 master's programs at Rowan University across nine disciplines. While these programs do not actively promote academic advising assistance for their students through webpages, the expectation is that program coordinators for each program serve in an academic advisor role. As mentioned earlier, NACADA (2017) details seven core values that all academic advisors should prioritize, and they are: Caring, Commitment, Empowerment, Inclusivity, Integrity, Professionalism, and Respect.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study was graduate-level students at Rowan University, excluding graduate students within the College of Business and those students pursuing a graduate degree in Educational Services and Leadership due to conflict of interest concerns. Only masters-level students were invited to participate in the study as academic advising at the doctoral-level requires future research beyond the scope of this thesis. The survey was distributed during the Spring 2020 academic semester to all students that fit the specified criterion.

Data Instrumentation and Collection Procedures

The purpose of this study was to determine students' perceptions about their relationships with their academic advisors (or lack thereof) and how that affects their academic performance. To best answer my research questions, I chose a quantitative approach, specifically a predictive study. The predictive study allows me to use a regression analysis and show how an independent variable (s) (relationship quality with academic advisor) can predict a dependent variable (academic success) (McMillan, 2016). It is important to note that the results of these two research questions were not intended to directly impact each other. Both questions are being included because this was one of the areas found during my literature review where future research is needed. The research questions for this study are:

1. Does the relationship quality between an academic advisor and a graduate student have an impact on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success at Rowan University?

2. What academic advisor qualities are most important to the academic success of graduate students at Rowan University?

To retrieve the data necessary to answer my research questions, digital surveys were distributed through the Qualtrics software. The intent for the sample of this study is at 294 graduate students across the graduate programs invited to participate in this study. I will be unable to predict overall participation because if one graduate program has full participation while one graduate program has minimal participation, the data may be

heavily skewed based on the academic advising structure of the fully participating program.

The survey included 16 Likert scale questions, which is an effective way for the participants to describe their opinions and beliefs about their academic advising relationship (McMillan, 2016). The survey was sent electronically via Qualtrics, which is the approved survey tool of Rowan University. An email was sent to all invitees, and any students that wished to complete the survey clicked a link to the Qualtrics survey where they had the choice to submit a consent form and thus complete the survey. All graduate students at Rowan University were invited to participate, except for those in the College of Business or pursuing an Educational Services and Leadership degree. The reasoning for using surveys as opposed to another data collection strategy, such as interviews or focus groups, is due to the broad nature of academic advising models in graduate programs. Per my general understanding of the literature, many academic advising structures within individual graduate programs are different, even at the same institution. Surveys are the best strategy for me to analyze the overall academic advising experience of graduate students in multiple graduate programs, as opposed to just a small group of graduate students.

All surveys were completely anonymous and no personally identifiable information was collected in the survey. Each participant was informed of the objectives of this research study, that their participation was voluntary, and that he or she can discontinue the survey at any point. This thesis proposal was approved by Rowan University's Institutional Review Board before any data was collected. This approval ensured that my study was ethical and that all participants were protected. My full intent

was to avoid all harm to the participants in this study by fulfilling all obligations of beneficence. All results of this thesis will be shared with the Office of Graduate Studies at Rowan University and any decisions made based on this study will be made by them. The timeline for collecting and analyzing data took just over one month (30 days). The survey took participants 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and there were no major delays in data collection.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, a predictive approach was used to analyze the data received from the surveys. A multiple regression analysis was the appropriate way for me to analyze how the participants' academic advising relationship and the qualities their academic advisor shows, relates to their academic success (McMillan, 2016). The survey data from Qualtrics was exported directly into IBM SPSS, a statistical software that allows for in-depth analysis of the data. Through the literature review conducted for this study, it can be determined that some qualities graduate students prefer their academic advisor to have are an empathy towards lack of knowledge and experience in an area, and the willingness to mentor them on their professional industry. This approach will not only be beneficial in determining the effectiveness of graduate student advising, but it will also provide meaningful data in determining the qualities that are most impactful for academic success of graduate students at Rowan University.

