MOTIVATING FACTORS OF MID-LEVEL COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

by

Johanna Koh
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty Program
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies

Committee:

_____ Director

_____

_____

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Humanities and Social
Science

Date: ___July 29, 2014___ Summer Semester 2014
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Motivating Factors Of Mid-level College Administrators

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

by

Johanna Koh
Bachelor of Arts
Gallaudet University, 1995

Director: Jan Arminio, Professor
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies

Summer Semester 2014
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
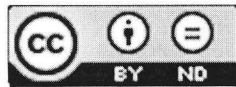
DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Alan, Megan and Conor, and my cats Oscar, Little Momma and Ratcliff.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American College Personnel Association .... ACPA
American Council on Education...ACE
Association for the Study of Higher Education...ASHE
Bureau of Labor Statistics ....BLS
Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education ....CAS
English Language Institute ....ELI
George Mason University.. GMU or Mason
Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies...MAIS
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators ....NASPA
University Life...UL

ABSTRACT

MOTIVATING FACTORS OF MID-LEVEL COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

Johanna Koh, MAIS

George Mason University, 2014

Thesis Director: Dr. Jan Arminio

This case study of mid-level college administrators at George Mason University explores the motivating factors that influence their decision to stay in higher education for over 10 years. This study used a purposeful sample of twelve participants. The three criteria to select participants were: 1) length of service must be at least ten years; 2) expertise must be in student affairs area; and 3) must have a master's degree. Data collected were based on individual interviews, which were transcribed, analyzed and coded.

The findings indicated that these administrators were motivated through direct contact with students, job satisfaction and career advancement.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Entering the world of higher education in late 2000 changed my perspectives on academia. My professional career began in the private sector where competition was fierce, unforgiving, support was lacking, and friendships were scarce. At times, I felt I was in a corn maze carefully weaving my way out without harming or offending someone. When I entered academia, I was in a complete shock over the different working environment. The dynamics of the academia were impressive in spite of the bureaucracy. It was an institution filled with energy, positivity, and understanding. It was and still is an environment that encourages exploration and learning. I imagined most, if not all, academic and non-academic professionals, and faculty as being brilliant, intellectual, and technologically advanced. Subsequently, it can be an intimidating environment. However, working with student affairs professionals became the source of my inspiration as they initiated many of my learning experiences.

My first job at a higher education institution was in a clinic. The doctors, nurses, and administrative professionals had an impact on my initial impression of the student affairs profession. Their genuine sense of responsibility and care for the students and patients had a lasting effect on me. After a couple of years, I moved to a department where I worked and met a very diverse group of professionals and faculty. It was a journey filled with coming to know the intricacies of a student affairs profession. When I

saw and experienced how student affairs professionals performed in their daily work, I decided to study the source of their motivation and the impact it has on their student affairs careers.

Here, I will introduce the motivational factors according to the literature that influenced the lengthy service of student affairs professionals and other concepts associated with my study.

The Site for My Study

This thesis focused on college administrators in student affairs at George Mason University (Mason) in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Mason is a "public, comprehensive research" (George Mason University, 2013, mission statement, para 1) university with the highest recorded enrollment of 33,917 students based on Fall 2013 enrollment (George Mason University, n.d.). The mission of the university is "an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world" (George Mason University, 2013, para 1). Mason was listed as the top ten "Up-and-Coming" universities in the U.S. News and World Report (2014). "According to the U.S. News, the 2013 "Up-and-Comers" list was developed from a survey of college administrators on what institutions they deemed "have recently made the most promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, student life, campus or facilities" (Herron, 2012, para 3).

With a large student population of more than 30,000 students, it requires extensive student services to prepare students to succeed in the workforce and meet the needs of the country and the world. The Office of University Life (UL)

> creates purposeful learning environments, experiences, and opportunities that energize ALL students to broaden their capacity for academic success and personal growth. Through innovative programs, partnerships, and direct services, students discover their unique talents, passions, and place in the world. (George Mason University, University Life, About Us, para 1)

University Life has 32 units with approximately 250 UL staff including student workers. There are nine core values of UL comprising: foster student success, live and act with integrity, embrace our differences, catch the mason spirit, show you care, dream big, celebrate achievements, pursue lifelong learning, and lead by example.

Who are Student Affairs Administrators?

Throughout this paper, the terms "college administrators," "administrators," "employees," and "student affairs professionals" are used frequently and interchangeably. The terms apply to both academic and non-academic administrators although all but one of the administrators interviewed were non-academic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2014), the administrators include provosts or academic deans. However, this thesis will concentrate on mid-level college administrators. Mid-level administrators are defined as:

academic and non-academic support personnel within the structure of higher

education organization (e.g., directors and coordinators of admissions,

institutional research, registrars, computing and technology, human resources,

alumni affairs, student affairs, placement and counseling services, financial aid,

development and planned giving). (Rosser, 2004, p. 317)

Mid-level administrators are vital to higher education institutions accomplishing their

missions. Currently, institutions are faced with many challenges such as accommodating

the diverse needs of students and finding sufficient funding. Because of these challenges,

the devotion of mid-level administrators is essential to higher education but their work is

often not visible to the public. As quoted from author Rosser, who has several

professional affiliations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA),

American Council on Education (ACE), Association for the Study of Higher Education

(ASHE) (2004), "college and university midlevel leaders are the unsung

professionals…their contributions to the academic enterprise are rarely recognized, and

professionals because of their commitment, training and adherence to high standards of

performance and excellence in their areas of expertise" (p. 317). Hence, "midlevel

student affairs leaders play an essential role in achieving these goals by administering

programs, services, and functions that are central to the institutional mission of colleges

and universities throughout higher education" (Rosser & Javinar, 2003, p. 813).

    As defined by Rosser (2004), mid-level administrators work in a wide range of

services and departments. They interact with students, faculty, and the public. However,

to narrow the scope of this study, I will concentrate on student affairs professionals.

Student affairs is made up of specialized areas, often referred to as functional areas (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, CAS, 2012). CAS includes student health services, disability services, housing and residence life, counseling services, judicial affairs, career services, multicultural student affairs, international programs and services office, and more functional areas depending on the university's mission, type, and capacity to serve the students. Mid-level student affairs administrators work in different areas - to ensure that students have "a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration" (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, NASPA, 2014, para 1). Students learn to grow, and develop outside of classrooms through various activities, and social contacts (NASPA, 2014). It is the job of student affairs professionals to "foster and promote these interactions" to "encourage an understanding and respect for diversity, a belief in the worth of individuals, and supporting" their needs (NASPA, 2014, para 2).

Student affairs is a unique and complex profession that requires specialized training. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), the U.S. values the philosophy of educating the whole person, which is a foundation of student affairs work (CAS, 2012).

How are Student Affairs Professionals Prepared for their Roles?

Graduate programs in student affairs play a pivotal role in preparing student affairs professionals. CAS requires that graduate programs offer the following course content in:

foundational studies (i.e., history, philosophy, ethics, culture, and research in

higher education and particularly student affairs); course content in professional

studies (i.e., basic knowledge of the profession, such as student development

theory, student characteristics and effects of college on students, individual and

group interventions, organization and administration of student affairs,

assessment, evaluation, and research); and three hundred hours of supervised

practice. This practice provides opportunities for the application of foundational

and professional studies and student affairs values and norms, as well as for the

conceptualization of workplace subcultures." (CAS, 2012, p. 353).

Hence, college administrators in student affairs are professionals with specialized training

that requires a unique set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. The American College of

Personnel Administrators (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel

Administrators (NASPA) had collaborated to create a set of area competencies required

of student affairs professionals. Student affairs professionals are expected to demonstrate

the list of area competencies such as:

1. Advising and helping;

2. Assessment, evaluation and research;

3. Equity, diversity and inclusion;

4. Ethical Professional Practice;

5. Understanding history, philosophy and values;

6. Human and organizational resources;

7. Law, Policy and Governance;

8. Leadership;

9. Personal Foundations; and

10. Student Learning and Development (2010).

The set of area competencies was intended to "define the broad professional knowledge, skills, and, in some cases, attitudes expected of student affairs professionals regardless of their area of specialization or positional role within the field" (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 3).

In addition, on-going professional development is warranted. Professionals, particularly the mid-level college administrators and their supervisors, attend professional development training regularly, to increase their student affairs knowledge. Janosik, Carpenter, and Creamer (2006) wrote that it was necessary for student affairs professionals with related degrees to have continuous training in order to maintain professional competency.

Turnover

Unfortunately, Mooney, Sagaria and Johnsrud found that the number of individuals in administrator positions have increased as well as the turnover rates in the field of student affairs (as cited in Rosser and Javinar, 2003). However, an administrator's long-term stay at an academic institution is closely related to motivation and job satisfaction, and its effect on the administrator's morale (Frank, 2013; Rosser and Jarvinar, 2003).

