

STUDENT RETENTION IN A CRIMINOLOGY PROGRAM

Bir Kriminoloji Programında Öğrencilerin Programa Devamı

M. Alper SÖZER*

Özet

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde, son yıllarda, üniversite öğrencilerinin eğitim görmekte oldukları programda devam etmeleri konusu ciddi bir problem haline gelmiştir. Öğrencilerin eğitim gördükleri programda kalmaları ve programlarını tamamlama oranları son yirmi yıldır azalmaktadır. Bu problemin anlaşılabilmesi için New England bölgesinde bulunan bir Amerikan üniversitesinde bilimsel bir çalışma yapılmıştır. Veri toplamak için nitel bir çalışma tekniği olan yüz yüze mülakatlar kullanılmıştır. Çalışma sonuçları; arkadaş, öğretim görevlileri, geleceğe ait hedefler ve kampüs içerisindeki tesislerin öğrencilerin eğitim gördüğü kriminoloji programına devam etmelerine etki eden önemli faktörlerden olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışmanın sınırlılıkları ve programda devam sorununun çözümüne dair öneriler tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrencilerin Okula Devamı, Nitel Çalışma, Not Ortalaması.

Abstract

In recent years, student retention has become an important concern for universities in the United States (U.S.). Student retention has consistently decreased over the past two decades. To explore student retention in an American college located in New England, a qualitative study was designed. Face to face interviews were utilized as a data collection method. The results show that friends, faculty members, future goals, and campus facilities are important factors that influence student retention in the criminology program. Limitations of the study along with a recommendation are discussed.

Keywords: Student Retention, Qualitative Study, GPA.

* Dr., Başkomiser, Polis Akademisi, masozer@yahoo.com
PBD, 11 (2) 2009, ss. 31-50

Introduction

The student retention in colleges is a crucial issue for both institutions and students. In 1995, the four year graduation rate was two in five students, or in other words it was approximately 38% in the U.S. (Peltier et. al., 1999). Most of the four-year college students tend to leave their schools within first two years (Tinto, 1996; DeBerard et. al., 2004). Lau (2003) argued that due to the integration issues with the new environment and academic area, student drop outs usually occurred at the end of the first year. Drop outs deeply influence the institutions financially as well (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a). Most of the universities rely on tuition fees to support their academic programs. According to the literature, four major factors are argued that they influence student retention. These factors are students, faculty, institution, and family.

1. Student Retention

1.1. Student Related Factors

Since 1979, the retention rate has begun to diminish because the students are not as well prepared as before for college life (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997b). Tinto (1996) asserted that students' academic difficulty and failure in meeting academic requirements represent approximately 30 to 35 percent of student attrition. Academic achievement is one of the most important reasons to retain (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a). Lau (2003) found a high correlation between high school grade point average (GPA) and scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores and the retention rate. In the same way, it is stated that students' first semester grades have great influence on persistence (Sydow & Sandel, 1998; Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a). If they were doing well in high school, they would more likely to do well in college, and their retention would be significantly higher than others who did not perform well in high school.

Financial difficulties are also related with student retention. Tinto (1996) asserted that financial problems are one of the most significant factors that affect student retention. According to Sydow & Sandel (1998) more than 60% of the students were employed prior to college. Student's coming from broken and low economic condition families are more likely to leave college since they have to work either to support their families or to pay their tuition. These students are not able to maintain their motivation and energy to participate in classes because they were tired of working too much (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997b).

It is likely that freshmen have some social integration problems. Tinto (1996) argued that the lack of capability to establish connection with others make some students isolated. These students cannot get friends as others, and they usually experience loneliness and homesickness (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a). According to Peltier et. al. (1999) if students involved with others at the first step, they would more likely to stay in the school.

Educational goals and aspirations increase motivation, which, in turn, increases retention rates. Students who do not have commitment to finish the program and students who really do not realize the importance of the education are more likely to drop out from the program (Lau, 2003).

Age, race, and gender are also found to have influence on retention. Feldman (1993) found that students between the ages of 20-34 were 1.77 times more likely to drop out than students age 19 and under. He also suggested that females are more likely to persist (as cited in Sydow & Sandel, 1998:637-638). In support to this finding, Peltier et. al. (1999) found that females have higher retention and academic achievement rates than males. In regard to race, they found that Whites have higher retention rates than African American, American Indians, and Hispanics.

