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**IMPACT OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE IN  
COMMUTER STUDENTS**

by

Julianna Paolini

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Research  
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education

at

Rowan University

April 19, 2024

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## **Dedications**

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family, friends, and colleagues for all of the support they have given me throughout this process. I want to first thank my parents for their unconditional love and support throughout my educational journey. To my amazing four siblings, thank you for always cheering me on and providing me with laughs along the way. I am so thankful to have an amazing family and support system who always believes in me.

I want to thank my friends who have supported me since we first met in undergrad. The monthly check-ins and words of encouragement were a big motivating factor during my time in this program. You all continue to leave a positive impact on me every day and I am thankful I get to share this accomplishment with you all.

I also want to dedicate this thesis to my many mentors and colleagues at Rowan University. Thank you to the amazing staff in the Office of Orientation & Student Leadership Programs. I am thankful for the opportunities you have all given me to grow personally and professionally. To my wonderful classmates, thank you for all your support and words of encouragement throughout our time in this program. Finally, I would like to thank Jessica Prach for being an amazing mentor and giving me the encouragement to have taken on this journey. Your support and dedication have left such a positive impact on me.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge the faculty members in the Higher Education Administration program. Thank you for your dedication and support throughout my time in the program. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from all of you and will take the knowledge you have shared with me into my professional career. To my thesis advisor Dr. Stephanie Lezotte, thank you for your constant support and guidance throughout my thesis process. It was a pleasure working with you and I am grateful for everything you have taught me.

## **Abstract**

Julianna Paolini  
IMPACT OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE IN  
COMMUTER STUDENTS  
2023-2024  
Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively examine the ways in which social integration impacts student persistence in the commuter student population on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University. Additionally, this study examines the levels of social engagement in the commuter student population and in what ways is their engagement impacted. The sample consisted of 159 participants who commute to Rowan University's main campus who are enrolled as undergraduate students. Participants were surveyed utilizing a Qualtrics survey that was distributed to students starting in December of 2023 and ending in February 2023. The survey consisted of questions about the population's demographics, levels of actual engagement versus desired engagement, challenges that impact their ability to get involved, and events that contribute to their persistence to continue at Rowan University. The survey data was then analyzed to better understand commuter students' social engagement and well as what areas of social engagement contribute the most to their persistence. The results indicate that aside from peer interactions, social integration has little impact on commuter students' overall persistence. The research suggests that there is a need to create alternative opportunities to increase commuter student engagement as well as explore what other areas outside of social integration contribute to commuter student persistence to help support their success.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Many scholars discuss the importance of student persistence within higher education as it relates to retention and graduation rates. Students who enroll in higher education institutions go through a period where they seek some sort of confirmation in the decision they made in their institution of choice (Ishitani & Reid, 2015). Tinto (1975) discusses in his theory of college departure how academic and social integration can impact students' persistence to remain enrolled and committed to an institution. Academic and social integration can take many forms inside and outside of the classroom. Both provide different experiences for various populations of students. In particular, students who commute to campus often spend less time on-campus and cannot engage in the same ways as residential students (Jacoby, 2000). These experiences can impact students' sense of belonging and commitment to their campus.

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

When thinking about student persistence and higher education, it is important to consider the experiences students have both inside and outside the classroom. For commuter students, their academic and social involvement in college can be impacted in many ways that differ compared to their residential counterparts (Jacoby, 2000). Factors such as transportation, multiple life roles, balancing support networks, time commitments, etc. can get in the way of commuter students' involvement in academic and social activities (Jacoby, 2000). Understanding the perceptions and experiences of

this student population's involvement can help student affairs professionals better support and serve these students all the way through graduation.

### **Significance of the Problem**

As commuter students' needs continue to grow and change, it is important to consider how we can best serve this student population both in and out of the classroom. Success in students' education goes beyond the classroom. Tinto's *Model of Student Departure* discusses the importance of students' integration both academically and socially (Tinto, 1975). The concept of student engagement in higher education has been widely discussed in literature (Sá, 2023). For example, the impact of community experiences on retention and satisfaction in higher education has been explored in the undergraduate student population (Boyd et al., 2022). The impact that student involvement has on students' sense of belonging and psychological well-being in students are other areas that have been explored (Ribera et al., 2017; Kilgo et al., 2016). However, a lot of previous research takes into account the experiences of both residential and commuter students. Therefore, there is still room to be explored as to how social integration impacts the commuter student population.

This research aims to reflect how areas of social integration impact the commuter student population. More specifically, this study aims to explore its impact towards this population's persistence to continue in their institution. This research contributes to the broader knowledge of how to better support and retain this population of students because as the cost of a college degree continues to increase, more students may opt to reside off-campus to save money. Professionals in the field of higher education will have

a better understanding of how to create involvement opportunities that fits the needs of this population of students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to evaluate how areas of social integration impact commuter students' overall persistence in their institution. Social integration such as peer-interactions, extracurriculars, and faculty-interactions can have an impact on student persistence (Tinto, 1975). Students who are highly involved devote a substantial amount of time and energy in those specific areas of social integration (Astin, 1999). The study also aims to examine what commuter student engagement looks like at Rowan University, a public four-year university in New Jersey, as well as how it impacts their ability to be engaged. Understanding what social engagement looks like in this student population contributes to a broader knowledge based around commuter students and their social integration on-campus.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study presents several assumptions and limitations. It is assumed that all respondents answered the questions truthfully. Another assumption is that this sample is representative of the commuter student population. Students who participated that have completed multiple semesters at Rowan University may have had more opportunities to engage in factors of social integration compared to students who have completed just one. Additionally, the data collected from this study may not be transferrable to all institutions as the needs and engagement of commuter students may look different at other institutions. Previous studies and results may be different pre-COVID due to the changing needs of students after the pandemic. This is also one of the first studies done at

Rowan University on commuter students' social integration. A personal assumption would be possible bias as I am someone who has seen and worked with commuter students and created the survey instrument. Finally, the list of students who fit the study inclusion criteria was provided by Rowan University's Division of Information Resources & Technology (IRT). There is a chance that there could have been inconsistencies or data errors when compiling the data.