Turnover occurs in every workplace. It has an effect on any organization including higher education. Allen, Bryant and Vardaman (2010) reported that when an employee leaves, an organization has the opportunity to reorganize its structure and determine whether to hire a replacement in terms of cost, that is, salary and benefits. According to Rosser and Javinar (2003), past researchers have found that "professional and institutional work life issues of mid-level administrators affect morale or satisfaction and ultimately their decision to stay in or leave a position or institution" (p. 814).

With the research focused on turnover in student affairs, there was little research conducted on those who stay on the job for an extended period of time. I believe that factors such as morale, satisfaction, or motivation do not clearly explain the reasons for staying on the job. This thesis intends to study the motivating factors that compel college administrators who mainly focus on student success and development to stay on their jobs for an extended period of time.

Problem Statement

Many mid-level college administrators in student affairs view it is as an honor to be in the position of shaping students' lives in college through services and programs (Hibel, n.d.). Traditional college students are typically seen as being at a vulnerable stage in their lives. Many do not know what to expect in college, whereas non-traditional college students are perceived as more responsible and mature than their traditional counterparts. They have work experience and may have families to take care of. Another group of students attending college are online or distance education students.

8

They have their own set of challenges such as their social and academic interactions are restricted to online. Yet, in any of these groups of students, their surroundings are filled with a myriad sights and sounds of college life. An administrator's role is crucial to students in connecting them to the college community. Student affairs administrators' motivation to serve others could make a difference to a student's success.

Scholars such as Rosser & Javinar (2003), Jo (2008), and Rosser (2004), studied the reasons for the departure of college administrators from the academic workplace to a non-academic workplace such as private, a non-profit/profit organization or the government sector. To create institutional systems that encourage experienced administrators to stay, my goal is to study this unique group of professionals who have maintained their motivation.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this case study research was to identify, understand, and describe the motivating factors of current mid-level college administrators in student affairs, specifically those who stayed for an extended period of time in their professions. The period considered an extended period of time is ten or more years. The location of the case study was at George Mason University. Knowing what motivates student affairs administrators can influence institutions and supervisors to create systems, policies, and procedures that take these motivating factors into consideration.

Research Question

This thesis attempts to answer the following research question: What are the motivating factors that encourage administrators to stay on the job for an extended period of time?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

For this study, the literature review will focus on key factors in staying on the job for an extended period of time such as job satisfaction, motivation, morale, flexibility, support, college administrators, turnover, and recognition. These are the keywords found in many scholarly articles. The articles have focused mainly on the departure of faculty in higher education, motivation, and job satisfaction levels, and the factors that influence decisions to leave their jobs or intentions to leave. Many studies focused on faculty and students rather than administrators (Volkwein & Zhou, 2003). Many studies focused on the administrators' departure, whether with intent or unintentional (Frank, 2013). Little research was conducted on the motivation of mid-level college administrators.

Student affairs administrators play an important and essential role in higher education. According to Rosser, "They are a significant force in higher education in the United States" (2004, p. 317). It is vital that administrative satisfaction is accounted for as indirectly it influences students' performance and efficiency as well as organizational effectiveness. I believe administrators have an impact on an institution's vibrant spirit of cohesiveness in its community.

Many studies concentrate on senior college administrators who have worked in higher education for at least ten years or more. However, most of the senior

administrators are those who have extensive experience in higher education. Because of their extensive experiences, they hold senior, executive-level or leadership positions. Mid-level administrators, on the other hand, are the higher education leaders who wear many hats and manage multiple roles and responsibilities (NASPA, 2014, NASPA Careers: Mid-Level, para 1). In addition, the "virtue of their "middleness" within academic organizations, midlevel leaders' must find the balance between superiors' directions and the needs of those who require their support and service" (Rosser, 2014, p. 319). Because of their precarious positions, mid-level administrator positions will be the core population of this study.

Mid-level administrators are highly educated and trained professionals who are dedicated and committed to their roles and responsibilities to serve students on college campuses. Similar to the faculty, their goals are to support and achieve their universities' missions (Rosser, 2004). Part of this mission is to ensure that students enjoy their campus experiences and most importantly, learn, graduate, and be successful in their career paths. Rosser (2004) formulated that "mid-level leaders…are an essential group of individuals whose administrative roles and functions support the goals and mission of the academic enterprise. They reflect the institution's overall spirit and vitality" (p. 318). Most often, they are "identified by the administrative units in which they coordinate or direct and they play a key role within the four traditional service areas of higher education" (Rosser, 2004, p. 319). The four traditional service areas of higher education are academic support, business/administrative services, external affairs and student affairs. Examples of *Academic Support* are media and library services, learning skills

center and cooperative education; *Business/administrative Services* are fiscal management, accounting and human resources, operations and maintenance, information technology and planning and budgeting; *External Affairs* are public relations, alumni affairs, communication and fund-raising; *Student Services* are admissions, counseling, advising, health services and other aspects of student life. I will be concentrating on those administrators whose roles are in the student services areas. Mid-level administrators typically have titles of directors, associate directors, and assistant directors depending on the size of the institution.

An additional term commonly used in higher education is educators. In an article written by Dungy (2012) in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, she wrote of beginning her career as a teacher in various community colleges and universities. Through undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate studies, she was promoted from the rank of a teacher to an "executive director at NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, a position she held for 17 years" (Dungy, 2012, p. 1). She explained that no one goes to college with any knowledge of student affairs. She believed the administrator's role is "to complement what goes on in the classroom, giving students an opportunity to practice what they're learning. That means talking to faculty and…reinforce what you're doing. This is a role for us as educators, too" (Dungy, 2012, p. 2). The participants in my study consider themselves to be both educators and administrators. But how is motivation a factor for educators and administrators?

In the literature that follows, I focus on several reoccurring topics in the literature that seem to determine employee longevity. These include employee motivation, job satisfaction, and morale as well as job flexibility and supervisor support.

Motivation

Motivation has been studied by many scholars. Therefore, there are variations in the definition of motivation. The etymology of the word "motivation" comes from the *motive* and a suffix "-ation" (Oxford, 2014). "Motivation is the study of why people think and behave as they do" (Graham & Weiner, 1996, p. 63). Motivation comes from within people to propel them to do something willingly and happily. Motivation drives people to find and sustain a job. Student affairs professionals need energy and motivation on a daily basis to

> help students access higher education, have the most enriching experience while they are in college, and then ultimately graduate. In addition to recruitment, retention, and graduation of students…face other challenges such as campus safety, technology, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and of course the latest economics challenges that are impacting our students and campus communities. (Hibel, n.d., para 6).

From a psychological point of view, motivation is defined as "the desire to do things…the crucial element in setting and attaining goals" (Psychology, 2014, para 1). The challenging aspect of defining motivation is the quantity and how it can be measured.

According to Valencia (n.d.), the central problem for leaders and managers has been employees' motivation. When employees are unmotivated, they are likely to spend little or no effort in their jobs, or avoid the workplace as much as possible. Ultimately, an employee with low motivation produces low quality work and exits the organization when given the opportunity. In addition, Valencia (n.d.) reported that motivated employees demonstrate quality and inspirational work. Studying the behavior of employees' motivation is critical to an organization's success. Motivating employees is the organization's biggest challenge and often occurs through the help of leaders and managers. Motivation is an "important determinator of individual performance" (Valencia, n.d., p. 3). Wright found that (2007)

> work motivation among public and private employees suggest that the importance employees place on contributing to the public service mission of their organizations may provide intrinsic rewards that compensate for the low levels of extrinsic rewards commonly associated with public sector work. (p. 54)

It is a challenge to pinpoint exactly what triggers motivation.

Job Satisfaction

Another factor in influencing an administrator to stay in a position is job satisfaction. Grueberg (1979) defined satisfaction as an emotional reaction of an individual to a particular job. It is a broad definition that needs clarification. Howard-Baldwin (2012) defined job satisfaction as "the optimistic orientation of a person towards his or her current work role" (p. 4).

Bender (2009) and Renn and Hodges (2007) reported that 66% of student affairs professionals were satisfied with their current positions and 26% of student affairs professionals stated they will remain in the field long term while 50-60% of new student affairs professionals leave before fifth year.

Job satisfaction has been an important topic in the employment literature for many years (Howard-Baldwin, 2012; Van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek & Frings-Dresen, 2003). Howard-Baldwin (2012) stated that the relationship between a workplace environment and employee satisfaction is what defines job satisfaction. Other important factors include the attributes and abilities of an individual to adapt to an organizational environment. It is possible that a sense of confidence may have developed when one has the ability to adapt to an organizational environment. This leads an individual to have a sense of satisfaction and encourages the individual to stay on the job and continues the success of their work or sense of achievement (Howard-Baldwin, 2012).