1.2. Faculty Related Factors

Quality of teaching and advising are important factors that increase retention rate. Faculty can play a crucial role in maintaining a good academic environment. It is argued that adjunct faculty does not respond sufficiently to the freshmen's needs, whereas, permanent faculty members increase student satisfaction (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a; Green, 2008; Lau, 2003). Theory dominant teaching methods do not make much sense for freshmen. They would like to know how their education related to the real world. In the colleges where learning communities, cooperative learning techniques, and group studies are available, retention rates are likely to be high especially for the first year.

According to Tinto (1996), the quality of education and academic level are other factors influencing student retention. Education supported by technology such as computers, DVD players, and other multimedia stuff may positively contribute the quality of education.

Faculties' positive attitudes toward students also help to retain students in a program. According to Rouchee (1993), "caring attitude of the staff and faculty" was the most important retention factor (as cited in Sydow & Sandel, 1998:640). It is found that faculty members who work closely with the students increase the student learning (Lau, 2003).

1.3. Institution Related Factors

Institutions as well as the students have been suffering from drop outs. Institutions that have quality residential life, housing program, freshman experience courses, and comprehensive orientation programs are advantageous in retaining students (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a; Noonan-Terry & Waiwairole, 2008). These facilities and programs are crucial especially for freshmen because they experience a transition process in which they need professional help. In addition, sports and extracurricular activities are suggested as positive factors to keep students in academic programs (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997b; Peltier et. al., 1999). Living in a residence hall, financial aid, and student funding are among most important environmental characteristics associated with finishing school (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997a; Braunstein & McGrath, 1997b; Lau, 2003; Sydow & Sandel, 1998; Peltier et. al., 1999; Tinto, 1996). Institutions providing wide range of activities, facilities, and financial support along with student-oriented service mentality are likely to retain their students.

1.4. Family

Family support is vital for student retention. DeBerard et. al. (2004) found that parental support increases academic success which, in turn, positively affects retention rates. Education level of the family and socioeconomic conditions are also related with retention. Parents having college or upper academic degree are more likely to support their children, and their expectations from their children stronger than parents without any academic degree. On the other hand, Braunstein & McGrath (1997a) found no significant difference between parent's education level, family's native language and retention. Personal and family health and personal and family conflict accounted for totally 56% of school drop outs (Sydow & Sandel, 1998:638). Students coming from disrupted families and unhealthy environment are more likely to leave without getting a degree.

To sum, institutions, families and faculty members have surely influence on retention, but it mostly depends on students' motivation, academic success, financial situation, health condition, goals, study principles, and preparedness for higher education. However, further studies should be conducted on that issue to better understand and explain the possible factors that relate to retention. In that sense, this study is an effort to understand why criminology students retain in the program at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

2. Methodology

In this study, interviewing which is one of the most prevalent techniques of qualitative method was utilized. The qualitative study might provide a better understanding of the student retention. Since the students' perceptions, feelings, values and assumptions are fundamental in analyzing the causes of retention, utilizing interviews as the research method is crucial to collect accurate data in-depth. Particularly, the unanticipated responses may often be more useful in highlighting what students really think and really do than responses obtained through surveys. McCracken (1988) argued that in qualitative research the issue is not the generalizability; it is more to discover how many, and what kind of people share certain characteristics. The purpose of that study is neither to come up with objective findings that can valid for every institution, nor obtaining findings that can be generalized. As this study aims to understand undergraduate student retention in the Criminology Department, interviews with undergraduate student is an appropriate way to better understand the students' experience, feelings and the perceptions. How students perceive retention may allow the researcher to see the points which they could not have seen if they had designed a quantitative study.

After completing the literature review, interview questions were prepared (Appendix). A summary of the study along with the questions were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) since the study included human subjects. After receiving the IRB approval, faculty members who taught freshmen classes were asked to whether they allow their students to participate in the study. Two professors contended to allow their students to participate in the study. Thus, the sampling frame of this study consisted of 90 students. Each student was assigned a number from zero to 90. Next, 15 number (students) were randomly selected by drawing numbers from the list. Students were

asked to fill out a consent form to participate in the study. Within this form, students were required to write available dates when they can be available for interviews. Professors also contended that they assign extra points to the freshmen who participate in the study.

