FACULTY ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF AN ACADEMIC ADVISING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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ABSTRACT

MAKENA NICOLE STEWART. Faculty advisors' perceptions of the impact of an academic advising quality enhancement plan on organizational culture of a community college. (Under the direction of DR. LISA MERRIWEATHER)

Student success initiatives identify comprehensive academic advising as a key strategy in promoting student retention while also ushering in cultural change within an organization. A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted to examine the impact an academic advising Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) had on the organizational culture of one community college. There were two research questions: 1) what are faculty advisors' perceptions of the impact of academic advising on organizational culture? and 2) how does organizational culture influence faculty roles and expectations as advisors? The research was explored through an organizational culture theoretical framework. Methodology included semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of community college faculty advisors. A constant comparative data analysis was used to identify themes of safety, professional identity of the advisor, and impact on organizational ideologies. Implications for advising practices, policies, and professional development for advisors are discussed. Further research is warranted on other institutional stakeholder subgroups to understand the holistic impact the implementation of an academic advising plan has on an organization.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the one triune God, for with Him all things are possible. Mark 10:27; Proverbs 3:6.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

This study examined faculty advisors' perception of the impact of an academic advising quality enhancement plan (QEP) on the organizational culture of one community college. The method of this qualitative case study consisted of faculty interviews, and results were analyzed using a constant comparative data analysis strategy. Themes of safety, professional identity, and the impact of process on ideology were identified. Implications for policy and practice, as well as future research are discussed.

This chapter presents an overview of the national problem of student non-completion and highlights the call for student success reforms at community colleges. It includes a brief discussion regarding the effects of academic advising toward degree completion as well as the implications for organizational culture change at the community college. This is followed by a presentation of the extant research on the perception of faculty advisors and the purpose of the study. The research questions, significance, and design are outlined as well as a discussion of the definition of culture used for this study as positioned within the theoretical framework of organizational culture theory. The chapter concludes with identified key terms limitations and delimitations of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Poor college completion rates in America are persistent and troubling. The U.S. Department of Education noted in a 2012 press release that, while the United States was once first place globally in the proportion of college graduates produced, the country has now dropped to 16th place (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). With 36 million Americans aged 25 years or older who have started college, but have not earned a degree—approximately one fifth of this population—the issue is of national concern (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Hanson, 2012). Furthermore, with 65% of workforce careers requiring some postsecondary education by the year 2020 (Carnevale et al., 2012), the need for completers is critical. Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010) project that, by the year 2018, 22 million new workers with college degrees will be needed; however, there will be a projected deficit of at least 3 million postsecondary degrees. In light of this, President Obama put forth the 2020 Completion Goal: a charge that America would resume its place of having the highest number of graduates in the world by 2020. The U.S. Department of Education estimates, in order to reach that goal, the number of certificates, diplomas, and degrees earned by American students would need to increase by 50 percent (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

Particularly in demand are those middle education jobs that require more than a high school education, but less than a bachelor's degree (Carnevale et al., 2012). In response, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) launched the 21st-Century Initiative in 2011. This initiative proposed an increase in the number of

postsecondary credentials earned at community colleges by five million by the year 2020 (AACC, 2012). As noted by the AACC (2012), "because a highly educated population is fundamental to economic growth and a vibrant democracy, community colleges can help reclaim that dream" (p. vii). While commendable, the reality of the current state of community college credential completion is sobering in the face of this goal. In 2013, less than 20% of students seeking a two-year degree graduated within three years (The Chronicle, 2016). To further place this goal in perspective, a total of 12.3 million students enrolled in credit and non-credit programs in Fall 2014. However, nationwide only 795,235 associate degrees and 494,995 certificates were awarded during the 2013-2014 academic year (AACC, 2016).

The 21st-Century Commission's report calls for community colleges to redesign student educational experiences, reinvent institutional roles, and reset the system (AACC, 2012). These three overarching goals encompass seven specific recommendations to transform community colleges to better serve their students. Of the seven, recommendation four specifically calls for institutional leaders to "refocus the community college mission and redefine institutional roles to meet 21st-century education and employment needs" by "expanding community college work in academic advising, learning assessment, and credentialing" (AACC, 2012, p. 28). In addition, the report states that community colleges need to "do a better job of counseling and advising students" at the transition points of high school to college as well as during the transfer to post-degree completion (AACC, 2012, p. 11).

The recommendation is supported as research suggests that academic advising can fill this gap:

> When done well, academic advising can serve as a powerful lever in improving the college student experience and in supporting an institution's goals with regard to persistence and time to graduation because it provides the structured opportunity to direct student behavior toward the 'right' activities. (Campbell & Nutt, 2008, p. 4)

Furthermore, projects such as Completion by Design, an initiative created to holistically redesign the student experience, call on community colleges to revamp front-door services. This includes developing academic advising programs that offer structured participation as well as intrusive and proactive intervention to connect students to advisors (Completion by Design, 2013). The inclusion of advising as a necessary component for institutional redesign should not be seen as surprising; while nearly 90% of students report that they believe academic advising and planning is important, only a third voluntarily seek help from a college advisor to create a completion plan that outlines their goals (AACC, 2012). A myriad of reasons could account for this; however, one of the prevailing concerns is that students at community colleges often report not knowing that they even have an advisor (McArthur, 2005).