On the other hand, job dissatisfaction needs to be explored. A review of student affairs literature revealed, several factors found to influence the decision to stay or leave a job were: burnout, dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities, conflicts with supervisor, limited career mobility or limited career advancement and low pay (Evans, 1998; Jo, 2008; Lorden, 1998; Stamatakos, 1978). In addition, Anderson, Guido-DiBrito and Morrell (2000) stated

> demanding schedules and work overload may frequently be responsible for
> interpersonal and time conflicts, which can reduce job satisfaction and increase

stress. Thus, job dissatisfaction and stress may play a role in the level of satisfaction an administrator receives from life in general. (p. 99)

The authors mentioned that there had been very little research done on job satisfaction among student affairs professionals. The most prominent evidence was that the higher level of student affairs professionals have a better job satisfaction than those below them (Anderson et al., 2000). Therefore, hierarchy played a role in the satisfaction of the employees. Reinhold (1996) wrote that "doing a good job and being appreciated for it builds self-esteem and sense of purpose, which in turn enhances functioning of the cardiovascular and immune systems. Many studies show that work satisfaction increases both health and longevity" (p. 6). Thus, job satisfaction affects health, which in turn affects the employees' motivation.

Morale

Morale is defined as "a quality of mind and spirit which combines courage, self-discipline, and endurance" (Johnsrud, Heck, Rosser, 2000, p. 36) and also reflects on the self-esteem of an individual whether one is "powerless or socially unimportant" (p. 36). Johnsrud et al. has done extensive study on morale related to the quality of the individual-supervisor relationship, career advancement, and recognition. Morale is achievable through teaching and experience. Parents, teachers, mentors, or advisors can influence the morale of an individual. Morale is more likely to be measured on an individual basis rather than on a group. Still, a group can develop its own morale based on its leader (Johnsrud, et al., 2000).

Morale matters at work and in people's personal lives. Morale emphasizes one's views or feelings of an organization as opposed to satisfaction, which is related to an individual's feelings about a job (Johnsrud and Edwards, 2001 as cited in Rossor & Javinar, 2003). Hence, "individual satisfaction is often perceived as the counterpart to the emergent collective trait of morale (Rosser, 2004, p. 321). Having low morale is likely to present a high turnover in an organization, which may affect the productivity rate, cost and loss of skills as well as morale.

There is no specific literature about morale and mid-level college administrators. Like the literature on motivation, there is no exact measurement of morale that influences an employee to stay on the job. This study will further explore the factor of morale, as it is possible that motivation, job satisfaction, and morale are all intertwined with one another and these influence the administrators' decision to stay in the student affairs profession.

Flexibility

Flexibility can be described in many ways. It could mean flexibility in work schedule or the mobility to move laterally and vertically within an organization. That is, career advancement and change or simply the ability to communicate freely within an organization. Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) found studies suggesting, "administrative mobility, through organizational advancement and position change, is the means by which individuals accumulate skills, knowledge, and experience, and build careers" (p. 40).

According to the literature, the flex-work schedule is important for administrators, especially female administrators with young children, as they place emphasis on family more than men (Jo, 2008). Women are more inclined to stay on the job when there are flexible work arrangements. There is insufficient attention from researchers on flexibility, as it is not considered vital for an individual's performance. Nonetheless, Jo's study may have implications for mid-level student affairs (Jo, 2008, p. 576). That study found that individuals prefer work with less pay but have more flexibility in the work hours. More research is needed to further examine the effects and importance of flexibility to provide a more family-friendly workplace.

Support

Rosser (2004) wrote that mid-level administrators' loyalty and dedication are a "significant force in higher education" (p. 317). Rosser stated that the

> quality of midlevel leaders' work life (i.e., career support, recognition for competence, external relations, review/intervention, discrimination experiences) is important to midlevel leaders across the United States, and thus has a direct effect on their level of satisfaction and their intentions to stay or leave their position or career. (p. 330)

Support is such a simple word and yet difficult to define. In the sixties, Nevitt Sanford introduced a psychosocial development theory of challenge and support. His theory for student development is based on a balance of challenge and support. Too much support resulted in lack of growth and complacency. Too much challenge leads to

frustration, paralysis and retreat. The challenges and support an administrator has may be different or similar to another administrator depending on the work they do and their individual strengths although they all serve the same purpose in developing students' learning and growth.

Rhoades (2007) argued that student affairs professionals have many characteristics of faculty, yet they lack academic freedom and intellectual property rights. In addition, employment for an administrator "falls under the category of work for hire, meaning that typically, student affairs educators are hired, fired, and reviewed by supervisors, not peers" (Arminio, 2011, p. 473). The fear of insecurity could be a factor in shortening their career as administrators. In such a climate, administrators could feel less supported. But non-profit organizations and membership of the professional organizations could provide support to the profession of college administrators. Ressor, Associate Vice Provost at the University of Kansas advised that it is vital that student affairs professionals join a professional association, if not two or more. She is an advocate of being "a member of a 'generalist'" association like NASPA and then one that is more specific to their own work area" (as cited in Hibel, n.d., para 4). Associations such as NASPA and ACPA offer opportunities for professional development such as conferences, workshops, research, policies, and practices of the profession. What needs to be explored is how the development opportunities support student affairs professionals in their decisions to stay on their jobs.

Summary of Literature

Administrators are professionals who used their expertise given to ensure that students succeed in college. The work is often completed behind closed doors such that students and parents will not be able to see, particularly the discussions, collaborations and complex decisions made in the best interest of the students and institutions.

The administrators' specialized training and education through graduate and postgraduate schools provided a vital foundation in doing their jobs well. It provides the confidence to serve the community in the face of adversity, challenges, and chaos especially in the peak of the term when there are simultaneous priorities.

Further studies are needed to explore the depths of the possible factors that influence an administrator to stay on the job. Motivation seems to be a key factor that has a domino effect on job satisfaction and morale. Job flexibility and a supportive environment also seem influential in determining job longevity. This study will further explore longevity factors of mid-level student affairs administrators.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this qualitative thesis is a case study. Creswell (2013) defined a case study as followed,

> a case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study). (p. 97)

This case study used a methodological approach as the researcher was particularly focused on a single entity: the case of a group of mid-level college administrators at Mason. The case study was selected as a methodology and a method to study the qualitative data that provided the motivation behind administrators' work experiences and their longevity in higher education. Hence, the "real-life, contemporary bounded system" as stated by Creswell (2013) was selected to uniquely identify the study in two specifics: location at George Mason University and the area of the administrators' work experiences, student affairs.

The purpose was to study and understand the motivational factors of mid-level college administrators. Specifically, the study focused on administrators' motivation that kept them on the job for an extended period of service.

This section is divided into two subsections: 1) participants; and 2) data collection and analysis.

Participants

The study used purposeful sampling to select participants on a specific location. Purposeful sampling was chosen for the study with the intent to "select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The central phenomenon under investigation was the motivation of the mid-level administrators. This allowed an in-depth understanding of the information rich participants who provided useful information, and a voice for the silenced people (Creswell, 2012). With purposeful sampling in this qualitative research, originally the number of participants was very small. Therefore, snowball sampling was used to further locate other participants who could provide detailed information on the central phenomenon. As stated by Marshall and Rossman (2006), snowball sampling allowed researchers to identify potential participants by building on insights and connections with other persons who meet the criteria of the study. The combination of the two sampling methods allowed the study a more substantial participant pool.

A minimum of five participants was originally planned for the study, however, there were twelve participants interviewed after the method of snowball sampling was

used. Participants selected were based on three criteria. First, the length of service must be at least 10 years as the paper focused on the experiences of those with extended length of service. Secondly, their expertise must be in student affairs. The essence of a case study was that it be an explanation of a phenomenon in a student affairs bounded system. The third and final criterion was the requirement of a master's degree, which is typically understood as the standard minimum requirement in mid-level college administrator positions.

Participants received an invitation for an interview either in-person or email from the researcher. In the email invitation (refer to Appendix B), a consent form (as in Appendix A), was attached explaining the details of the study such as the incentives, benefits, risks, location, and confidentiality of the participants' identities. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities in the thesis.

There was no limited number of participants selected for the research, as the case study was a qualitative analysis of the participants' experiences and factors that influenced their motivation and decision to continue in their student affairs profession. Participants were not selected based on gender, ethnic or racial groups, age, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, or disability status but rather the criteria mentioned above. This was to maximize the detailed information from the participants' experiences in motivation in their decade long career in student affairs regardless of the demographics.

Informed consent from participants was signed before the start of the interview. An example of the informed consent can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred at the same time in this qualitative case study. In order to have an in-depth understanding of the motivational factors of mid-level college administrators, a couple of sources of information were collected in this study. Data were collected from interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and personal artifacts (Creswell, 2013). The researcher was the only source of instrument used to collect and analyze data. The text format consisted of interview transcripts, webinar notes, and observation notes.