Interviewers met with the students on the campus if possible in the rooms that can be viewed by others from the outside. First, interviewers explained interviewees that the participation is voluntary. If they would like to give up at any time, they were free to do so. Additionally, students were informed that this study is anonymous which means students' names are not released in the study, and no answer can be linked to any interviewees. Interviewers asked four questions to the students and interviews were recorded to tapes. After interviews were completed, interviewers typed the records and formed the transcripts.

3. Analysis

Since students' perceptions, feelings, and assumptions are fundamental in analyzing the causes of retention, data were not analyzed by using pre-set categories. Instead, during analysis, "*open coding*" technique which is also known as "*inductive coding*" was utilized. The emerging insights as the researcher immerse himself into data were used to identify the patterns and the themes of the study. The researcher was open to what transcripts brought up to the table. Data were analyzed based on the variables that emerged from the transcripts; therefore, analysis and categories were variable-oriented.

After the transcripts had been read two times, a large picture of data began to take a shape. During the third round of reading the important themes in transcripts were highlighted. These important themes were accepted as variables that fairly influenced student retention.

After, forming variable-based substantive categories, these categories were linked to the concepts available in the literature. Two main concepts were emerged as factors influencing student retention; individual and institutional factors (Table 2).

By keeping these sub-variables in mind, transcripts were read again. To avoid overlapping among sub-variables, similar sub-variables were combined in broader substantive categories. As a result of this process, nine significant variables were emerged from the transcripts.

3.1. The Organization of Narrative

The variables were not organized according to research questions in the narrative because each question focused on separate issues that are considered relevant with student retention. When the participant answered the question “Why did you choose IUP?” the answers given by the participant will also be applicable to the question “Why are you still at IUP or Why did you stay at IUP”? If the order of research questions were pursued, the same variables would be repeatedly used for at least in analyzing two questions; however, the difference sides of the same variable were identified within the context of the same variable in the present study. Basically, the research subjects gave the same reasons both for why they choose IUP, and for why they stay in the program (i.e., being affordable institution, reputation of the program, location of the university). Only three themes, the goodness of faculty, making new friends, and GPA explain why they still stay at the IUP. Therefore, using variable-based categories were seen more appropriate in the process of organizing narrative rather than using research questions.

4. Results

The findings of this study run parallel with the literature, but there were some findings unique to the IUP. Under the two main conceptualized categories, the variables friends, family, GPA, future goals, program, faculty, social activities, campus, and town, were identified as important factors that influence student retention. The campus itself and the town Indiana are the factors that were not the part of the literature and unique to this study. Even though all institutional factors can be considered as unique to the IUP, according to literature the quality of program, faculty, and the extracurricular activities were mentioned specifically as important institutional factors keeping students in the college.

4.1. Individual Factors

4.1.1. Family

Family support is crucial keeping students in the school. Research shows that low social support is related with non-persistence (DeBerard et. al., 2004). The present research findings suggest the same thing. Besides its

importance to keeping students in school, present study shows that family has direct and indirect effect on decision making process about attending and choosing the college. As indirect effect, students reported;

“...um, it was kind of a family tradition cause my grandma and grandfather both came here, and my uncle came here and it was basically my first option...”

“...it was probably actually that my cousin went there, because, then I would know somebody...”

Table 1: Sub-Variables and Substantive Categories

Sub-Variables	Substantive Categories
Fiends before IUP Making new friends	FRIENDS
Clubs-Plays-Sports-Parties-Volunteer job	SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
Closeness-Town size-Bars-Residence Campus size-Class Size-Buildings Structure-Program reputation Program's relevance to future goals Family background-Family member in the campus Family expectations	TOWN CAMPUS PROGRAM FAMILY
Knowledge of faculty Openness and availability of faculty Good experience with faculty	FACULTY
Good Grades	GPA
Preparing towards to a career Obtaining a degree Increasing the likelihood of finding a good job	GOALS

As direct effects, some families encourage or push their children to go to any college. These effects influence both decision making process about choosing and staying in the college.

“...my sister went to college and then she only went for a like semester and then quit...so, my parents also encouraged me none of my family as gone to college...”