### **Operational Definitions**

- Commuter student – A student “who does not live in institution-owned housing” (Jacoby, 1989, p. 1). This can be students who live at home—possibly with family—and commute to campus from all over the region their institution lies in (Rowan University Off-Campus Services & Resources, n.d.).
- Sense of belonging – There are many ways to define sense of belonging across a span of current literature. For the purposes of this research sense of belonging can be defined as one’s “feelings about themselves, their sense of importance and significance to the school, and their sense of value to the school as a whole” (Dost & Smith, 2023, p. 823).
- Social integration – Within this study, being incorporated into social interactions outside of the classroom such as student organizations, extracurricular activities, university sponsored events, and informal interactions with peers, faculty, and administrators.
- Student involvement – For the purposes of this study, “is the physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1999, p. 518).

- Student persistence – A student’s ability to remain enrolled and committed to a university (Tinto, 1975). Their ability to persist to the next semester rather than drop-out or transfer to a different institution.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does commuter students’ desired level of engagement compare to their actual engagement?
2. What impacts the ability for commuter students to be involved on-campus?
3. What events do commuting students report as contributing most to their persistence?

### **Organization of Remaining Chapters of Study**

Chapter II will provide a review of relevant literature of the commuter student population. This chapter also highlights relevant research on theories and models of social integration and student involvement. Chapter III includes the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. This chapter provides details on the context of the study, the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV provides the findings of the study while addressing the research questions at hand. Finally, Chapter V presents a summary of key findings, a discussion of the research, conclusion, and recommendations for future practice and research.



## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

To explore commuter students' social integration and persistence, this literature review will first explore the background, characteristics, and challenges of this student population. This will set a foundation and provide context into the lives of these students. The review will then lead to the discussion of topics that contribute to social integration and persistence, such as an overview of student involvement and Astin's theory on involvement. Additionally, sense of belonging will be discussed to further highlight the importance of involvement and persistence in higher education. Finally, the review will conclude with an overview of social integration and persistence in higher education. Tinto's model of student departure provides a foundation for this review and research to build upon.

#### **Commuter Students**

Commuter students can be defined as those who do not live in institution-owned housing (Jacoby, 1989). Students who commute to college make up 85% of the undergraduate student population (Snyder & Dillow, 2010; Soares, 2013). As this student population has greatly increased over decades in U.S. higher education, there has been a shift in issues and concerns to address that this group of students uniquely possesses.

As higher education began to expand in the United States, institutions began to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of its students. Between 1960 and 1980, higher education saw an increase in students attending two-year and four-year institutions that reflected a new population of students (Kim & Rury, 2011). The proportion of students living in dormitories and on-campus housing decreased by about 40% as students who

lived at home with their parents increased by about 47% (Kim & Rury, 2011). Commuter students are not just limited to those who live at home with their parents. They also can account for those who rent houses near or around campus and adults who work full-time and have families to care for (Jacoby, 1989).

When considering what would be a high-quality environment for this group of students, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of the profile characteristics of the students to better meet their needs (Jacoby, 1989). Descriptive factors of commuting students have constantly changed and evolved (Kim & Rury, 2011). Socioeconomic status was an early significant factor linked to the enrollment of commuting students in the 1960s (Kim & Rury, 2011). Those from a higher socioeconomic status were more likely to be enrolled in college in college as they could afford to live there which was the preference at the time. Twenty years later, there was an increase in students who commuted to college (Kim & Rury, 2011). However, this increase saw a change in student profiles as students from a higher income profile were now commuting to college (Kim & Rury, 2011). This shift in enrollment illustrated how commuting to college versus living there was becoming more socially acceptable (Kim & Rury, 2011). The student profiles of commuter students are very familiar to those found in nontraditional students. Nontraditional students were one of the largest increases in enrollment during the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with institutions seeing an increase from 30% to 50% between 1996 and 2006 (Newbold, et al., 2010; Bye, et al., 2007).

The characteristics and demographics of commuter students differ from those of their non-commuting counterparts. Gianoutsos and Vicki (2014) conducted a quantitative study to compare the differences between the profile characteristics of residential and

commuter students. They found factors such as socioeconomic status, residence, age, ethnicity, etc., continue to play a role in differences between residential and non-residential students (Gianoutsos & Vicki, 2014). Socioeconomic status was another differing factor as residential students were more likely to come from a higher socioeconomic status. Additionally, residential students were more likely to come from parents who received a college education (Gianoutsos & Vicki, 2014). In another study examining the demographic and psychographic differences between commuter and non-commuter students, it was found that students who commute were five times more likely to be non-traditional students (Newbold et al., 2011). They were also more likely to be transfer students (Newbold et al., 2011). While there is no one definition of non-traditional students, non-traditional students may possess a certain characteristic(s) that classify them as such. For example, this could range anywhere from not living on campus, to being the first in their families to attend college, or students of older age (Trowler, 2015; Chung & Chur-Hansen, 2017).

As commuter students have a different set of characteristics and demographics than those of non-commuter students, they are presented with different challenges during their collegiate experience (Burlison, 2015). Issues related to students who commute often revolve around areas such as transportation, multiple life roles, a sense of belonging, engagement and student involvement, and support networks (Jacoby, 1989; Jacoby & Garland, 2004; Burlison, 2015). Compared to residential students, commuter students are consumed by more non-academic related commitments that affect the time they spend on campus (Burlison, 2015). These non-academic related commitments, such as responsibilities at home or an off-campus job, can simply lengthen the number of

times a student has to commute and increase the amount of time spent driving (Burlison, 2015). Ishitani and Reid (2015) suggest that the longer the distance to commute to campus could have an impact on retention as students who live closer to campus could have more time to engage with the campus.

The challenges commuter students face impact the ways they can get involved. Thomas (2020) wanted to gain a better understanding of the experiences and challenges these students face with their engagement in higher education. A common challenge that was found among the group was the negative experience students had when commuting back and forth to their respective institutions as it can be time-consuming, exhausting, and stressful (Thomas, 2020). Alfano and Eduljee (2013) investigated the relationship in commuter and residential students' (n=108) levels of involvement, commitments to work, and academic performance. The results found that forty percent of the commuter students surveyed had a job. For many of these students, the reason behind working had to do with paying bills, tuition, and having money to spend (Alfano & Eduljee, 2013).

### **Student Involvement**

According to Astin (1999), student involvement can be defined as “the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). A student who is highly involved is one who devotes time and energy to their academics, extracurriculars, and time spent on campus in addition to interacting with their peers and members of the faculty (Astin, 1999). Involvement in on-campus activities can have a positive impact on the student experience and leave students feeling more connected to their campus.