As mentioned earlier, some of the limitations that were considered during this study included:

- Results were isolated to the specific graduate programs within Rowan University and cannot be generalized for graduate students nationally

- Some graduate programs may have a more effective (or ineffective) academic advising structure than others which may have skewed the results.

Chapter 4

Findings

Context of Study

   This study was conducted at Rowan University between the dates of January 20th and February 10th, 2020. Twelve-hundred and fifty eight students who were enrolled in master's degree programs during the Fall 2019 semester were invited to complete a 16 question Likert scale survey (Appendix A). Students pursuing a master's degree in the Rohrer College of Business were excluded, as well as students that are pursuing an Educational Services and Leadership degree due to the potential for bias responses. The survey asked students to rate their own perception of their academic success, and to answer Likert scale questions about their academic advising experience. Students were invited via email, which include a link to the Qualtrics website. All recruitment emails were approved by Rowan's IRB prior to being dispersed amongst the population of the study. There were two research questions intended to be answered by this quantitative study:

1. Does the relationship quality between an academic advisor and a graduate student have an impact on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success at Rowan University?

2. What academic advisor qualities are most important to the perception of academic success by graduate students at Rowan University?

As previously mentioned, the survey (Appendix A) consisted of one question asking for consent of each participant to participate in this research study, and 16 Likert scale questions. Each Likert scale question had five points: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree. The first four questions of the survey were intended to focus the students on their perceptions of their own academic success related to their graduate program. The first question was a broad request for the student's own perception of academic success, while the following three questions served as this study's definition of academic success, which included: Achievement of expected GPA, preparation for career goals and fulfillment of educational goals. The questions asked of the students were:

1. I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program:

2. My Grade Point Average (GPA) is within my personal academic expectations:

3. My graduate program is effectively preparing me for my career goals:

4. My graduate program is helping me achieve my educational goals:

The following 12 questions of the survey were then focused on the academic advising experience each of these students have had so far in their graduate programs. These 12 questions were designed with the core competencies of academic advising in mind created by NACADA (2017). The 12 questions asked of each participant were:

5. I know who the academic advisor/program coordinator is for my graduate program:

6. My academic advisor is easily accessible for appointments:

7. I have a positive, professional relationship with my academic advisor:

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8. My academic advisor takes an interest in my experience as a student:

9. My academic advisor is empathetic to my values as a student:

10. My academic advisor is educated about my program's curriculum:

11. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the professional industry/job market for individuals with my graduate degree:

12. My academic advisor is encouraging when discussing my professional goals:

13. My academic advisor and I discuss which elective course options for my degree program fit my individual goals:

14. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about existing campus resources (i.e. Office of Career Advancement, Wellness Center, Veteran Affairs, etc.):

15. My academic advisor has advised me on how to maximize my experience as a graduate student (i.e. networking events, career fairs, etc.):

16. My academic advisor, to the best of their ability, has put me in a position to succeed academically:

The survey was broken up into two sections as detailed above for the purpose of completing the multiple regression analysis. As explained by York, Gibson, and Rankin (2015) there are many ways to define academic success. Since this is the case, four questions were asked of the students regarding perceptions of their success relevant to their graduate program. These four questions make up how academic success is being defined for the purpose of this study: Student Perception of Academic Success, Personal GPA Expectation, Professional Goals Met by Graduate Program, and Educational Goals Met by Graduate Program. The IBM SPSS statistics tool was used to conduct four separate multiple regression analyses, with each of the four "academic success" questions

serving as the dependent variable in one regression analysis. For each multiple regression analysis, the independent variables were the 12 questions related to academic advising. Thus, the regression analysis would then provide the R2 value for each. The R2 value allows us to predict the variance of the association between the 12 independent variables (academic advising questions) and dependent variable (single academic success question.

