

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

4-29-2021

## Perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming

Allison V. Niemiec  
*Rowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Niemiec, Allison V., "Perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2888.  
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2888>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact [graduateresearch@rowan.edu](mailto:graduateresearch@rowan.edu).

**PERCEPTIONS OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS  
EXTRACURRICULAR AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING**

By  
Allison V. Niemiec

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  
at  
Rowan University  
May 1, 2021

Thesis Advisor: Andrew Tinnin, Ed.D.

Committee Members:  
Tyrone McCombs, Ph. D.  
Dianna C. Dale, Ph. D.

© 2021 Allison Niemiec

## **Acknowledgements**

Completing this master's thesis has been both a challenging and rewarding process that would not have been possible without the support from the following individuals.

First, I would like to express my appreciation towards Dr. Andrew Tinnin, my thesis chair, who has played a key role in providing guidance during my Capstone Research and Internship Seminar courses. Thank you, Dr. Andrew Tinnin, for always answering any of my questions and concerns about my thesis, and for allowing me to gain a greater appreciation for the field of higher education.

I am also thankful to Allie Pearce, Brittany Gottsch, and Chiara Latimer for acting as positive role models during my graduate school experience. Additionally, I would also like to thank my family for supporting me throughout my bachelor's and master's journey.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to Nick LaPosta for acting as a major support system throughout my graduate school and thesis journey. Nick was always willing to motivate me to succeed and offered encouragement every day.

## **Abstract**

Allison V. Niemiec  
PERCEPTIONS OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS  
EXTRACURRICULAR AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING  
2020-2021  
Drew Tinnin, Ed.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education

Nontraditional student populations at higher education institutions have been continuously growing, which requires institutions to become better prepared to address their unique needs. The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming at Rowan University. This research study involved a cross-sectional survey that identified characteristics of nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan University since at least the fall of 2019 and identified their satisfaction with and interest in extracurricular and leadership opportunities. Optional one on one interviews were administered to gain a better understanding of the survey responses. This study was able to determine various factors that are significant towards willingness to engage in extracurriculars, the needs that nontraditional students desire extracurriculars to focus on, the extent to which students value extracurricular and leadership opportunities, and the best communication methods for opportunities.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iv
List of Tables .....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	2
Research Questions.....	3
Outcomes .....	3
Limitations .....	4
Key Terms to Understand .....	5
Organization of the Study .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
Nontraditional Students in Higher Education.....	7
Why Are Nontraditional Students Attending College? .....	8
Barriers to Academic Success and Retention .....	9
Transition into the College Environment.....	9
Academic Preparedness .....	10
Feelings of Isolation.....	10
Areas of Improvement for Institutions.....	12
Remedial Programs .....	12
Scholarships and Financial Aid .....	13

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Faculty to Student Interaction.....	13
Online Learning and Courses.....	15
Student Involvement.....	16
Future Steps for Research.....	17
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	20
Purpose of the Study.....	20
Research Questions.....	20
Location and Context of the Study.....	21
Research Design.....	21
Population and Sample.....	22
Data Collection.....	23
Data Analysis.....	25
Chapter 4: Findings.....	27
Profile of the Sample.....	27
Analysis of the Data.....	29
Research Question One.....	29
Research Question Two.....	39
Research Question Three.....	41
Research Question Four.....	44
Interviews.....	46

**Table of Contents (Continued)**

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations..... 48

    Summary of the Study ..... 48

    Discussion of the Findings..... 48

        Question One ..... 48

        Question Two..... 50

        Question Three..... 51

        Question Four..... 51

    Conclusions..... 52

    Limitations ..... 53

    Recommendations for Future Practice..... 54

    Recommendations for Future Research ..... 55

References..... 56

Appendix A: Online Survey Instrument ..... 58

Appendix B: Interview Instrument ..... 77

Appendix C: Key Information and Adult Consent Form..... 82

## List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. Sample Demographics .....	28
Table 2. Club Interest Based on Racial Identity .....	30
Table 3. Club Interest Based on Housing Status .....	31
Table 4. Employment Status on Agreement to Create a Club .....	32
Table 5. Racial Identity on Agreement to Make a Club .....	34
Table 6. Variables on Club Occurrence Preference.....	38
Table 7. Level of Agreement That There are Clubs That Address Adult Student Needs.....	39
Table 8. Nontraditional Student Needs.....	40
Table 9. Desired Qualities in Clubs and Organizations.....	41
Table 10. Level of Agreement on Importance of Out-of-Class Interaction .....	42
Table 11. Club Type Interest .....	43
Table 12. Preferred Communication Methods.....	44
Table 13. Level of Agreement on Feeling Welcomed by Members of Clubs/Organizations.....	45

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The student populations found at higher education institutions have been continuously growing and becoming more diverse. One of the student populations that has rapidly grown since the late 1990s is the nontraditional student population (May & Akin, 1998). There are a variety of characteristics used in order to describe the nontraditional student such as being over twenty-five years old, delayed enrollment into college after high school, having children, part time enrollment at an institution, financial independence, and more (May & Akin, 1998; Rabourn et al., 2018). According to Rabourn et al. (2018) an individual may only need to display one of the mentioned characteristics in order to identify as a nontraditional student. As student populations continue to become more diverse, it is an expectation that most higher education institutions will notice a larger increase in the enrollment of nontraditional students than traditional aged students (Rabourn et al., 2018). This increase of nontraditional students will require institutions to create new or make changes to current programming and extracurricular activities so that the needs of these students are appropriately addressed.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As nontraditional students become more of the norm on college campuses, institutions should become better prepared to support their unique needs. Common areas that nontraditional students need further assistance with are time management, transition into college, academic preparedness, and feeling isolated from others (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; May & Akin, 1998; Zerquera et al., 2018). Findings have supported that

student involvement in extracurriculars, or programming can address these needs and lead to academic success and retention (Tan & Pope, 2007). However, current findings fail to explore the specific types of programming that nontraditional students desire, what factors influence their willingness to get involved, and how to best communicate and encourage student involvement. Rowan University is one institution that appears to lack specific orientation programming that address the needs of nontraditional students regarding scholarships, academic courses, parking, and services (Savage, 2019). Through research, Rowan University and other institutions may become better equipped with the knowledge to create new or make changes to current extracurriculars and leadership programming with nontraditional student needs in mind.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Findings have been able to support the idea that student involvement can be beneficial at allowing for the retention and academic success of nontraditional students (Tan & Pope, 2007). However, little information is known about the factors that influence involvement, expectations, and how to best communicate about opportunities to nontraditional students. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the perceptions of student involvement and leadership programming for undergraduate nontraditional students at Rowan University using a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach. An online Qualtrics survey was sent to all undergraduate nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan University since at least fall of 2019. This quantitative survey will gather information on the characteristics of participants, satisfaction, interest levels, perceptions, and preferences on extracurricular and leadership programming. Qualitative one on one interviews will be offered to participants who

wished to better explain their answers, perceptions, and provide recommendations (McMillan, 2016). This study will be able to identify nontraditional student needs, allow for communication methods to be altered, identify correlations between variables, and encourage engagement in extracurricular and leadership programming.

### **Research Questions**

Data collected should be able to address the following research questions:

1. What factors influence nontraditional students' willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities?
2. Are there specific needs that nontraditional students want extracurriculars to focus on?
3. To what extent do nontraditional students value extracurriculars and student leadership opportunities?
4. What are the best methods to communicate extracurricular opportunities to nontraditional students?

### **Outcomes**

By conducting this study, the following outcomes can be achieved. First, the voices of undergraduate nontraditional students at Rowan University will be heard. These voices can offer the opinions and information necessary to better introduce new or make changes to current student involvement opportunities. For example, if the undergraduate nontraditional students demonstrate an interest in participating in leadership development, the Leadership Rowan program may be able to adjust its requirements to better fit the needs of the nontraditional students. Second, by offering student opportunities that best match nontraditional student needs, an increase in nontraditional

student academic success and retention rates may be achieved (Tan & Pope, 2007). More specifically, if student involvement opportunities match the expectations of the nontraditional student, there may be an increase in participation, the ability to create relationships with peers, feelings of connection with the institution, mental health, and many other benefits (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; May & Akin, 1998; Rabourn et al., 2018; Zerquera et al., 2018).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations that should be considered when reviewing the results of this study. For one, the results of the study will be retrieved using surveys and interviews with participants. The surveys and interviews will be completed through voluntary engagement, which may allow for the introduction of biases (McMillan, 2016). Online surveys may also lead participants to be unable to answer all questions accurately due to having questions about the content asked. Furthermore, students who do not have easy access to the tools necessary to complete an online survey may not be able to engage in the study. Second, results of the study may not accurately represent the opinions of all nontraditional students. Results will be reliant on responses from students at Rowan University who may be influenced by the culture of the school, location, expenses, or other external factors (McMillan, 2016). Third, the study will be conducted during the events of the global pandemic, COVID-19. Students may be overcoming challenges as a result of the pandemic, which may influence their opinions on student involvement or responsibilities that conflict with involvement.

## **Key Terms to Understand**

In order to best understand the language used in this study, the following terms should be reviewed:

- 1. Nontraditional Student:** Students who are twenty-five years older and may have characteristics such as having children, being financially independent, married, part time enrollment, and more (May & Akin, 1998).
- 2. Traditional Aged Student:** Students who are under twenty-five years old and have enrolled at an institution straight after high school graduation (May & Akin, 1998).
- 3. Extracurricular Activities:** An activity that falls outside the expectations of one's major. Involvement in these activities have been linked to academic success and retention (Tan & Pope, 2007).
- 4. Academic Success:** Usually reliant on being able to complete the necessary work or tasks so that one can achieve graduation (Zerquera et al., 2018).
- 5. Academic Retention:** The continual involvement in the higher education institution until graduation. Academic success often influences retention (Zerquera et al., 2018).

## **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 2 includes the literature review for this study.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology, which describes the location and context of the study, research design, population and sample, data collection measures, and data analysis measures.

Chapter 4 will review the results of the study found from the surveys and one on one interviews.

Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion of the results and recommendations for future programming.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will provide an in-depth understanding of the literature that is currently available about nontraditional students. Specifically, this chapter will provide the definition of a nontraditional student, determine the reasons for nontraditional students attending college, review the barriers to academic success and retention, discuss areas of improvement, and propose future steps for research.

#### **Nontraditional Students in Higher Education**

Nontraditional students are an often neglected, but increasingly more common student population seen on college campuses. May and Akin (1998) provide evidence that nontraditional students have been a growing student population since the late 1990s. It is further explained that prior to the late 1990s the term nontraditional student was rarely used and much of higher education primarily consisted of traditional aged students. Most definitions suggest that nontraditional students have characteristics such as being over twenty-five years old, having children, are commuters, are married, or work full time while going to school (May & Akin, 1998). Traditional aged students on the other hand are the opposite of nontraditional students and are typically defined as being under twenty-five years old (May & Akin, 1998).

When researching nontraditional students, many studies appear to use terms such as adult learner in order to describe this demographic of students (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). In order to better support this growing student population, it is important to understand who nontraditional students are, what barriers towards academic success and

retention exist, and the current and proposed solutions that can aid nontraditional students.

### **Why Are Nontraditional Students Attending College?**

Researchers have determined a few different explanations as to why nontraditional students are becoming more common within the college student population. First, many nontraditional students require a degree so that they can advance in their current job or career (May & Akin, 1998). College degrees may allow an individual to make more money or earn a higher position that they were unable to access without having a degree. Second, nontraditional students may need valuable educational skills such as critical thinking or analytical skills that they may not have been able to acquire through the workplace (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Kenner and Weinerman (2011) provided the example that some nontraditional students may have worked for an employer that went out of business and were only able to master a skill such as using specific types of machinery. However, once their employer went out of business, the nontraditional student's mastery with the specific type of machinery was not easily transferable when applying to other jobs. Therefore, a nontraditional student may find themselves required to attend college in order to learn the skills that are needed for a new job (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Third, nontraditional students may not have had the financial resources or been aware of financial support available to them upon graduating high school (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Instead, these students are likely to have entered the workplace so that they could save up enough money to attend college later.

## **Barriers to Academic Success and Retention**

Nontraditional students experience their own unique barriers when working towards academic success and retention in college (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011).

Academic success most commonly refers to being able to successfully complete a college degree and engage in the college environment (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). There are various barriers that impact nontraditional students' academic success and retention.

### ***Transition into the College Environment***

An often-overlooked barrier that many nontraditional students experience is their transition into the college environment. Like traditional aged students, a nontraditional student will be facing a variety of changes to their routine or way in which they have lived their life previously (May & Akin, 1998). Understanding the college environment may refer to understanding the types of resources available to nontraditional students, navigating online tools, having proper study skills, and transitioning into the college environment (Zerquera et al., 2018). In some cases, the adjustment into the college is even more challenging if a nontraditional student is considered to be a first-generation student (Zerquera et al., 2018). Kenner and Weinerman (2011) stated that many nontraditional students are financially independent, have either full or part time employment, may have dependents to take care of, and are likely to have been out of schooling for an extended period of time. Warden and Myers (2017) further suggested that nontraditional students are likely to experience role conflicts due to the amount of responsibilities that they hold. Because of the large amount of responsibilities, a nontraditional student will likely struggle with time management skills and may face conflict when figuring out how to prioritize their schedule (May & Akin, 1998; Warden

& Myers, 2017). Difficulty in balancing their responsibilities can further lead to challenges when needing to select their classes. May and Akins (1998) explained that scheduling classes can become highly stressful because many universities have a limited selection of class times. This limited selection is often the result of most institutions catering to the needs of traditional students, which is often thought to be the norm of the student population (May & Akins, 1998). If a nontraditional student faces difficulty in planning their class schedule, they are more likely to drop out of college or struggle academically in an attempt to make things work (May & Akins, 1998).

### ***Academic Preparedness***

Research by Zerquera et al. (2018) found that nontraditional students often lack academic preparedness in terms of understanding academic content or college expectations. More specifically, academic content may refer to the basic understanding of reading, writing, and math skills that are traditionally taught in grades K-12. The skills that nontraditional students have in these areas may be substantially different from that of traditional aged students due to the fact that teaching methods from several years ago may not have been effective (Zerquera et al., 2018). College faculty are likely to expect that students will be proficient in these academic areas and may not account for the nontraditional students who have an entirely different understanding of the material.

### ***Feelings of Isolation***

After interviewing several nontraditional students from New Jersey, Goncalves and Trunk (2014) determined that feelings of isolation are a common theme and challenge. Nontraditional students feel isolated from other classmates during their in-person lectures since they are unaware of who the other nontraditional students are. They

also appear to struggle to connect with traditional aged students because of the differences in lifestyles, expectations of their educational experience, and age in general (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Rabourn et al. (2015) conclude that nontraditional students will experience increased levels of anxiety and decreased levels of confidence in the college learning environment due to noticing such differences. This anxiety and lack of confidence may further lead a nontraditional student to isolate themselves from peers.

Feelings of isolation are also amplified when trying to work with advisors who are unprepared to work with a nontraditional aged student (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Meeting with advisors often lead nontraditional students to feel devalued and as if they do not belong at the institution. Furthermore, Goncalves and Trunk (2014) identified that nontraditional students also have difficulties when interacting with specific college departments or resources. They specifically found that nontraditional students were told that they would receive specific financial support when entering the institution but were eventually turned away or told that no such support exists for them (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). May and Akins (1998) also reported similar findings that nontraditional students felt isolated when they had no college orientation, counseling, tutoring, and resources that were geared towards their needs.

A common trend seen in all the barriers is that institutions gear their attention and support for traditional aged students primarily and often do not consider the needs of nontraditional students. It is startling to see that nontraditional students are experiencing similar issues today that they were experiencing in the late 1990s (May & Akins, 1998). Such findings support the need for there to be change and acknowledgement of the growing nontraditional student population.

## **Areas of Improvement for Institutions**

As one can see, institutions have traditionally focused their support efforts on the traditional aged student population as opposed to nontraditional students. Recent research has begun to delve into the potential ways that institutions can better support nontraditional students and improve their academic success and retention. In this section, potential solutions and improvements to current institutional practices will be discussed.

### ***Remedial Programs***

First, a main resource that universities utilize to assist students who are struggling academically is to require them to engage in remedial programs. Bettinger et al. (2013) have concluded that most remedial programs are geared towards traditional student experiences and do not recognize the nontraditional students that may be required to take the course. Remedial courses often do not count towards degree completion and cost the same financially as taking another academic course (Bettinger et al., 2013). These courses are likely to focus their attention on a wide range of academic specialties, rather than a specific area of study. Another issue with remedial courses is that they may prevent an individual from taking other courses until they are successfully completed due to holds put on student accounts (Bettinger et al., 2013). Nontraditional students may experience scheduling conflicts due to the limited remedial course offerings, which can deter them from successfully completing their degree (Bettinger et al., 2013). Bettinger et al. (2013) proposed the following improvements to remedial courses so that nontraditional student needs are better met. In response to scheduling conflicts, an institution can offer flexibility in scheduling through online courses or additional class times. Remedial courses should also stray away from focusing on teaching a wide range

of academic specialties and should be teaching more transferable skills instead (Bettinger et al., 2013). An example of transferable skills that could be beneficial for nontraditional students are on how to manage time better, educating on the college resources available to them, and assisting in teaching skills that allow for an easier transition into the college environment.

### ***Scholarships and Financial Aid***

Bettinger et al. (2013) stated that institutions should provide more performance-based scholarships for nontraditional students that need the financial support. According to their research, nontraditional students are more likely than traditional aged students to enroll in an institution and continue their education when offered financial aid (Bettinger et al., 2013). Performance based scholarships will likely push nontraditional students to succeed academically, while offering funds that can be used by these students to help with childcare or household costs (Bettinger et al., 2013). Performance based scholarships may also be beneficial in allowing a nontraditional student to have more free time that they can devote to their studies as opposed to needing to work additional hours in order to afford high tuition costs or childcare.

### ***Faculty to Student Interaction***

Third, interactions between faculty members and nontraditional students should be encouraged and promoted. Faculty members are often similar ages to nontraditional students, which can provide a sense of ease and comfort when a nontraditional student needs to engage with them (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). Zerquera et al. (2018) were able to interview current college faculty members and discovered that one on one interactions seem most impactful. One on one interactions allow for faculty members to build

personal relationships with nontraditional students, which can promote further engagement in the future. Through a personal relationship a faculty member can demonstrate that they care for the nontraditional student, address specific questions and concerns, or share personal experiences that may be relevant to the nontraditional student (Zerquera et al., 2018). Through personal relationships faculty members are also able to adapt their teaching practices and expectations more easily to best fit the needs of the nontraditional student (Zerquera et al., 2018). For example, faculty members may be more likely to adjust office hour times to meet with a nontraditional student who expresses their concerns. Wyatt (2011) has also demonstrated that faculty member interactions prove to be a valuable resource at offering engagement in the college campus for nontraditional students.

The benefits of adapting teaching styles have been further explained in the research conducted by Kenner and Weinerman (2011). They used the adult learning theory in order to better explain the challenges that nontraditional students experience when engaging in the classroom. Adult learning theory originally derives from the organizational development field, which focuses on ways to better provide employees with the tools to succeed in the workplace (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Adult learners are found to be more self-directed and take responsibility for their actions, have a wide variety of life experiences that have shaped their identity, are eager to learn, and have specific goals in mind that motivate them towards success (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Faculty members should adjust their teaching strategies to better match the unique characteristics of adult learners. According to Kenner and Weinerman (2011) faculty would benefit nontraditional students by assisting them in understanding the purpose of

assignments that might seem tedious, allowing for repetition of material so that adult learners can learn what method work best for them, and explaining how material will be relevant towards the adult learner's specific goals.