Students need to connect with their advisor, specifically their faculty advisor, as research has shown that student and faculty interactions outside of a classroom are essential to academic success (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Students' limited interaction with members of the institution may be indicative of a lack of social and academic integration, which are factors identified as contributors of student

departure (Tinto, 1975; 1993). While the literature is inconclusive as to what degree academic and/or social integration impact student decisions to stay or leave an institution (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Milem & Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Voorhees, 1987), the interwoven relationship of the concepts should be considered when discussing the success and completion rates of community college students (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Deil-Amin, 2011; Halpin, 1990). Kodama (2002) identified that the lack of social and academic engagement can contribute to feelings of marginalization by commuter students. Deil-Amin (2011) discusses the need for socio-academic integration at the community college as:

> moments in which the academic influence is coupled with elements of social integration to provide needed support and enhance feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence. Such processes revolve around events, activities, interactions, and relationships reflecting 'moments' that combine academically and socially integrative elements. (p. 73)

These moments can be specifically accomplished through academic advising, a process that is both student-centered and learning-focused (Gordon, 2004). Academic advising also supports interactions with members of the institution through structured student services backed by institutional policies and practices (Heath, 1991; Nakajima, Dembo & Mossler, 2012). The advising process can be the connection to the institution that lets students know someone is watching out for their best interests and will recognize their departure (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

Institutions must look for strategic ways to utilize limited resources as they develop and implement academic advising programs that connect students to

opportunities for success (Darling, 2015). Karp (2013) found that advising is often underfunded and under-resourced at the community college, and many students do not experience the level of advising that allows them to participate in goal setting and long-term planning. Many community colleges have developed a faculty-based advising program as the solution to address that need (Gordon, 2004; McArthur, 2005, Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). Research from Achieving the Dream, a national student success initiative aimed at achieving sustainable institutional transformation, points to the importance of faculty stakeholder engagement while implementing institutional cultural change (Rothkopf, 2009). As key stakeholders in advising, "faculty are well positioned to know what works and to design and implement innovations to better help students reach their goals" (Birnback, Friedman, & Lumina Foundation, 2009, p.1), while interrelating student development and learning (Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). Additionally, faculty develop a connection with students both in and out of the classroom that sets the foundation for trust-built relationships (Kennemer & Hurt, 2013).

Yet, despite the predominance of using faculty-based models in advising programs (Habley, 1997), a surprisingly limited amount of research has been conducted on the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of faculty who serve in this role (Allen & Smith, 2008). While there is a significant body of research concerning student beliefs about advising, there is limited published empirical research on faculty perceptions of advising (Allen & Smith, 2008; Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). The majority of the research conducted on faculty advisors has been at research universities, which

may not have the same implications for community colleges. The environment of universities and community colleges are different; therefore, the faculty may differ in beliefs, aspirations, and opinions (Carducci, 2002). Research is needed to highlight the perceptions of community college faculty advisors. Furthermore, the research on advising is often conducted by administering surveys to students and faculty (Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Goomas, 2012; Smith & Allen, 2008; Smith & Allen, 2014; Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). With organizations developing academic advising programs geared towards changing how their colleges address the challenge of student completion, there is a unique opportunity for qualitative research that can complement quantitative findings in this field.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty advisors' perceptions of the impact an academic advising quality enhancement plan had on the organizational culture of one community college. The research sought to add to the existing body of literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role academic advising has on shaping the thoughts and beliefs of faculty advisors at community colleges. In addition, the research sought to understand how faculty perceived academic advising to influence the overall organizational culture.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of the study, the researcher posed the following two questions:

1) What are faculty advisors' perception of the impact of academic advising on organizational culture?
2) How does organizational culture influence faculty roles and expectations as advisors?

Significance

This research has scholarly, practical, and institutional significance. The results of the study has implications to inform policy and practice. It is important to have timely feedback on the reception of implementation strategies as completion initiatives are being developed, evaluated, and redesigned; this may contribute to the success or hindrance of the initiative. Research in academic advising aids faculty and members of the advising community in detecting and explaining trends beyond their local institution (Hurt & McLaughlin, 2012). Contributions from other researchers are needed to document aspects of their institution's evolution of advising (Gordon, 2004). There has been a call for future research on the impact of advising models on various institutions to assist those responsible for developing and implementing advising models (Gordon, 2004; Habley, 1983; Hurt & McLaughlin, 2012). Research on the impact of advising structures at an institution provides feedback to administrators regarding organizational similarities and appropriate fit for their respective institutions. It allows supervisors, coordinators, and

those that provide administrative oversight to use that information to anticipate and address challenges and barriers to advising model implementation. This allows for more effective program execution (Habley, 1983).

Additionally, subcultures within an institution experience, respond to, and influence planned change differently (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006). Literature is needed that relates to understanding how organizational culture impacts perceptions and behaviors as a result of institutional initiatives (Taplay, Jack, Baxter, Eva, & Martin, 2014). Greater knowledge of the perception of faculty advisors would assist those seeking to implement change at institutions to tailor strategies for greater effectiveness.

There was also significance for the researched institution in this study. This study was the work of the sole remaining member of the original committee that developed the institution's academic advising plan. This in itself is notable; the design and implementation of an advising plan usually takes a significant amount of time, and there may be considerable personnel turnover during that period. Research gathered in this effort is a historical artifact useful for current and future stakeholders at this institution; other researchers may benefit from studying the design of this study when conducting similar research to capture organizational change for the historical records of their own institutions (Gordon, 2004).