One-on-one interviews were conducted at George Mason University in the participant's office or in a conference or meeting room. An exclusive location was essential to protect the confidentiality and sensitivity of data as well as the identity of the participants. The interview questions were open-ended questions that allowed an exploration and analysis of the participants' motivations and experiences. Once the interviews were completed, the next step was to transcribe, analyze, and code.

The names of the participants are not revealed, rather pseudonyms are used. In the slim chance that someone would recognize a participant through the use of quotations and contextual descriptions, some identifying descriptors were changed. Transcripts and/or data were kept in a secured location with password protection. The data were to be shredded after completion of the thesis.

There were twelve, open-ended questions. The interview ranged from 30 minutes to an hour, and soliciting the motivating factors of the participants' interests in higher

education administration and reasons for their extended length of service. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix C. The first three questions focused on educational and professional interests and background. This was to help the participants feel at ease. The next five questions addressed reasons or experiences for their extended length of service as well as their choice of profession. These were designed to explore and understand their motivational factors behind their lengthy service. The remaining questions with the exception of the last one, requested their proposals, suggestions, or advice for keeping mid-level student affairs administrators motivated. The final question allowed the participants the opportunity to add other motivation factors, if any, not mentioned in the interview. The questions were open-ended requiring the participants to elaborate on their experience.

Other forms of data collection included the University Life's webpages, student affairs webinars, and observations through interactions with University Life administrators at seminars and professional development meetings.

The interview transcript was first read to obtain a sense of the whole experience and understanding of a participant. After several readings, the researcher determined the meaning of the text. The researcher then determined the factors that dominated the meaning of the text.

The data from the interviews were coded and analyzed for generalization as well as patterns of motivational factors. Organizing the data included "describing, classifying, and interpreting the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Accordingly, "It is a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful

ways…establishes patterns and looks for a correspondence between two or more categories" (p. 199). The process of data analysis was done by hand in an attempt to find the common and key motivational factor(s) that influenced student affairs professionals to stay on their jobs for a long time.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This section presents the outcomes of the study on the motivational factors of mid-level college administrators at George Mason University. The goal was to explore the factors that influenced them to stay on their jobs for more than ten years. From the list of questions as shown in Appendix C, it was important to obtain rich data on the participants' backgrounds and insights on their careers and the initial impact of their decision to join student affairs profession. The data were divided into codes or patterns that would further narrowed the common fields that sparked their motivation. Each of these codes tells the story of the mid-level administrators.

Education and Professional Background

All twelve participants acquired baccalaureate degrees outside of George Mason University (also known as GMU or Mason). The disciplines vary in humanities (English, Communications, Politics, Justice), Business, Education, Music and Human Resources. All of them have master's degrees. Three of them acquired Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) at Mason. Others acquired Masters in Education, International Relations, Music, Business and Counseling.

Three of the twelve participants are currently pursuing doctoral degrees and one has a doctoral degree. These four participants specialized in education, specifically in student affairs in higher education.

The average work experience of these participants is 14.92 years ranging from 10 to 24 years. All of them but one, hold non-academic administrator positions in higher education in the field of student affairs. One works in student services in an academic unit. The titles of their positions vary from advisor to associate dean with the majority being directors of a unit.

Below I discuss the findings of the study. These include the physical presence of motivation, direct contact with students, job satisfaction, and career advancement.

The Physical Presence of Motivation

This section is the feature of the thesis. During the course of interviewing the participants, their body language and expressions provided a wealth of information.

Body language includes all the communication through the non-verbal channel. This can include how we greet others, how we sit or stand, our facial expressions, our clothes, hair styles, tone of voice, eye movements, how we listen, how we breathe, how close we stand to others, and how we touch others. The pressure of body language can especially be felt in emotional situations where body language usually prevails over words. (Rugsaken, 2006, para 3)

A researcher not only listens attentively to an interviewee but also to observe the surrounds and any non-verbal communication. This could add substance to a study.

"Most researchers generally agree that the verbal channel is used primarily for conveying information, while the non-verbal channel is used for negotiating interpersonal attitudes, and in some cases is used as a substitute for verbal messages" (Pease, 1988, p. 9).

From my observation, the participants were relaxed and comfortable with a hint of curiosity. One of the participants got curious about my thesis, "Tell me more about your paper and what you want to achieve. Why did you choose the topic?" They projected an air of confidence and positivity with good eye contact. They knew what they wanted to do in their profession. They leaned forward and showed enthusiasm. Some expressions were cheerful and contend, yet attentive and serious about how they answered my questions. While most of their answers were thorough, a couple of participants gave brief answers. Most prominently, their faces lit up whenever they talked about students, particularly the success stories of the students they have met and known. They smiled as they were filled with nostalgia about their experiences with students. Moreover, they portrayed themselves with immense passion and energy, which I found very inspirational. There was so much "fire" in their eyes communicating their keen sense of accomplishing their work for the love of the higher education community. In the above observation, there are more positive non-verbal gestures or signs than negative. As a noted Australian body language expert explained that there was research done to reveal that when a "listener folds his arms, not only has he more negative thoughts about the speaker, but he is also paying less attention to what is being said" (Pease, 1988, p. 58). In my interviews with the participants, none of them folded their arms.

The common thread of all the participants was their interest in direct contact with students. They enjoyed helping, working, and supporting students. This was consistent with the description of student affairs professionals according to NASPA, "the work done by student affairs professionals helps students begin a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration" (NASPA, 2014, para 1). The following sections described what motivated the participants to work and serve in higher education as student affairs professional for a long service.

Direct Contact with Students

All the participants stated that the primary reason for their motivation to stay at their jobs was the contact with students on a daily basis. They felt the students' positive energy and eagerness to grow through social and academic development activities. It has a positive impact on the administrators. One stated, "I really work with students on their decision making. I have some students who want to meet me every week after the first time they met with me, but I also have some students who never want to see me again in their lives…I enjoy what I do. It's interesting." Every day is different. There is a variety of challenges each day. Today maybe challenging. The next day is an easy day. That is the nature of the work that keeps the job interesting. For many participants, the assortment of challenges motivate the administrators to go to work every day. They could not expect nor predict what the next challenge or dullness each day brings. Another said "my internal motivation comes from the direct contact with students and being able to see the changes." This student affairs professional demonstrates passion

about students' development. Student affairs professionals are motivated by the idea that they have an impact on the students' lives and contributed to their social and academic development.

From direct contact with students, student affairs professionals impact student lives, feel at home, and make a difference.

Impact Student Lives. The changes and impact on students, participants discussed included academic progress, social behavior, and maturity. One said,

Working with students is a real part of my motivation. I had a student come by yesterday and I've worked with him. We sat and talked for 30 minutes on what he's been doing and catching up. That's a big source of motivation for me is seeing the student progress.

Seeing the student who had "come a long way" brought this administrator euphoria.

Another participant pointed out that the constant meeting with students was what she liked most about higher education.

The university would see my main role as helping them, helping international students maintain their legal status by staying in compliance with US laws related to F1 status…I see myself as a bit of a translator both to speak for international students through the campus community.

It is a role as a cultural translator, helping students understand the American culture and acclimatize to their customs that was meaningful. This relationship between a student affairs professional and student is valuable in that it builds trust and confidence in both

parties. This is important in building a diverse culture at Mason. The trust and confidence allowed the administrator to be motivated with the appreciation from the students. One shared,

> When people appreciate the work I do, that motivates me…what makes me wake up in the morning is, knowing that I might help a student. Helping them through a difficult part in their lives or help celebrate an exciting part in their lives. That's the number one thing that keeps me in my job.

The result of helping a student succeed in overcoming challenging gives a sense of achievement and motivation to the administrators. For example, an administrator who worked at a student conduct office stated, "I am motivated by how I see the effect of what I do on other people. So, when I'm working in student conduct, I enjoy helping students see how their behaviors impact others. And helping them grow beyond their negative behavior into more positive behaviors." This reflection from the participant allowed me to realize the impact that this work had on the student that day. Participants found it a gratifying experience to be a part of the impact and change of students. One said "The feeling that I belong here where I can make a difference. The students mean so much to me. Their success means so much to me. It is almost like I went to college that trained us that our role in life is to give back to people."

Feeling at home. One participant felt motivated with the feeling of closeness with her colleagues as if she has another family. She felt she could rely on her colleagues for support and assistance to help her succeed in her work as a student affairs

professional. In effect, she felt comfortable and enthusiastic about helping the unit to achieve its mission, which is to serve and help students in their learning and development process. She stated, "I came from an international background and happy to help international students and scholars. I help them navigate. I felt a sense of belonging to the campus environment because it was inclusive and respectful." Feeling at home and cohesiveness were the reasons that kept her on the job for sixteen years in higher education. It was important to have a family-like unit to provide the necessary support. Like a family, an administrator could help a student in a trial and tribulation period while also being supported. The support of the administrators helps students mold their future to prepare for their future world. At times, there are challenges when interacting with students, especially having to deal with difficult and stressful issues. These issues could be academic, cultural, and psychological.