### ***Online Learning and Courses***

Online courses should be implemented and further introduced so that nontraditional students can graduate and attend class more easily. According to Vella et al. (2016) online courses may include the use of pictures, videos, audio, and text in order to teach class materials. Findings by Vella et al. (2016) suggested that online courses should use mixed methods of teaching to allow their students to succeed. According to data retrieved, it appears that older aged individuals, especially those that identify as female, are most likely to receive higher course grades and completion rates (Vella et al., 2016). Based on these findings, one can assume that the barrier of needing childcare can be relieved through online courses. In other words, Vella et al. (2016) explained that online courses may allow for nontraditional student parents to take care of their children at home while attending classes. The ability to take classes from home can save an individual money that they would have used on childcare services and offers a sense of flexibility when scheduling classes.

The study by Zawacki-Richter et al. (2015) explained the digital habits of nontraditional students and provided additional support for the use of online classes. Research determined that nontraditional students are more likely than traditional students to have access to digital devices such as smartphones or laptops (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2015). Increased access to digital devices may be the result of working jobs that require the use of technology or being able to afford such devices due to being financially

independent. Nontraditional students are also likely to use a wide variety of online platforms for an average of 3.8 hours a day (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2015). Because of the fact that nontraditional students are knowledgeable of online tools and have access to digital devices, blended online learning courses would offer more opportunities for students to succeed (Vella et al., 2016; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2015).

### ***Student Involvement***

Student involvement has been proven to be beneficial at promoting the development and retention of college students. Astin (1999) developed the Student Involvement Theory and stated that as students participate in college experiences, they will be able to learn and develop. Astin (1999) was able to include five main assumptions about student involvement. First, student involvement depends on the amount of psychological or physical energy a student uses to engage in an activity. Second, all students are different and may not engage in an activity with the same amount of effort. Third, student involvement is both quantitative and qualitative. Fourth, the more a student participates in an activity, the more they will develop or learn from it. Fifth, a program will be deemed only as effective as the amount of student involvement in them (Austin, 1999). Astin's theory is typically used when exploring student involvement in relation to traditional aged students but can be applicable to nontraditional students as well. Astin's (1999) theory supports the idea that engagement in extracurricular activities on a college campus should be encouraged and additional ways to get involved should be introduced.

Both Tan and Pope (2007) and Wyatt (2011) explored the fact that student engagement can positively impact academic success and retention. Extracurriculars may allow for career exploration, personal development, and the development of relationships

with administrators and peers (Tan & Pope, 2007). Tan and Pope (2007) found that nontraditional students are aware of the importance of extracurriculars on their education, but their other responsibilities, lack of advertising about opportunities available to them, or feelings of isolation often contribute to lack of involvement. Wyatt (2011) concluded that students of color will benefit the most from involvement with extracurriculars, nontraditional students are not likely to attend extracurriculars if their children are not allowed to attend as well, and that engagement outside of the classroom is more difficult to achieve than inside the classroom (Wyatt, 2011). Nontraditional students seem highly interested and open to joining an organization that allows them to meet other nontraditional students or that acts as a support system (Goncalves and Trunk, 2014). However, most institutions do not seem to have an organization that is specifically designed for nontraditional students.

Overall, there is a lot of research on the various ways in which an institution can adapt to better meet the needs of nontraditional students. It appears that common themes for supporting nontraditional students are being aware that nontraditional students have different expectations and needs from their college experience than traditional aged students, faculty members can be a positive influence on retention and academic success, online courses should be implemented more often, and institutions should consider developing extracurriculars that are geared toward nontraditional student needs.

### **Future Steps for Research**

Without a doubt, nontraditional students have been a neglected student population since at least the late 1990s (May & Akin, 1998). Most institutions appear to design their classes and student resources with only traditional aged students in mind.

The most common barriers that nontraditional students appear to experience are transitioning into the college environment and learning to manage their time effectively (May & Akin, 1998), lack of academic preparedness (Zerquera et al., 2018), and feelings of isolation (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). In recent times it appears that there have been more studies on the areas in which institutions can better support their nontraditional students. Proposed improvements include altering the way in which remedial courses are offered (Bettinger et al., 2013), offering performance based scholarships (Bettinger et al., 2013), encouraging faculty to nontraditional student interactions (Zerquera et al., 2018; Wyatt, 2011), adapting educator teaching styles (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011), offering more online courses (Vella et al., 2016), and introducing additional ways in which nontraditional students can get involved extracurricularly (Tan & Pope, 2007; Wyatt, 2011).

Most of the findings on nontraditional students have been retrieved through interviews or surveys with faculty members and nontraditional students themselves. The fact that nontraditional students appear to be experiencing the same types of challenges towards academic success and retention as they were in the late 1990s demonstrates that current efforts at supporting nontraditional students are not enough (May & Akin, 1998). Nontraditional students appear to be aware of the benefits of extracurricular activities, but there is often a lack of organizations relevant to their needs (Tan & Pope, 2007; Wyatt, 2011). More research should be conducted in order to determine the best ways to communicate about extracurricular events with nontraditional students, determine what nontraditional students look for in student organizations, and determine if any

nontraditional students would be interested in engaging in student leadership opportunities.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and leadership programming at Rowan University so that nontraditional student needs can be identified, correlations between variables can be identified, communication methods can be altered, and engagement can be promoted. By understanding this, universities may be able to create better programming and activities that support nontraditional students in areas such as academic success and retention. Nontraditional students often experience various barriers to academic success and retention such as time management skills (May & Akin, 1998), transitioning into the college environment (May & Akin, 1998), academic preparedness (Zerquera et al., 2018), and feelings of isolation (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). One of the proven ways to support the retention and academic success of nontraditional students is involvement in programming and extracurricular activities (Tan & Pope, 2007). Research conducted by Savage (2019) states that Rowan University appears to have a lack of adequate programming and services geared towards supporting nontraditional students and their specific needs. The results of this study will provide Rowan University and other institutions with a better understanding on the types of programs to invest in and communicate about for nontraditional students.

#### **Research Questions**

The main research questions that this study will address are:

1. What factors influence nontraditional students' willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities?
2. Are there specific needs that nontraditional students want extracurriculars to focus on?
3. To what extent do nontraditional students value extracurriculars and student leadership opportunities?
4. What are the best methods to communicate extracurricular opportunities to nontraditional students?

### **Location and Context of the Study**

This study will take place at Rowan University, a public institution located in Glassboro, New Jersey (Rowan University, n.d.). Rowan University was founded in 1923 as a teacher preparation school, but now offers a wide variety of bachelor through doctorate degrees. This institution is the fourth fastest growing research institution in the nation and currently serves 16,011 undergraduate, 2,417 graduate, and 1,190 professional and medical students (Rowan University, n.d.). As Rowan University's student population continues to grow, one can assume that the nontraditional student population will increase as well. Rowan University will likely need to implement additional programming and extracurricular activities to better support the academic success and retention of this growing student population.

### **Research Design**

A sequential explanatory mixed methods approach will be used in this study (McMillan, 2016). This approach was selected because quantitative questions will be presented first using a survey, followed by qualitative questions that are asked in the

interview (McMillan, 2016, p.368). A major strength of using a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach is being able to gain in-depth information about the data, which can better answer the research questions (McMillan, 2016). Quantitative data will be collected using the online, Qualtrics, cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional survey has been chosen because the survey will be sent to all undergraduate nontraditional students, which may represent a variety of ages and identities (McMillan, 2016). To gain a more in-depth perspective of the experiences and opinions of nontraditional students, qualitative data will be obtained from the one-on-one interviews (McMillan, 2016). One on one interviews will be used to gain both a personal narrative and a clearer understanding on survey responses, which focus on nontraditional students' views of and recommendations for extracurricular programming.

A pilot study of the survey and interview will be completed with four colleagues of mine who are not currently pursuing an undergraduate degree but identify as a nontraditional aged student. The pilot study will be done to ensure readability and validity of my survey and interview instruments (McMillan, 2016).

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study includes all undergraduate nontraditional students who are over 25 years old and are currently enrolled at Rowan University as of fall of 2019 (May & Akin, 1998). Undergraduate nontraditional students have been selected because most university programming is designed to address traditional aged student needs (May & Akins, 1998). Graduate level students were not the focus of this study because graduate students are often over twenty-five years old, may have completed their undergraduate experience as a traditional aged student, and are likely to have

characteristics such as having children, being married, and being financially independent (May & Akins, 1998). With the focus being on nontraditional undergraduate students, there may be more variety in the responses retrieved. In addition, it was important to use the population of nontraditional students who have been enrolled at Rowan since Fall of 2019 because they will have had a year worth of college experience and may better understand the types of programming that will be useful to them.

To gather the sample for the study, sequential mixed methods sampling is used (McMillan, 2016). During the initial survey phase of the study, simple random sampling will be used to select the participants of the study based on their completion of the Qualtrics online survey (McMillan, 2016). Simple random sampling involves an equal probability that nontraditional students who have answered the surveys will be selected for data analysis (McMillan, 2016). At the end of the survey, participants will be asked whether they would be willing to engage in a one-on-one interview (McMillan, 2016). An additional convenience selected sample will be chosen from the participants that agree to participate in a one-on-one interview (McMillan, 2016). Convenience sampling will be used because participants will be selected for the interview based on availability (McMillan, 2016, p.114).

### **Data Collection**

Before data collection can begin, permission by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) must be granted. The IRB will ensure that proper procedures in confidentiality, ethics, and safety are ensured for the nontraditional students that wish to participate in the study (McMillan, 2016). Participants will also be given a consent form and a chance to

ask any questions via email about the form before they engage in the study (McMillan, 2016).

Students will be solicited to participate in this study through a variety of different methods. First, public announcements will be made through the university's emailing system called Rowan Announcer and departmental emails. Second, both Rowan University's Global Learning and Partnership Staff and Rowan University's Analytics, Systems, and Applications (ASA) office will be contacted to gather emails of the undergraduate nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan. Students will be emailed directly with the link to the Qualtrics online survey in case they are unable to see the public announcements made through Rowan University's emailing system or departmental emails.