Design

Yin (2014) states that a case study is the preferred method when a researcher is examining real world, contemporary events that cannot be manipulated or when the

researcher has limited control. This research was a qualitative case study using interview data to determine how faculty advisors in one institution perceived the culture after the implementation of an academic advising quality enhancement plan.

Theoretical Framework

To frame this study, a working definition of culture must be defined. Culture is an abstract concept that "points us to phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact, but invisible and to a considerable degree, unconscious" (Schein, 2010, p. 14). Cultures are made up of facts, metaphors, stories, rites, and rituals. It includes the rich and "open-endedness" of meanings associated with shared symbolism (Hatch & Zilber, 2012). The theoretical framework for this study is Schein's model of organizational culture.

In the model, Schein identifies three levels of culture: a scaffolded model where each level gives way to a deeper reflection of the internal, perhaps unreachable, level of consciousness that influences thinking and actions. There are three levels to his model, the first of which is artifacts. Artifacts are defined as areas that are visible such as processes and structures; they may be difficult to interpret even though they are behaviorally observable. The second level is the notion of espoused beliefs and values. These express the ideals, goals, ideologies, and rationalizations of a culture. There may be both congruence and dissonance in this level in light of the artifacts of the institution. The third level consists of underlying assumptions. Underlying assumptions are those

beliefs and values that are conventions or traditions that are generally accepted: these drive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of those in the institution (Schein, 2010).

Schein (2010) stated that there are categories of culture: macroculture, organizational culture, subculture, and microcultures. Macrocultures refer to the large global community of an occupation, nation, ethnic or religious group. The organizational culture is defined in terms of private, public, nonprofit, and government organizations. Within the organization, there are subcultures of occupational groups. Lastly, there are microcultures that occur both within and outside of the organization. In the context of this study, the term organizational culture is used in reference to the individual community college that is the focal point of the research. The microculture is academic advising. Faculty advisors comprise the subculture or subgroup. The researcher acknowledges that there are a multitude of micro and subcultures that participants of the study are part of; there cannot be a separation of the biases that come with membership to these communities (Kuh, 2001). Subcultures of race, faith, generation, campus affiliation, and schools of discipline all shape the lens through which members perceive academic advising. However, the diversity of the participants' experiences and memberships should be viewed as a strength. Faculty serve as a microcosm of the community and the diversity in there subcultures are therefore a representative sampling of the complexity of a greater institution.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research, specific definitions are used to refer to various processes.

- Academic Advising: A "systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources" (Winston, Enders, & Miller, 1982, p. 8).
- Developmental: A theory of advising that focuses on the personal growth of the student through self-awareness of personal interest, abilities, and values (Gordon, 1992).
- Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): A five-year plan designed to improve student learning outcomes and/or the environment that supports student learning (SACSCOC, 2011).

Limitations/Delimitations

Participants in the study were faculty advisors employed with the institution during or prior to the 2012-2013 academic year when the QEP was approved for implementation. A limitation of this study was that the participant pool was narrow due to turnover in faculty since the inception of the QEP. With the passage of time, participants may have limited memory recall of the detail of events or may have a reframed perspective of events with additional information that they gathered.

A delimitation of the study was that it was limited to one organization and includes only faculty. The experiences of students, staff, and administrators are beneficial; however, the focus of this study was to understand the perception of academic advising from those that are responsible for implementing the work in a faculty-driven advising model.

Summary

With student completion now more critical than ever, it is important for institutions to study the perceptions of the impact that student success programming, like advising, have on organizational culture. An organization's effectiveness in advising depends on how well the individuals who provide the advising are willing to perform the services (Habley, 1983); this willingness is reflected in perceptions of advising. This is most evident when the individuals are faculty, the critical point of connection for students within the institution. An analysis of the literature in the following chapter provides a foundational overview of what academic advising is, perceptions of faculty's role within the advising process, and reference to organizational advising models. The literature review concludes with current practices in academic advising and a brief discussion of organizational culture theory. Chapter Three details the aspects of the qualitative case study including the background of the case, interviewing data collections strategy, and data analysis procedures. The results of the study are presented in chapter four. The study concludes in chapter five with a discussion of the findings and implications for policy and practice and future scholarly research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty's perception of the impact of an academic advising quality enhancement plan on organizational culture at a community college. The chapter begins with an overview of academic advising and theoretical approaches to advising. This is followed by a discussion regarding the distinction between professional and faculty advisors and the resulting perceptions of the role. The research transitions to organizational models of academic advising and components of an effective advising program, followed by current practices. The chapter concludes with research on organizational cultural theory.

Academic Advising

Academic advising has been defined in a number of ways. Habley (1981) defined academic advising as "providing assistance in the mediation of dissonance between student expectations and the actualities of the educational environment" and further states that "quality advisement should be a student-centered, developmental process rather than a prescriptive and clerical activity undertaken for the promulgation of institutional rule and regulations" (p. 46). Winston et al. (1982) emphasize the importance of relationship and state that advising is a "systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals

through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources" (p. 8). This is echoed by O'Banion (1994) who states that "the process of academic advising includes the following dimensions: 1) exploration of life goals, 2) exploration of vocational goals, 3) program choice, 4) course choice and 5) scheduling courses" (p. 10).