A majority of the participants said that the opportunities to be a part of the cohesive family-like unit that led students to learn and grow as a motivating factor. Administrators felt their positive guidance helped deflect the difficulties students faced.

Making a difference. Data indicated that making a difference is a powerful effect on both the student affairs professionals and students. For the student affairs professionals, the participants know that making a difference comes from direct contact with students and seeing the transformation of the students. One shared "...know that I've made a difference. My internal motivation comes from direct contact with students and being able to see the changes. The ability to speak one-on-one with people who are

pursuing their goals and their dreams is inspiring, sometimes frustrating. It's rewarding to see them accomplish things."

A participant who has been in student affairs for fifteen years and currently working with undergraduate and graduate students, felt motivated to talk with students one-on-one because it helps to know that the work she did was making a difference in a small and positive way in their lives. She also felt motivated by ways that she could see and measure the impact made on the students.

It is certainly motivating to know that the work I'm doing is making a difference in a small way in their lives, in a positive way. Ways that I can see and measure the impact we're having. I believe in the value of what student affairs contribute to learning, and promote opportunities for students to learn and grow.

Having an impact and making a difference serve as motivators to the participants. However, the impact of their work and effort is a long process. It takes time, commitment, long hours, and patience to see the result of their hard work. It could take weeks, months and even years to see the impact and difference made on the students. One participant stated, "I get to spend my time helping students build their future."

Regardless of the nature of their work, their role is to meet the students, and maintain relationships, for there to be influence made on each one of the students. As a participant with the longest service said "I get motivated by things that happened externally. Human interaction with students, faculty, and staff motivates me. I get motivated by the growth of a university, the growth of programs, and student growth."

Job Satisfaction

An additional motivating factor is job satisfaction in which administrators feel rewarded, recognized, successful, and satisfied with the work they are doing to serve students. As cited in Rosser and Javiner (2013), the "satisfaction is the individual's emotional reaction to a particular job" (p. 814). A participant stated "motivation comes for me from having the job satisfaction, feeling like I'm doing a good job and making a difference. It's sort of the source of my motivation." Doing a good job motivates a student affairs professional. One is inspired to be motivated to enjoy work each day.

The most common terms among the participants mentioned in connection to job satisfaction during the interviews were recognition and rewards. They wanted to feel recognized for their hard work and commitment and be well rewarded. They want to feel boosted in their sense of worthiness as a student affairs professional. For example,

I'm motivated by the satisfaction that I get from doing good work. That helps in student affairs. My colleagues perform their jobs better and help to serve the students with regards to their academic and personal success. I am motivated by the capacity to be of service to others. We are, after all, in the helping profession.

Therefore, satisfaction is often connected to recognition. "Mid-level leaders want to be recognized and respected for their contribution and expertise within the institution and in their work units" (Rosser, 2004, p. 330).

A couple of the participants did not feel sufficiently rewarded or recognized. In fact, a few participants mentioned leaving at some point in their career. This was because there were moments when the jobs was daunting, overwhelming, and frustrating.

Sometimes too, others they worked with had a "not-my-job" attitude. They worked long hours and felt unappreciated during their decade long careers. One offered,

> I remember one time I was so frustrated having to work long hours and not being able to take time out to rest and refuel. That was the moment when I wanted to quit and change careers but decided to stick it out and give it another chance. I'm glad I did. I have been in student affairs for 13 years.

One particular participant was at a turning point where there was lack of upward mobility and balance between work and personal life. The participant felt that the change was not necessarily a better option for one to feel happy or satisfied as more responsibilities come with upward mobility.

> I'm at a turning point in my career. I feel like people are telling me that it's time to seek more responsibility. I'm not quite ready for the next step in management. I feel like I have more to learn. What motivates me are the people appreciating the work I do. It's nice to know that the work and effort you put in is noticed and appreciated. And of course, some reward would not be bad. A pay raise or some token of gratitude like, take a half day off or something like similar…

The participant went on to describe the desire to have a work-life balance.

> I'm working on developing a better work-life balance. I don't want my job to be everything. I would really love to make more money. It sounds a bit cold but in line with wanting to have more of a work-life balance. I know that money helps you to be able to travel and visit your family when they live in a different state, take a vacation just to step away from the office…these little luxuries.

The participant values personal life as well as work. Due to the long hours that the participant had to work as in many student affairs work, it is important to balance work and personal life in order to serve and help others better. Lorden (1998) stated, "individuals could be given additional time off when possible, or job-sharing could be instituted to reduce work load or make it possible to work fewer hours" (p. 210).

Without an incentive, whether it is monetary reward or non-monetary reward, such as not being appreciated, there is a negative impact on the decision to continue to work in higher education. That prompts dissatisfaction. On the other hand, participants were clearly aware that working in higher education is not about monetary reward especially in a state institution. One said,

> I've always felt I'm not happy with higher education and so it's almost like, stay
> with the known versus the grass is always greener until you go to the other side.
> It's a nice field to be in. It's not – you're not going to make a lot of money.

> That's certainly not something that's a motivator for people in student affairs.
This participant had concerns about the jobs at student affairs, especially with budget cuts happening in many higher education institutions. Since Mason is a state university, it is possible that student affairs units are the first ones to get cut. Therefore, the participant was being realistic about working for an institution. Regarding compensation, another participant said,

> Work at the level to where you feel like you're not being paid enough for your
> work and continue to work at that level. In other words, outpace the pay that

you're getting because you'll get more pay next time, but only if you work hard.

We are not paid to focus on ourselves. Our goal is to invest in other people. Monetary reward is more of a financial gain rather than the reward of being happy with the job, colleagues, students, and the environment one is in. Another reward is career advancement.

Career Advancement

I found that career advancement is directly proportional to job satisfaction. When an administrator feels satisfied, there is motivation for further education to be able to be successful in more complex roles. Career advancement recognizes accomplishments. All participants had shown a desire to participate in professional development opportunities that allowed them to enhance or build new skills and competencies in their current positions. Their sharp focus towards their next goal was very clear during the interview.

The most interesting aspect of the interview was that the majority of the participants agreed that student affairs should be introduced as a career field at the undergraduate level rather than the graduate level. The earlier one prepares for a career in student affairs, the better chance of success in the field and the ability to overcome the various challenges from the job. One participant said

> I wish I had known about student affairs early in my college days rather than find
> out after I graduated and started work, then I realized that student affairs is
> something I want to be involved. I would have not majored in business.

A challenging aspect of career advancement in student affairs is the expectation of having a doctoral degree. Not everyone wants to earn a doctoral degree for various reasons such as family, cost, and time constraints. However, in my sample, those who could not pursue a doctorate, strive to attend many workshops, training, webinars, and conferences to improve their knowledge and skills. Yet, they feel that earning a doctoral degree was necessary, if not a requirement.

> If I had to start my career over from scratch, I would never had studied music education at all. I would have studied business and then go into a Ph.D. program at Harvard or tried to go to a good doctoral program. I think my life would be so different if I have gone straight to Ph.D. and then become a 10-year faculty member and moved into academics. I also think that when you are in higher education, one of the challenges is you compete with people that have Ph.D.'s and some places, masters degree was appreciated while others do not. If I had known higher education is what I wanted to do, I would have done it differently. The thing about higher education is no one knows what he or she wants to do.

Another participant shared that

> if you have a Ph.D., you have more opportunities. I think you can make more money with Ph.D. It's interesting because typically, you would think administrative people don't really need Ph.D.'s. You don't really need Ph.D. to be a director of student affairs. But sometimes, sometimes they want applicants with Ph.D.

Professional development is an integral part of career advancement.

In student affairs, there are constant changes. For example, there are issues and challenges with diverse student populations such as undergraduates and graduates who are traditional age, undergraduates and graduates who are not traditional age, veterans, international students, racially and ethnically diverse domestic students, students with disabilities, and religious diversity of students. One participant shared,

> I am self-motivated to learn new things to meet the challenges of a student affairs professional. I want to learn new skills to improve communication, teamwork and conflict resolution to prepare myself for more or newer challenges in student affairs. Have the ability to choose and develop core skills and various approaches to complete various tasks.

Another participant commented, "I'm motivated to move up and also motivated to create an environment and a space where people want to work. The big motivator for me is to sort of reach for the stars and kind of pioneer for my own family as a first generation college graduate." The determination to succeed and adapt to changes of duties and responsibilities are the reasons and incentives for a career advancement. The participant was motivated to improve through education and training in order to achieve upward mobility.