Per McMillan (2016), my expected sample size for a population of 1,258 invited students and a 95% confidence interval should be 294 responses. For statistical significance, 10 responses per independent variable included in the survey was needed, meaning a minimum of 120 responses is required to meet all statistical assumptions of regression. Ultimately, 105 responses were received from the invited population, which put me short of the minimum 120 responses needed. Of those 105 responses, only 94 were fully complete and 11 surveys were recorded as partial data. Following the initial outreach to all eligible students on January 20th, three reminder emails were sent to the unfinished respondents on a staggered basis across the following 19 days. These reminders were sent with the intent of increasing student participation in the survey, but 105 responses was the final count of usable surveys upon the closing of the survey. While the results of this thesis may be usable by Rowan University's Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, it must be noted that the small sample size utilized for this thesis impacts the accuracy of the following data.

Presentation of Data

Tables 1 and 2 are general representations of the results from this finding, and how participants answered each question. It is important to analyze this data prior to

creating the regression models to search for trends in the data otherwise not evidenced by

those models.

Table 1

Perceptions of Academic Success

Variable	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Succeeding Academically in Graduate Program	66	62.85	38	36.2	1	0.95	0	0	0	0
Current GPA within Personal Expectations	85	80.95	16	15.24	1	0.95	2	1.9	1	0.95
Graduate Program Preparing for Career Goals	41	39.05	50	47.62	4	3.81	5	4.76	5	4.76
Graduate Program Helping to Reach Educational Goals	61	58.10	34	32.38	2	1.90	4	3.81	4	3.81

Table 1 provides the student responses to the first four questions of the survey,

which were related to the student's general perception of their academic success, and

three areas being used to define academic success in this study. These three areas were

GPA, preparation for professional goals, and fulfillment of educational goals. The

amount of esponses received for these four academic success-related questions was 105,

and the results were distinctly one-sided. Of all survey responses, 62.85% strongly agreed

that they are academically successful in their graduate programs, while another 36.2%

somewhat agreed with the same sentiment. A positive surprise from Table 1 was that

80.95% of the responses strongly agreed that their Grade Point Average (GPA) was within their personal expectations. Seeing how this is the first question related to this study's definition of academic success, this is a strong result in favor of graduate students being academically successful at Rowan University.

Table 1 shows that 39.05% of the graduate student participants strongly agree with the idea that their program is preparing them for their professional goals, while 47.62% somewhat agreed. It is worth noting that of the four academic success survey questions, this question had the biggest drop-off from strongly agree to somewhat agree. While this may not mean the students disagree with the sentiment that their graduate programs are preparing them for their profession, it does show some doubt may exist. 58.1% of participants strongly agree that their educational goals are being met by their degree program, and 32.38% somewhat agreed.

For Table 2, it is important to note that the number of respondents (n) is not the same for each question, as there were 11 incomplete surveys that were used as partial data. Before discussing the results for specific academic advisor qualities, one key trend that became apparent during data analysis was the large number of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" responses from students. For 9 of the 12 questions asked, "Neither Agree nor Disagree" responses were between 20 and 47%. It appears as if for some students, not all of the academic advisor qualities felt applicable to their specific graduate programs. This will be discussed in greater detail during Chapter 5 of this thesis, and the possibilities for this type of response.

Table 2

Academic Advisor Qualities

Variable	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Identity known? (N=105)	68	64.76	18	17.14	4	3.81	7	6.67	8	7.62
Easily accessible? (N=105)	40	38.10	24	22.86	25	23.81	6	5.71	10	9.52
Positive relationship? (N=104)	46	44.23	17	16.35	22	21.15	7	6.73	12	11.54
Interested in student experience? (N=105)	42	40.0	15	14.29	21	20.0	13	12.38	14	13.33
Empathetic to personal values? (N=98)	46	46.94	11	11.22	26	26.53	8	8.16	7	7.14
Educated about program curriculum? (N=98)	56	57.14	17	17.35	14	14.29	5	5.10	6	6.12
Knowledgeable about profession? (N=98)	41	41.84	15	15.31	32	32.65	3	3.06	7	7.14
Encouraging of professional goals? (N=98)	40	40.82	11	11.22	37	37.76	2	2.04	8	8.16
Relate electives to personal goals? (N=95)	22	23.16	20	21.05	28	29.47	5	5.26	20	21.05
Knowledgeable of campus resources? (N=95)	27	28.42	12	12.63	44	46.32	4	4.21	8	8.42
Coached student on maximizing degree? (N=94)	26	27.66	13	13.83	22	23.40	13	13.83	20	21.28
Advisor guides student to success? (N=95)	42	44.21	14	14.74	18	18.95	10	10.53	11	11.58