There are multiple instruments that will be used in this study. For the quantitative strand, a Qualtrics cross-sectional online survey will be used to retrieve information about the characteristics of undergraduate nontraditional students at Rowan University (McMillan, 2016). A cross-sectional survey collects data to describe a population at one point in time through a convenient manner (McMillan, 2016, p.228). Characteristics may include their age, gender, year enrolled in school, housing arrangement, employment status, funding source for their education, and more (Tan & Pope, 2007). Likert-scale questions will also be used to determine the current agreement levels on statements about extracurricular programming. Survey questions on services are adapted from surveys used by Savage (2019) and Pustizzi (2008) that focused on extracurricular and student programming. Questions that focus on communication methods, interests, student leadership, and more will be developed using a literature review on these areas. I was

able to email Savage (2019) on November 19<sup>th</sup> to receive the proper permission to use her survey tools.

For the qualitative strand, one on one interviews will be used to better understand nontraditional student views, current student experiences, and recommendations regarding the existing extracurricular activities. Interviews are a form of data collection in which specific questions will be asked verbally and participant responses will be recorded for analysis (McMillan, 2016, p.190). These interviews will be conducted through a web call on WebEx. Web calls have been chosen as the method to conduct the interview due to social distancing measures because of COVID-19. Furthermore, web calls will be beneficial for students that are unable to meet in person but wish to engage in the interview. Questions for the one-on-one interview were adapted from literature review and the studies conducted by Savage (2019) and Tan and Pope (2007). These questions will be semi structured because they will be open ended and allow for individual responses (McMillan, 2016). To transfer information more easily into graphs and an excel sheet for analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program will be used. SPSS can perform tests that determine if correlations, statistical significance, and patterns exist within the quantitative data (McMillan, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

The main software that will be used to analyze the data is the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The quantitative survey data will be analyzed for demographic information and correlations through the SPSS. Correlations will be conducted to determine if there is a relationship between specific characteristics or items on the survey (McMillan, 2016; Tan & Pope, 2007). Additionally, an analysis on

variance (ANOVA) will be used to determine whether or not the demographics or responses reported by nontraditional students have any statistical significance with the items mentioned on the survey (McMillan, 2016; Tan & Pope, 2007). For example, does a nontraditional student's gender have any significance on their views of student leadership opportunities (Tan & Pope, 2007). The Likert-scale questions will be analyzed with specific attention to the frequency of responses provided. Frequency is important to analyze because it may be able to demonstrate patterns or the areas that extracurricular activities should focus on (McMillan, 2016). The qualitative data from one-on-one interviews will be analyzed using content analysis. According to Hand (2011) content analysis is great to use on large samples to determine if there are any patterns in word choices or connections between responses. The qualitative patterns and connections will be coded to perform quantitative data collection (Hand, 2011). Through data analysis, the study should be able to determine nontraditional student expectations for student involvement and recommendations for improvements to current programming.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

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

The participants of this study were all undergraduate nontraditional students currently enrolled at Rowan University as of fall of 2019: 964 students. These students were sent a link to the Qualtrics online survey through their student email on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. A final call to participate in the survey was sent on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Of the 964 surveys sent, 126 surveys (13%) were identified as being started on the Qualtrics website. Before starting the data analysis, I furthered filtered out any surveys that were not successfully completed and used simple random sampling to select the 97-participant sample for the study. Table 1 displays the demographics of the 97-participant sample.

To participate in the interview portion of the study, students had to successfully complete the survey and agree to be contacted to schedule an interview. Of the completed surveys, 43 nontraditional students agreed to be contacted to schedule for an interview. The desired number of students to complete the interview phase was 20 students, which would have been about 20% of the sample. The total number of students that were able to successfully complete the interview phase of the study was 4 (4.1%). This number was lower than anticipated, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter 5.

**Table 1***Sample Demographics*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Female	48	49.5
Male	47	48.5
Other	2	2
Age		
25 to 29 years	41	42.3
30 to 34 years	19	19.6
35 to 39 years	14	14.4
40 to 44 years	7	7.2
45 to 49 years	10	10.3
50 to 54 years	4	4.1
55 years or older	2	2.1
Racial Identity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1
Asian	5	5.2
Black or African American	7	7.2
Hispanic or Latino	6	6.2
Prefer not to disclose	3	3.1
White/ Caucasian	75	77.3
Dependents		
None	65	67
One or more	32	33
Employment Status		
Full Time (30 hours or more)	49	50.5
Part Time (29 hours or less)	19	19.6
Not Working	29	29.9
Housing Status		
On campus	3	3.1
Off campus	94	96.9

## **Analysis of the Data**

### ***Research Question One***

*What factors influence nontraditional students' willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities?* To determine a student's willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities I used the three survey questions that I believed most accurately represented having a degree of willingness to engage in extracurriculars. Specifically, I used Likert scale question number 16-4 because I believed that students would be more willing to engage in extracurriculars that interested them. I chose Likert scale question number 16-16 because I believed that students who were demonstrated willingness to create a club were willing to become involved with extracurriculars. Last, I selected question 17 because it allowed participants to demonstrate how often they would like to become engaged with extracurriculars. Some participants even explicitly stated having no interest in participating in a club or organization through the other option on the survey question.

To best determine the factors that had significance towards the participants' willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities, I performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVAs allowed me to check whether background characteristics had any significant correlation with the survey questions listed above.

**ANOVA on Question 16-4.** When performing an ANOVA on survey question 16-4, I was able to determine that racial identity (p value of .002) and housing (p value of .003) were significant factors for a student's level of agreement that there are clubs that interest them.

***Racial Identity as a Factor Towards Club Interest.*** Table 2 represents the data from 91 of 97 participants that compared racial identity to level of agreement that there are clubs that interested the student. A crosstab provided insight on the level of agreement that each racial identity had towards there being clubs of interest to them. From the data the following are the percentages of students from each racial identity that disagreed on some level that there were clubs that interested them: American Indian or Alaska Native (0%), Asian (0%), Black or African American (28.6%), Hispanic or Latino (60%), Prefer not to disclose (100%), and White/Caucasian (7.1%). Students that identify as Hispanic or Latino and students who identify as Prefer not to disclose appear to more strongly disagree that there are clubs that interest them the most.

**Table 2**

*Club Interest Based on Racial Identity*

Racial Identity	Strongly Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	100	0	0	0	0
Asian	60	0	40	0	0
Black or African American	42.9	28.6	0	28.6	28.6
Hispanic or Latino	20	0	20	0	60
Prefer not to Disclose	0	0	0	0	100
White/Caucasian	15.7	20	45.7	20	7.1
Total %	20.9	17.6	38.5	17.6	14.3

***Housing as a Factor Towards Club Interest.*** Table 3 represents data from 91 of 97 participants that compares a student's housing status to level of agreement that there are clubs that interested them. From this data we can determine that most of the sample lives in housing that is off campus. However, all the students who identified as living on campus (3.3%) strongly agreed that there were clubs that interested them. The following are the percentages of students from each housing situation who disagreed on some level that there were clubs that interested them: lives with parents/relatives (16%), off campus (30.9%), on campus (0%), and other (0%).

**Table 3**  
*Club Interest Based on Housing Status*

Housing Status	Strongly Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Lives with Parents/Relatives	44	16	24	8	8
Off Campus	9.1	20	40	10.9	20
On Campus	100	0	0	0	0
Other	11.1	11.1	77.8	0	0
Total %	20.9	17.6	38.5	8.8	14.3

**ANOVA on Question 16-16.** When performing an ANOVA on question 16-16, I was able to determine that that both employment status (p value of 0.026) and racial

identity (p value of .029) were significant factors towards a student’s interest in creating a club that does not already exist.

*Employment as a Factor Towards Interest in Creating a Club.* Table 4 reflects data comparing student’s employment status to interest in creating a club. Of the sample, 92 out of 97 participants successfully completed this answer. Through this data we can determine that students who identify as working part time are the most interested in creating a club on campus in comparison to those who either work full time or not at all. To be more specific, the following are the percentages of students from each employment status who agree on some level that they are interested in creating a club: students not working (7.6%), working full time (12.8%), and working part time (36.9%).

**Table 4**

*Employment Status on Agreement to Create a Club*

Employment Status	Strongly Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Not Working	3.8	3.8	26.9	19.2	46.2
Full Time (30 hours or more)	8.5	4.3	27.7	12.8	46.8
Part Time (29 hours or less)	21.1	15.8	26.3	15.8	21.1
Total %	9.8	6.5	27.2	15.2	41.3

***Racial Identity as a Factor Towards Interest in Creating a Club.*** Table 5 represents data from 95 of 97 participants that compares racial identity to interest in creating an organization or club that does not already exist on campus. From the data we can determine that when compared with other members of the same demographic, American Indian or Native Alaska Native and Black or African American students appear to be most interested in creating a club. The following are the percentages of students from each demographic that agreed on some level that they were interested in creating a club that did not already exist American Indian or Alaska Native (100%), Asian (20%), Black or African American (50%), Hispanic or Latino (0%), prefer not to disclose (0%), and White/Caucasian (13.9%).

**Table 5***Racial Identity on Agreement to Make a Club*

Racial Identity	Strongly Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	100	0	0	0	0
Asian	0	20	60	0	20
Black or African American	33.3	16.7	0	0	50
Hispanic or Latino	0	0	0	20	80
Prefer not to Disclose	0	0	0	0	100
White/Caucasian	8.3	5.6	30.6	18.1	37.5
Total %	9.8	6.5	38.5	15.2	41.3

**ANOVA on Question 17.** When performing an ANOVA on survey question 17 that determines a student's preference on the frequency to which a club meets, I determined that dependents (p value of .002), housing (p value of .001), employment (p value of .011), race (p value of .003), and age (p value of .041) were all significant factors.

***Dependents as a Factor of Club Occurrence.*** Table 6 reviews the comparison between dependents and preference on the frequency in which a club meets. When analyzing this data, I combined one, two, and three or more dependents into the same has dependents group. For this question 97 out of 97 participants successfully answered the

question. This data suggests that students who have no dependents are likely to be willing to participate in clubs that meet more frequently than students who have dependents. Although it is important to note that most common response was no preference (34%) towards the frequency in which clubs meet. The next highest responses were tied at once a week (23.7%) and bi-weekly (23.7%).