Associations such as NASPA, encourage its members to attend conferences, webinars, and workshops to expand their horizons. Thus, it is no surprise that the participants are constantly on the lookout for workshops or conferences for professional development. For example, "It's the fact that every couple of years I've been able to

41

learn and do something significantly new. For me, that keeps me excited and jazzed about my job. That keeps me motivated." Professional development is the step that many need to move to accomplish their next goal – whether to become a dean or director or registrar. Rosser (2004) identified that mid-level administrators were interested in improving their performance and acquiring skills and experience in order to be able to take on new and more challenging positions.

In summary, the findings of the study concluded that student affairs professionals are motivated by three factors: direct contact with students, job satisfaction, and career advancement. Each has its own sub factors that influence their decision to stay on the job for an extended period of time. Impact on students, feeling at home, and making a difference are the three subfactors of direct contact with students. The common thread of the subfactors is that student affairs professionals have experienced each of these in their contact with students. Each of these subfactors is interconnected. When student affairs professionals feel comfortable working in their job, it has an impact when they meet students, thus making a difference. When a student affairs professional is comfortable, one shows the confidence and energy to provide a level of service that students are happy and well served. In turn, motivated student affairs professionals make a difference on the lives of students.

The sub factors of job satisfaction are the reward and recognition. The majority of the participants have pointed out that it is crucial to have their work recognized and their hard work rewarded. Otherwise, dissatisfaction could occur prompting them to leave.

Lastly, career advancement is one of the major factors for their motivation and length of service. All the participants concurred that it is important to seek out professional opportunities to increase their student affairs knowledge improve their services to students as well as improve chances of upward mobility. To reinstate what Janosik, et al. (2006) wrote about the necessary continuous training in order to maintain professional competence.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS

Because there is very limited literature on the motivating factors of mid-level college administrators with at least ten years of higher education experience, the implications will be based solely on the data from the interview of the participants. Much of the literature focused on the departure of college administrators, especially in student affairs. The literature I have found pertains to specific groups such as career motivations of non-academic administrators (Koch, 2006), women with children leaving mid-level student affairs position (Hebreard, 2010), and a case study exploring motivational determinants of mid-level student affairs administrators (Hernandez, 2010). The factors that motivate student affairs professionals are not well identified or sufficiently studied to determine their reasons for staying on the job.

College administrators play an important role in higher education. They are the forefront of a university's contact with students. In the case of George Mason University (Mason), specifically the University Life (UL) is a unique student affairs unit comprised of administrators and educators whose main role is to provide programs and support services to ensure that every student succeeds in college.

From the interviews of twelve participants, my findings have resulted in the following motivating factors: direct interaction with students, job satisfaction, and career

advancement. The sub-sectors are impact on others, feeling at home, making a difference, and reward and recognition.

The results of the findings have shown that there are few common motivating factors compared between the factors in the literature review and the actual interviews of the participants. Although motivation is the keyword in this thesis, the factors such as morale, flexibility, support were not used or found in the words of the participants or the outcome of the interviews.

Work-life balance was a term used by participants. It was unclear if work-life balance means flexibility. For example, one said, "people are telling me that it's time to seek more responsibility…and I see my supervisors are trying to balance that. It looks a bit daunting trying to balance the responsibilities of managing a team." The participant was concerned about moving up as it almost always takes up most of your day and less time for oneself. Therefore, spending too much time and focus on work and less time on personal life will very likely not motivate an administrator to stay on the job. Not balancing work-life creates more frustration and unhappiness. Rosser (2004) stated that it was less likely for mid-level administrators to leave if their work-life issues were perceived positively which affected their level of satisfaction. Although the author wrote about the factors that affected the administrators' decision to leave their job, he stated that the quality of work-life has an impact on mid-level administrators' satisfaction, and morale.

The flexibility discussed in the literature review was in reference to flexible schedule to accommodate family life. This is particularly important to many female

administrators. The impression I have received from the participants is that the environment is important to them. That is, working in an academia and the people they work with. The only time the term "flexibility" was used, was the quality that a student affairs professional should have as a successful professional. For example, an advisor said, "you are the student government advisor and dealing with student government, but you may be called upon in different ways to help other offices or other things. So being flexible is on the, I guess, the biggest things that I would say." Contrary to research, female administrators did not use the term "flexibility" or "work-life balance" in the interviews. Therefore, there is no substantial evidence to support that flexibility is one of the motivating factors in staying on the career or profession for a long time for these participants. Further research and time are needed to pursue the impact on the profession and the motivation to stay on the job for a long period of time.

Morale was mentioned in the literature review, however, there was no explanation or experience of morale from the data. Similar to flexibility, there is insufficient data to support that morale is a motivating factor. The only evidence is through my observation on the participants. Throughout the length of the interview, the participants had a cheerful disposition and a hint of contentment. This was deduced from the observation of the participants' physical and emotional behavior. Almost all of them showed a set of good conduct and the confident to know what they were doing. With the air of confidence and steadiness, they appeared to have good morale. Through good and steady behavior, a student affairs professionals would likely stay on their jobs. More research is

needed to further investigate the value of morale in improving the motivation of student affairs professionals.

The most significant aspect of what I observed from the interviews and interacting with other college administrators through informal meetings such as the Contested Issues Dialogue, was an eagerness to learn and exchange and share ideas and/or knowledge. This dynamic prompted the professionals to feel like a cohesive unit. The interactions were respectful and professional. The majority of my participants were privileged to be given a great amount of autonomy to do their work. There was a strong sense of camaraderie among the professionals supporting and motivating each other, whether it was collaborating or initiating new ideas. This provided a sense of belonging as one participant said "I feel I have a sense of belonging here, because the environment is inclusive and respectful." That would explain why many of the UL student affairs professionals have stayed on the job for a long period of time. They were motivated by the cohesiveness of the unit which provided much needed support and opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge through professional development such as informal meetings and/or workshops.

However, there are some negative aspects. The downside of the profession is the long hours, little compensation, and insufficient recognition and rewards as mentioned in the job satisfaction section. In other words, burnout. A participant made a suggestion that more incentives be provided to those who value hard work. For example, "I'm a very responsible person so the motivation is that I do a good job. I also like when I've done something well, not in front of a group, you know, with my supervisor saying you

47

did great or something. That helps me to understand if I'm heading in the right direction." A few examples of incentives are certificate of recognition, gift cards, free reserved parking for a month, employee of the month parking space, free month of personal training at a local gym, and lunch day with supervisor.

The key focus of all the participants was the conscious intention to provide quality and quantity of student development.

Limitations

As in any research, there are limitations in this study. First, the data collected was limited to mid-level student affairs professionals at one institution. The outcome of this single case study is restricted to the institution. It may not be applicable to other institutions as the data does not apply to any other institution.

Interviewing the participants was the main source of data collection along with one webinar meeting, and Contested Issues Dialogue. The purpose was to observe the dynamics and study the behavior of student affairs professionals who were not selected for the interview. The observation of the characteristics of the student affairs professionals was to examine how they motivated themselves and each other. Was the rapport they had for each other motivating? The time restraint was a challenge as there was insufficient qualitative data to allow further analysis of the study as the event/webinar took place in a day. Additionally, it was a difficult role for the researcher to observe the student affairs professionals as the researcher was also participating in the event/webinar. Creswell (2013) stated,

The types of challenges experienced during observations will closely relate to the role of the inquirer in observation, such as whether the researcher assumes a participant, nonparticipant, or middle ground position. There are challenges as well with the mechanics of observing, such as remembering to take field notes, recording quotes accurately for inclusion in field notes, determining the best timing for moving from a nonparticipant to a participant (if this role change is desired), keeping from being overwhelmed at the site with information, and learning how to funnel the observations from the broad picture to a narrower one in time (p. 172).

An additional limitation was the inability to obtain data via webpages, documents, and resources from UL website and publications due to time constraints. Time was limited for both the researcher and participants. However, the participants were empathetic in providing as much information as they could outside of the interview. Follow-up questions were kept to a minimum so as not to disrupt their work schedule. In spite of the limitations, data collected from the interviews were beyond my expectations. The personal and professional experiences from the participants had shared were valuable.

Recommendations and Future Research

Based on this study, three recommendations were determined for further research in this motivational issue of college administrators. They are autonomy, motivation, and one-on-one interaction with students.

Autonomy is a frequent, yet crucial factor in job satisfaction. I believe it is the pride of higher education among the faculty and staff. Participants mentioned that having autonomy allows them to do their job well and knowing that their supervisors have trust and confidence in them. The relationship between supervisor and student affairs professionals plays a crucial role in the autonomy and success of the student affairs professional. With the evidence that autonomy exists in student affairs at this institution, it is important it continues to exist in the profession.

