The impact of student employment on student involvement

Stefanie Anderson
Rowan University

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THE IMPACT OF STUDENT EMPLOYMENT
ON STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

by
Stefanie Anderson

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration of The Graduate School at Rowan University May 7, 2009

Approved by
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date Approved May 7, 2009
ABSTRACT

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THE IMPACT OF STUDENT EMPLOYMENT ON STUDENT INVOLVEMENT
2008/09
Dr. Burton R. Sisco
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of student employment on student involvement. The study also assessed the difference in levels of involvement between those students who worked on-campus verse off-campus and assessed the impact of demographic factors on levels of student engagement. The subjects in this study were 223 students at Rowan University during the 2008-2009 academic year. A questionnaire was used to collect demographic information and information from the 2008 fall semester, such as GPA and number of credits taken. The survey also provided information on participation in activities at Rowan University and data concerning paid employment (i.e. location of employment and hours spent working per week). The results of this study generally confirm the findings that the impact of paid employment on student involvement is neutral. However, location of the employment was found to have some effect on the degree of involvement in specific activities. Data analysis also found a statistically significant negative correlation between GPA and tutored or taught other students, residence hall activities, and group exercise classes offered at the REC.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the last several years, colleges and universities have been intensely looking at selection and retention issues among students. One of the main concerns in the recruitment and retention of students is the escalating cost of tuition. In order to meet the increasing tuition costs, many students have to be employed in a full-time or part-time job in order to meet the financial needs. College student employment has shown a steady increase in the past 20 years. Today, more than half of college students have a job. The number of college students who work is likely to increase because of reduced funding for higher education by state legislatures.

Statement of the Problem

More and more college students are relying on part-and full-time employment to help finance their college education. Colleges and universities have to confront the issue of students spending less time on campus and more time working. Previous research has studied the relationship of student employment to academic success and persistence (Astin, 1975; Furr & Elling, 2000; King, 1999; Kulm & Cramer, 2006). These studies have considered different variables that may impact this relationship, such as the number of hours a student works per week, living conditions, and on-campus versus off-campus employment.

There are differences of opinion regarding the impact of employment on college students’ academic performance. Some researchers say the number of hours a student
works has a direct relationship on academic success. Others disagree, claiming there is not a significant impact. Another issue of debate surrounds the place of employment. Researchers note that on-campus employment has a significantly positive impact on academic success, whereas other studies did not find a difference between on-campus employment verse off-campus employment.

Student involvement theory argues that in order for a curriculum to accomplish the intended effects, it has to draw enough student effort and energy to create the desired learning outcomes (Astin, 1999). Academic institutions are competing with family, friends, jobs, and other activities for a portion of a student’s time and energy. Research has found that the more students are involved in the college, the more students are likely to learn (Tinto, 1993). Astin (1999) theorizes that students who spend more time on campus increase the chance of connecting with other students, professors, and staff. On the other side, retention suffers, if a student has a full-time job off-campus.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of student employment on the level of involvement of students who lived on Rowan University’s campus. The study also investigated the impact student employment had on campus involvement at Rowan University between those students who worked on-campus versus off-campus.

Significance of the Study

This study assessed the impact student employment has on campus involvement. The findings of this study may provide guidance for counselors and academic advisors who are assisting students throughout their academic career. The results will acknowledge factors that impact student persistence, academic success, and engagement.
Assumptions and Limitations

The scope of this survey was limited to students living on Rowan University’s campus, a convenience sample of 223 students. The participants of this study were limited to those who returned the survey. It was assumed that all students honestly answered the survey. Results for this study were limited to the self-reporting survey of GPA, number of hours of work per week, and number of hours spent involved on campus, in the fall semester of 2008. Potential bias in the findings may have been the result of researcher perspectives and experiences.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Achievement: Self reported GPA for the fall 2008 semester at Rowan University.

2. College Performance: Self reported GPA for the fall 2008 semester at Rowan University.

3. Freshmen: Refers to undergraduate students, who had earned less than 15 credits previous to the study and enrolled in 12 or more credits during the Spring 2009 semester at Rowan University.

4. Junior: Refers to undergraduate students, who had earned 58 or more credits but no more than 89 credits previous to the study and enrolled in 12 or more credits during the Spring 2009 semester at Rowan University.

5. Senior: Refers to undergraduate students, who had earned 90 or more credits previous to the study and enrolled in 12 or more credits during the Spring 2009 semester at Rowan University.
6. Sophomore: Refers to undergraduate students, who had earned 30 or more credits but no more than 57 credits previous to the study and enrolled in 12 or more credits during the Spring 2009 semester at Rowan University.

7. Students: Refers to undergraduate students enrolled in 12 or more credits during the Spring 2009 semester at Rowan University.

8. Student Involvement: Active participation in campus activities, including studying, interacting with faculty, involvement with athletics, student government, and other campus organizations.

9. Work: Any job that a student does for money, including full and part-time, regular as well as casual work (i.e. occasional babysitting is included, voluntary work and unpaid housework are not included).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What impact does employment have on involvement of surveyed students during the fall 2008 semester at Rowan University?

2. Is there a difference in the amount of hours spent participating in student involvement activities between those who work on-campus versus off-campus?

3. What activities are employed students involved in and how much time do they devote to these activities?

4. What are the surveyed employed students’ attitudes regarding the importance given to social involvement, academic involvement, and the campus atmosphere at Rowan University?
5. Is there a significant relationship between demographic variables, the number of hours worked, and the number of hours involved in campus activities?

Overview of the Study

Chapter two includes a review of the professional literature that is relevant to this study. This chapter includes a discussion of the increasing trend in student employment and the most commonly reported reason for student employment. The debate on the relationship between working and academic success is also a focus in this section. Student involvement and engagement theories are discussed as well as the impact paid employment has on student involvement.

Chapter three provides a detailed description of how the study was conducted. An explanation of the context of the study is given as well as the population and sample size. The data collection instruments and collection process are also described. This section also includes a description of how the data were analyzed.

Chapter four presents the findings and results of the research questions posed previously in this chapter. This section provides a narrative and statistical analysis summary of the data.