***Housing as a Factor of Club Occurrence.*** Table 6 reviews the data that compares housing status to preference on the frequency in which a club meets. To analyze this factor more clearly, I grouped lives with parents/relatives, off campus, and other in the same off campus group. 96.9% of students fall within the off-campus housing status group and 3 of the participants (3.1%) identified as living on campus. Each of the on-campus participants preferred a different club occurrence: one preferred if clubs met once a week, one preferred if clubs met multiple time a week, and one preferred if clubs met bi-weekly. Students who live off campus appear to have no preference as their top response. The most common responses for the entire sample were no preference (34%) followed closely by once a week (23.7%) and bi-weekly (23.7%), which were tied.

***Employment as a Factor of Club Occurrence.*** Table 6 reviews the comparison between employment status and preference on the frequency in which a club meets. All 97 participants successfully completed this answer. Students who identified as working part time appear to have more interest in attending clubs that meet more frequently than full time and not working students. The top response for all respondents was no preference (34%) on the frequency in which a club or organization meets.

***Racial identity as a Factor of Club Occurrence.*** Racial identity was demonstrated to have a strong significance with preference on the frequency in which a club meets. All 97 participants were able to complete this answer. The following are the top responses for each racial identity: American Indian or Alaska Native reported once a week (100%), Asian reported once a week (60%), Black or African American reported bi-weekly (42.9%), Hispanic or Latino reported multiple times a week and once a week equally (33.3%), prefer not to disclose reported no preference (100%), and white/Caucasian reported no preference (38.7%). The top responses for all the participants were no preference (34%) followed closely by once a week (23.7%) and bi-weekly (23.7%), which were tied.

***Age as a Factor of Club Occurrence.*** Table 6 represents data from all 97 participants comparing age to preference on the frequency in which a club meets. Students who identified as older than 35 years had no interest in participating in a club that met multiple times a week. Older students, those who are 45 years and older, appear are more likely than younger students to prefer clubs that meet once a month or once a semester. The top responses for all the participants were no preference (34%) followed closely by once a week (23.7%) and bi-weekly (23.7%), which were tied.

**Summary of Factors Influencing Willingness to Engage in Extracurriculars.** By using Likert scale question 16-4 that examined level of agreement on the existence of clubs that interested the student, Likert scale question 16-6 that reviewed level of agreement on interest creating a club, and question 17 on the preference of club occurrence I was able to determine a student's willingness to engage in extracurriculars. After performing an ANOVA, I was able to determine that the factors of racial identity,

housing, employment status, dependents, and age are all significant factors towards willingness to engage in extracurriculars.

**Table 6***Variables on Club Occurrence Preference*

Variable	Multiple times a week	Once a week	Bi-weekly	Once a month	Once a semester	No Preference
Dependents						
No Dependents	4.6	29.2	26.2	10.8	1.5	27.7
Has Dependents	3.1	12.5	18.8	12.5	6.3	46.9
Housing Status						
Off Campus	3.19	23.4	23.4	11.7	3.1	35.1
On Campus	33.3	33.3	33.3	0	0	0
Employment Status						
Full Time	0	18.4	22.4	12.2	4.1	42.9
Part Time	10.5	31.6	36.8	5.3	5.3	10.5
Unemployed	6.9	27.6	17.2	13.8	0	34.5
Racial Identity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	100	0	0	0	0
Asian	0	60	40	0	0	0
Black or African American	0	28.6	42.9	0	14.3	14.3
Hispanic or Latino	33.3	33.3	16.7	16.7	0	0
Prefer not to disclose	0	0	0	0	0	100
White/Caucasian	2.7	20	22.7	13.3	2.7	38.7
Age						
25 to 29 years	7.3	36.6	22	4.9	2.4	26.8
30 to 34 years	5.3	15.8	26.3	15.8	5.3	31.6
35 to 39 years	0	14.3	7.1	14.3	0	64.3
40 to 44 years	0	0	42.9	0	0	57.1
45 to 49 years	0	10	40	20	10	20
50 to 54 years	0	50	25	25	0	0
55 or older	0	0	0	50	0	50

**Research Question Two**

*Are there specific needs that nontraditional students want extracurriculars to focus on?* I was able to gather a lot of data regarding nontraditional students' needs for extracurricular and leadership programming. To assess whether students felt that there were organizations and clubs available that addressed adult student needs, question 16-3 was analyzed. Out of the 95 participants that completed this question, only 20.6% of students agreed on some level that there were clubs that addressed adult student's needs. Table 7 demonstrates those findings.

**Table 7**

*Level of Agreement That There are Clubs That Address Adult Student Needs*

Agreement Level	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly Agree	10	10.3
Somewhat Agree	10	10.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	46	47.4
Somewhat Disagree	13	13.4
Strongly Disagree	16	16.5
Total	95	100

Students were also asked to identify the areas that they believed that they could use more support. 96 students were able to select as many options as applicable and Table 8 demonstrates the top areas students feel they need more assistance. Both financial (48.5%) and academic (44.3%) support and are the areas that nontraditional students

desire the most support. Students appear to need the least amount of support in other (7.2%) and technology (24.7%). Those who clicked on other suggested wanting support with athletics, internships for adult learners, and veteran needs.

**Table 8**

*Nontraditional Student Needs*

Needs	<i>f</i>	%
Academic	43	44.3
Financial	47	48.5
Other	7	7.2
Social	35	36.1
Technology	24	24.7
Transition/Orientation	27	27.8
Total	96	99

Additionally, Table 9 provided nontraditional students with a chance select the qualities they wish a club or organization had that would make them most likely to participate in them. 95 participants successfully completed this question and were able to select as many options as they felt applied. The top desired qualities that scored over 50% are the following: nontraditional students are likely to participate if the organization allowed them to network (58.8%), involved an interest or hobby that they enjoyed (55.7%), prepared them for a job of their choice (51.5%), and allowed them to learn something new (50.5%).

**Table 9***Desired Qualities in Clubs and Organizations*

I would be most likely to participate in organizations if it...	<i>f</i>	%
Allowed me to include my dependent children	11	11.3
Allowed me to learn something new	49	50.5
Allowed me to network	57	58.8
Allowed me to socialize and make friends	35	36.1
Develop better physical and mental habits	34	35.1
Develop communication or public speaking skills	31	32
Develop leadership skills	33	34
Involved an interest or hobby I enjoy	54	55.7
Other	6	6.2
Prepared me for a job of my choice	50	51.5
Provided academic support	31	32
To become more involved with the Rowan Community	23	23.7
Total	95	97.9

***Research Question Three***

*To what extent do nontraditional students' value extracurriculars and student leadership opportunities?*

**Value Extracurricular Activities.** To determine the level in which nontraditional students value extracurricular activities I used Likert scale question 16-9. Likert scale question 16-9 allows students to indicate their level of agreement with the statement having out-of-class interaction with classmates and peers important to me. According to Tan and Pope (2007) a major benefit of extracurricular activities is providing an opportunity for students to make connections with peers outside the classroom. By having some level of agreement with the statement making connections with peers

outside of the classroom is important, they may be more likely to value extracurriculars than those who do not seek those connections. Table 10 demonstrates the responses provided by 91 of 97 participants. 38.2% of students agreed on some level that interaction with classmates and peers outside of class is important to them.

**Table 10**

*Level of Agreement on Importance of Out-of-Class Interaction*

Having out-of-class interaction with classmates and peers is important to me...	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly Agree	18	18.6
Somewhat Agree	19	19.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27	27.8
Somewhat Disagree	13	13.4
Strongly Disagree	14	14.4
Total	91	93.8

**Value Leadership Opportunities.** To better understand how nontraditional students value leadership opportunities, I analyzed the data in Table 9 as shown above. Table 9 allowed me to determine how many students are interested in joining a club if it allowed them to develop their leadership skills. Out of the 95 respondents, 34% of students indicated being most interested in joining a club or organization that allowed them to develop leadership skills.

Additionally, students were provided with an opportunity to demonstrate the club and organization types that they would be interested in participating in. Students could

pick as many club and organization opportunities as they desired. Table 11 displays that data for which club types of nontraditional students are interested in participating in. Out of all the options, 27% of students demonstrated having an interest in participating in a leadership development club or organization. The leadership development club was the fourth highest selected club.

**Table 11**

*Club Type Interest*

Club Types	<i>f</i>	%
Academic and Educational	40	41.2
Greek Fraternity or Sorority	8	8.2
Intramural or Recreational Sports	14	14.4
Leadership Development	27	27.8
Media and Publication	12	12.4
Multicultural	13	13.4
Nontraditional Student Focused	41	42.3
Other	10	10.3
Political	7	7.2
Religious	12	12.4
Special Interest	22	22.7
Student Government	7	7.2
Volunteer/ Community Service	34	35.1
Total	96	99

### ***Research Question Four***

*What are the best methods to communicate extracurricular opportunities to students?* Table 12 displays the results from a survey question that asked participants to rank from most to least valuable the types of communication methods that they would prefer hearing about student engagement opportunities. Preferred methods of communication were determined by averaging the ranked responses. Table 12 shows that the top method for communication about student engagement opportunities is email by a large margin. After email, both recommendation from professors/instructor and recommendation from peers are preferred similarly. After those, social media, texting services, and on campus signage ranked similarly. The least preferred method of communication appears to be phone call.

**Table 12**

*Preferred Communication Methods*

Contact Method	Min	Max	Mean	$\sigma$
Email	1	6	1.78	1.288
On campus digital signage/flyers	1	7	4.33	1.781
Recommendation from professors	1	7	3.31	1.505
Recommendation from peers	1	7	3.76	1.612
Social Media	1	7	4.27	1.697
Texting Services	1	7	4.42	1.747
Phone Calls	1	7	6.13	1.496

Another form of communication that the survey was able to investigate was the communication between members of organizations and nontraditional students. Likert scale question 16-13 that gauged nontraditional students' level of agreement with the statement "I feel welcomed and invited by members of organizations or clubs." 92 out of 97 participants were able to successfully answer this question and their results are shown on Table 13. Out of the respondents, 24.8% of students agreed on some level that they felt welcomed by members of organizations or clubs. On the other hand, 25.8% of students disagreed on some level that they felt welcomed by clubs or organizations. Most of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (43%) about feeling welcome and invited by members of organizations or clubs.