Table 2: Frequency of the Key Variables

Interviewee	f	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Individual Factors																
Friend	15	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Family	6	+		+		+				+	+			+		
GPA	4	+	+					+								+
Goal	7		+	+	+	+						+	+	+		
Institutional Factors																
Program	11		+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+
Faculty	12	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+
Activity	11	+	+	+		+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+		
Campus	10		+	+		+	+	+		+	+		+	+		+
Town	11		+		+			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

“...they (parents) never gone to college or anything like that, so they really pushed for me to go....”

“...it (dropping out of school) was never an option... I am sure they (parents) wouldn't be happy...”

On the other hand, some children were naturally expected to attend a college.

“...it was never really an option not to go to college. My parents both went to college...I mean it was just...I really never considered not going to college.”

Although the literature suggests a positive relationship between academic achievement and parental support, the present study did not find that kind of relationship in particular. Instead, having a family member in the criminal justice system leads students to choose the criminology program rather than the IUP itself.

4.1.2. Friends

A “friend” is the most frequent response given by the participants to the research questions. Basically, it has two dimensions. First, the student who wishes to go to college is highly influenced by his/her friends in deciding which college to go to as it is evident in the following responses given by participants:

“... I knew my way...I lived with a girl that I went to high school with and got along really well...”

“...three of us try to get room together..., you already have friends to go eat every night, and do things with on the weekend...”

“...I had a girlfriend from high school who went to IUP and also a brother and also I wanted to run the track team...”

“...why I came here...one of my best friends from high school went here...we just talked about it (IUP) and I decided to come to IUP...”

Second, for some students making new friends and having fun are solely good enough reasons to stay in the school. Since they established good friendships, they do not want to quit the school or transfer to any other college. Friendship, as a social network, is a very strong bond that also ties students to the institution. It is likely that if students had not had friends or made new friends, they would not have stayed in the school as evident in the responses below:

“...what keeps me here ... probably friends that I have made here are a big influence...”

“...you already have a place to set up here to go to friends said there is no point in trying to make new friends start the whole process...”

“...a lot of friends I have here that graduated last year they were reluctant to leave because some of friends were still here... they just had a great time in college...”

“...I met a lot of people in the dorms...then I lived in the house with like nine other guys, so that was crazy. I had a good time...”

Besides students who did not mention about having old friends or making new friends, they at least mentioned that they had good experiences with other students.

“...most of the people who I have talked to have been really nice and helpful...”

“... friendly relationships with other students...I do like that...”

The literature is parallel with the findings of the study. According to Milem & Berger (as cited in Peltier et. al., 1999:358) early involvement with other students appears to produce retention. This is exactly what the present findings suggest. Majority of the students in the criminology program appear to have friends here before they enrolled in the IUP, and they also do not have any problems in establishing connection with other students.

4.1.3. GPA

Since Tinto (1996) asserted that student's academic difficulty (not being able to fulfill the course requirements) represents approximately 30 to 35 percent of student drop out, it was expected that subjects would largely point out academic success. However, it is not a response that was received as frequently as expected. Students basically reported that good grades encourage them to pursue the program.

“... you don't drop out of school... it's something you don't do and I have always done fairly well...I am not in danger of failing or anything like that...may be that has to factor into it (staying at IUP) ...”

“...I have had my grades pretty good there has been no real need to transfer anywhere...”

“...and coming out of freshmen year with 4.0 made me feel a little bit better...”

4.1.4. Future Goal

Since Tinto (1996) asserted that student's academic difficulty (not being able to fulfill the course requirements) represents approximately 30 to 35 percent of student drop out, it was expected that subjects would largely point out academic success. However, it is not a response that was received as frequently as expected. Students basically reported that good grades encourage them to pursue the program.

4.2. Institutional Factors

4.2.1. Program

The criminology program is another important factor for students to stay in the college. Having an available criminology program itself has influenced student's decision on choosing IUP. Second, the quality of the program influences students' decisions. The program is well-known among students and considered the best Criminology program in the area. In addition, some students, based on their own experience, reported that the program has met their expectations. These positive experiences and thoughts appear to influence student retention.

“... some other small factors good reputation IUP has...”

“...I talked some people and they said they have a very good crim program here, so I decided to transfer here...the classes that I had here...they have been really good...”