Previous research has examined the many ways in which students can get involved and how it can impact their overall collegiate experience. In a study that focused on students' engagement in extracurricular activities and decision-making processes, students perceived engagement as a critical factor in their overall academic experience (Sá, 2023). In addition to strengthening their commitment to their university, the students in this study found additional benefits in their involvement in such activities as professional development opportunities, strengthened social relationships, relaxation, and many other benefits that complement their educational experience (Sá, 2023). In another study, first-year students who participated in university signature events tended to persist from the fall to spring semester, and furthermore, those who attended three types of different events were likely to persist from their first to second year (Kulp et al., 2021). This study illustrated the strong association between student involvement and persistence.

It has been found that students who live in residence halls are more involved with their institution compared to their commuter student counterparts (Astin, 1999). Students who live on-campus have an increased chance of achieving in areas such as extracurriculars, leadership roles, student friendships, and social life as they are presented with more time and opportunities to get involved (Astin, 1999). On the other hand, it is often more challenging for commuter students to be able to participate in university-sponsored events (Newbold et al., 2011). Alfano and Eduljee (2013) found that sixty-six percent of commuter students in their study engaged in no university sponsored activities. They also found that fifty percent of commuter students “agreed” that they desired to engage more with their school (Alfano & Eduljee, 2013, p. 339). Commuter students too, look for ways to get involved and engage in their campus. Due to the challenges that

many commuter students face, they cannot participate in campus activities in the same ways that residential students can (Jacoby, 2000).

### **Sense of Belonging**

Sense of belonging has been explored across many areas of literature on higher education. In a meta-ethnographic study, Dost and Smith (2023) took a closer look into the analysis of students' perceptions as to how they define a sense of belonging. The findings revealed the complexity of a student's sense of belonging. Dost and Smith (2023) summed up this multidimensional perspective of a sense of belonging into "four main concepts: (1) University belonging and social capital; (2) University belonging and ethnic group fit and cohesion; (3) University belonging and social exclusion; (4) University belonging and on/off faculty/campus connections" (Dost & Smith, 2023, p. 832). A study conducted by Ahn and Davis (2020) broke down current and emerging factors that contribute to a sense of belonging. The domains of sense of belonging discussed in their study complement Dost and Smith's (2023) findings very well. The domain of social engagement—peer interactions, societies, and friendships—has shown to be a salient factor among students' sense of belonging in college life (Ahn & Davis, 2020). However, there are two emerging domains that can play a big role in fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses: surroundings and personal spaces (Ahn & Davis, 2020). These two domains focus on the connection students have with the areas they are surrounded in, as well as the psychological aspects of belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2020). In fact, institutions at times fail to provide spaces or lounges for commuter students to surround themselves in to help them feel wanted at the institution (Jacoby, 1989).

Sense of belonging plays an important role on the impact of student retention and admission in higher education (Jacoby & Garland, 2004). Students' impressions can be influenced by the way an institution portrays itself and whether it is able to meet the needs of its students (Jacoby & Garland, 2004). As students who commute face many challenges that can impact their success, it is helpful for them to make a decision to enroll in an institution that offers the support that they need (Jacoby & Garland, 2004). Factors such as creating personal spaces on campus or activities that better includes commuter students are important to consider when thinking about commuter students' sense of belonging.

### **Student Persistence**

College student persistence has been explored across many sources of literature in higher education. Most notable is the theoretical model presented by Vincent Tinto. Tinto's theoretical model of dropout behavior refers to persistence as a student's commitment and integration into an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1975) explains that this model of dropout behavior can be a longitudinal process that involves social and academic systems with which a college student interacts. Positive encounters in the areas of social integration factor into student support and affiliation with the institution, which helps strengthens a student's commitment to their institution (Tinto, 1975). Interactions in these areas not only accompany a student's commitment to their institution but allow students to develop other competencies that can aid them later in life (Sá, 2023).

Tinto's model examines the characteristics of individuals that can be related to student dropout. This includes the examination of family background, the student's educational performance, past educational experiences, and goal commitments (Tinto,

1975). Ishitani and Reid (2015) conducted a study on the influence of student characteristics and institutional environments on first-year persistence among commuter students. The set of campus variables they analyzed helped evaluate if there is a difference in dropout behavior in first year on- and off-campus students. Their findings suggested that off-campus students who lived with their parents were 23% more likely to leave their institution (Ishitani & Reid, 2015).

Within college student persistence lies institutional commitment. Institutional commitment is one of the variables Tinto considers in students' persistence decisions (Tinto, 1993, as cited in Savage et al., 2019). There are many ways to define institutional commitment. A way to understand institutional commitment is to recognize it as a commitment between the student and the institution. The institution owes a commitment to graduate its students (Savage et al., 2017). Another way to view institutional commitment is a student's satisfaction and confidence in the choice they made toward their institution (Robbins et al., 2004). Regardless of definition, institutional commitment is a characteristic of student persistence that can contribute to retention in higher education.

Academic integration has also been shown to be a factor in students' persistence. Student-faculty interactions within the classroom have shown a positive correlation to students' educational commitment (Dwyer, 2017). Motivating factors for students when it comes to student-faculty interactions include positive personalities, approachability, and communication (Dwyer, 2017). Student-faculty interactions do not only have to take place within the classroom to have an impact, but they can also occur outside the classroom and still contribute to a student's sense of belonging and persistence.



## **Social Integration**

Tinto (1975) views social integration as “the interaction between the individual with given sets of characteristics and other persons of varying characteristics within the college... involves notions of both levels of integration and degrees of congruency between the individual and his social environment” (p. 107). Social integration can take many forms, such as peer interactions, extracurricular activities, and interactions with faculty and administrators (Tinto, 1975). Peer interactions provide a space for students to feel accepted and connect with others who have shared or similar experiences (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2023). Both peer and student-faculty interactions can contribute to building an overall community for students. Community experiences such as membership, group mattering, and emotional connections also can contribute towards a student’s sense of belonging and persistence. Further, engagement in community experiences has been shown to correlate with students’ overall satisfaction and commitment to their university (Boyd et al., 2022).