**Table 13**

*Level of Agreement on Feeling Welcomed by Members of Clubs/Organizations*

I feel welcomed and invited by members of organizations or clubs	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly Agree	12	12.4
Somewhat Agree	12	12.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	43	44.3
Somewhat Disagree	12	12.4
Strongly Disagree	13	13.4
Total	92	94.9

## ***Interviews***

One-on-one interviews were conducted to develop a narrative for the survey responses. The total number of interviewees for this portion of the study was four. After interviewing these individuals, I was able to determine several key themes and responses as highlighted below.

**Communication.** Three out of four interviewees suggested that texting was the primary form of communication they used because of its convenience. Two out of four interviewees suggested that they use email the most because of its professional feel.

**Interaction with Other Nontraditional Students.** Two out of four interviewees suggested that they do not have opportunities to interact with other nontraditional students. Both interviewees who did not have the ability to interact with nontraditional students wished to have more interaction for social reasons. The two out of four interviewees who reported interacting with other nontraditional students suggested that they had the ability to do so in their classes. They were also not actively seeking additional social interactions with nontraditional students.

**Recommendation of Clubs.** Two out of the four interviewees stated that no one recommended any clubs or organizations to them. One interviewee suggested that they learned about clubs and organizations at a transfer orientation from an orientation leader. One interviewee suggested that they learned about clubs and organizations through recommendation from a professor.

**Club Involvement.** Four out of four interviewees reported that they were not involved with any clubs or organizations at Rowan University. Two out of four interviewees suggested that they were not looking for club involvement; their primary

reason for being at college was to get a degree. The other two out of four interviewees suggested that they were not involved with clubs or organization due to the time in which clubs occur and schedule conflicts.

**Interest in Creating a Club.** Three out of four interviewees had no interest in creating a club or organization. One interviewee was interested in creating a club if they were able to determine the time and way in which the club functioned. This interviewee was also interested in creating a club that allowed them to have access to a creative outlet.

**Needs Being Met.** Four out of the four interviewees believed that their educational needs were being met to some degree. One out of the four interviewees suggested needing additional support with becoming familiar with digital technology and feeling safe on campus. One out of the four interviewees suggested needing additional support with financial and social needs.

**Benefit from Leadership Role.** Three out of four of the interviewees agreed that they could directly benefit from a leadership role. The one interviewee that disagreed stated that they already participate in several leadership positions in the community. Four out of four of the interviewees acknowledged that everyone could benefit from engaging in a leadership position. All interviewees reported similar definitions of a leader and suggested that a leader has traits such as being a positive role model, setting examples for others to follow, and allowing for the development of others.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and leadership programming. More specifically this study investigated the factors that influence a nontraditional students' willingness to participate in extracurriculars, the needs that nontraditional students want extracurriculars to focus on, the extent to which nontraditional students value extracurricular and leadership opportunities, and the best ways to communicate about engagement opportunities to nontraditional students. Both an online Qualtrics survey and WebEx interviews were used to conduct the study.

#### Discussion of the Findings

##### *Question One*

*What factors influence nontraditional students' willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities?* Current research has suggested that nontraditional students have a variety of unique characteristics such as being over the age of twenty-five, having dependents, being commuters, having marital partners, and working in full time positions (May & Akin, 1998). Due to the wide array of background characteristics that nontraditional students have, this survey asked a series of questions to better determine which of those characteristics or factors influence willingness to get involved with extracurricular activities. To determine willingness, three survey questions were used: a Likert scale question that evaluated nontraditional students' level of agreement with there being clubs or organizations of interest to them, a Likert scale question to determine level

of agreement on being interested in creating an organization or club, and a survey question that determined preference on the frequency in which a club meets. An ANOVA was then performed to gain an understanding on which background characteristics were most significant.

The study was able to determine that racial identity, housing, employment status, having dependents, and age are all significant factors that influence a nontraditional student's willingness to engage in extracurricular activities. The following are key findings found by looking at crosstabs with each factor.

**Racial Identity.** Students who identified as Hispanic or Latino and students who identified as prefer not to disclose disagreed the most about there being clubs of interest to them. Despite this, students that identified as Hispanic or Latino and students who identified as prefer not to disclose disagreed on some level that they would be interested in creating a club. Students who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native and students who identified as Black or African American were most interested in creating a club. The top responses when looking at all participants regarding frequency of club occurrence was no preference (34%), once a week (23.7%), and bi-weekly (23.7%).

**Housing.** Most of the nontraditional students in the sample identified as living off campus (96.7%). The 3.3% of students who lived on campus strongly agreed that there were clubs that interested them. When analyzing the entire sample, the most common responses for how often a club should meet were no preference (34%), once a week (23.7%), and bi-weekly (23.7%).

**Employment Status.** Nontraditional students who identify as working part time are more interested in creating a club than students who work full time or not at all. Part

time working students are also more interested in participating in clubs that meet more frequently than full time and not working students. A large portion of the sample had no preference towards the frequency in which a club meets.

**Dependents.** Nontraditional students that have no dependents are more likely to be interested in participating in extracurriculars that meet more frequently. The most common response on frequency when comparing the whole sample was no preference.

**Age.** Nontraditional students over the age of 35 years old have no interest in participating in a club that meets multiple times a week. Additionally, nontraditional students who are over the age of 45 prefer clubs that meet once a week or once a semester when compared to younger students. The top responses for all participants when determining club occurrence preference was no preference (34%), once a week (23.7%), and bi-weekly (23.7%).

### ***Question Two***

*Are there specific needs that nontraditional students want extracurriculars to focus on?* Nontraditional students have been identified to face various challenges when striving for academic success and retention in the college environment. Literature review has demonstrated that many nontraditional students often need further assistance with time management skills (May & Akin, 1998), transition into college (May & Akin, 1998), academic preparedness (Zerquera et al., 2018), and when experiencing feelings of isolation (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). The surveyed nontraditional students appear to desire support in two of the areas that the literature suggests. Nontraditional undergraduate students at Rowan University believed that they could use more support with financial (48.5%) and academic (44.3%) needs.

The surveyed participants were also asked whether they believed that there were existing clubs or organizations that addressed adult student needs; only 20.6% of the sample agreed. The sample claimed that they would be most likely to participate in an extracurricular that allowed them to network (58.8%), involved an interest or hobby they enjoyed (55.7%), better prepared them for a job of their choice (51.5%), or allowed them to learn something new (50.5%).

### ***Question Three***

*To what extent do nontraditional students value extracurriculars and student leadership opportunities?* To best determine the extent to which nontraditional students value extracurricular opportunities, the study analyzed a Likert scale question that asked whether students felt that out-of-class interactions with peers was important to them. Importance on out-of-class interactions was looked at because research by Tan and Pope (2007) suggests that extracurriculars are one of the best ways to students can make social connections outside of the classroom. 38.2% of 91 respondents agreed on some level that out-of-class interaction was important to them.

The extent to which nontraditional students value leadership opportunities was also analyzed. Of the 95 respondents, 34% suggested that they would be most interested in participating in a club or organization if it allowed them to develop leadership skills. Similarly, 27% of 96 respondents answered that they would be interested in participating in a leadership development focused club.

### ***Question Four***

*What are the best methods to communicate extracurricular opportunities to nontraditional students?* Tan and Pope (2007) suggested that nontraditional students are

typically aware that extracurriculars are beneficial to engage in, but the lack of advertisements about opportunities contributes to lack of involvement. The surveyed sample was able to rank their preferred communication methods to learn about extracurricular activities. The most desired form of communication was emailing by a long shot. Recommendations from professors and peers scored similarly and would be considered the second-best way to communicate engagement opportunities. After those, social media, text, and on campus signage also ranked similarly. The least preferred method to communicate about engagement opportunities is phone calls. During the interviews, students suggested that both texting and email are forms of communication they use daily.

Lastly, the study also looked briefly into the communication between members of organizations and nontraditional students. Students were asked whether they felt they were welcomed and invited by members of organizations and clubs. Of the 92 respondents, 25.8% reported that they did not feel welcome and 43% of the 92 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that interaction with organization members was welcoming. Only 24.8% of students agreed that they felt welcome and invited.

## **Conclusions**

Nontraditional students are an ever-growing student population on college campuses. Using surveys and one-on-one interviews, this study was able to gain a better understanding on nontraditional students' perceptions towards extracurricular and leadership programming. Current research has suggested that nontraditional students are defined as having a variety of background characteristics such as being twenty-five years or older, entering college later in life, having dependents, working a full-time job, and

much more (May & Akin, 1998; Rabourn et al., 2018). The study found that the background characteristics of racial identity, housing status, employment status, having dependents, and age are all significant factors that influence willingness to engage in extracurriculars.