Chapter five summarizes the study and discusses the major findings. Conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research are also presented.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW
Trends in Student Employment

Today, more than half of college students have a job. Between 1984 and 2001, the percentage of college students aged 18 to 24, at a four-year institution, who worked full- or part-time had increased from 49 to 77% (Choy, n.d.). The number of students working full-time while also going to school full-time had nearly doubled, rising from 5.6% in 1985 to 10.4% in 2000. The data indicate that the increased employment rate is largely due to increases in work among full-time college students (Orszag, Orszag, & Whitmore, 2001). The number of students working while attending college has risen annually throughout the study period.

Not only are more students working but they are working more hours. According to data published by the US Department of Education, the percentage of students who reported working 20 or more hours had risen from 14.1% in 1970 to 26.8% in 1995. The percentage of students working 35 hours or more also rose from 3.7% to 6.5% (Schuh, 2005).

Of particular interest is the increasing percentage of freshmen who work. Between 1993 and 1998, the number of college freshmen who worked 16 or more hours per week increased 4% (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). The Higher Education Research Institute found in 2004, that 47.2% of entering freshmen expected to get a job to help pay for college (Farrell, 2005), up from 34.7% in 1989 (Furr & Elling, 2000). Lipka (2007)
reported that the percentage of freshmen who planned to hold full-time jobs while in college jumped to 4.7% in 2007, from 2.7% in 2000.

In 2003, a survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute found that only 34% of freshmen had spent six or more hours per week outside of class on academic related work. This percentage decreased from the 47% found in 1987 (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). According to data collected between 2003 and 2006 by the US Department of Labor (2007), on an average weekday, full-time university and college students spent 3.2 hours engaged in educational activities, 2.8 hours working, and 3.9 hours in leisure and sport activities. Young (2002) found that college students are spending less time preparing for class than is recommended and that may be due to more students working and working an increased number of hours. As the number of hours working is increasing the time spent studying is decreasing.

Reasons Students Work

A trend toward increased student employment has coincided with increases in educational costs. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education observed that in 1980, tuition at four-year public colleges represented 12% of total family income for the lowest-income families. In 2000, tuition had climbed to 25% of family income for this group (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parkins, 2006). Trends in College Pricing 2007 has documented over the past 30 years college tuition and fees has risen quicker than the prices of other goods and services (Baum & Ma, 2007). The cost of attending college has risen over three times as fast as median family income (Kulm & Cramer, 2006).
A 2002 survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute found that 65.3% of entering freshmen have either “some concern” or “major concerns” about not having enough money to complete their college degrees, this is an increase of 1% from 2001 (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). This concern is likely to increase because of reduced funding for higher education by state legislatures and the impact of changes in federal financial aid packages and scholarships.

Many families are facing challenges in financing their children’s college education. In order to meet the increasing tuition costs, many students have to be employed in a full-time or part-time job in order to meet their financial needs (Lenaghan & Sengupta, 2006). Over 60% of college students report that their parents now expect them to work during the school year to help cover expenses (Orszag, Orszag, & Whitmore, 2001). Sixty-three percent of dependent undergraduates who worked reported that their parents expected them to work about 21 hours per week (Horn & Berktold, 1998).

Debate Surrounding the Issue of Student Employment

“Debate abounds regarding the relationship between working and academic grades, with limited amounts of evidence supporting each of several possibilities” (Bradley, 2006, p. 486). Literature on student employment is marked by diversity and contradiction. The relationship between student employment and grade point averages (GPA), persistence, and retention has been examined in several studies. Some show negatively affected academic performance and retention, while others conclude that the impact of work is neutral or even beneficial. Some suggest on-campus employment has a different impact than off-campus and may be beneficial for student performance and
retention. There are still contrary findings on whether the number of hours a student works has a direct relationship on academic success. The professional literature reveals a complex and contradictory puzzle regarding the impact of employment on students’ higher education experience.

There is a common belief among most students and academicians that more time spent studying outside of class positively influences academic success and that more time spent working negatively influences academic performance (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). Astin (1975) agrees finding both full and part-time employment are associated with lower GPAs. He contends that working while enrolled in college is a threat to students’ level of academic success and satisfaction (Riggert et al., 2006). Student employment consumes time which might otherwise be spent on academics or co-curricular activities (Frerichs, 1995).

A study presented at the 39th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research in 1999, found those students with the lowest GPAs were 18-24 years old who had need based financial aid and were employed. A regression analysis indicated that for every $1000 earned, it lowered the student’s GPA by 0.03 points. In contrast, students who did not work had higher average GPAs than those who worked (Perkins, Pitter, Howat, & Whitfield, 1999).

King and Bannon (2002) reported that “nearly half of all full-time working students are working enough hours to hurt their academic achievement and the overall quality of their education” (p. 3). Many self-reporting surveys have found that most working students claim that their paid employment affects their academic performance (Bradley, 2006).
For every study that emphasizes the negative impact of student employment, there is an equally compelling study declaring the exact opposite. Numerous studies have been done showing that students who work while in college tend to have higher GPAs and are better suited to the work force upon graduation (Cheng & Alcantara, 2004). Bradley (2006) also concluded working long hours was associated with relatively high GPAs. Working a small number of hours actually helps grades, perhaps by encouraging good time-management skills (Applegate & Daly, 2006). Furr and Elling (2000) found that students who did not work reported slightly lower GPAs and were less satisfied than students who were employed 11-20 hours per week.

Much of the literature does agree that student employment can affect academic development positively or adversely depending on the number of hours worked. However the number of hours that produce a positive impact is still debatable. Research has found that working 30 hours or more may impair full-time students' academic performance (Cheng & Alcantara, 2004). Thirty-nine percent of students who worked full time indicated that work did have a negative impact on academic progress (Furr & Elling, 2000).

Riggert et al. (2006) reported finding no overall statistically significant differences in GPA between working and nonworking students but noted that students’ grades declined with increasing hours of work. King and Bannon (2002) also found that a student’s GPA lowers as he/she works more hours. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported similar data showing that students who do not work tend to perform more poorly, as measured by GPA, than those who work less than
15 hours per week however, working more than 15 hours decreases a student’s GPA (King, 1999).

Bradley (2006) also found clear evidence of a relationship between work participation and study success. However, the two groups of students that performed well academically were those who did not work and those who worked at least 20 hours per week. He did not find evidence that indicated students who worked fewer than 20 hours per week performed better academically than those working longer hours.