Table 2 provides interesting data in terms of what academic advisor qualities are most consistently present at the graduate level at Rowan University. The qualities with the highest level of agreement from students are the identity of the academic advisor being known, and the academic advisor being educated about their respective program's curriculum. These attributes are immediately relatable to academic advising for individuals without a background in academic advising, as the longstanding expectation is that academic advisors must be able to guide students on which courses to take so they can graduate on time. It was not surprising that these two attributes were the most agreed with by participating students. The qualities with highest level of disagreement were the advisor's ability to relate elective course options to a student's personal or professional goals, and the advisor's knowledge of campus resources. To effectively answer the research questions of this study, the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 required multiple regression analyses to be conducted. The best way to answer research question 1 is through tables 3, 4, 5 and 6, as they summarize the four regression models that were created directly in the IBM SPSS statistics tool. These four tables reflect the precision in which the 12 academic advisor qualities can predict the variance of the four academic success traits.

Research question 1. Does the relationship quality between an academic advisor and a graduate student have an impact on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success at Rowan University?

Table 3 was the first regression model created, and this model utilizes results from question one of the survey "I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program" as the dependent variable, and each of the 12 academic advising questions as

the independent variables. Table 3 shows the R Square value as .109, or 10.9%, which

means the academic advisor qualities can only predict 10.9% of the variance for the "I

believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program" question. This indicates

that the academic advising qualities asked about in this survey have a weak association

with the perception graduate students have regarding their own academic success.

Table 3

Regression Model 1:
Perception of Academic Success

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.330	.109	-.023	.722

Table 4 was the second regression model created, and this model utilizes results

from question two of the survey "My Grade Point Average (GPA) is within my personal

academic expectations" as the dependent variable, and each of the 12 academic advising

questions as the independent variables. Table 4 shows the R Square value as .102, or

10.2%, which means the academic advisor qualities can only predict 10.2% of the

variance for the "My Grade Point Average (GPA) is within my personal academic

expectations" question. This indicates that the academic advising qualities asked about in

this survey have a weak associationwith the perception graduate students have regarding

their own academic success.

Table 4

Regression Model 2:
Achieving Expected GPA

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.320	.102	-.031	.697

Table 5 was the third regression model created, and this model utilizes results from question two of the survey "My graduate program is effectively preparing me for my career goals" as the dependent variable, and each of the 12 academic advising questions as the independent variables. Table 5 shows the R Square value as .331, or 33.1%, which means the academic advisor qualities can predict 33.1% of the variance for the "My graduate program is effectively preparing me for my career goals" question. While the association between the academic advising qualities and how students feel they are being prepared for their professional goals is higher than those listed in tables 3 and 4, 33.1% is still a low level of association between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 5

Regression Model 3:
Degree Program Preparing for Career Goals

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.576	.331	.232	.890

Table 6 was the fourth regression model created, and this model utilizes results

from question two of the survey "My graduate program is helping me achieve my

educational goals" as the dependent variable, and each of the 12 academic advising

questions as the independent variables. Table 6 shows the R Square value as .299, or

29.9%, which means the academic advisor qualities can predict 29.9% of the variance for

the "My graduate program is effectively preparing me for my career goals" question.

Similar to Table 5, the association between the academic advising qualities and how

students feel they are being prepared for their professional goals is higher than those

listed in tables 3 and 2.2. The level of association between the dependent and independent

variables was low (29.9%), meaning the academic advising qualities asked about in this

survey only slightly impact the fulfillment of students' educational goals.