“...good criminology program was here was the most important factor to choose IUP...”

“... when I do research IUP had a really good reputation for criminology really good program...”

The literature suggests the academic quality of education influences the retention rate. According to Tinto (1996), most of the first year drops are due to bad education. In the present study, almost every subject gave positive responses about the quality of the program. One of the subjects told that due to the unqualified faculty and program in another college she had transferred to the IUP.

‘... they are not as popular...it seems to me professors aren’t necessarily good... I am paying for, to go to school there (other college), I want to like learn things that are relevant to what I want to do...so I just transferred to here.”

4.2.2. Faculty

The literature suggests that faculty should increase the quality of education and actively involved in retention efforts. The present study found that faculty after the ‘friend’ is the second most important factors in the student retention.

“...the two professors that I have now for crim, it seems like they really know what they are talking about...”

“... professors are just fun...”

“...faculty has always been really nice and willing to help in any of my classes...”

“...I know them name basis, been to their offices, talked to them, anything I need help with they have been there for me...”

“...teachers that I have tried to talked to whenever after class have been really friendly, always available during office hours and such...”

4.2.3. Social Activities

Social activities are here range from school based activities to informal parties. The students reported “social activities” as a reason to choose the IUP, or as a reason to stay at the IUP. Additionally, few students reported that they selected the IUP because athletics teams;

“... I looked sports at ahead...one of the competing cross country and track and field...so I came here competing...”

“...I looked at schools for athletics...went there for athletics...”

“...I also played ice hockey...and I knew IUP had a good club team or whatever, so that contributed to my decision.”

In terms of activities, IUP offers students a lot of choices. Students easily socialize by participating in a variety of activities. The healthy socialization process positively influences retention rates.

“...I joined fraternity... a lot of positive social interaction...I was a president of a fraternity once that was a social big thing too...”

“...there is a plenty of activities to do, plenty of clubs, plenty of plays...there is all kind of activities to take part of...”

“...even if it is off campus, like I am involved with Big brother big sister program...I am involved with honors program...”

“...I have involved in a lot of intramural sports...I take advantage of six o'clock series...and try to take advantage of different clubs...”

“...and ROTC I made lots of friend doing that so being in an organization... I am really involved in ROTC here such a big thing...”

“...I do some volunteer work ...I volunteer at the Alice Paul House... I know people through that...”

4.2.4. Campus

As stated earlier, this finding is unique to the IUP, the students basically like the campus itself. It is kind of a relative and abstract thing to describe for students. Some students cannot even say why they like the campus. The closeness of the campus to students' hometowns also influences the students' opinion to stay in the school.

The literature suggests that programs and facilities like dorms and residence halls are important factors affecting student retention (Noonan-Terry & Waiwaiiole, 2008). However, IUP students did not mention anything related to dorms and residence halls. Instead, they reported that they just like the campus and its size.

“... it is smaller campus and it is not that you have to walk so far to get the classes or you have to have transportation to get to classes...”

“... it was bigger... Penn State berk had three buildings...”

“...I think, the campus, I absolutely love the campus...so, that’s really a big factor staying enrolled in IUP.”

“...I like the campus and hasn’t give me any reason to leave...”

In that study, there was no need to separate the financial issues from the variable campus because students who mentioned affordability and in-state tuition fee talked about the IUP itself, and did not refer anything related to their own financial situations. None of the participants talked about his or her financial situation, or mentioned anything about getting financial aid from the school. Therefore, responses related with financial situation such as being affordable and cheap were considered as a part of institution, and they were included in the variable “campus”.

“...it was relatively cheaper than the other colleges...”

“...I applied based on that in-state tuition is a lot cheaper than out state tuition...”

“...I transferred here because out-state tuition was very expensive ...my family here in Pennsylvania...”

4.2.5. Town

At the first place, the variable town can be considered as location or closeness; nonetheless, it would be insufficient to encompass all the factors that Indiana has as a town. Indiana plays a more important role in college selection process than decision making process about staying. Closeness of campus is convenient for some, whereas, being far away is convenient for others. However, in either case, students are not from like hundreds of miles out of the state.

“...I live only an hour and half away it makes it easier to go home whenever I need be...if you want to come here Indiana, you will have fun...”