Many studies use students’ GPAs as a determining factor in the impact of employment on college students. Other studies compare retention rates. The NCES found that students who worked 1-15 hours per week had the lowest risk for enrollment interruption even when compared with students who did not work. Students who did not work had a rate similar to that of students who worked 16-34 hours per week. Not surprising was the finding that those students working 35 or more hours had the highest risk for dropping out (Riggert et al., 2006).

Astin (1993) found many negative outcomes of part-time employment, the biggest of which concerned completion of a degree. Students have reported that paid employment has a detrimental effect on their studies, affecting attendance at lectures and completion of assignments, reducing time for study and increasing stress (Ford & Bosworth, 1995; Tam Oi I & Morrison, 2005). The 2005 College Student Survey (CSS) found work to be an important source of stress for students. Twenty-five percent of surveyed students reported “frequently” or “occasionally” having to miss class due to employment. Forty-five percent reported they did not have time to study due to job responsibilities (Saenz & Barrera, 2007).
“One of the primary reasons students leave college before graduation is that they work too much while attending college” (Lee & Gladieux, 2003, p.17). Riggert et al. (2006) cited a few studies with findings that showed students who worked tended to take longer to graduate and had increased risk of dropping out. Astin (1975) suggests that full-time employment should be avoided. Working full-time has a consistently negative effect on college student persistence in completing degree requirements.

Many articles failed to differentiate between on-campus employment and off-campus employment. When there was a distinction, a trend toward student retention concerns and increased time required for completion of a degree was noted for students employed off-campus. Astin (1975) found that freshmen who were employed on-campus increased their chances of finishing college. Holding an off-campus job was negatively associated with completing a college degree.

Students holding off-campus jobs were more likely to drop out of school if the job was not related to career goals. Working-off campus can also negatively impact grade point average, college satisfaction, and willingness to re-enroll in classes (Hutto, 2002). However, if students find employment on-campus, they are more likely to finish their degree. On-campus jobs help students to stay connected to the campus community, and they are also more flexible to the student’s schedule (Astin, 1975).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) cite numerous studies showing consistent evidence that off-campus employment has a negative influence on completing a bachelor’s degree and a part-time job on campus has a positive impact on a timely graduation. This effect remains even when controls are made for factors such as
academic ability, secondary school achievement, socioeconomic status, educational aspirations, gender, race, and type of college.

A few studies did not find that location of employment impacted academic outcomes. Pascrella, Bohr, Amaury, Desler, & Zusman (1994) evaluated longitudinal cognitive growth in reading comprehension, mathematics, and critical thinking. The consequences for cognitive development were characterized as trivial for both on-campus and off-campus employment.

**Student Involvement and Engagement**

Astin (1999) defines student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (¶4). Forms of involvement can include living on-campus, participating in honors programs, number of hours spent studying, degree of interest in personal courses, interaction with faculty, athletic involvement, and involvement in student government and other campus organizations (Astin, 1999).

According to Astin (1999) student involvement theory argues that in order for a curriculum to accomplish the intended effects, it has to draw enough student effort and energy to create the desired learning outcomes. Active participation is encouraged to achieve the greatest learning and development. Educators are encouraged to focus on what the student does and how much energy and time the student devotes to learning. The theory acknowledges that students have a finite amount of time and energy. Institutions are competing with family, friends, jobs, and other activities for a portion of a student’s time and energy. Astin (1999) suggests that student time is the most valuable institutional resource. According to student involvement theory, “the extent to which
students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and 
effort they devote to activities designed to produce these gains” (Astin, 1999, ¶31).

Astin (1993) found that the following involvement variables have a positive 
association with a student’s GPA: tutoring other students, hours spent studying, hours 
spent talking with faculty outside of class. On the other hand, hours spent partying, 
working full-time, and being a member of a sorority or fraternity are negatively 
associated with academic performance.

Tinto’s review of the literature (1993) concluded that the more students are 
involved in the college, the more frequently they converse with faculty and other students 
outside of the classroom, and the more students are likely to learn. In Tinto’s (1993) 
Theory of Individual Departure, he states, “the absence of interaction almost always 
enhances the likelihood of departure” (p. 117). The less interaction a student has with 
faculty and staff lessens commitments, lowers individual goals, and isolates the student 
from the intellectual life of an institution. Tinto (1993) also incorporated the role of 
external communities (work, family, outside affiliations) and their potential impact on a 
student’s likelihood to persist. External community ties may pull the student away from 
the university, impacting the extent to which the student becomes academically and 
socially integrated. The nature of the external communities, the amount of time devoted, 
and the level of personal value and commitment associated with these communities 
factors into the extent to which the outside force has a significant impact on a student’s 
degree of integration into the university community and in turn its impact on retention 
(Tinto, 1993).
Students who are actively engaged in educational activities are more likely to "enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development" (Carini, Kuh, Klein, 2006, p.2). Kuh uses the term student engagement in his reports and studies to describe "the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside of the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities" (Kuh, 2003, p. 25). This definition is remarkably similar to Astin’s definition of student involvement.

Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) studied the forms of student engagement associated with student performance. The data sources used were the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), college GPA, and tests developed by Research and Development (RAND). A positive correlation was found between student engagement and scores on the RAND and GRE tests. Student engagement was found to have a positive but weak effect on critical thinking. Conclusions from this study also reported that student engagement is only one source which impacts learning outcomes.

After three years of findings from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Kuh (2003) reports smaller schools generally engage students more effectively. Another finding suggests that women, full-time students, students living on-campus, international students and learning community students on average are more engaged than others. The NSSE results also found that the students who reported more experience with diversity also reported being more involved in active and collaborative learning. Results from the NSSE also indicate that students are not spending as much time studying and preparing for class as deemed necessary by the faculty. Students have also reported that their institution does not emphasize the importance of studying.
Impact of Work on Student Involvement

According to Astin’s (1999) involvement theory, students employed off-campus are less likely to succeed in college because their work draws their time and energy away from college. His theory is supported by a few studies indicating that working many hours hinders involvement (Furr & Elling, 2000) and those students who invest time and energy with peers and faculty increase personal learning and persistence (Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Tinto (1993) agrees, stating “Employment limits the time a student has for academic studies and limits opportunities for interaction with faculty and peers” (p. 64). This may cause social integration and academic performance to suffer. Lundberg (2004) examined a national sample of 3,774 responses to the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) and found that working hindered involvement, but did not have a negative effect on learning. This is contrary to Astin’s involvement theory and Tinto’s departure theory.