Table 6

Regression Model 4:
Degree Program Fulfilling Educational Goals

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.547	.299	.195	.864

Research question 2. What academic advisor qualities are most important to the

perception of academic success by graduate students at Rowan University?

The data used to answer research question 2 can be found in Table 7. Each of

these tables are also regression models, which utilizes question one of the survey, "I

believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program" as the dependent

variable, and the 12 academic advising quality questions as individual independent

variables. Table 7 shows that essentially none of the specific academic advisor qualities

can significantly predict how graduate students perceive their own academic success. The

academic advising question that most accurately predicts a students' perception of

academic success is a general sense that the academic advisor is putting the student in a

position to succeed. This was question 16 of the survey, and this question was able to

predict 6.5% of the variance relating to the "I believe I am succeeding academically in

my graduate program" question.

Table 7

Regression Models 5 to 16:
Perception of Academic Success vs Academic Advising Attributes

Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Identity known?	.204	.042	.031	.701
Easily accessible?	.208	.043	.033	.700
Positive relationship?	.149	.022	.012	.708
Interested in student experience?	.176	.031	.020	.705
Empathetic to personal values?	.187	.035	.025	.703
Educated about program curriculum?	.137	.019	.008	.709
Knowledgeable about profession?	.171	.029	.019	.706
Encouraging of professional goals?	.174	.030	.020	.705

Table 7 (continued)

Regression Models 5 to 16:
Perception of Academic Success vs Academic Advising Attributes

Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Relate electives to personal goals?	.084	.007	-.004	.714
Knowledgeable of campus resources?	.173	.030	.019	.705
Coached student on maximizing degree?	.178	.032	.021	.707
Advisor guides student to success?	.255	.065	.055	.692

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University via electronic survey in Glassboro, New Jersey during the months of January and February of the Spring 2020 academic semester. The purpose of this study was to analyze how academic advising at the graduate level impacted the perceptions that graduate students had about their own academic success. The subjects of this study were all graduate students pursuing a master's degree at Rowan University, excluding those in the Rohrer College of Business and those pursuing the Master of Arts in Higher Education program due to the potential for bias.

The survey instrument used in this study was a digital survey that I created via Qualtrics, an electronic survey tool. The survey (Appendix A) consisted of 17 questions, which were broken down into one informed consent question, four perceptions of academic success questions, and 12 academic advising quality questions. The survey was structured this way so that the participants would be focused on one area at a time, academic success and academic advising. The informed consent question detailed that all responses were voluntary, no participation was required beyond the survey and that no personally identifiable information would be collected. If they chose to provide consent, the survey allowed them to continue to actual survey questions. If they denied consent, the survey ended, and they were not shown any questions.

The first four questions of the survey addressed each student's perception of their own academic success, such as: a general belief of academic success, achievement of expected Grade Point Average, a feeling of preparedness for their professional goals, and the fulfillment of their educational goals. The following 12 questions asked about their academic advisor, including their advisor's qualities and the relationship between them. These 12 advising qualities and relationship aspects included were related to: advisor's identity being known, the advisor's accessibility, the positivity and professionalism of the relationship with their advisor, the advisor's interested in the student experience, the advisor's empathy to personal values of the student, advisor's knowledge of program curriculum, advisor's knowledge about professional industry, advisor's encouragement of professional goals, advisor's ability to relate coursework/electives to personal goals, advisor's knowledge of campus resources, advisor's ability to coach student on maximizing degree experience, and advisor's ability to guide student to success. This study was distributed to 1,258 masters-level students at Rowan University, and while the minimum sample size was 120 responses, only 105 surveys were returned with 94 being fully completed. The results of the study were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. All regression analyses, frequencies and percentages were created by this program and translated to reports in this thesis.

Discussion of Findings

This section will provide meaning to the data presented in Chapter IV of this thesis, and discuss how the data answers the two research questions presented by this study.

Research question 1. Does the relationship quality between an academic advisor and a graduate student have an impact on graduate students' perceptions of their academic success at Rowan University?