Among many of the common themes of social integration, there are newly emerging ones that show there is still much to be explored when it comes to social integration in higher education. In a comprehensive literature review of students’ social integration, it was discovered that there are numerous and diverse factors that make up social integration (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2023). Personal attributes and social network sites add important elements to social integration. Factors such as social behaviors or religious beliefs can impact how students connect and interact with each other (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2023). Social networking provides a new way of interacting beyond the classroom. Interacting through social networking sites allows students to connect with

friends old and new, use social media as a way to integrate into a new environment, and continue to sustain relationships (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2023).

Research on the impact social integration has on student persistence and retention displays a variety of findings. In some of the earliest research, Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that academic and social integration had important direct and indirect effects on first-year student persistence. Additionally, they found that social integration had a greater impact on female first-year students' persistence than male first-year students' persistence (1983). Overtime as student demographics changed, so did the outcomes of social integration. Ishtani (2016) examined data on 7,571 first year students from private and public institutions. Ishtani (2016) found that academic integration remained effective in first-year to second-year persistence in college students. However, social integration appeared to have lost its significance in first-year to second-year persistence of college students (Ishtani, 2016). This may be because the data was limited to participation rates of student activities. Ways to get involved varies across many institutions to truly capture its impact holistically (Ishtani, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

The commuter student population makes up a significant number of students enrolled in higher education. This student population faces its own unique challenges and barriers with their student experience. Outside commitments such as life roles, off-campus jobs, and the time it takes them to commute to campus impact the ways in which they can get involved outside of the classroom in college (Burlison, 2015). Tinto's model on student departure and persistence provides a framework for the importance that social integration has on a student's collegiate experience (Tinto, 1975). Not only does being

socially engaged allow them to interact with their campus, but it also aids students' growth beyond the classroom (Sá, 2023). This present study will explore what commuter student involvement looks like at Rowan University and how it impacts their persistence to continue at their institution. Exploring the ways in which involvement and social integration impact this population of students can aid higher education professionals in serving and retaining this student population.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

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

This study was conducted at Rowan University located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University is a four-year, public institution that serves 15,264 undergraduate students across all campuses (Rowan University Fast Facts, 2023). Academic programs at Rowan University include 98 bachelor's, 58 master's, three professional, and nineteen doctoral programs (Rowan University Fast Facts, 2023). Glassboro, New Jersey is a suburban town with a population of 23,149 people located in southern New Jersey (United States Census Bureau, 2020). Located in Gloucester County, Rowan University is surrounded by multiple municipalities and is within 16 miles of 15 surrounding southern New Jersey cities (TravelMath, n.d.; Gloucester County New Jersey, n.d.). There are only two other four-year institutions located in southern New Jersey: Rutgers University—Camden located in Camden, New Jersey, 17 miles away from Rowan University, and Stockton University located in Galloway, New Jersey, which is approximately 40 miles away from Rowan University's main campus. This leaves a total of three four-year institutions in southern New Jersey for commuter students to consider attending.

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate how areas of social integration impact commuter students' overall persistence at Rowan University. The study utilized a quantitative approach through a survey questionnaire since use of a survey allows me to reach a greater number of participants within the population I am interested in (Fowler, 2013). Due to the nature of the study, a random sampling procedure was utilized to allow

for more sensitivity and variability among the population (McMillan, 2016). The target population is undergraduate students who commute to Rowan University's main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey. The survey was available to undergraduate students above the age of 18 irrespective of their race or gender.

### **Population and Sampling**

The study's target population is undergraduate students who commute to campus since the nature of this study is very specific to this population of undergraduate commuter students. This population of students includes first-years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have completed at least one semester at Rowan University. Additionally, students who are taking classes fully online or at Rowan's non-main campuses were also excluded. Graduate commuter students were not included in this study due to the limited involvement opportunities they have as most extracurricular activities and events are exclusive to undergraduate students. Based on these criteria, the survey was made available to 6,358 students. To ensure findings are representative of the entire population, I needed 363 students to complete this survey based on a 95% confidence level.

### **Instrumentation**

A survey instrument was utilized to investigate the research questions for this study. The first section of the instrument consisted of questions about the participants' age, gender, zip code, year, number of semesters completed, and distance lived from campus. The mile range for distance traveled was derived from an UK Engagement Survey conducted by Jonathan Neves (2020). The second section of the survey instrument went on to address the research questions. The questions within the survey consisted mostly of Likert scale format. A Likert-type scale is useful to measure the

levels of satisfaction in students as it can provide a direction or gradation in the participants' responses (McMillan, 2016).

### **Data Collection**

The survey instrument was completed in Qualtrics. After IRB approval, the survey was then distributed to a list of students compiled by Rowan's IRT department that met the criteria for the study. Students provided voluntary consent to participate in the study and could stop the survey at any time without penalty. The survey was available for students to partake in from December 2023 – February 2024. All the data were reported in aggregate and measures were taken to protect confidentiality, therefore published data does not include participants' individual information. All the data were stored in a secure or in an encrypted and password protected environment with access limited to the study team.

### **Data Analysis**

This study utilized quantitative methodologies for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were mostly utilized to numerically summarize the results of the survey. The Likert-scale questions provided a scale of the direction and gradation of the students' responses to better measure their opinions and attitudes towards their persistence. The independent variables include demographic information such as age, gender, and zip code. The dependent variables analyzed include levels of engagement, challenges faced, institutional satisfaction, and persistence.

## Chapter IV

### Findings

#### Profile of Population

This study was conducted at Rowan University's Glassboro Campus between the dates of December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, after receiving IRB approval. The survey was made available via an email through Qualtrics to 6,358 enrolled undergraduate students who commute to Rowan University's Glassboro campus. After the initial email, two follow-up emails were distributed to individuals who did not complete the survey. The survey closed on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. After the survey was closed, the data were evaluated for any potential missing or incomplete data such as participants who did not complete a significant number of questions (Osborne, 2013). This left a total of 159 valid responses that were part of the data analysis below.

**Table 1**

*What is Your Age? n=159*

Age	<i>f</i>	%
18-22	118	74.21
23-27	31	19.50
28-32	4	2.52
32 and older	6	3.77

*Note.* Table 1 demonstrates the demographic of respondents by age. The majority of respondents (74.21%) were between the ages of 18-22 years old. Less than 10% of respondents were older than 28 years old.