Location of employment and the number of hours spent working seem to be a factor in whether an employed student is involved within the college community. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found in a review of studies that there is consistent evidence showing that off-campus employment has a negative impact on persistence and degree attainment. Part-time employment on-campus was found to have a positive influence. The theory being that working on-campus helps students integrate into campus life and that working off-campus hinders involvement (Horn & Berktold, 1998).

Astin (1999) found that holding a part-time job on-campus positively affected retention. Astin theorizes that students who spend more time on campus increase the chance of connecting with other students, professors, and staff. On the other side,
retention suffers, if a student has a full-time job off-campus. The more time spent off-campus on nonacademic activities decreased the time and energy the student can dedicate to campus activities and class work.

Lundberg (2004) found that students employed more than 20 hours per week off-campus interacted with faculty and other students less frequently than any other student. Students working less than 20 hours reported similar levels of interaction as did non-working students.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature shows that there is a commonly held belief among students that work has a negative impact on academic performance and involvement. However, there is a great discrepancy among the literature about the impact of student employment. Some of the research has not found a significant negative relationship of paid employment on students’ results. Other studies even found a moderate amount of work may be beneficial. Still others contend that those students who work while attending college have an increased probability of dropping out and negative effects will be seen in their academic progress.

There is also much debate about the number of hours a student works and the location of employment. In general on-campus employment has been found to have less of a negative effect on academic performance and involvement and possibly even beneficial compared with off-campus employment. While some research has shown that working 30 or more hours per week can be detrimental to a student’s GPA, other studies have found no negative effects of full-time employment on academic outcomes. Most studies do suggest that a moderate amount of nonacademic work is considered helpful to
academic achievement when compared to heavy or no employment. Working on-campus fewer than 15 hours per week seems to be the right combination for high levels of student involvement.

Most of the conclusions have been reached through examining national college student surveys. These studies included traditional and nontraditional students and a wide range of ages and living conditions.

Very few have looked at the impact student employment has on students who live on-campus. A clear understanding of the impact of student employment has importance for students when they are faced with the question of financing their college education. It is also essential that educators and advisors clearly understand the impact of employment on student outcomes. With the impact of student employment on academic performance being inconclusive and the strong evidence suggesting the positive influence of student involvement on student’s GPA and persistence, more research is needed to determine if paid employment impacts student involvement.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. The school is a medium sized public university located in southern New Jersey. Founded in 1923 as a school for training elementary teachers, the university currently offers 58 undergraduate majors among seven colleges. The university also offers seven teacher certification programs, 38 master’s degrees and specializations, 19 graduate certification programs, and a doctoral program in educational leadership. Classes are taught by professors, with an average class size of 20 and a 15 to 1 student/faculty ratio.

The 10,000 full and part time student population enrolled in the 2008-2009 academic year, at Rowan University was comprised of students from the Mid-Atlantic States and 30 foreign countries. Among the 8,862 undergraduates enrolled in the 2008 fall semester, 1,515 were freshmen, 1,874 were sophomores, 2,462 were juniors, and 2,825 were seniors. Approximately 48% of Rowan’s undergraduate population was men. Rowan University is a selective institution admitting 57% of its applicants (CollegeBoard, 2009).

The university provides over 150 student clubs and organizations, supplying students with professional, service, and cultural activities. Offering eight men’s and 10 women’s sports teams, Rowan University is a member of the Division III, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).
The university houses five residence halls and four apartment complexes. Rowan University requires all unmarried, undergraduate, first-year, full-time students to live on campus or reside with a parent or legal guardian whom lives within a 40 mile radius of the campus.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was all the students enrolled in a higher education institution during the 2008-2009 academic year. The available population was all the students enrolled at Rowan University during the 2009 spring semester. The projected number of students needed for the project was 300. For the purposes of this research, graduate students were excluded. All undergraduates, women and men, were included with a preference towards those students between the ages of 18 and 23.

Instrumentation

The survey used to assess the impact of student employment was determined from a review of the literature and adapted from three instruments used in previous studies. Bradley (2006) developed a 12-page interview schedule through a series of pilot tests and focus group discussions. The interview was comprised of four sections: 19 open and closed-ended questions pertaining to the student’s paid work, 12 questions relating to the student’s current studies, 21 Likert-type statements regarding the relationship between the student’s studies and employment, and 10 questions about the student’s demographic background.

Frerichs (1995) developed an incoming freshmen student questionnaire to ascertain their preconceptions about college employment. Interviews and a pilot survey
were conducted with college students and the survey was revised to meet the approval of the focus group.

Ohio University administers the Student Involvement Study to first-year students each year. The questionnaire collects information on three aspects of student involvement: academic involvement, social involvement and activities, and personal goals and adjustment to college.

The three surveys influenced the design of the instrument used in this research. To meet the objectives of the research questions, the questions and statements used in the three surveys were altered. The survey used in this study focused on the impact employment had on the subject rather than perceptions paid employment has on college students. Another focus of this study concerned the engagement of students in higher education. A few of the questions and statements used on the final instrument were taken directly from the three previously mentioned surveys, many of the items were written for the purpose of this research.

The survey (Appendix B) consists of seven sections: Background Information, Fall 2008 Information, Participation of Activities, Frequency of Engagement, Relationships on Campus, Importance and Satisfaction, and Employment. The first portion gathered demographic information. The second section asked participants to recall information from the 2008 fall semester, such as GPA, number of credits taken, and approximate number of classes skipped. The following section asked students to indicate participation in certain activities, including athletics and various organizations, and a weekly average number of hours spent participating in each activity. Section D collected the frequency each participant engaged in activities on a monthly average,
including discussions with faculty and tutoring other students. A small segment of the survey asked students to consider their relationships with other students, faculty members, and staff and administration. The sixth element looked at social and academic involvement and campus atmosphere. Students were first asked to rate how important each item was by using a Likert-style scale. The participants were also asked to rate how satisfied they were with each item using the same scale. The final section was answered by those students who were employed during the fall semester of 2008. Questions covered the student’s experience of working while attending Rowan University. Students also ranked six Likert-style items by evaluating their attitude towards personal employment experience.

Six students who were enrolled at a local community college were given the survey to determine the readability and face validity. The wording of two questions was changed to help answer the research questions. The students took between 10 and 12 minutes to complete the pilot survey. A Cronbach’s Alpha reliability of .902 was found for section F of the survey. Section G yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha reliability of .714. These reliability scores indicate that the instrument is consistent. The Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix A) approved the instrument for use in this research.