The first formal documentation of an established system of faculty advisors dates back to 1877 at Johns Hopkins University with the recognition that undergraduate students need guidance in elective course selection (Cook, 2009). Harvard University followed suit in 1889 by appointing a board of freshman advisors (Rudolph, 1990, p. 460). While the presence of advising services may be ascertained from brief mentions in college catalogs and other documentation throughout the years, the organizational inner working, practices, culture and perceptions of academic advising have not been adequately documented (Gordon, 2004).

With the inception of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in 1979, advising has evolved into recognition as a profession (Grites & Gordon, 2009). There has been much discussion in the profession on advising theory. A prescriptive model of advising is where the advisor, assuming an authoritarian stance, tells the student what course of study to undertake, similar to a doctor prescribing a course of medicine for a patient (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013). The one-way directional design of this model allows for very little feedback and engagement in the process from the student. Research with student athletes examined the efficacy of prescriptive advising and found that the model provides limited student ownership in choices for the direction of their

academic career (Sport Journal, 2015). Despite its limitations, prescriptive advising laid a foundation and served as the precursor to more advanced models such as developmental advising (Drake et al., 2013).

Several researchers (e.g., Habley, 1981; O'Banion, 1994; Winston et al., 1982; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, & Associates, 1984) support a developmental view. The developmental theory of advising focuses on the personal growth of the student through self-awareness of personal interest, abilities, and values. The advisor assumes a teaching role in developmental advising, leading to the phrase coined by Crookston (1972) that "advising is teaching" (p.12). Academic advising theory has traces of student development, adult development, and career development theories (Gordon, 1992). Professional advising is seen as a student-centered approach where relationships between the faculty and student are built based on student's interests and long-term goals; the advisor guides the student toward various academic opportunities (Holmes & Irvine, 1983). The underpinnings of developmental advising theory can be traced back to the client-centered approaches of psychologists such as Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, B.F Skinner and Carl Rogers (Gordon, 1992). This influence has often led to confusion between the roles of counselor and academic advisor in higher education.

The term counselor was used synonymously with advisor throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Gordon, 2004). Questions often arise about the difference between advising and counseling at the community college. The distinction lies in that academic advising is related specifically to academic planning while counseling encompasses a broader scope

(Cook, 2009). Counselors assist students in immediate crisis with referrals to outside agencies; oftentimes advisors do not have this level of training. King (2002) draws a distinct difference between the role and responsibilities of a counselor and an advisor at the community college. King (2002) identifies that community college campuses with a faculty-based advising model utilize faculty as advisors while counselors are professional staff that assist with needs beyond academics such as personal counseling, career services, and transfer option discussion.

The advisor should be the most trained person on the campus that is knowledgeable of institutional policy and procedures as well as the individual needs of the student (Habley, 1981). The academic advisor assists students in selecting courses that are relevant for their program of study and their goals (Habley, 1981). The academic advisor has access to students' past performance history through grades and student self-reports as well as knowledge of course requirements; they therefore knows what level of rigor is appropriate to keep students engaged and stimulated in the classroom, be it in foundational courses or more advanced levels (Habley, 1981). As Habley (1981) noted, "the advisor promotes a class schedule which balances requirements and electives with student abilities and goals" (p. 49). Due to the critical role an advisor plays in the life of a student, it is imperative that the academic advisor refer students to resources that will help them perform academically. This effort allows students to perform to the level that they expect and increases the chances that they will remain enrolled at the institution (Habley, 1981). Resource referrals may be to tutors or personnel who provide strategies

to combat test anxiety or poor time management. This is of particular importance within the community college; students are not only more diverse in terms of race, age, and socioeconomic background when compared to university students, but they may not be prepared for the rigor of higher education (King, 2002). Subsequently, advising at the community college often subscribes to a developmental approach, but it is typically more focused on practical matters such as course selection for degree completion and transfer instead of theoretical conversations (King, 2002).

Additionally, the advisor serves in creating an institutional connection. Bensimon (2007) discusses the need for institutional agents to promote a sense of belonging. Deil-Amin (2011) conducted a qualitative study where she interviewed 283 students across 14 different two-year public and private commuter colleges. A major factor contributing to student persistence was faculty interaction outside of the classroom, particularly for African-American and Latino students. This demonstrates the true socio-academic nature of the community college setting. Braxton et al. (2004) propose that, unlike at residential institutions where socio-integration is a major component to student persistence, academic integration plays a major factor for community college students. This often takes the form of student connections with members of the institution such as faculty.

Perceptions of Faculty as Advisors

It is important to note that, within an institution, advising may be the responsibility of a professional staff academic advisor or a faculty advisor. Professional staff advisors typically have advising as their primary job responsibility and have

professional backgrounds in student development (King, 2002). In contrast, faculty advisors have expertise is in their discipline of study and rarely have advising as their primary responsibility. Although both advisor types have their strengths, a consensus exists in the literature that faculty involvement in advising is essential to a strong academic advising model (Allen & Smith, 2008; Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Habley, 1994; Holmes & Irvine, 1983, Kennemer & Hurt, 2013; McArthur, 2005; Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). Faculty have expertise in their vocational areas which adds value to the advising process in terms of understanding course selection, program requirements, and the job market (King, 2002). Professional staff advisors are deemed very knowledgeable but often lack the influence to change the culture of advising as effectively as faculty; staff advisors do not elicit the same level of respect nor see the same students as consistently as faculty in the classroom (Holmes & Irvine, 1983).