**Table 2***What Year Are You Currently in? n=159*

Academic Year	<i>f</i>	%
First-year	0	0
Sophomore	35	22.01
Junior	40	25.16
Senior	84	52.83

*Note.* Table 2 demonstrates the demographic of respondents by academic year they are currently enrolled in. In this data set, half of the respondents (52.83%) are made up of respondents who are within their senior year of college. About half of the other respondents (47.17%) consisted of respondents who are either in their sophomore or junior year. None of the respondents reported being in their first year of college.



**Table 3**

*How Many Semesters Have You Completed at Rowan University? n=159*

Semesters Completed at Rowan University	<i>f</i>	%
1	2	1.26
2-3	66	41.51
4-5	48	30.19
6-7	32	20.12
8+	11	6.92

*Note.* Table 3 demonstrates the demographic of respondents by number of semesters completed at Rowan University.

Participants were then asked a series of demographic questions regarding their commute to and from Rowan University. Table 4 shows the demographic of respondents by miles they commute to campus. The majority of respondents (61.39%) travel over 10 miles to Rowan University. 18.35% of respondents commute between 6-10 miles to campus. 13.93% of respondents commute between 1-5 miles to campus. 6.33% of respondents travel under 1 mile to get to Rowan University. Table 5 shows the responses for how many minutes participants' commute takes to get to Rowan University. The largest group of respondents (40.24%) are traveling greater than 25 minutes to get to campus.

**Table 4***How Many Miles Away do You Commute to Rowan University? n=158*

Miles Traveled	<i>f</i>	%
Under 1 mile	10	6.33
1-5 miles	22	13.93
6-10 miles	29	18.35
Over 10 miles	97	61.39

**Table 5***Approximately How Many Minutes Does it Take For You to Commute to Rowan University? n=159*

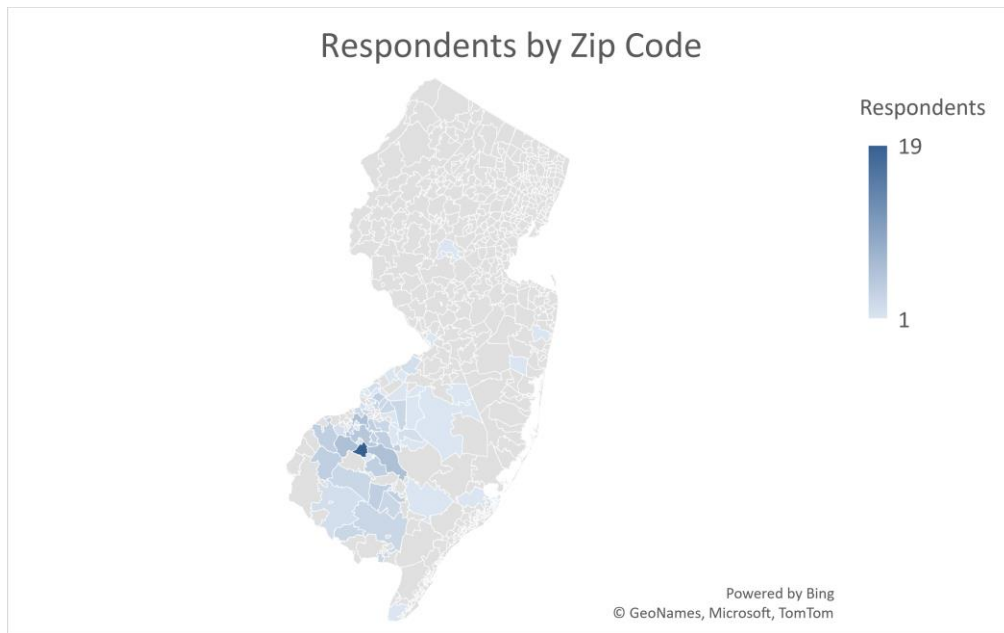
Minutes Traveled	<i>f</i>	%
Under 5 minutes	6	3.77
5-10 minutes	15	9.44
10-15 minutes	10	6.29
15-20 minutes	30	18.87
20-25 minutes	34	21.39
Greater 25 minutes	64	40.24

*Note.* Table 5 demonstrates the demographics of respondents by minutes commuted to Rowan University's Glassboro campus.

Figure 1 demonstrates the demographics of respondents by valid New Jersey zip code. Participants had the option to write in their zip code. Out of the 156 responses, there was one Delaware zip code that was not included on this map. Additionally, there was one zip code that was incomplete. Figure 1 shows the number of respondents' who reside in each city of New Jersey.

**Figure 1**

*What is the Zip Code of Where You Reside During the Academic Year? n=154*



*Note 1.* Demonstrates the demographics of respondents by New Jersey zip codes of where they reside during the academic year. Respondents were able to write in their zip code.

**Survey Questions**

The survey included 14 non-demographic questions, most of which were based on a Likert scale. The beginning of the survey asked participants about their engagement

outside of the classroom. Table 6 asked participants about their engagement with club and organizations on campus. The majority of respondents (44.36%) reported that they are not at all engaged with clubs or organizations on campus. 7.75% of respondents selected they felt neutral about their engagement with clubs and organizations. 29.58% of respondents reported they are either engaged or very engaged with clubs and organizations. Table 7 demonstrates participants' engagement with on-campus programming. The majority of respondents (77.46%) are not at all engaged with on-campus programming at Rowan University. Table 8 shows how often participants interact with their peers outside of the classroom. 20.42% of respondents report that they always or often interact with peers outside of the classroom. 30.28% of participants report that they sometimes interact with peers. 49.3% of participants report that they rarely or never interact with peers outside of the classroom.

**Table 6**

*During Your Time at Rowan University, How Engaged Are You With Clubs or Organizations On-Campus? n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Very engaged	11	7.75
Engaged	31	21.83
Neutral	11	7.75
Somewhat engaged	26	18.31
Not at all engaged	63	44.36

**Table 7**

*How Engaged Are You With On-Campus Programming Such as Rowan After Hours, Movie Nights, Profs Place Trivia, etc.? n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Very engaged	3	2.11
Engaged	6	4.23
Neutral	7	4.93
Somewhat engaged	16	11.27
Not at all engaged	110	77.46

**Table 8**

*How Often Do You Interact With Peers Outside of the Classroom? n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Always	7	4.93
Often	22	15.49
Sometimes	43	30.28
Rarely	44	30.99
Never	26	18.31

Participants were then asked if they are satisfied with their level of social engagement at Rowan University. 61.27% of participants responded “no” and 38.73% responded “yes” when asked about how satisfied they are with their level of social engagement (see Table 9). Table 10 shows if participants’ level of social engagement meets their expectations of how engaged they want to be. 33.09% of respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree that their social engagement meets their expectations. 18.32% neither agree nor disagree that their level of social engagement meets their expectations. 48.59% of respondents somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that their level of social engagement meets their expectations of how engaged they want to be.