Data Collection

The subjects selected to take the survey were all students who attended Rowan University’s campus in Glassboro, New Jersey. The survey was administered in February, 2009. Subjects were drawn from visits to residence halls and the Chamberlain Student Center. Visitations occurred during various times and days. No identifying
information was collected. In order to achieve a high participation rate candy and snacks were available for all respondents.

Data Analysis

On and off-campus employment, the number of hours worked per week, and no employment were the independent variables. The information for these variables was section C of the survey. Academic achievement, number of classes skipped, and hours spent participating in college sponsored extra-curricular activities are the dependent variables. Variations in the impact employment has on student engagement were investigated based on each of the four independent variables using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Data were analyzed using frequency tables. Cross-tabular analysis, obtained through SPSS, studied the impact of independent variables on dependent variables. Correlations were calculated with the Pearson product-moment to examine the data in relation to the research questions. Descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations) computed through SPSS were also used to study the data in regards to the research questions.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Profile of the Sample

The subjects in this study consisted of 223 full and part-time students who were enrolled at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey during the 2008-2009 academic year. The subjects were recruited through convenience sampling. Of the 264 surveys distributed, 223 surveys were returned for a response rate of 84%.

There were 112 females (50.2%) and 111 males (49.8%). Eight students (3.6%) reported a part-time enrollment status. The majority (42.6%) of the subjects were between the ages of 19 and 20. Of the 223 surveyed students, 97 (44%) were unemployed, 59 students (27%) indicated having an off-campus job, 55 (25%) were employed on-campus, and 12 students (5%) reported employment both on-campus and off-campus.

Table 4.1 shows the demographics of the subjects who participated in the study. The first section represents the racial and ethnic distribution of the subjects in the study. The majority of the subjects were White, Non Hispanic with 68%. African Americans represented the next largest group (17%). Eight percent of the subjects were Hispanic, while 5% were Asian or Pacific Islander. Less than 1% of the subjects represented American Indian.

The following section contains data of the approximate total family income as reported by the respondents. Over 59% of the subjects indicated an approximate total
family income of $45,000 or more. One hundred fifty three respondents (69%) received financial aid and/or scholarships.

Table 4.1 also contains information about the number of credits the subjects took during the fall semester of 2008. The majority (55%) of the students in this research were taking between 13 and 15 credits.

The last section describes the subject’s cumulative GPA for the fall semester of 2008. The majority of the subjects (71%) had a GPA of 3.0 or greater.

Table 4.1

Sample Demographics (N = 223)

| Race and Ethnicity                   | f  | %
|--------------------------------------|----|---
| African American                     | 37 | 16.6
| American Indian                      | 1  | 0.4
| Asian or Pacific Islander           | 11 | 54.9
| White, Non-Hispanic                 | 153| 68.6
| Hispanic                             | 17 | 7.6
| Other                                | 4  | 1.8
| Total                                | 223| 100

| Approximate Total Family Income     | f  | %
|-------------------------------------|----|---
| Less than $25,000                   | 18 | 8.1
| $25,001 to 45,000                   | 33 | 14.8
| $45,001 to 65,000                   | 46 | 20.6
| Over $65,000                        | 87 | 39.0
| I do not know                       | 39 | 17.5
| Total                               | 223| 100

| Number of Credits taken During Fall Semester of 2008 | f  | %
|------------------------------------------------------|----|---
| 1-6                                                  | 2  | 0.9
| 7-9                                                  | 6  | 2.7
| 10-12                                                | 36 | 16.1
| 13-15                                                | 122| 54.7
| 16 or more                                           | 57 | 25.6
| Total                                                | 223| 100

| Cumulative GPA for the Fall Semester of 2008          | f  | %
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|---
| 4.0 to 3.7                                           | 54 | 24.2
| 3.6 to 3.4                                           | 47 | 21.1
| 3.3 to 3.0                                           | 57 | 25.6
Analysis of the Data

Research Question 1: What impact does employment have on involvement of surveyed students during the fall 2008 semester at Rowan University?

Table 4.2 compares the statistics of employed students versus unemployed students and the number of hours students participated in involvement activities per week and the number of hours spent in involvement activities per month. Sixty-nine percent of the unemployed students indicated time spent in involvement activities per week and 95% indicated time spent in involvement activities per month. Of the 126 employed surveyed students, 67% indicated time spent in involvement activities and 90% indicated time spent in involvement activities per month. The average number of hours spent in involvement activities per week was 11.27 for unemployed students and employed students recorded an average of 12.26 hours per week. The averages of the number of hours spent in involvement activities per month were also close between the two groups with unemployed students recording an average of 23.16 hours and employed students indicating an average of 22.6 hours per month.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.9 to 2.7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 to 2.4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 to 2.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 to 1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 to 1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26
Table 4.2

Statistics of Employed Students Versus Unemployed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hours involved per week</th>
<th></th>
<th>Hours involved per month</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n = 97$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>13.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n = 126$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in the amount of hours spent participating in involvement activities between those students who work on-campus versus off-campus?

Twelve surveyed students indicated both on-campus and off-campus employment. For the purposes of this research question, these 12 surveys were omitted from the following analysis.

Table 4.3 looks at the number of hours employed students spent in involvement activities per week. Seventy-six percent of the students who were employed on-campus recorded time spent in various involvement activities, compared to the 56% of the students who were employed off-campus. The average amount of hours spent in involvement activities was 12.24 for those students who were employed on-campus, slightly higher than the average of 11.85 for the students employed off-campus.

Table 4.3

Hours Employed Students Spent in Involvement Activities per Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus employment</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>9.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus employment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>16.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 provides data on the number of hours employed students spent in involvement activities per month. The percents of students employed on-campus and off-campus who indicated time spent in involvement activities are relatively equal in this category. The average number of hours spent per month in involvement activities was slightly higher at 24.86 for those students employed on-campus than those employed off-campus at an average of 22.23 hours per month.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-campus employment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>24.86</td>
<td>20.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-campus employment</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>22.23</td>
<td>23.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: What activities are employed students involved in and how much time do they devote to these activities?

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 present information regarding this research question. The tables look at the frequencies of participation in activities of working students. The tables also look at the average number of hours the employed students spent participating in each activity.