Administrators and professional advising staff are aware of the influence of faculty and often support the need for faculty advising, but support from faculty in the process has not always been consistent (Holmes & Irvine, 1983). One researcher mentions a stereotype held by professional advisors that depicts faculty as "uninterested, unskilled, and unconcerned" regarding advising (Habley, 1994, p. 24).

Allen & Smith (2008) offer an alternative interpretation. In their research surveying 171 faculty advisors at a large urban research institution, they concluded that the perceived apathy of advising by faculty is really a reflection of uncertainty of college information, vague expectations by supervisors, and a perception of low prioritization by

senior administrators. Similarly, Dillon & Fisher (2000) found in their study that faculty advisors at a large university believed that advising was not weighted significantly enough in the tenure process to warrant the amount of time that is necessary for quality advising. The faculty reported a strong disagreement that senior administrators took advising load into real consideration while doing tenure review; faculty believed it should be a greater part of the evaluation.

Another factor to consider is how faculty advisors perceive the institution's framework regarding advising. Holmes and Irvine (1983) found that, depending on how advising is presented, faculty can perceive advising as an "institutionalized duty" that is not directly related to their professional discipline (Holmes & Irvine, 1983, p. 22). When institutionalized in this manner, advising is seen as clerical in nature and centered around course selection and registration where the end result is that the student has their registration choices approved. The result is a retreat from such duties by faculty advisors to tasks that are deemed to be more esteemed and productive towards tenure (Swanson, 2006). However when faculty have clear expectations, support from administration, and campus consensus of advising definitions, they become actively involved and effective in the advising process (Irvine & Holmes, 1983).

Another consideration is the increased workload of faculty compounded throughout the years. Gordon (2004) documented the changes in academic advising practices in the 130-year history of Ohio State University. In her research, she noted recurring themes and patterns that emerged throughout the years such as increased

expectation of faculty in advising roles with the growth of a diverse student population and advancement of technology. The acquisition of specialized knowledge and skills were necessary to meet the needs of students.

While the root cause of the tension surrounding faculty advising is not clear, more research is needed on faculty perceptions surrounding advising so that all involved stakeholders may work together to collectively serve students (Allen & Smith, 2008).

Advising Organizational Models

When discussing an organizational culture of an institution, it is imperative to understand the advising organizational model employed by an institution in addition to the people who conduct the advising. Habley (1983) defines an advising organizational structure as the "formalization of those factors that are unique to the institution in which the program must function" (p. 536). Advising organizational models give consideration to the culture of the institution, the people delivering advising, and the policies and procedures that govern the activity (Habley, 1983). The author's research continued to affirm, even a decade later, that the individual needs of the institutions were most influential in determining the delivery of advising services. For example, two institutions of similar size may elect to have very different models if a variance exists in physical and personnel resources. The institution must consider practical needs of students and staff, professional development training for advisors, accountability, coordination, communication, evaluation for continuous improvement, and a cost-effective delivery during the design of an effective advising model (Habley, 1983). While there is variation

from institution to institution, a great amount of congruency may be found when looking at the holistic organization of advising delivery. There are seven widely accepted organizational models for academic advising in higher education that are employed at both universities and community colleges (Habley, 1983; 1993; 1997; King, 2002; Pardee, 2004). These models are faculty-only, supplemental, split, dual, total intake, satellite, and self-contained. These models range from the most decentralized (faculty-only) to the most centralized (self-contained) in terms of the centralization of services provided to students (Pardee, 2004).

The "faculty only" model is the most decentralized where all advising occurs individually with faculty; there is no administrative oversight or advising office on campus (Habley, 1997). This model provides flexibility in terms of delivery but also may vary widely in the consistency of information provided to students due to the model's individualistic design. The faculty-based model stipulates that all entering students be assigned to one faculty member, usually based on the student's declared major (Habley, 1983). In a study conducted by the American College Testing program, this was the predominant model in higher education between the years of 1987-1997 (Habley, 1997). The high percentage of faculty-only models show the influence of the senior institutions in this study as this is the model that is most frequently used at the four-year institutions (Habley, 1993). Research by Habley (1997) found a correlation between the size of the institution and the advising model used. Institutions that were very large with 20,000 or more students were less likely to use a faculty-only model while institutions with less

than 1,000 students were more likely to use this model (Habley, 1997). Additionally, King (2002) noted that the faculty-based model may be selected by community colleges because it is often less expensive than other models. While the faculty-only model was most prevalent at one point, there is a downward trend in the number of institutions using this model. There was a decrease in the percentage of higher education institutions that relied on a faculty-only model in the years between 1987 and 1997 (Habley, 1997). Kuhtman (2004) examined advising at Boston College and 21 similar institutions and found that institutional mission played a critical role in successful implementation of an advising organizational model. The researcher determined that, while a faculty-only model would be feasible at a small liberal arts college, a split or shared model with an advising center would best serve an institution similar to Boston College since it has an evolving mission to serve a diversification of student needs across multiple schools. One of the limitations of the author's research was the focus on four-year research institutions; that may not be a true representation of all undergraduate institutions, specifically community colleges.