**Table 9**

*Are You Satisfied With Your Level of Social Engagement at Rowan University? n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
No	87	61.27
Yes	55	38.73

**Table 10**

*My Level of Social Engagement Meets My Expectations of How Engaged I Want to Be.*  
*n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly agree	13	9.15
Somewhat agree	34	23.94
Neither agree nor disagree	26	18.32
Somewhat disagree	39	27.46
Strongly disagree	30	21.13

The next survey question asked participants if they wish they could increase their current level of engagement outside of the classroom. Of 142 responses, 109 selected “yes” and 33 selected “no” (see Table 11). Additionally, participants were asked if they had more opportunities to get involved outside of the classroom that were convenient to them, would they take advantage of them? Table 12 shows that the majority of participants (60.56%) would take advantage of those opportunities. 35.92% of participants selected “maybe” to taking advantage of more opportunities to get involved that are convenient if given to them. Less than 5% of respondents selected “no” to taking advantage of more opportunities to get involved that are convenient to them.

**Table 11**

*Do You Wish You Could Increase Your Level of Engagement Outside of the Classroom?*  
*n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
No	33	23.24
Yes	109	76.76

**Table 12**

*If You Had More Opportunities to Get Involved That Are Convenient to You, Would You Take Advantage of Them? n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	86	60.56
Maybe	51	35.92
No	5	3.52

This study also examined the ways in which commuter students' involvement on campus is impacted. Participants were asked to select as many options that apply to outside commitments that impact their ability to get involved or interact with others on campus. A total of 588 boxes were selected between 141 respondents. Participants also had the option to write in their own responses if they selected "other" (see Table 13). A total of 11 respondents selected the "other" option to write in their own responses. Topics



from those responses included “childcare,” “gas,” “civic obligations outside of school,” and “work schedule.”

**Table 13**

*Do Any Outside Commitments Impact Your Ability to Get Involved or Interact With Others On-Campus? Check All That Apply. n=141*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Time it takes to commute	96	16.33
Traffic	69	11.73
Finding alternative means of transportation	10	1.70
Parking	93	15.82
Conflicts with work schedule	94	15.99
Household responsibilities	62	10.54
Lack of interest in events/activities offered	53	9.01
The times events/activities take place	100	17.01
Other	11	1.87

*Note.* Table 13 demonstrates respondents’ selections of outside commitments that impact their ability to get involved or interact with others on-campus. A total of 588 checkboxes were selected. Respondents had the option to select as many checkboxes as possible that apply to them. They also had the option to write in responses by selecting the “other” checkbox.

The next set of survey questions examined the ways social engagement impacts participants persistence to continue into the next semester and at Rowan University. Table 14 shows participants' agreement if involvement in extra-curricular activities such as clubs and organizations contribute to their persistence to continue into the next semester. 22.53% of respondents selected strongly agree or somewhat agree. 35.22% of respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. 42.25% of respondents selected somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that involvement in extra-curricular activities contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

**Table 14**

*Involvement in Extra-Curricular Activities Such as Clubs or Student Organizations Contributes to My Persistence to Continue Onto the Next Semester at Rowan University.*  
*n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly agree	15	10.56
Somewhat agree	17	11.97
Neither agree nor disagree	50	35.22
Somewhat disagree	15	10.56
Strongly disagree	45	31.69

Participants were then asked if attending on-campus programming such as Rowan After Hours or movie nights contributed to their persistence to continue onto the next

semester at Rowan University. Table 15 shows participants' level of agreement if attending on-campus programming contributes to their persistence. The majority of respondents (52.11%) somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that attendance at these events contributes to their persistence at Rowan University. 37.32% of respondents neither agree nor disagree that attending on-campus programming contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University. 10.57% of respondents either somewhat agree or strongly agree that attending on-campus programming contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

**Table 15**

*Attending On-Campus Programming Such as Rowan After Hours, Movies Nights, Profs Place Trivia, etc. Contributes to My Persistence to Continue Onto the Next Semester at Rowan University. n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly agree	4	2.82
Somewhat agree	11	7.75
Neither agree nor disagree	53	37.32
Somewhat disagree	20	14.08
Strongly disagree	54	38.03

Table 16 demonstrates participants' level of agreement if peer interactions outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University. 40.84% of participants either strongly agree or somewhat agree that peer interactions contribute to their persistence. 27.46% of participants selected neither agree nor disagree that peer interactions contribute to their persistence. 31.7% of participants either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that peer interactions outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

**Table 16**

*Peer Interactions Outside of the Classroom Contribute to My Persistence to Continue Onto the Next Semester at Rowan University. n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly agree	17	11.97
Somewhat agree	41	28.87
Neither agree nor disagree	39	27.46
Somewhat disagree	8	5.64
Strongly disagree	37	26.06

This study overall aimed to examine if involvement outside of the classroom contributes to participants' persistence to continue at Rowan University. Table 17 shows participants' level of agreement if being involved somehow outside of the classroom

contributes to their persistence to continue at Rowan University. 40.84% of respondents either strongly agree or somewhat agree that being involved outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue at Rowan University. 25.35% of respondents neither agree nor disagree that being involved outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue at Rowan University. 33.81% of respondents selected that they somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that being involved outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue at Rowan University.

**Table 17**

*Being Involved Outside of the Classroom Contributes to My Persistence to Continue at Rowan University. n=142*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly agree	14	9.86
Somewhat agree	44	30.98
Neither agree nor disagree	36	25.35
Somewhat disagree	11	7.75
Strongly disagree	37	26.06

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways social integration impacts persistence in the commuter student population at Rowan University. Additionally, this study aimed to examine the level of desired and actual engagement in the commuter student population as well as ways commuter student involvement may be impacted. Undergraduate students enrolled in the Fall 2023 semester who had completed at least one semester at Rowan University received a 14-question survey via their student email to voluntarily participate in the study. Once the survey had closed data analysis took place. As the importance of student retention continues to grow, it is critical to consider the ways to best support students both inside and outside the classroom.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

##### ***Research Question 1***

How does commuter students' desired level of engagement compare to their actual engagement?