Table 4.5 provides information on the number of employed students who participated in involvement activities and how many hours a week were spent participating in each activity. The highest participation rates among employed students were found in social clubs with 29 and volunteer service with 28 participants. The activities in which the least employed students participated in were university publication with 4 participants and intercollegiate sport and college productions or performances both
with 6 participants. The activities in which employed students indicated the highest average time spent a week were intercollegiate sport with 20.33 hours and member of a social fraternity or sorority with 11.67 hours. Residence hall activities and religious organizations had the lowest weekly average with 3.24 hours and 3.18 hours, respectively.

Table 4.5

*Hours a Week Participating in Involvement Activities.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social clubs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer service</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group exercise classes offered at the REC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramural athletics</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence hall activities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional or developmental clubs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a social fraternity or sorority</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership programs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious organization</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student government</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College productions or performances</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercollegiate sport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>20.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University publication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 displays information on the number of employed students who participated in involvement activities and how many hours a month were spent participating in each activity. More employed students (82) at Rowan University indicated participation in the activity of “worked with classmates outside of class” than any other activity. The second highest indicated participation activity among employed students at Rowan University was “discussed grades or assignments with an instructor” with 76 participants. The activities with the least amount of participation included “participated in religious or spiritual activities” with 19 and “participated in community
based projects as part of class” with 17 participants. The activity of “tutored or taught other students” recorded the highest monthly average of 16.37 hours among employed students. The lowest monthly average of 2.74 hours was found in the activity of “discussed grades or assignments with an instructor.”

Table 4.6

Hours a Month Participating in Involvement Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worked with classmates outside of class</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>11.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked about career plans with faculty or staff</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in Rowan After Hours/SUP events</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, or dance</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutored or taught other students</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>20.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in religious or spiritual activities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in community based projects as part of class</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4: What are the surveyed employed students’ attitudes regarding the importance given to social involvement, academic involvement, and the campus atmosphere at Rowan University?

Table 4.7 looks at the attitudes of employed students towards the importance of social involvement. The majority of employed students (60%) indicated that having a job while enrolled was important or very important. A total of 31% indicated that religious activities were not at all important.
### Table 4.7

*Survey of Employed Students’ Attitudes Towards the Importance of Social Involvement*

*Very Important = 1, Neutral = 3, Not at all Important = 5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th></th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having a job while enrolled</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing personal relationships with peers at Rowan</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in student organizations</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with students of different races or cultures</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in religious activities</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in campus activities</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending cultural events on campus</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 displays the attitudes of employed students towards the importance of academic involvement. The majority of employed students (52%) indicated academic advising to be very important or important.
Table 4.8

Survey of Employed Students' Attitudes Towards the Importance of Academic Involvement

Very Important = 1, Neutral = 3, Not at all Important = 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Important</th>
<th></th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th></th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.59, SD = 1.54</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty availability outside of class</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.67, SD = 1.48</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contact with faculty</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.85, SD = 1.45</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9 shows the attitudes of survey employed students towards the importance of the campus atmosphere. An adequate social atmosphere was indicated to be very important among the majority of employed students (39%) with adequate personal security a very close second at 38%. However, adequate personal security also received the highest percent in the not at all important rating with 21%.
Table 4.9

Survey of Employed Students' Attitudes Towards the Importance of the Campus Atmosphere

Very Important = 1, Neutral = 3, Not at all Important = 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate social atmosphere</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.40, SD = 1.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate personal security</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.60, SD = 1.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate academic atmosphere</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.52, SD = 1.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitting into campus community</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.63, SD = 1.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate physical environment on campus</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 126, M = 2.68, SD = 1.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between demographic variables, the number of hours worked, and the number of hours involved in campus activities?

Several Pearson product moments were calculated for correlations of many variables. The following tables look at the relationships between the respondents' demographics of academic performance, gender, age, race and ethnicity, location of employment, and specific involvement activities at Rowan University.

Table 4.10 presents the significant relationships between the respondents' GPA and their level of involvement at Rowan University. This study found a significant but weak negative correlation between GPA and residence hall activities ($r = - .146, p = 33$
A weak negative correlation was also found between GPA and group exercise classes offered at the REC ($r = -.140, p = .037$). GPA and tutored or taught other students yielded a weak, negative correlation ($r = -.156, p = .020$).

Table 4.10

*Significant Correlations between GPA and Involvement Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence hall activities</td>
<td>-.146*</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group exercise classes offered at the REC</td>
<td>-.140*</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutored or taught other students</td>
<td>-.156*</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.11 investigates the relationship between age and involvement activities. The researcher found a moderately significant positive correlation between age and off-campus employment ($r = .364, p = .000$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. The table shows a negative significant correlation between age and intercollegiate sport ($r = -.142, p = .034$). The relationship between age and participation in Rowan After Hours/SUP events was found to be negative and weak ($r = -.191, p = .004$).

Table 4.11

*Significant Correlations between Age and Involvement Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off – campus employment</td>
<td>.364**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercollegiate sport</td>
<td>-.142*</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in Rowan After Hours/SUP events</td>
<td>-.191*</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 4.12 shows the significant correlations between the location of student employment and involvement activities. A weak positive correlation was found between
on-campus employment and student government ($r = .155, p = .020$) A moderate positive
correlation was found between on-campus employment and residence hall activities ($r = .246, p = .000$). Negative correlations were found between off-campus employment and
residence hall activities ($r = -0.145, p = .030$) and participation in Rowan After Hours/SUP
($r = -0.181, p = .007$).

Table 4.12

*Significant Correlations between Location of Employment and Involvement Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On - Campus</td>
<td>Student Government</td>
<td>.155*</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residence hall activities</td>
<td>.246**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off - Campus</td>
<td>Residence hall activities</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in Rowan After Hours/SUP events</td>
<td>-.181**</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the impact of employment on student involvement at Rowan University during the 2008-2009 academic year. The study was also designed to assess the difference in levels of involvement between those students who worked on-campus versus off-campus and assess the impact of demographic factors on levels of student engagement. The subjects in this study were 223 students at Rowan University during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The Ohio University Student Involvement Study, as well as two other surveys served as a guide in developing the instrument. The survey gathered demographic information and information from the 2008 fall semester, such as GPA and number of credits taken. The survey also provided information on participation in activities at Rowan University. The final section was answered by those students who were employed during the fall semester of 2008 and asked about the student's experience while working and attending college. Two-hundred-twenty-three surveys were anonymously returned, yielding a return rate of 84%.