To answer this question, we must look at Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6, as they each represent a multiple regression analysis for each survey question related to academic success. Table 3 shows the regression analysis for the survey question "I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program:" which provides data that accurately answers Research Question 1. Table 3 shows an R square value of .109, meaning the 12 academic advising relationship qualities (Table 2) asked about in the survey do not strongly predict how graduate students at Rowan University perceive their own academic success.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 are useful data in answering this question because the term "academic success" has many definitions to students and higher education professionals. Table 4 focuses on the student's expectations for GPA, Table 5 represents their career goals being met, and Table 6 asks about fulfillment of educational goals. Based on the work of York, Gibson, and Rankin (2015), these three aspects of "academic success" seemed appropriate to include as they were extremely common in the various definitions provided in their study. Out of these three determining factors for academic success, Table 5 showed the highest R square value of .331 compared to the other two areas. This means that the 12 values of academic advising asked about in the survey most accurately predict graduate student's beliefs that their career goals are being met by their graduate programs. Graduate students often pursue degrees beyond a bachelor's degree for career purposes, whether that is a change of career or need for advancement. So, a graduate

student's perception that their career goals are being met by their program may be the most important determining factor for graduate academic success. The result that strong academic advising has a more accurate prediction rate for the factor related to career goals as opposed to GPA or educational goals may also reflect this.

There are multiple reasons why the R square values of each regression analysis show a weak relationship, but the primary cause appears to be a limited sample size. With only 105 responses, and over 90% of each academic success question being either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree," the regression analysis is unable to account for any "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" responses. The expected sample size was 294 for statistical confidence, but the failure of receiving at least 10 responses for each independent variable in this study (12) is a significant reason for low R square values and inaccurate results. An additional reason for the small R square values is the amount of "neither agree nor disagree" responses for the qualities related to academic advising. My intent for keeping this neutral response as an option in the survey was that not all questions will apply to each student (i.e. advisor's ability to relate electives to student goals), and this was a way for students to avoid answering. However, on average neutral responses were the second most common response behind "strongly agree," and this may impact the regression analyses' ability to provide an accurate connection. Overall, the lack of variability in the survey data is what prevented the R square values from being higher across all regression analyses.

While the statistical analysis of this study does not illustrate the importance of academic advising for graduate students' perceptions of their own academic success, the retrieved data does express one thing: graduate students overall agree that they are

academically successful. This information is helpful for higher education professionals at Rowan University, as we can see that over 90% of the participants in this study agree they meet their own definition of academic success (Table 1). We cannot say that academic advising directly supports the reason for this perception, but the responses to "I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program:" show that Rowan University graduate students are receiving the support they desire.

Research question 2. What academic advisor qualities are most important to the perception of academic success by graduate students at Rowan University?

The 12 academic advising relationship traits and qualities asked about in this survey included the following:

- Identity of advisor

- Accessibility of advisor

- Student perception of a positive relationship

- Student perception of advisor guiding student to success

- Academic advisor's:

  o Interest in student experience

  o Ability to be empathetic

  o Understanding of program curriculum

  o Knowledge of professional industry

  o Encouragement of professional goals

  o Ability to relate electives to student goals

  o Knowledge of campus resources

o Ability to coach student on maximizing degree experience

All 12 of these qualities are part of the values and competencies presented by NACADA (2017), and appeared to be the most relatable qualities for graduate students. While all 12 of these qualities are important, understanding which academic advisor quality most accurately correlates to graduate students' perception that they are successful in their program can be useful for Rowan University professionals.

Similar to the results for Research Question 1, all 12 of the academic advisor qualities included in the survey were weakly associated to the survey question "I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program:". The academic advising quality with the highest R square value (.255) is the student's perception of their advisor guiding them to academic success, which can be found in Table 7. I find this result very interesting, as the question focused less on a specific academic advising quality, and more on the perceived effort given by the academic advisors. I believe the cause for this result, is that this question relates to all graduate students, regardless of a personal expectation for academic advising. For reference, an advisor's ability to relate electives to student goals had the lowest connection to perception of academic success (.084 R square value), which is most likely due to not all graduate programs at Rowan University including elective course options. When it comes to an advisor's overall effort and intent to guide a student to success however, that is applicable across graduate programs. This data allows us to assume that there is a higher likelihood for graduate students to believe they are academically successful if their advisor puts a strong effort forward in supporting their students.