The results show that commuter students' actual engagement in various areas of social integration are rather low. Only 29.58% of participants responded that they are either engaged or very engaged with clubs and organizations on campus (see Table 6). The least amount of engagement is with on-campus programming with 77.46% of participants reporting they are not at all engaged in this area (see Table 7). This is similar to Alfano and Eduljee's (2013) findings in which sixty-six percent of commuter students in their study engaged in no university sponsored activities. Moreover, the data shows

that commuter students are not satisfied with their level of engagement in areas of social integration. As shown in Table 9, more than half of the participants responded that they are not satisfied with their engagement. Additionally, Table 11 shows that many students wish they could increase their level of engagement outside of the classroom. This also aligns with Alfano and Eduljee's (2013) findings that commuter students desire to be engaged more with their school. Additionally, Table 12 shows that most commuter students would take advantage of getting involved if they had more opportunities to do so. These findings suggest that the low levels of engagement displayed by the commuter student population is not due to a lack of interest in wanting to be involved, but rather a lack of ways to be able to do so.

### ***Research Question 2***

What impacts the ability for commuter students to be involved on-campus?

Respondents had the opportunity to identify the ways their involvement on campus is impacted by a series of variables. Table 13 displays the results of what outside commitments impact their ability to get involved or interact outside of the classroom. Respondents had the option to select multiple variables that apply to them as well as write in any additional options not listed. A total of 588 responses were recorded. Some common themes included conflicts such as the time it takes to commute to campus, conflicts with work schedules, and the times events/activities take place. These results were to be expected based on previous research on the challenges commuter students experience in college (Thomas 2020; Jacoby 2000). Despite commuter students wanting to be involved on campus, there are challenges along the way that make it difficult to do so.

The results also revealed that rather than one or two conflicts impacting their ability to get involved, it is multiple outside conflicts that respondents are balancing during their time at Rowan University. Jacoby (2000) discusses the ways multiple life roles and other challenges commuter students are taking on influences the nature of their educational experience. Based on the survey results, respondents in this study are balancing multiple commitments and conflicts that may be impacting their levels of social engagement.

### ***Research Question 3***

What events do commuting students report as contributing most to their persistence?

Respondents were asked a series of questions about which areas of involvement outside of the classroom contribute to their persistence. They were first asked about the ways extracurricular activities such as clubs or student organizations contribute to their persistence to continue onto the next semester. Table 14 shows less than 25% of respondents agree that involvement in clubs or student organizations contributes to their persistence. Additionally, only 15 respondents agreed that attending on-campus programming events contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester (see Table 15). These results are interesting as previous research has found a strong association between student involvement in university events and persistence (Kulp et al., 2021). However, based on the findings from research questions one and two, students may not be able to make a strong connection between involvement in these areas and persistence as their engagement is low in those areas. Additionally, Kulp et al.'s (2021) study includes first-year students who lived on- and off-campus which is something to



take into consideration as residential students have an easier time participating in university events.

Interestingly, the area that respondents reported contributing the most to their persistence is peer interactions outside of the classroom. According to Table 16, 58 respondents reported that they strongly agree or agree that interactions with peers informally outside of the classroom contributes to their persistence to continue onto the next semester. Peer interactions can occur at any time of the day, in between waiting for classes, or walking around campus. There are no time constraints, conflicts with schedules, or other variables that could impact this area of engagement unlike the times on-campus events or club meetings take place. Additionally, previous studies were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. These results could reflect a change in students' desires for wanting more interaction with their peers due to previous social isolation experienced during the pandemic. Peer interactions could provide a way for commuter students to interact with others as more opportunities can occur during the time they spend on campus.

### **Limitations**

A total of 159 participants enrolled for the survey with the target population needing to be 363. This means that the results may not be generalizable therefore making it a limitation for this research. This should be taking into consideration for future research to allow more time for enrollment of participants.

The criteria of this research did not account for students who may be commuting for the first time. While all the respondents have completed at least two semesters at Rowan University and were currently commuters when participating in the study, it is

unknown if they have commuted for more than one semester. Future research could aim to consider commuting for at least two semesters as to prevent any time participants might have spent living on campus when thinking about their experiences.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Recommendations for future practice include diversifying the times and locations events, clubs, and programs take place on campus. This might allow alternative opportunities for the commuter student population to explore ways to get involved and fully experience those areas of engagement. Creating alternative opportunities that aid commuter students' ability to get involved or interact with others on campus might help them realize the ways social integration can impact their experience as a student as it relates to their persistence. Based on the findings, this could include improving practices to better foster peer interactions outside of the classroom or offering programs at times that are convenient to commuter students' daily commutes. Higher education practitioners that work with commuter students should continue to explore commuter students' needs and desires for engagement on campus.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this study and previous research, there are many recommendations that can be made for future research:

1. Researchers can explore what other factors outside of student social integration contribute to commuter students' persistence in higher education.
2. Researchers could also investigate the impact academic integration has on the commuter student population compared to social integration.

3. A study to explore what aids in the retention and success of commuter students in higher education.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways social integration impacts persistence in the commuter student population. Additionally, this study examined commuter student involvement and the ways their involvement was impacted. The results showed that social involvement in the commuter student population is low and impacted by various factors both inside and outside of their college institution. This does not mean they do not want to be involved, but rather they have a difficult time doing so. As far as social integration goes in relation to their persistence, peer interactions seem to be the biggest contributing factor to their persistence in social integration. Despite previous research suggesting that social integration is a salient factor in students' persistence in higher education, it may not be the most contributing factor in this population due to their little social engagement. Recommendations for future practice should consider the ways we can help increase the engagement of the commuter student population thus having a greater impact on their persistence. Additionally, further research should explore areas that might have a larger impact on commuter student persistence such as academic integration.