“It is only about an hour away from my home which is a good distance...but not too close to home...”

“...it is close to home, I am a baby...”

“...I wanted to go far away, I wanted independence...it was five hours from here where I am from...”

“...may be just the fact that even though it is in the middle of a town or a city or whatever it still kind of has a country feel to it...police sirens or ambulance sirens... I thought I was going to be keeping me up at night but it doesn't so it was very nice.”

Although majority of comments about the town concentrated on the closeness of student's home town or family, there were other issues that make Indiana a unique factor for students to stay such as size and bar scene.

“...being a bigger town, there is a lot to do in town...there are bars...the social life is better...it is a lot more fun here...”

“...and I like atmosphere around the campus, but I don't really like the weather...”

“I like just the way the town is set up...everything is in driving distance...I did not go to urban college. It just does not appeal me.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Factors that were found in this study generally support the literature. There are some reservations about the research questions because ‘faculty’ and ‘friends’ stood out as the two most important factors that influenced the student retention even though the literature does not place so much emphasis on these factors. The ‘faculty’ and ‘friends’ are the two most frequent variables that emerged from responses. It is anticipated that due to the probe of the second research question, those factors (variables) were frequently emerged. The probe appears to lead the students’ response because it asks “talk about your relationships or interactions with students and/or faculty”. When students hear this question, they naturally began to talk about those specific topics. The frequency of the variable ‘faculty’ is 12, and the frequency of the variable ‘friend’ is 15 (Table 2).

There might be two reasons that can explain the difference between two. First, in two interviews, the interviewer did not ask or tell the probe including experiences with faculty, so these two students did not tell anything about the faculty. Second, although ‘friend’ is an important factor influencing decision making process about choosing the college, ‘faculty’ does not appear to have any influence on it. Therefore, if the variable ‘friends’ was not mentioned for the second question, it was likely to be mentioned for the first one. Future studies should avoid using that kind of questions which might be leading.

The subjects are consisted of students who are pleased with the program, and talked about why they were still in the program. Including alumni and students who dropped out from the program within the scope of this study might be a better strategy to explore the factors influencing student retention.

According to present study’s findings, student who have old friends at the IUP, and who are able to make new friends are more likely to stay in the program. Moreover, having motivation and set future goals related to criminology field are important factors that influence retention. Even though social activities in town and around campus are

considered sufficient by majority of students, new activities can be introduced and the quality of existing activities can be increased.

References

- Deberard, M. S., Speilmans, G. I., Julka, D. L., (2004), "Predictors of academic achievement and retention among college freshmen: A longitudinal study", *College Student Journal*, Vol 3, pp.66-80.
- Green, D. W. (2008), "SIRIUS Academics: A multidimensional initiative to improve student retention and success", *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, Vol 32, No.11, pp. 886-887.
- Lau, L. K., (2003), "Institutional factors affecting student retention", *Education*, Vol. 124, pp.126-136.
- McGrath, M. M., & Braunstein, A., (1997a), "The retention of freshmen students: An examination of the assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions held by college administrators and faculty", *College Student Journal*, Vol 31, No. 2, pp. 188-201.
- McGrath, M. M., & Braunstein, A., (1997a), "The prediction of freshmen attrition: An examination of the importance of certain demographics, academic, financial, and social factors", *College Student Journal*, Vol 31, No 3, pp.396-408.
- Noonan-Terry, C. M., & Waiwaiiole, E. (2008), "Making a positive impact in students' lives", *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, Vol. 25, No. 18, pp.35-35.
- Peltier, G. L., Laden, R., Matranga, M., (1999), Student persistence in college: A review of research, *Journal of College Student Retention*, Vol. 1, No.4, pp.357-375.
- Sydow, D. L., Sandel, R. H., (1998), "Making student retention an institutional priority", *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 22, pp.635-643.
- Tinto, V., (1996), "Reconstructing the first year of college", *Planning for Higher Education*, Vol.25, pp.1-6.

Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose the IUP? What was the most important factor for you to choose this school?
2. Can you tell me about your experiences at the IUP? Probe: Your relationships, or interactions with students and faculty at the IUP.
3. Why do you still at the IUP?
4. Did you find here what you expected from a college?
5. Do you want to add something?