The overall weak R square demonstrated in Table 7 does cause some concern for me as a believer in the importance of academic advising, as well as the overall support for academic advising in past literature. Due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of participant responses to this survey agreed that they are succeeding academically in their graduate program, the regression analyses shown in Table 7 are not a true representation of which academic advising qualities are most important to graduate student success perceptions. Additionally, on average 24.5% of participant responses were neutral for the questions related to academic advising qualities. I was genuinely surprised with this number, and this can also be factor in the low R square values displayed in Table 7.

Conclusions

The results for Research Questions 1 and 2 were surprising as through my professional experience and review of prior literature on the subject, a clear connection between academic advising and the perception of academic success by graduate students was expected. All regression analyses done in this study showed low levels of association between the independent and dependent variables used, which primarily stemmed from limited variation in responses to the academic success survey questions. Receiving only 105 survey responses when at least 120 responses were needed to satisfy the statistical assumption of regression (10 responses per independent variable) severely limits the accuracy of these results. While the results of this thesis show that academic advising and the associated qualities cannot accurately predict graduate student academic success, the survey results do provide some useful data.

Table 1 shows the frequency of responses to the 4 questions related to academic success perceptions. As discussed throughout this thesis, academic success does not have

a single definition, and students may define it differently than a higher education professional. The academic success definitions chosen for this study are the students' perception of their success, the student achieving their personal GPA expectation, their program's preparation for their career goals, and their program's fulfillment of personal educational goals. Fedynich and Bain (2011) emphasize that academic advisors at the graduate-level must fill a mentor role for graduate students and guide them towards achieving their educational and professional goals, as many students join graduate programs with this very idea in mind. With this in mind, it seemed crucial to ask the graduate-students at Rowan University how their career preparation and educational goals were being met in terms of their academic success.

Rowan University should be proud to know that of the 105 responses received for this survey, 91 agree their programs prepare them for their career goals and 95 agree their educational goals are being fulfilled. While this data does not directly answer a research question for this thesis, it is worth noting because prior research emphasizes educational and career goals for graduate students, and it appears that Rowan University is easily providing satisfactory graduate education programs. Additional data that is also important to mention can be found in Table 2, which includes the responses to individual academic advising qualities at the graduate level. Each of the 12 advising qualities are important to an academic advisor's effectiveness, and the clear trend evidenced by Table 2, is that not all qualities are being treated with the same importance. The obvious qualities had the highest level of agreement (identity of advisor being known and advisor knowledge of program curriculum), but all additional qualities such as empathy, encouragement and knowledge of appropriate professional industry and more disagreements.

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A majority of higher education professionals would likely agree that an academic advisor or mentor of some kind should have the ability to relate to their students and support their needs. The overall response trends prior to the regression analyses conducted in this study show that the individuals fulfilling an academic advisor role at the graduate level at Rowan University are not meeting all expectations of being an advisor, as defined by NACADA (2017). Further research is necessary to determine if academic advising can be a predictor for the perceptions graduate students have about their own academic success. Rowan University graduate students generally believe they are academically successful, and their individual expectations are being met by their graduate program. This is a positive outcome for the university, and can be considered as evidence for the effectiveness of Rowan's graduate programs. This study has potential to provide additional insight for future research regarding graduate-level academic advising at Rowan University, and other similar institutions.

Recommendations

The results of this thesis conclude the need for further research on the topic, and suggestions for future practice. Suggestions for future research are:

1. A qualitative study must be conducted, ideally with a thematic analysis. Academic advising and academic success have fluid definitions, and a qualitative study of either interviews or focus groups will provide clearer responses from the graduate student population.

2. If this quantitative study is to be replicated or used as a model, being sure to meet all statistical assumptions for survey responses (10 responses per each

independent variable at minimum) must be used for accurate data. Additionally, the removal of a neutral response option may provide clearer data.