Descriptive statistics and correlations, computed through SPSS software, were used to analyze the data from the completed surveys. Correlations between variables were calculated using a Pearson product-moment.
Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What impact does employment have on involvement of surveyed students during the fall 2008 semester at Rowan University?

The percentages of unemployed and employed students who participated in involvement activities are very close, 69% compared to 67%. Similar results were found in the comparison of the number of students who indicated time spent in involvement activities, 95% compared to 90%. These findings contradict previous studies conducted by Furr and Elling (2000) and Lundberg (2004). Also relatively similar were the average number of hours spent in involvement activities between unemployed students verse employed. This finding contradicts Tinto’s (1993) theory that employment limits the time students have for involvement activities. This study actually found that employed students spent almost an average of an hour more in involvement activities per week than the unemployed students.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in the amount of hours spent participating in involvement activities between those students who work on-campus versus off-campus?

Twenty percent more of the students employed on-campus spent time in involvement activities compared to those students employed off-campus. This finding supports the theory that working on-campus helps students integrate into campus life and that working off-campus hinders involvement (Horn & Berktold, 1998). However, this difference was not reflected in the same comparison for the time spent in involvement activities. This finding disputes Astin’s (1999) theory that the more time spent off campus decreases the time and energy students can dedicate to campus activities.
Contrary to Astin’s (1999) theory, this study found the average number of hours spent in involvement activities were relatively close when comparing those students who worked on-campus versus off-campus.

Research Question 3: What activities are employed students involved in and how much time do they devote to these activities?

The findings showed that more employed students were involved in social clubs than any other involvement activity with a reported average of 4.28 hours a week. This was one of the lower reported weekly averages. These results support Furr and Elling’s (2000) findings that work hinders the amount of time spent in involvement activities. It is not surprising, that only six of the employed students participated in an intercollegiate sport, considering the amount of time that is needed for athletics, an average of 20.33 hours per week was reported.

Tinto (1993) stated that employment limits the time a student has for interaction with faculty and peers. However, the findings in this study showed that 65% of employed students at Rowan University worked with classmates outside of class for an average of 9.2 hours a month. The majority of employed students (60%) also indicated time spent discussing grades or assignments with an instructor.

Research Question 4: What are the surveyed employed students’ attitudes regarding the importance given to social involvement, academic involvement, and the campus atmosphere at Rowan University?

It is not surprising that the majority of employed students (60%) reported having a job while enrolled was important or very important. This supports Lenaghan and
Sengupta’s (2006) findings that many students have to be employed in order to meet financial needs.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between demographic variables, the number of hours worked, and the number of hours involved in campus activities?

This study found a weak but negative correlation between GPA and tutored or taught other students \( (r = -0.156, p = 0.020) \). This disputes Astin’s (1993) findings that a student’s GPA has a positive association with tutoring other students. This study also found significant negative correlations between GPA and two other involvement activities, residence hall activities \( (r = -0.146, p = 0.029) \) and group exercise classes offered at the REC \( (r = -0.140, p = 0.037) \). Although these findings present weak correlations, they serve to question the current validity of Tinto’s (1993) and Astin’s (1993) theories with students in the 21st century.

A moderate positive correlation was found between on-campus employment and residence hall activities \( (r = 0.246, p = 0.000) \). A positive correlation was also found between on-campus employment and student government \( (r = 0.155, p = 0.020) \). Significant negative correlations were found between off-campus employment and residence hall activities \( (r = -0.145, p = 0.030) \) and participation in Rowan After Hours/SUP events \( (r = -0.181, p = 0.007) \). These findings support Horn and Berktold’s (1998) theory that working on-campus helps students integrate into campus life and that working off-campus hinders involvement.
Conclusions

There is considerable inconsistency in the literature regarding the impact of work on academic performance and student involvement. Many of the inconsistencies may reflect the differences between the investigational methodologies. The variables associated with student employment makes it an extremely complex and situational entity. For this reason, there is legitimate room for debate and disagreements regarding methodologies used to measure impact and for interpreting the meaning of the outcomes.

It is important that counselors, university student affairs professionals, secondary educators, faculty, parents, and students have information related to the topic of student employment, as found in previous research, employment can affect students both positively and negatively. The relationship between paid employment and student involvement is also important for students, parents, advisors, and faculty to understand. In advising students, all parties need to be aware of the impact employment has not only on GPA, but also how it can impact a student’s integration into campus life.

The results of this study generally confirm the findings that the impact of paid employment on student involvement is neutral. There was only a difference of 2% between the number of unemployed and employed students who participated in involvement activities per week. The employed students actually reported a slightly higher average number of hours spent involved per week. These findings contradict Astin’s findings.

However, location of the employment was found to have some impact on the degree of involvement in specific activities. Comparing the number of hours spent participating in involvement activities per week, there is a significant percentage
difference (20%) between the students employed on-campus versus off-campus. The average reported number of hours was also slightly higher for those students working on-campus. These findings support Astin’s (1999) involvement theory.

Many of the findings in this study could not be disputed or supported by previous research because there has been little research on the impact employment has on student involvement in college. As tuitions rise across the country, more and more students will find a need to be employed to help pay for the cost of college. Analysis of the costs and benefits of student employment, relative to individual personalities and situations, can assist current and future students to maximize their college experience. Additionally, students who have certain personality types may be more likely to become involved in campus activities than are other students. Some students are more inclined to fit work, activities, and study into their schedules while others become overwhelmed with one or two of the three.

Recommendations for Practice

1. This study did not reveal the same patterns as specified in the published student involvement theories. This may be due to the dated studies that lead to the theories. Student Affairs professionals should be aware that more students are working throughout their high school careers which may be causing some of the student involvement theories to be out-dated. Student Affairs professionals should not be alarmed by student employment.

2. With more than half of college students working, there is a need to educate students on financial management so that students have the information necessary to make good financial decisions with the money they do have.
3. Students working on-campus were slightly more involved than those working off-campus. Institutions of higher education should look for ways to provide more on-campus employment opportunities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Data collected during this first study revealed rich opportunities for further exploration of the impact paid employment has on student engagement. The following suggestions are presented:

1. Further studies with a larger representative sample should be conducted to yield results for a more valid approximation of the target population.