Motivation continues to be the key aspect in both professional and personal aspect of one's life. There is so much more to investigate the role it plays on student affairs professionals. As explained by many of the participants, motivation is the true indicator of a student affairs professional's intent to stay on the job for an extended period of time. Considerations to further expand understanding of motivation on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is needed. Further research is needed to determined if there are differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and its relationship to the student affairs professionals decision to stay on the job. Based on the interviews, less than half of the participants have internal motivation. The majority of the participants were influenced mainly through direct interaction with students, colleagues, faculty, and supervisors. This is due to the nature of their work, which requires extensive contact with people and is an external motivating factor. More research is needed to determine how to gauge or measure the level of a person's intrinsic motivation.

More than half of the participants are motivated by direct interaction with students and have a desire to provide more one-on-one interaction. One participant stated that

"more student face time and more strategic program development" opportunities are needed. How can higher education provide or create jobs that will assure the student affairs professional to have a one-on-one interaction with students? The problem is whether it is realistic to meet students one-on-one especially for a large university like George Mason University, which has more than 35,000 students.

The idea of one-on-one interaction does not have to be exclusively face-to-face in person; it can be done via Face Time, Hangouts, Skype or other video conferencing methods, especially for students and faculty who are not available on-campus to meet face-to-face. These are examples of using current technology and social media applications to connect with students. Using technology could reduce the level of frustration and time intensive work as in today's cultures; the majority of students are constantly on laptops, smartphones, and tablets. Therefore, the potential of having an enjoyable one-on-one conversation is much more satisfying and less frustrating. It is possible that in the future, one would be communicating via a smart watch if one can conceive the notion of talking on the watch as part of the daily routine.

The recommendations for autonomy, internal motivation, and direct interaction need additional research but jobs that embrace these would add to the attractiveness of the profession for mid-level administrators. These factors could influence motivation of mid-level administrators to stay on the job for an extended period of time in addition to the three factors already mentioned in the findings section, hence they should be considered in job description creation.

Educator or Administrator

The use of the term "educator" and "administrator" is worth exploring. The participants used the term "educator" more frequently than the term "administrator". For one participant, an educator is a preferred term because "when I meet a student as an educator, I'm going to talk to them about their decisions. It's that basic theory of education that challenge is important…I want them to leave with more knowledge than what they entered with." Some young adults enter college with a set of new and fresh ideas and expectations but lack of experience and maturity. Therefore, "a lot of students don't take accountability for what they do, and a lot of people feel that ""I don't have to…everyone else does it.""…we want to challenge students to learn about what it really means to be who they are, but to also be civil."

Here is a participant's story of how and what the role of an educator is.

> When a student at my former institution…when they take shots of alcohol, which used to be a huge trend. There was a lot of alcohol poisonings resulted from that. My job as an educator…I talked to students, "I understand you're in between age. Half of your friends are 21 and half of your other friends are 20. And you'll be 20 next month. How can you be responsible so you're not on a death certificate at 21? I'm not trying to say, "don't have fun." I'm not trying to say "I know what you're doing at all times." But "I want you to think about what you're doing."

And I think that's what education is. I believe some administrators should be called an educator. They do the bulk of educating the students, not in classrooms but outside of classrooms guiding and teaching them the social norms of society. Many of the

participants believed in higher education and the avenue for social ability, social justice, and promoting democracy. Therefore, for a student affairs educator, one has the opportunity to contribute to the learning environment through promotion of good conversation and dialogue that encourages leadership development, team-building, and working with peers and colleagues who are different as well. Educators provided the learning outside of a classroom and encourage the application of what they had learned in a classroom.

On the other hand, as an administrator, "I do policies, procedures, which aren't necessarily the interaction with students." The administrators do all the work behind the scenes. According to NASPA (2014), the core aspect of a student affairs professional is "to foster and promote these interactions. Encouraging an understanding and respect for diversity, a belief the worth of individuals, and supporting our students in their needs." (NASPA, para 2)

Student affairs professionals may want to carefully and thoroughly consider the identity they embrace: that of an administrator or educator.

The intent of this research was to benefit and learn from the educators and/or administrators who are an invaluable asset and to create recommendations that would nurture their longevity.

Conclusion

The mid-level college administrators in this study shared a wealth of information of their student affairs experiences and their aspirations. It was remarkable to witness the

energy and enthusiasm of these professionals as they approached their work and the demands of their jobs.

Based on observations and data from interviews, the participants' had shown that the main motivational factors in staying in their jobs for an extended period of time were the constant direct interaction with students, job satisfaction, and career advancement. Since their jobs are in higher education, their daily interactions with students allowed them to develop and maintain relationships with students. They had the opportunity to connect with students in the various roles they performed such as advising, counseling, mentoring, and disciplinarian. The outcomes of any of these actions have an impact on the student affairs professionals. It is an indicator of success or failure in the development of students. With success, they felt gratitude and proud of the achievement of making a difference in a student's life. Thus, they feel satisfaction when a mission is accomplished. To further enhance their success, they had demonstrated their desire to expand their knowledge and skills through professional development.

The administrators have emphasized the importance of serving the students and watching their progress, particularly their graduation. They recognized the factors that linked to their outcomes and success, and longevity of their careers. They felt rewarded and contended to be part of Mason community that sustain their motivation, which impacted their performance.

The participants had expressed the importance of professional development to enhance or further develop their professional knowledge and skills, especially in this ever changing technological advancement.

As mentioned in the recommendation section, further research is needed on autonomy, motivation, and one-on-one interaction with students as well as the definition of educators and administrators. I believe that educators and administrators spent a great deal of time educating students outside of the classrooms. They guided and advised students to ensure their paths to success are paved. Students will always be the sole reasons for the presence of student affairs administrators in higher education. Thus, it is important to recognize and reward them for the support provided to the students and the institution. The factors that sustain them in a long term are crucial and should be valued.

Most important of all, more research is needed to study other underlying reasons or expand the current factors from this study of the motivation of student affairs administrators for staying in their jobs for an extended period of time.

APPENDIX A

MOTIVATING FACTORS OF MIDLEVEL COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to understand the motivating factors of current mid-level college administrators who have been in student affairs profession for at least 10 years. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to partake an in-person interview of no more than an hour and a half (90 minutes). Should there be a moment where there is discomfort, you are free to stop the interview and/or leave without any penalty. There may be a possibility of a post-interview for the purpose of clarification and checking the accuracy of information interpreted.

Observations will take place during seminars, one-on-one meeting, and professional development meetings.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in understanding the factors that student affairs professionals stay on their jobs for an extended period of time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be kept confidential. Your name will not be disclosed except to the researcher (Johanna Koh) and the chair of the thesis committee (Dr. Jan Arminio). Your name will not be connected with any materials produced for this study, although there is some possibility of someone recognizing you through use of quotations and contextual descriptions. Only the researcher and the chair will have access to the materials, information and data. Data and/or transcripts will not be used for publications or public presentation (such as web blogs, newsletter, poster presentation). Transcripts and/or data will be kept in a secured location and then destroyed after completion of the thesis.

The thesis does not involved any observation or discussion with a minor. There is one exception to confidentiality. It is our legal responsibility to report situations of suspected child abuse or neglect to appropriate authorities. Although we are not seeking this type of information in this study nor will you be asked questions about these issues we will disclose them as required under the law if discovered.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any

---

IRB: For Official Use Only

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Office of Research
Integrity & Assurance

Project Number: 555214-1
Date Approved: 1/23/14
Approval Expiration Date: 1/22/15

Page 1 of 2

56

reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Johanna Koh at George Mason University. She may be reached at 703-622-3908 (cell) or jbyrne2@gmu.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem. Thesis Chair committee member's name is Dr. Jan Arminio, jarminio@gmu.edu or 703-993-2064. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Integrity & Assurance at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

_____

Name

_____

Date of Signature

Version date: January 16, 2014

IRB: For Official Use Only

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Office of Research
Integrity & Assurance

Project Number: 555214-1
Date Approved: 1/23/14
Approval Expiration Date: 1/22/15

Page 2 of 2

57

APPENDIX B

Invitation for an interview via email:

Dear <name of participant>,

    My name is Johanna Koh. I am an MAIS graduate student at George Mason University. I am conducting a research study as part of the MAIS requirement of my degree in Higher Education Administration.

    I am very keen in learning and understanding the factors that compel student affairs professionals to stay on their jobs for an extended period of time, at least 10 years. I would be honored to have you as a participant for an interview either in-person or via email. Your knowledge and expertise would be very beneficial to potential student affairs professionals, especially graduate students. Attached is the Informed Consent form. Kindly complete the form and return to me via campus mail at MSN 4C4 if you decide to participate in the interview. The form explains the details of the study.

    Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to email me at jbyrne2@gmu.edu if you have further questions/concerns.

Regards,
Johanna Koh

IRB: For Official Use Only

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Office of Research Integrity & Assurance

Project Number: 555214-1
Date Approved: 1/23/14
Approval Expiration Date: 1/22/15

Page 1 of 1

58

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. What is your educational and professional background?