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## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board Approval



**DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier:** FWA00007111

**Rowan IORG/IRB:** Glassboro/CMSRU

**IRB Chair Person:** Dr. Ane Johnson

**IRB Director:** Eric Gregory

**Effective Date:** November 17, 2023

### Notice of Approval - Initial

**Study ID:** PRO-2023-350

**Title:** Impact of social integration on student persistence in commuter students

**Principal Investigator:** Stephanie Lezotte

**Study Coordinator:** Julianna Paolini

**Co-Investigator(s):** Julianna Paolini

**Sponsor:** Internal

**Study Sites:** Rowan University, Glassboro Campus

**Submission Type:** Initial

**Submission Status:** Exempt

**Approval Date:** November 17, 2023

**Review Type:** Exempt

**Exempt Category:** Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

**Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code:** N/A

**Pediatric/Children Code:** N/A

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

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.

2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.

2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual



progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.

3a. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.

3b. Human Subjects Research Training: Proper training in the conduct of human subjects research must be current and not expired. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator and the investigator to complete training when expired. Any modifications and renewals will not be approved until training is not expired and current.

4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.

5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office

(45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:

<https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>

6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>

7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.

10. Letter Comments: There are no additional comments.

11. **NJDOH Approved Studies:** IRB approval granted per the Data Use Agreement. Upon receipt of the fully executed Data Use Agreement (DUA) from NJDOH, the Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring an electronic, fully signed DUA is emailed to the Rowan University IRB.

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

## Appendix B

### Survey Questions



#### Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Impact of Social Integration on Student Persistence in Commuter Students. You are included in this survey because you are enrolled as an undergraduate student at Rowan University, commute to the Glassboro main campus, and have completed at least one semester. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 368, but the survey will be available to 8,500 students.

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 quantitatively evaluate how areas of social integration impact commuter students' overall persistence towards continuing at Rowan University.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey.

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There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how social integration and engagement impacts commuter students at Rowan University. Additionally, the results from this study can provide information on how to better serve the commuter student population at Rowan University.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can reach out to Julianna Paolini at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Julianna Paolini: paolin22@rowan.edu

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Stephanie Lezotte, School of Graduate Studies, lezotte@rowan.edu 856-256-4124

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-2023-350

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Please complete the checkbox below. To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and an enrolled, undergraduate student at Rowan University.

- Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

## Demographics

What is your age?

- 18-22  
 23-27  
 28-32  
 32 and older

What is your gender?

- Male  
 Female  
 Non-binary / third gender  
 Prefer not to say

Are you a full-time (enrolled in at least 12 credits) or a part-

time (enrolled in less than 12 credits) student?

- Full-time
- Part-time

What year are you currently in?

- First-year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

How many semesters have you completed at Rowan University?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8+

What is your expected year of graduation?

- 2024
- 2025
- 2026
- 2027
- 2028
- 2029+

How many miles away do you commute to Rowan University?

- Under 1 mile
- 1-5 miles
- 6-10 miles
- Over 10 miles

Approximately how many minutes does it take for you to commute to Rowan University?

- Under 5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- 15-20 minutes
- 20-25 minutes
- Greater 25 minutes

During the academic year, what is your living arrangement?

- With other Rowan University students in off-campus housing in Glassboro
- With parents, family members, or partner/spouse in Glassboro
- With parents, family members, or partner/spouse in surrounding towns or counties in South Jersey
- Independently off-campus
- Other

What is the zip code of where you reside during the academic year?

### Survey Questions

During your time at Rowan University, how engaged are you with clubs or organizations on-campus?

- Very engaged
- Engaged
- Neutral

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- Somewhat engaged
- Not at all engaged

How engaged are you with on-campus programming such as Rowan After Hours, movie nights, Profs Place Trivia, etc.?

- Very engaged
- Engaged
- Neutral
- Somewhat engaged
- Not at all engaged

Have you ever attended any athletic events at Rowan University?

- No
- Yes

How often do you interact with peers outside of the classroom on-campus?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely

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Never

Are you satisfied with your level of social engagement at Rowan University?

- No  
 Yes

How would you rate your level of satisfaction with social engagement at Rowan University?

- Very dissatisfied  
 Somewhat dissatisfied  
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
 Somewhat satisfied  
 Very satisfied

My level of social engagement meets my expectations of how engaged I want to be.

- Strongly agree  
 Somewhat agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Somewhat disagree  
 Strongly disagree

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Do you wish you could increase your level of engagement outside the classroom?

- No
- Yes

If you had more opportunities to get involved that are convenient to you, would you take advantage of them?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Do any outside commitments impact your ability to get involved or interact with others on-campus? Check all that apply.

- Time it takes to commute
- Traffic
- Finding alternative means of transportation
- Parking
- Conflicts with work schedule
- Household responsibilities
- Lack of interest in events/activities offered

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The time events/activities take place

Other

Involvement in extra-curricular activities such as clubs or student organizations contributes to my persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Attending on-campus programming such as Rowan After Hours, movie nights, Profs Place Trivia, etc. contributes to my persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/Q/EditSection/Blocks/Ajax/GetSurveyPrintPreview?ContextSurveyID=SV\\_1GGx380P08Y6uf1&ContextLibraryID=U...](https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/Q/EditSection/Blocks/Ajax/GetSurveyPrintPreview?ContextSurveyID=SV_1GGx380P08Y6uf1&ContextLibraryID=U...)

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Peer interactions outside of the classroom contribute to my persistence to continue onto the next semester at Rowan University.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Being involved outside of the classroom contributes to my persistence to continue at Rowan University.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

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## Appendix C

### Recruitment Email



Email Subject/Letter Heading: Social Integration and Student Persistence in Commuter Students

Hello,

I am writing to you about a volunteer opportunity to participate in a research study titled: Impact of Social Integration on Student Persistence in Commuter Students. This research study is investigating how areas of social integration impact commuter students' overall persistence in their institution. Potential benefits of this important research study are by participating in this study, you may help us understand how social integration and engagement impacts commuter students at Rowan University. After the data is collected, the results from this study can provide information on how to better serve the commuter student population at Rowan University.

You may volunteer to participate in this study if you are enrolled as an undergraduate student at Rowan University, commute to the Glassboro main campus, and have completed at least one semester. Your participation will require you to complete a survey that may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. This research study will take place at Rowan University via online survey.

Contact Stephanie Lezotte at [lezotte@rowan.edu](mailto:lezotte@rowan.edu) or Julianna Paolini at [paolin22@rowan.edu](mailto:paolin22@rowan.edu) about this research study.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-350)

Sincerely,

Julianna Paolini

Version Date: 01/26/2022

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PRO-2023-350  
Approved on 11-17-2023