Additionally, this study has supported the claim that institutions need to become better prepared to support nontraditional students with their unique needs. During the study, many of the surveyed students reported feeling as if there were no organizations or clubs that best addressed adult student needs. The primary areas that nontraditional students appear to be most interested in receiving aid is with financial and academic needs. Nontraditional students are also more likely to participate in extracurricular activities that allow them to network, include a hobby or interest they enjoy, prepares them for a job, or allows them to learn something new. A large portion of nontraditional students also appear to be interested in participating in organizations or opportunities that allow for leadership development. Lastly, communication about extracurricular and leadership opportunities can be a challenge in general for many institutions. This study was able to determine that when encouraging nontraditional students to get involved, emailing is the most preferred method of communication.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations that may have impacted the findings in this study. For one, the results of this study were acquired using voluntary surveys and interviews. Because involvement in the study was voluntary, the introduction of biases may be prevalent (McMillan, 2016). Second, since the study focuses on determining perceptions on extracurricular and leadership programming, students who are more interested in those

topics may be most likely to participate. This factor may also have led to the introduction of potential biases. Third, when the survey was first sent out, some participants noted difficulties with being able to select more than one option within the Likert Scale. This function had to be altered so that future participants were not able to select more than one option during the Likert scale questions. Surveys that had more than one response listed in the Likert scale section had to be considered as a no response option. It is for this reason that many of the respondent sizes vary in the data analysis section. Fourth, this study was conducted as part of a capstone research project. Because of the study had to be conducted in a short amount of time, which may have contributed to the low response rates. This project was also heavily a learning process; some of the survey questions were not able to directly measure a student's willingness to engage in extracurriculars or the degree to which a student valued them. Fifth, most of the small sample size identified as being White/Caucasian. Findings in this study may not be representative of larger and more diverse demographic samples. Last, this study was conducted during the events of the global pandemic, COVID-19. Many of the ways in which this study was carried out were due to the COVID-19 social distancing measures. Some of the demographic characteristics such as housing status and employment may also have been influenced by this event. Overall views and opinions on extracurricular and leadership involvement may have also been impacted.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

Based on the findings of this study, here is a review on the recommendations for future practice:

1. Develop an extracurricular organization or program that focuses on offering nontraditional students support with financial or academic needs.
2. Create an emailing application that informs nontraditional students about engagement opportunities.
3. Better train those in leadership positions for clubs and organizations on how to best welcome and invite nontraditional students into their organizations.
4. Encourage professors, instructors, and faculty to inform students about engagement opportunities.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon the findings of this study, the following are recommendations for future research:

1. Structure more specific survey questions that target or identify a student's willingness to engage in extracurricular or leadership opportunities and the extent to which they value them.
2. Conduct the study over a longer period to get a larger and more representative sample.
3. Conduct the study after the events of the global pandemic, COVID-19 to see how drastically the findings may differ.

## References

- Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40 (5), 518-529.
- Bettinger, E. P., Boatman, A., & Bridget, T. L. (2013). Student supports: Developmental education and other academic programs. *The Future of Children*, 23(1), 93-115.
- Goncalves, S. A., & Trunk, D. (2014). Obstacles to success for the nontraditional student in higher education. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*. 19(4), 164-172.
- Hand, M. (2011). Content analysis. In D. Southerton (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of consumer culture 1*, 354-355.
- Kenner, C., & Weinerman, J. (2011). Adult learning theory: Applications to non-traditional college students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 41(2), 87-96.
- May, E. L., & Akin, R. (1998). The Nontraditional student: A Neglected resource? *Allied Academies International Conference. Academy of Educational Leadership. Proceedings*, 3(1), 9-19.
- McMillan, J. H. (2016). *Fundamentals of Educational Research*. Boston: Pearson.
- Pustizzi, D. (2008). *The adult student decline: A study of the longterm impact of the rowan university strategic plan*. (Publication No. 752) [Master's Thesis, Rowan University]. Rowan Digital Works Theses and Dissertations.
- Rabourn, K. E., BrckaLorenz, A., & Shoup, R. (2018). Reimagining student engagement: How nontraditional adult learners engage in traditional postsecondary environments. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 66(1), 22–33.
- Rowan OSLP. (n.d.). *About Leadership Rowan*.  
<https://sites.rowan.edu/oslp/leadership/about.html>
- Rowan University. (n.d.). *Rowan University Fast Facts 2019-2020*.  
<https://sites.rowan.edu/fastfacts/index.html>
- Savage, J. (2019). *A needs assessment for programming for adult undergraduate students at Rowan University*. (Publication No. 2663) [Master's Thesis, Rowan University]. Rowan Digital Works Theses and Dissertations.
- Tan, D. L., & Pope, M. L. (2007). Participation in co-curricular activities: Nontraditional student perspectives. *College and University*, 83(1), 2-9,11.

- Vella, E. J., Turesky, E. F., & Hebert, J. (2016). Predictors of academic success in web-based courses: Age, GPA, and instruction mode. *Quality Assurance in Education, 24*(4), 586-600.
- Warden, D. N., & Myers, C. A. (2017). Nonintellective variables and nontraditional college students: A Domain-based investigation of academic achievement. *College Student Journal, 51*(3), 380–390.
- Wilson, C. (2013) *The influence of familial responsibility, extra-curricular activity participation, and employment status on the undergraduate academic performance of traditional and non-traditional aged students*. (Publication No. 224) [Master's Thesis, Rowan University]. Rowan Digital Works Theses and Dissertations.
- Wyatt, L. G. (2011). Nontraditional student engagement: Increasing adult student success and retention. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 59*(1), 10–20.
- Zawacki-Richter, O., Müskens, W., Krause, U., Alturki, U., & Aldraiweesh, A. (2015). Student media usage patterns and non-traditional learning in higher education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 16*(2), 136–170.
- Zerquera, D. D., Ziskin, M., & Torres, V. (2018). Faculty views of "nontraditional" students: Aligning perspectives for student success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 20*(1), 29-46.

**Appendix A**  
**Online Survey Instrument**  
**Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming Survey**

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled “Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming.” You are invited to participate in this survey because you identify as a nontraditional undergraduate student at Rowan University. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be all undergraduate nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan University as of Fall 2019.

The survey may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how to better support nontraditional students at Rowan University regarding extracurricular and leadership programming.

Your responses will be kept confidential. 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 the survey, you can contact Allison Niemiec at the email address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Researcher:  
Allison Niemiec  
Higher Education Administration Masters Candidate  
Rowan University  
niemieca0@students.rowan.edu

Advisor:  
Andrew Tinnin, Ed. D.  
Professor  
Educational Services, Administration and Higher Education  
tinnin@rowan.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, Pro-2020-104.

## **Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming**

---

### **Start of Block: Informed Consent**

#### **Q30 Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming Survey**

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled “Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming.” You are invited to participate in this survey because you identify as a nontraditional undergraduate student at Rowan University. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be all undergraduate nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan University as of Fall 2019.

The survey may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how to better support nontraditional students at Rowan University in regards to extracurricular and leadership programming.

Your responses will be kept confidential. 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 the survey, you can contact Allison Niemiec at the email address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Researcher: Allison Niemiec Higher Education Administration Masters Candidate  
Rowan University niemieca0@students.rowan.edu Advisor: Andrew Tinnin, Ed. D.  
Professor Educational Services, Administration and Higher Education  
tinnin@rowan.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, Pro-2020-104.

Version Number and Date: Version 1.2 on January 14th, 2021

---

Q31

Agreement to Participate

By checking the box below, you agree to the following statements:

I have read the entire information about the research study, risks, benefits, and confidentiality, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed.

All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered and you agree to volunteer to participate in the study.

I agree to participate (1)

**End of Block: Informed Consent**

---

**Start of Block: Background Information**

Q1 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Non-binary (3)
  - Transgender (4)
  - Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to disclose (6)
- 

Q2 What is your current age?

- 24 years or under (1)
  - 25 to 29 years (2)
  - 30 to 34 years (3)
  - 35 to 39 years (4)
  - 40 to 44 years (5)
  - 45 to 49 years (6)
  - 50 to 54 years (7)
  - 55 years or older (8)
-

Q3 Ethnicity

- Hispanic (1)
  - Not Hispanic (2)
- 

Q4 Racial Identity

- American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
  - Asian (2)
  - Black or African American (3)
  - Hispanic or Latino (4)
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5)
  - White/ Caucasian (6)
  - Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to disclose (8)
-

Q5 Marital Status

- Single (1)
  - Married (2)
  - Divorced (3)
  - Separated (4)
  - Widowed (5)
  - Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to disclose (7)
- 

Q6 How many dependents children are you responsible for?

- None (1)
  - One (2)
  - Two (3)
  - Three or More (4)
- 

Q7 Current Student Enrollment Status

- Part Time (11 or under credits) (1)
  - Full Time (12 or more credits) (2)
-

Q28 What is your current year enrolled in school?

- Freshman (1)
  - Sophomore (2)
  - Junior (3)
  - Senior (4)
- 

Q8 What is your current housing arrangement?

- On Campus (1)
  - Lives with Parents/Relatives (2)
  - Off Campus (3)
  - Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q9 What is your current employment status?

- Not working (1)
  - Working Full Time (30 hours or more) (2)
  - Working Part Time (29 hours or less) (3)
-

Q14 What is your funding source for your education? (Please check all that apply)

- Personal/Family Income (1)
  - Personal/Family Savings (2)
  - Social Security Benefits (3)
  - Veteran's Benefits (4)
  - Educational Grants (Pell, private grants, etc.) (5)
  - Scholarships (Private, federal, college, etc.) (6)
  - Other Loans (7)
  - Reimbursed by Employer (8)
  - Other (9) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q11 What type of classes do you prefer?

Morning Classes (1)

Afternoon Classes (2)

Evening Classes (3)

Weekend (4)

Online or self-paced class (5)

No Preference (6)

Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q12 Reasons for continuing your education?