2. What is your current position? Describe what you do in your job.

3. How do you feel at this point about your career? Successful? Need advancement?

4. Tell me about how motivation places in your work. How do you experience motivation?

5. From where does motivation come for you? How long have you been in the profession? What motivates you to stay in Higher Education?

6. What is it about higher education that compels you to stay? Might you stay for your entire career? What factors will determine that? How does it feel to contemplate staying in higher education for your entire career?

7. Was there a unique experience that solidified your career in Higher Education?

8. Was there a unique experience that solidified your motivation in Higher Education?

9. Is there any advice, proposals, suggestions that you could share with new graduates who are interested in pursuing a career in student affairs profession?

10. What are the qualities that you feel a student affairs professional should have in order to be successful?

11. What would you change if there is an opportunity to restart your career?

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your longtime motivation to work in Higher Education?

REFERENCES

-ation (2014). *In Oxford English dictionary*
　　　　http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122708?redirectedFrom=motivation#contentWra
　　　　pper

Allen, D. G., Bryant, P. C., Vardaman, J. M. (May 2010).　Retaining Talent: Replacing
　　　　misconceptions with evidence-based strategies.　*Academy of Management
　　　　Perspectives, 24(2), 48-64.*

America College Personnel Association (ACPA) - National Association of Student
　　　　Personnel (NASPA) Administrators. (2010).　*Professional Competency Areas for
　　　　Student Affairs.*　Washington D.C.: ACPA, NASPA.

Anderson, J. E., Guido-DiBrito, F. & Morell, J. S. (2000).　Factors that influence
　　　　satisfaction for student affairs. *New Directions for Institutional Research,
　　　　2000(105), 99-110.*

Arminio, J. (2011).　Professionalism.　In Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., Harper, S. R., and
　　　　Associates. (5th Ed.).　*Student services – A handbook for the profession.*　p. 468-
　　　　481.　San Francisco, CA: Jossy-Bass.

Bender, B. (2009).　Job satisfaction in student affairs.　*NASPA Journal,
　　　　46(4).*

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014).　*Postsecondary education administrators.*　Retrieved
　　　　from http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/print/postsecondary-education-
　　　　administrators.htm

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.　(CAS).　(2012).　*CAS
　　　　professional standards for higher education* (8th edition).　Washington, DC:
　　　　Author.

Creswell, J. W. (2013).　*Qualitative inquiry & research design.　Choosing among five
　　　　approaches.*　(3rd ed.).　Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2012).　*Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating
　　　　qualitative and qualitative research.*　(4th ed.)　Boston, MA.　Pearson Education.

Dungy, G. (2012, March 11). What I learned in the world of student affairs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/What-I-Learned-in-the-World-of/131118/

Evans, N. J. (1988). Attrition of student affairs professionals: A review of the literature. *Journal of College Student Development, 29*, 19-24.

Frank, T. (2013). *Why do they leave? Departure from the student affairs profession.* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Blacksburg, Virginia.

George Mason University. (2013). *Mission Statement.* Retrieved November 12, 2013 from http://about.gmu.edu/history-and-tradition/mission-statement/

George Mason University. (2013). *University Life.* Retrieved http://ulife.gmu.edu/offices-of-university-life/

George Mason University. (n.d.) *Institutional Research & Reporting.* Retrieved November 12, 2013 from http://irr.gmu.edu/factbooks/1213/Factbook1213_Enrollment.pdf

Graham, S. and Weiner, B. (1996). Theories and principles of motivation. In D.C. Berliner & R.C. Calfee (Eds.). *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, New York: Macmillan, 1996, 63-84.

Grueberg, M. M. (1979). *Understanding job satisfaction.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Hebreard, D. (2010). *Opt out: Women with children leaving mid-level student affairs positions.* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest. (3410405).

Hernandez, C. (2010). *A case study exploring motivational determinants of mid-level student affairs administrators.* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest. (3446664).

Herron, R. (2012). *Mason #1 on U.S. News 2013 Up-and-Comers List.* Retrieved from From George Mason University website. http://newsdesk.gmu.edu/2012/09/mason-1-on-u-s-news-2013-up-and-comers-list/

Hibel, A. (n.d.). Beginning a career in student affairs. *HigherEdJobs.* Retrieved November 12, 2013 from EdJobs website. http://www.higheredjobs.com/HigherEdCareers/interviews.cfm?ID=123

Howard-Baldwin, T. (2012). *Administrator Job Satisfaction in Higher Education.* Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED531811)

Janosik, S. M., Carpenter, S., & Creamer, D. G. (2006). Beyond professional preparation programs: The role of professional associations in ensuring a high-quality workforce. *College Student Affairs Journal, 25,* 228-237.

Jo, V. H. (2008, November). Voluntary Turnover and Women Administrators in Higher Education. *Higher Education, 56*(5), 565-582. doi 10.1007/s10734-008-9111-y.

Johnsrud, L. K., Heck, R. H, & Rosser, V. J. (2000). Morale matters: Midlevel administrators and their intent to leave. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(1), 34-59.

Koch, S. (2006). *What gets them and what keeps them: Career motivations of non-academic administrators in higher education.* (Doctoral dissertation). Purdue University, Indiana.

Lorden, L. P. (1998). Attrition in the student affairs profession. *NASPA Journal, (35)*3, 207-216.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research (4th ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Motivation. (1990). *Longman dictionary of contemporary English.* (New ed.). Essex, UK: Longman Group UK Limited.

Motivation. (n.d.) *In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary.* Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/motivation

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2014). *About student affairs.* Retrieved from https://www.naspa.org/about/student-affairs

Pease, A. (1988). *Body Language. How to read others' thoughts by their gestures.* Australia: Camel Publishing Company.

Porter, L. W., Bigley, G. A., & Steers, R. M. (2003). *Motivation and work behavior (7th ed.).* Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Reinhold, B. B. (1996). *Toxic Work: How to overcome stress, overload, and burnout and revitalize your career.* New York, NY: Dutton.

Renn, K. A., and Hodges, J. P. (2007). The first year on the job: Experiences of new

professionals in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 44*(2), 367-391

Rhoades, G. (2007). The study of the academic profession. In P. J. Gmport (Ed.).
  Sociology of higher education: Contributions and their contexts (pp. 113-146).
  Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rosser, V. J. (2004. October). A national study on midlevel leaders in higher education:
  The unsung professionals in the academy. *Higher Education, 48*(3), 317-337.

Rosser, V. J. and Javinar, J. M. (2003, November/December). Midlevel student affairs
  leaders' intentions to leave: Examining the quantity of their professional and
  institutional work life. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(6), 813-830.
  doi: 10.1353/csd.2003.0076.

Rugsaken, K. (2006). *Body speaks: Body language around the world.* Retrieved from
  NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources web site.
  http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/body-
  speaks.aspx

Stamatakos, L. C. (1978). Unsolicited advice to new professionals. *Journal of College
  Student Personnel, 19*, 325-330

Support. (n.d.) In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. Retrieved from
  http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/support

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2012, July 18). *Postsecondary Education
  Administrator*s. Retrieved from
  http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/postsecondary-education-administrators.htm

U. S. Department of Education. (2006). *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U. S.
  higher education.* Washington, DC: Author.

U. S. News and World Report. (2014). *Up-and-Coming Schools.* Retrieved from
  http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-
  universities/up-and-coming?int=9a3408

Valencia, C. (n.d.). *Motivation and productivity in the workplace.* Westminster College.
  Retrieved from Westminster College website.
  http://www.westminstercollege.edu/myriad/index.cfm?parent=2514&detail=4475
  &content=4798

Van Saane, N. V., Sluiter, J. K., Verbeek, J. H. A. M. & Frings-Dresen, M. H. W. (2003). Reliability and validity of instruments measuring job satisfaction--a systematic review. *Occupational Medicine, 53*(3), 191-200. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40196390 doi: 10.1093/occmed/kqg038.

Volkwein, J. F. and Parmley, K. (2000, February). Comparing Administrative Satisfaction in Public and Private Universities. *Research in Higher Education. 41*(1). AIR Forum Issue. p. 95-116. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40196390

Volkwein, J. F & Zhou, Y. (2003, April). Testing a model of administrative job satisfaction. *Research in Higher Education, 44*(2), 149-171.

Wright, B. E. (2007, February). Public Service and Motivation: Does mission matter? *Public Administration Review, 67*(1), 54-64.

BIOGRAPHY

Johanna Koh received her Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Gallaudet University in 1995. She began her graduate studies in 2008 in Data Mining. Started her studies in the MAIS program with a concentration in higher education in 2011. She worked as a programmer and analyst for a fundraising company and Cable and Wireless from 1997-2001. She is currently employed as an Office Manager at the English Language Institute (ELI) at George Mason University. She volunteers in the Discovery Program, an outdoor adventure based program at Gallaudet University as well as a support services person for the blind whenever help is needed.