In the supplemental advising model, faculty serve as students' primary advisors, but an advising office also exists to offer additional support to students (Habley, 1983). Similarly, in the split (or shared) advising model, students may be assigned to a faculty member or a member of the advising office as their primary advisor. Often students assigned to the advising office share a common factor such as an undeclared major or the need for developmental academic support. In these instances, students who declare their

major or pass developmental coursework are then assigned to a faculty advisor (Habley, 1983). The split and self-contained models were the most frequently found model in public two-year institutions (Habley, 1997).

The dual advising model provides students with two primary advisors: the advising center and a faculty member. The faculty member's responsibility may vary since the advising office is responsible for general advising and the faculty advisor provides program-specific advising (Habley, 1983). This differs from the total intake advising model where all students at the institution are first assigned to an advising office for an allotted period of time or until certain steps have been completed. The student is reassigned to a faculty advisor once the initial advising period has been fulfilled in the advising office (Habley, 1983). The advising office serves as an administrative unit and may also be responsible for general education curriculum development and/or developing and enforcing advising policy (Habley, 1983).

The satellite model allows for departments within an institution to provide advising independently of one another. This model can also be seen at institutions that have various campuses (Habley, 1983). It may be that campuses with oversight by separate administrative departments seek autonomy in how services are delivered to students. While this allows for customization based on student needs, it stands to reason that there may be discrepancies in the quality of services provided to students.

The self-contained model allows advising to occur in the advising office from the students' point of enrollment with the institution to graduation (Habley, 1983). This

model is the most centralized; all advising occurs at an advising center on campus. In this model, the advising centers assist students from the point of enrollment to their point of graduation or separation from the institution (Habley, 1997). The high percentage of community colleges with a self-contained advising model in place dates backs to the impact of the guidance-counseling model employed at secondary high schools. Larger, multi-campus institutions were more likely to use a satellite model or self-contained model (Habley, 1997).

The American College Testing (ACT) Program's fourth national survey on the status of academic advising asked community college advising personnel to rate advising practices at 2-year institutions. There were a total of 159 responding institutions; of reporting community colleges, 30% had a self-contained model, 27% faculty-only, 20% split, 8% dual, 6% supplementary, 6% total intake, and 1% satellite (Habley, 1993).

There has been a trend to move from the extremes of the advising spectrum to models that provide multiple streams of support for students (Habley, 1997). King (2002) advocates for models that have both professional staff and faculty advisors to capitalize on their respective strengths. This indicates an evolution of advising where combining the positive assets of both the faculty-only model and the self-contained model provides added benefits for the student and institution (Habley, 1997).

Barker & Mamiseishvili (2014) examined the shift that occurred when students transitioned from a centralized advising center to a decentralized faculty-only advisor in a shared model. Analysis of the phenomenological study revealed four themes. First,

participants evaluated the trustworthiness of their advisor based on professional responsibilities. Students perceived that advisors that had advising as their main responsibility provided more reliable information and were more likely to be trusted. Second, students exhibited a preference for a personalized advising relationship due to the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship. Students also reported feeling apprehensive when faced with the prospect of a new advisor. Lastly, students relied on previously developed advising expectations when engaging in interactions with their new faculty advisor.

Goomas (2012) found that students who took part in academic advising provided within an instructional framework and delivered by faculty generated greater participation in academic planning, class registration, and utilizing self-service online software when compared to students who did not participate. Although this was a single pilot study at El Centro College, an urban college within the Dallas County Community College District, the implications are clear that faculty involvement in the advising process increases autonomy of the student and faculty engagement.

Advising Program Components

Habley (1993) states, "Although it is conceded by most community college faculty and administrators that academic advising is a critical service to students, conversion of that belief into concrete action and systematic program planning appears to be far from the norm" (p. 41). Academic advising programs must be tailored to the individual needs of the student population and organizational structure of a community

college (Hably, 1993).The highest rated variables of progress and effectiveness in advising programs at the community college were providing accurate advisee information, meeting student needs, and positive advisor traits (Hably, 1993). A community college must have a guiding written philosophy that includes program goals to provide expectations for the advisors (Hably, 1993). Holmes, Clark, and Irvine (1983) stated that there is a formal structure with four main factors that dictates how advising occurs at an institution. Those factors are the criteria and definitions used to define advising, an outline for advising responsibility at an institution, the amount of time and resources allotted to advising on campus, and the evaluation system used to recognize effective advising. The presence or absence of each of these four criteria prove to be a strength or impediment, respectively, for the institution in gaining ground toward effective advising (Holmes et al., 1983). While many institutions are challenged to identify all of the components of an advising system on their campus, institutions without a formal system are likely to fail (Holmes et al., 1983). A description related to the definition of advising was previously provided what follows is a description of the three other factors.

Organizational Responsibility for Advising

For an institution to have an effective advising system, the oversight of advising must be assigned to someone at an institution in particular for direction and coordination (Hably, 1993). When looking at all postsecondary institutions (public, private, four-year, and two-year), academic advising is more likely to report to Academic Affairs with the

exception of institutions that are using the self-contained model, which is then more likely to report to Student Affairs (Habley, 1997). King (2002) found that the reporting structure in academic advising at the community colleges often reported through Student Affairs. Student Affairs departments in community colleges are often modeled after guidance departments found in secondary education, which may account for this finding.