3. Conduct a study to determine how academic advising is related to graduate student attrition. Past literature includes attrition as a problem for the graduate student population, and the effectiveness of academic advising (or lack thereof) may be related.

Suggestions for future practice include:

1. Professional development for graduate level Program Coordinators/Academic Advisors at Rowan University. The basics of advising are mostly being met (curricular knowledge and students knowing who is their advisor), but the additional traits of being an advisor are only partially being met.

2. Consider the hiring of graduate level professional academic advisors at Rowan University. Graduate Program Coordinators are currently the sole academic advisors for graduate students, and the expectation for someone to fulfill both roles effectively can be challenging.

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Appendix A

The Impact of Academic Advising on Graduate Students' Perceptions of Their

Academic Success Qualtrics Survey

Q1 Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is intended to determine how your experience with your academic advisor impacts your academic success as a graduate student at Rowan University. This research study only consists of this 16-question survey. Participating in this study is voluntary, and there are no additional expectations for subjects who complete this survey. No identifiable information will be collected from this study, and if you choose to participate, your response will be completely anonymous. If you begin the survey, but wish to stop, you can exit the survey at any time.

This survey is multiple choice, and should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. You may contact Jason Salvatore (salvat69@students.rowan.edu) or Drew Tinnin (Tinnin@rowan.edu) if you have questions about the research.

You may contact the RowanSOM IRB office at 856-566-2712 if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop.

I consent to participating in this research study (1)

I do not consent to participating in this research study (2)

End of Block: Informed Consent Form

Start of Block: Academic Success Perceptions and Academic Advising

Q2 I believe I am succeeding academically in my graduate program:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q3 My Grade Point Average (GPA) is within my personal academic expectations:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q4 My graduate program is effectively preparing me for my career goals:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q5 My graduate program is helping me achieve my educational goals:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q6 I know who the academic advisor/program coordinator is for my graduate program:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q7 My academic advisor is easily accessible for appointments:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q8 I have a positive, professional relationship with my academic advisor:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q9 My academic advisor takes an interest in my experience as a student:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q10 My academic advisor is empathetic to my values as a student:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q11 My academic advisor is educated about my program's curriculum:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q12 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the professional industry/job market

for individuals with my graduate degree:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q13 My academic advisor is encouraging when discussing my professional goals:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q14 My academic advisor and I discuss which elective course options for my degree program fit my individual goals:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q15 My academic advisor is knowledgeable about existing campus resources (i.e. Office of Career Advancement, Wellness Center, Veteran Affairs, etc.)

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q16 My academic advisor has advised me on how to maximize my experience as a graduate student (i.e. networking events, career fairs, etc.):

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

Q17 My academic advisor, to the best of their ability, has put me in a position to succeed academically:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

End of Block: Academic Success Perceptions and Academic Advising

Appendix B

Graduate Student Survey Participation Invitation Email

Greetings Rowan University Graduate Students!

Are you interested in completing a survey for a research study about your experience with your academic advisor and your graduate program?

My name is Jason Salvatore and I am a graduate student myself here at Rowan University.

I am conducting a voluntary research study to determine how academic advising impacts graduate students' perceptions of their own academic success. This study will determine if and how academic advising relates to the perceptions graduate students have about their success in their academic program.

The survey will be completely anonymous and no personally identifiable information will be collected as part of the survey.

This study only consists of an online survey via Qualtrics and will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The online survey can be accessed through Qualtrics, here: https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dpq2aqpyGydEnDT

Participating in this study has no additional expectations beyond completing the survey.

If you should have any questions regarding this study, you may contact either the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator via the contact information below.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this email, and hope you have the opportunity to participate in this study!

Thank you,

Jason Salvatore   Drew Tinnin, Ed.D.
Graduate Candidate for M.A. in Higher Ed.   Instructor, Ed. Services & Research
Study Co-Investigator   Leadership
                                                   Research Study Principal
                                                       Investigator

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # Pro2019000772)