- To earn a higher degree (1)
- To improve my income (2)
- To learn or improve occupational skills (3)
- For personal fulfillment (4)
- To earn or maintain a certificate (5)
- Self Improvement (6)
- Encouragement from peers or friends (7)
- Encouragement from parents or relatives (8)
- Encouragement from staff or administrators (9)
- Other (10) \_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Background Information**

---

**Start of Block: Section 2**

Q16 Please select the number that best fits your level of satisfaction with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I am aware of how to locate organizations and clubs online (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of the various organizations and clubs available to me (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are organizations and clubs that address adult student needs (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are organizations and clubs that interest me (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can easily get transportation to and from Rowan University (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I feel as if I  
am a part of  
the Rowan  
Community  
(6)

I consider  
myself to be a  
student leader  
(7)

Having out-  
of-class  
interaction  
with faculty  
members is  
important to  
me (8)

Having out-  
of-class  
interaction  
with  
classmates  
and peers is  
important to  
me (9)

I feel  
confident in  
my ability to  
succeed  
academically  
(10)

I feel as if I  
have a lot of  
free time to  
engage in  
student  
activities (11)

I feel as if I have opportunities to engage with other nontraditional aged students (12)

I feel welcomed and invited by members of organizations or clubs (13)

Organizations and clubs meet at a time that is convenient for me (14)

I am aware of the process involved in creating an organization or club (15)

I would be interested in creating an organization or club that does not yet exist (16)

I would prefer if organizations and clubs met in person (17)

I would prefer if organizations and clubs met online (18)

---

Q17 I would prefer if an organization or club met:

- Multiple times a week (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Bi-weekly (every two weeks) (3)
- Once a month (4)
- Once a semester (5)
- No preference (6)
- Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

Q18 I would be interested in participating in the following types of organizations or clubs:

- Academic and educational (1)
  - Religious (2)
  - Media and publication (3)
  - Political (4)
  - Multicultural (5)
  - Greek Fraternity or Sorority (6)
  - Intramural or Recreational Sports (7)
  - Student Government (8)
  - Leadership Development (9)
  - Nontraditional Student Focused (10)
  - Volunteer/ Community Service (11)
  - Special Interest (12)
  - Other (13) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q19 I would be most likely to participate in organizations or clubs if it:

- Allowed me to learn something new (1)
  - Allowed me to network (2)
  - Prepared me for a job of my choice (3)
  - Allowed me to socialize and make friends (4)
  - Provided academic support (ex: tutoring) (5)
  - Develop better physical and mental health habits (6)
  - To become more involved with the Rowan Community (7)
  - Develop leadership skills (8)
  - Develop communication or public speaking skills (9)
  - Involved an interest or hobby I enjoy (10)
  - Allowed me to include my dependent children (11)
  - Other (12) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q21 What types of communication methods do you prefer to learn about student engagement opportunities? (Please drag and drop the following into ranking order from most to least valuable)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Email (1)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ On campus digital signage or flyers (2)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Recommendation from professors/ instructors (3)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Recommendation from peers (4)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Social media (5)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Texting Services (6)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Call (7)
- 

Q22 Is there a communication method that you prefer that was not listed above?

- No (1)
  - Yes (Please indicate method below) (2)
- 

Q23 I would be interested in being involved with the executive board (president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, senator) of an organization or club.

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Not sure (3)
-

Q24 From the following list, please indicate which areas you feel that you would benefit to have more support:

- Transition/ Orientation (1)
- Academic (2)
- Social (3)
- Financial (4)
- Technology (5)
- Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Section 2

---

Start of Block: Interview Questions

Q25 I would be interested in participating in a one on one interview through a video conference call. This interview will allow me to share more information about my opinions on being a nontraditional student, extracurricular activities, and student leadership involvement.

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

Q26 If yes, what is your Rowan University email address?

- Email Address: (1) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Interview Questions

**Appendix B**  
**Interview Instrument**  
**Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and  
Leadership Programming Survey**

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled “Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming.” You are invited to participate in this survey because you identify as a nontraditional undergraduate student at Rowan University. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be all undergraduate nontraditional students enrolled at Rowan University as of Fall 2019.

This interview may take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this interview, please respond to this email. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the interview

The purpose of this research study is to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this interview. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how to better support nontraditional students at Rowan University in regards to extracurricular and leadership programming.

Your responses will be kept confidential. 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 the survey, you can contact Allison Niemiec at the email address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Researcher:

Allison Niemiec

Higher Education Administration Masters Candidate

Rowan University

[niemieca0@students.rowan.edu](mailto:niemieca0@students.rowan.edu)

Advisor:

Andrew Tinnin, Ed. D.

Professor

Educational Services, Administration and Higher Education

[tinnin@rowan.edu](mailto:tinnin@rowan.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, Pro-2020-104

## **Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming Interview**

While your participation in this interview is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the study and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being reported.

1. If you feel comfortable sharing, how old are you?
  
2. What form of communication do you use the most and why?
  
3. What is your current class level?
  
4. What are you currently majoring in?
  
5. How long have you been at Rowan University?
  
6. Do you currently work any jobs?
  - a. If so, what is your job?
  
  - b. How many hours per week do you work?
  
7. Have you been able to interact with other nontraditional aged students?
  - a. If so, how would you describe your interaction?
  
  - b. Do you want to interact more or less with nontraditional students?

8. How would you describe your interactions, if any, with traditional aged students?
9. How would you describe your interactions, if any, with professors/instructors?
10. How would you describe your interactions, if any, with other college staff members such as administrators, advisors, tutors, etc.?
11. Has anyone recommended organizations or clubs to you? Who was it?
12. Are you currently involved with any organizations or clubs at Rowan University?
  - a. If so, what organizations or clubs are you involved with?
    - i. Why are you participating in that club?
  - b. If not, why do you not participate in an organization or club?
    - i. What would encourage you to participate?
13. Would you be interested in creating an organization or club on campus if it did not already exist?
  - a. If yes, what would you want to create and why?
14. Do you believe that your needs as a student at Rowan University are being met?
  - a. What do you think that Rowan University can do better to support you?

15. What is your definition of leadership?
  
16. Do you think you could benefit from engaging in a leadership position within student organizations?
  
17. Do you believe that your needs as a student at Rowan University are being met? a. What do you think that Rowan University can do better to support you?
  
18. Would you be willing to share any experiences that have enhanced or negatively affected your college experience?
  
19. Are there any additional comments about your experience as a nontraditional student that you would like to share?

## Appendix C

### Key Information and Adult Consent Form

#### Key Information and Consent to Take Part in a Research Study Adult Consent Form for Social and Behavioral Research

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Perceptions of Nontraditional Students Towards Extracurricular and Leadership Programming

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Andrew Tinnin

**Co-Investigator:** Allison Niemiec

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide key information that will help you decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study.

Please carefully read the key information provided in questions 1-9 and 14 below. The purpose behind those questions is to provide clear information about the purpose of the study, study specific information about what will happen in the course of the study, what are the anticipated risks and benefits, and what alternatives are available to you if you do not wish to participate in this research study.

The study team will explain the study to you and they will answer any question you might have before volunteering to take part in this study. It is important that you take your time to make your decision. You may take this consent form with you to ask a family member or anyone else before agreeing to participate in the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask the study team and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

The Principal Investigator, Dr. Drew Tinnin, the Co-Investigator, Allison Niemiec, or another member of the study team will also be asked to sign this informed consent.

**1. What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of nontraditional students towards extracurricular and student leadership programming. This research will be able to determine the needs of nontraditional students regarding extracurricular and student leadership programming, how communication methods can be best utilized, and how engagement in these programs can be best encouraged. This study is for a thesis for the Masters in Higher Education Administrative Track program at Rowan University.

**2. Why have you been asked to take part in this study?**

You have been asked to take part in this study because you identify as an undergraduate nontraditional student and are 25 years or older at Rowan University.

**3. What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?**

To be take part in this research study you will first be asked to complete an informed consent included at the beginning of the Qualtrics online survey. You will then be able to complete the Qualtrics online survey. At the end of this survey, you will be given an option to volunteer to participate in a one-on-one web call interview.

**4. Who may take part in this research study? And who may not?**

Any undergraduate nontraditional student who is over 25 years old and are currently enrolled at Rowan University may be able to participate in this research study. No individuals will be excluded from this survey, except those who identify as being under the age of 25 years old and who do not identify as a nontraditional student.

**5. How long will the study take and where will the research study be conducted?**

The survey portion of the study will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you wish to participate in the interview, the interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The study will take place at Rowan University, a public institution located in Glassboro, New Jersey.

**6. How many visits may take to complete the study?**

There will be no in person visits for this study. You can complete the study in one sitting by successfully completing the 15-minute Qualtrics online survey. If you are interested in volunteering for the one-on-one interview it will take two sittings.

- 7. What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?**  
There are no risks or dangers associated with this study. Participants' identity will be kept confidential in accordance to the informed consents.
- 8. Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?**  
There are no direct benefits for participants in this study. An indirect benefit of this study is that participation will allow for a better understanding on how to support nontraditional students regarding extracurricular and leadership programming.
- 9. What are the alternatives if you do not wish to participate in the study?**  
Your alternative is not to participate in the study.
- 10. How many subjects will be enrolled in the study?**  
The survey will be sent to all 690 Rowan University students who identify as an undergraduate nontraditional student. The desired number of students to complete the survey will be 69 (10%) of the 690 students. The desired number of students to complete the interview phase will be 15 of the 69 students who completed the survey.
- 11. How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?**  
During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.
- 12. Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?**  
There will not be any costs for participating in this research study.
- 13. Will you be paid to take part in this study?**  
You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.
- 14. Are you providing any identifiable private information as part of this research study?**  
We are collecting identifiable private information in this research study. Your email will be used to contact you if you volunteer for the one-on-one interview. Any recordings from the one-on-one interview will only be used by the Investigator and Co-Investigator for data analysis. Your identifiable information will not be used in any of the future research projects or disclosed to anyone outside of the research team.

**15. How will information about you be kept private or confidential?**

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at scientific conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information.

Data will be stored in a secure computer 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 any identifiable information.

**16. What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with the study staff will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you, but you must do this in writing to Dr. Andrew Tinnin at [tinnin@rowan.edu](mailto:tinnin@rowan.edu).

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with the Principal Investigator.

**17. Who can you call if you have any questions?**

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research related injury, you can call the Principal Investigator:

Dr. Andrew Tinnin  
Educational Services, Administration, and Higher Education  
Department  
856-256-4909

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:

Office of Research Compliance  
(856) 256-4058– Glassboro/CMSRU

**18. What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?**

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

---

**AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE**

I have read the entire information about the research study, research risks, benefits and the alternatives, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed.

All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered and I agree to volunteer to participate in the study.

Subject Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:**

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

## Consent to Audio/ Video Tape

Version Number and Date: Version 1.3 on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Allison Niemiec, Higher Education Administration Master's Candidate. We are asking for your permission to allow us to use audio and video recording as part of the individual interview. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the interviewer.

The recording(s) will not include any identifiable information. The recording(s) will only be shared by the master's candidate and advisor for the study.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Permission:**

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the purposes and procedures of this study. All of the participant's questions have been accurately answered, and I have received a signed permission to use audio and video recording from the participant.

Person Obtaining Permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_