There was a wide variation of reporting by community colleges when asked about the assignment of advising oversight responsibility at their institution. A large portion of survey respondents reported that supervisory responsibility was held by the president at 23% and vice president of academic affairs at 36%. However, when this was further examined, most positions in these institutions had "academic advising" listed in job title descriptions (Habley, 1997). Nationally, 24% of institutions reported advising responsibility to a director of counseling, 17% reported to a director of academic advising, 12% to a top-level vice president of academic affairs, and 11% to a top-level administrator of student affairs such as the vice president. Four percent reported to an assistant vice president or dean of student affairs, 2 percent reported to an assistant vice president or dean of academic affairs, and 6 percent reported an academic department chair (Habley, 1993). The design of the model also impacts personnel decisions. The responsibility of coordinating advising efforts at an institution was most likely to fall to a director or coordinator of advising, regardless of who was providing the advising, when an institution utilized a total intake, supplemental, split, or dual model (Habley, 1997).

Devoted Time and Resources

The majority of four- and two-year institutions reported that the person responsible for advising spent portions of their time devoted to other responsibilities on campus (Habley, 1997). The study showed that 66% of those who are responsible for academic advising oversight spend less than 25% of their time on the task, 16% spend half of their time on the task, and 11% reported spending 75% of their time on the task. Only 7% of respondents indicated that advising was their full-time role at the community college (Habley, 1993).

Resources must also be invested in terms of man-hours for the professional growth of the advisors, which is the essential resource of effective advising. Professional development must be provided to faculty and staff advisors that includes "systematic skills training" (Habley, 1993, p. 43). Community colleges employ advising training for both faculty advisors as well as staff advisors in advising offices. Advisor training at the community college can be broken down into three subgroups that cover the general topics of key concepts, information needs, and relationship skills. *Key concepts* define what advisors should understand to effectively do their job, *information needs* identifies what an advisor should know such as institutional policies and procedures, and *relationship skills* identifies what an advisor should be able to do in terms of rapport building and information gathering skills of counseling, interviewing or decision-making (Habley, 1993). The focal point of faculty advisor training at the community college with faculty-based models is often on information needs or what the advisor knows. The area that

received the least amount of attention during faculty advising training was relationship skills (Habley, 1993). In contrast, training for advising office staff reported higher occurrences of relationship skills training in their professional development in comparison to reports provided by faculty regarding their professional development (Habley, 1993). Another difference between faculty advisors and advising office staff is the frequency of opportunities for professional development. Advising office training was more likely to occur at regularly spaced intervals throughout the year. Faculty advisor training was more likely to occur once during the year prior to the start of a new academic year and tends to last less than a day (Habley, 1993).The allocated time and resources to train advisors also varies between universities and community colleges. Research showed that 46% of community colleges required mandated training for advisors while 29% of responding community college had no mandated training in place for such. Lastly, 25% indicated that training was required only within certain departments or disciplines (Habley, 1993).

Evaluation System

Habley (1993) proposes that there are five characteristics to determine the effectiveness of an advising program: establishing clear guidelines, coordination of functions, sufficient training, evaluation of the program and the people, and a reward or merit system for top performers. There is considerable room by these standards for improvement for advising systems at the community college (Habley, 1993). When community colleges were asked to rate ten variables of advising effectiveness and

progress; training, accountability, evaluation, and recognition were the lowest (Habley, 1993). Almost half of institutions are not evaluating their advising programs (Habley, 1997; Habley, 1993). Almost a third of community colleges reported that there was no formal evaluation of their advisors in advising offices (Habley, 1993). Regular scheduled ongoing evaluation is necessary at both the program and advisor levels; however, only 28% of responding institutions used supervisory performance reviews to evaluate the faculty members' advising performance (Habley, 1993). A reward and recognition system should be in place to reward faculty and staff advisors based on their academic advising skills (Habley, 1993). Few community colleges implemented a reward system for faculty advisors, which shows that there was little to no recognition by the institution for the work of faculty advising (Habley, 1993).

Current Practices in Advising

Informing Advising Practices

Institutional leaders often use national surveys to inform advising practices on their campus. The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), a product and service of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, helps community colleges discover why some entering students persist and succeed and others do not (SENSE, 2016). Additionally, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) allows students to report their satisfaction with support services as well as indicate the level of importance (Kress, 2006).

Perhaps one the most frequently used national surveys used to inform those seeking student success reforms is the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, or *CCSSE.* Established in 2001, the CCSSE is a project of the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin (CCSSE, 2015). The CCSSE is a benchmarking and diagnostic instrument used by community colleges to assess the level of student engagement within an institution. In 2016, over 700 institutions participated in the survey; this provided a large cohort for administrators and policymakers to determine how levels of engagement at the institution level compared nationally and with institutions of a similar size (CCSSE, 2016). There are five benchmarks: student effort (SE), Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI), Support for Learners (SL), Academic Challenge (AC) and Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) (CCSSE, 2015). The role that academic advising plays in making the connection between the student and the institution is essential to student engagement and should not be taken lightly (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). The Support for Learner benchmark includes survey items specifically related to academic advising. The results of the 2014 CCSSE demonstrated that, nationally, students are not taking advantage of the services being offered. Of responding students, 70% said that they never discussed career planning with a counselor or academic advisor, 32% rarely or never used academic advising, and 50% rarely or never used career counseling services. (CCSSE, 2014).