2. A mixed-method study could be used to gain information on the impact paid employment has on the different aspects of the college experience, including retention rates, GPA, and making social connections.

3. Further investigation should be done into correlations between place of residence and level of involvement.

4. Another question to study is: Do the students who are highly involved in university activities while working more motivated than those students who are not involved?

5. Further research should also be done to investigate whether students’ perceptions of the impact paid employment has on student involvement impacts personal decision to work.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
November 26, 2008

Stefanie Anderson
257 Wilshire Blvd.
Woolwich Twp., NJ 08085

Dear Stefanie Anderson:

In accordance with the University’s IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2009-037

Project Title: The Impact of Student Employment on Student Engagement and Involvement at Rowan University

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for one calendar year from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman (hartman@rowan.edu or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Gonsam Pillay, Associate Provost for Research (pillay@rowan.edu or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burt Sisco, Educational Leadership, Education Hall
APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument
SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PAID EMPLOYMENT

This survey is being administered as part of master's degree research project at Rowan University. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly anonymous and no personally identifiable information is being requested. Moreover, whether you agree to participate or not, your decision will have no effect on your grades, your standing in class, or any other status. If you have any questions or would like to see the results of the study, please contact the researcher, Stefanie Anderson at stef_202@hotmail.com or the research advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco at sisco@rowan.edu.

Please answer these questions about yourself by circling your response.

Section A
Background Information:

1. Gender:
   a) Female
   b) Male

2. Race:
   a) African American
   b) American Indian
   c) Asian or Pacific Islander
   d) White, Non-Hispanic
   e) Hispanic
   f) Other

3. Current Age:
   a) 18 & under
   b) 19 to 20
   c) 21 to 22
   d) 23 & older

4. Student Enrollment Status:
   a) Full-time (12 or more credits)
   b) Part-time (11 or less credits)

5. What is the highest level of completed education for your parents?
   Father
   [ ] [ ] Did not finish high school
   [ ] [ ] Graduated from high school
   [ ] [ ] Some college
   [ ] [ ] Completed Associate’s degree
   [ ] [ ] Completed Bachelor’s degree
   [ ] [ ] Completed Master’s degree
   [ ] [ ] Completed Doctorate degree

   Mother
   [ ] [ ]

6. I receive financial aid and/or scholarships:
   a) Yes
   b) No

7. My approximate total family income is:
   a) less than $25,000
   b) $25,001 to 45,000
   c) $45,001 to 65,000
   d) Over $65,000
   e) I do not know

8. What class are you?
   a) Freshman
   b) Sophomore
   c) Junior
   d) Senior

Section B
Fall 2008 Information: Please answer by circling your response.

8. Number of credits taken during the fall semester of 2008:
   a) 1 – 6
   b) 7 – 9
   c) 10 – 12
   d) 13 – 15
   e) 16 or more
9. Grade point average (GPA) for the fall semester of 2008:
   a) 4.0 to 3.7  d) 2.9 to 2.7  g) 1.9 to 1.7
   b) 3.6 to 3.4  e) 2.6 to 2.4  h) 1.6 to 1.4
   c) 3.3 to 3.0  f) 2.3 to 2.0  i) 1.3 & below

10. Approximate number of classes skipped in the fall semester of 2008:
    a) 0  c) 4 - 6  
    b) 1 - 3  d) 7 or more

11. Which of the following best describes where you lived last semester?
    a) Residence hall or other campus housing
    b) Off - campus housing within walking distance
    c) Off - campus housing within driving distance

Section C
Participation of Activities
During your fall 2008 experience at Rowan University, have you participated in any of these activities? If so, check "yes" and write in how many hours you participated in each activity each week on average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Hours per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Off-campus Job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. On-campus Job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Member of a social fraternity or sorority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Intercollegiate Sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Intramural Athletics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Student Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. University Publication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. College Productions or Performances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Professional or Developmental Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Social Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Residence Hall Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Religious Organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Volunteer Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Leadership Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Group exercise classes offered at the REC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section D
Frequency of Engagement
During your fall 2008 experience at Rowan University, on average, how frequently did you participate monthly in each activity below?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours per</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Worked with classmates outside of class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Tutored or taught other students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Participated in community based projects as part of class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, or dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Participated in religious or spiritual activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Participated in Rowan After Hours/ SUP events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Talked about career plans with faculty or staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section E
Relationships on Campus
Mark the box that best represents your relationship with people at Rowan University:

Unfriendly

35. Relationships with other students 1 2 3 4 5
36. Relationships with faculty members 1 2 3 4 5
37. Relationships with staff/administration 1 2 3 4 5

Section F
Importance and Satisfaction
The following questions have two parts. First rate how important each item is to you by circling one of the numbers from 1 - 5. Second, rate how satisfied you are with each item by circling one of the numbers from 1 – 5. Use the following scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Not at all Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Involvement
1. Establishing personal relationships with peers at Rowan 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
2. Getting involved in student organizations 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
3. Getting involved in campus activities 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
4. Attending cultural events on campus 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
5. Interacting with students of different races or cultures 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
6. Getting involved in religious activities 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
7. Having a job while enrolled 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

Academic Involvement
1. Faculty availability outside of class 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
2. Social contact with faculty 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
3. Academic advising 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
### Campus Atmosphere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Adequate personal security
2. Adequate physical environment on campus
3. Adequate social atmosphere
4. Adequate academic atmosphere
5. Fitting into campus community

### Section G

**Employment**

Please answer the following questions only if you were employed during the fall 2008 semester.

1. Indicate your most important reason for working:
   - a) Gain work experience
   - b) Social interaction
   - c) Enjoyment
   - d) Parents require it
   - e) For the money
   - f) Relieve boredom
   - g) Other (please specify)

2. Rate each of the following statements, circling the number under the phrase that describes how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I would give up doing paid work during the semester if I could afford to.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) My job is extremely satisfying.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I feel a great deal of stress because of my job.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I feel overloaded trying to keep up with both my studies and paid work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) My paid work helps me develop skills relevant to my future career.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) I feel torn between the need to study and the need to meet my paid work commitments.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) My job has made involvement in campus activities and organizations difficult.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) My job is closely related to my career goals.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) My job is closely related to my major.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) My job is physically demanding.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) My job is mentally challenging.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your participation in this survey.
Please put the completed survey in the box next to the table.