Tallahassee Community College used the results of the CCSSE survey to inform their institution's quality enhancement plan, a requirement for regional accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Faculty and staff workshops were held to analyze the results of the institution's 2003 CCSSE findings. The results of the survey identified six key areas for institutional improvement: student preparation, class participation, peer collaboration, assessment and prompt feedback, and emphasis on high-level results. Based on these findings, the institution sought to increase retention efforts by developing a culture of shared responsibility (Balog & Search, 2006).

Santa Fe Community College in New Mexico analyzed their CCSSE data and learned that 63% of respondents reported little to interaction with the institutions academic advising system. The institution responded by improving advising systems and policies through case management style advising assignments and implementing a mandatory advising policy (Reynolds, 2007).

Another Santa Fe Community College, this time in Florida, used the results of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) to define institutional priorities within the framework of technology improvements. Survey results indicated a low level of satisfaction with multiple services, including academic advising and counseling. The college noted that the satisfaction levels were lower than the national averages and regional average for two-year institutions. Students reported having limited knowledge about advising services and relying on friends and family for information as a result. The institution responded by implementing a college-developed electronic advising system

funded by a U. S. Department Title III-Strengthening Institutions grant. The advising technology provided an interactive degree audit to assist the student in course planning. The resource encouraged students to be more autonomous which allowed for advisors to spend more time with higher risks students. Additionally, the technology created higher accessibility and allowed the institution to implement mandatory advising prior to registration (Kress, 2006)

Institutional Practices in Advising

As noted by Hatch (2016), high-impact practices (HIP) that move the needle on community college persistence and completion are typically not revolutionary but rather underused by institutions. Additionally, with a lack of criteria, it is difficult to measure the level of impact programs have on the outcomes of students. Therefore, the following programs are not intended to be a ranked list but rather illustrative of various academic advising practices that have been employed at institutions offering two-year degrees.

The Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, or ASAP, is a student success program a City University of New York (CUNY) designed to increase the number of students who complete a two-year degree in in three years or less (AACC, 2016). In addition to financial supports, students are assigned an ASAP advisor to help them navigate the road to degree completion.

Miami-Dade Community College in Florida assigned advisors to approximately 7,600 students in 2012-2013. They found that the number of students who created academic plans nearly doubled from the previous year (Completion by Design, 2013).

Northern Virginia Community College's Quality Enhancement Plan, "GPS for Success", assigns an advisor to all first-year students. The advisor is responsible for setting regularly appointments with advisees and tracking progress. At the completion of the first year, there is a formal introduction between the first year advisor and the program specific advisor to encourage continuity (The Chronicle, 2014).

Fox Valley Technical College created a "mall atmosphere" by rearranging the location of key college resources of academic, career, and personal counseling to increase student access. A faculty advising office is strategically placed near this service pod and continuity and consistency of services is tied closely through faculty and staff serving on joint working committees. The location and shared goals of support create an institutional environment geared towards student success (Kiker, 2008).

Best practices identified from the Education Advisory Board (2014) recommended assigning students to "professional and faculty advisors based on academic goals and program interest" (p.4). In addition, the researcher recommended including early alert software systems, conducting formal training, and defining student learning outcomes to evaluate advising programs.

Organizational Culture Theory

Schein (2010) defines culture as a "pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 18). It is

inclusive of the shared values and beliefs of a specific group or institution (Taplay et al., 2014).

Defining an institution's culture can be challenging since there are various levels which culture can and should be analyzed. Additionally, the elements of each level vary in observability. Artifacts, the first and most visible level, consist of the organizational structures and processes of an institution. This may also include the physical environment, products, and mannerisms of a group. The next level of organizational culture are the espoused values and beliefs of an organization. This includes the ideologies, goals, values, and rationale espoused by a leader. While perhaps not always in congruence with institutional artifacts, these organizational beliefs are shared principles that can influence and shift individual attitudes to the vested interest in the purpose and aim of the organization (Taplay et al., 2014). Lastly, the deepest and unconscious level of culture are the underlying assumptions. These assumptions ultimately determine the behaviors, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of a group (Schein, 2010).

Four characteristics of culture are structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration. Structural stability is the group identity that, once developed, are not given up easily since it is seen as a stabilizing force necessary for the culture to survive. This ties to depth; deeply embedded beliefs provide cultural stability. Breadth states that culture covers all areas of an institution. Patterning is the tying together of all elements to create a greater paradigm or model (Schein, 2010, p. 17).

Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) assert that organizational culture should not be seen as comparison of multiple organizations but as an understanding of what one organization is able to bring forth and allow as a result of its intricacies. A "web" is spun through communication within an institution, and within the web lies the stories of the members of the group (p. 123). Furthermore, culture is not causal and is therefore not subject to causal analysis. Rather organizational culture, such as this case, should be subject to interpretation that provides a thick description of the thoughts and perception of the members of a culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982).

Locke & Guglielmino (2006) found that when looking at four subcultures of administrators, junior faculty, senior faculty, and staff at a community college, there was differences in the levels of perceived values, beliefs, and assumptions when looking at planned change. Faculty were seen to have a highly analytical perspective to change focused on student achievement while administration tended to take a global view of community engagement. Junior faculty who were newer to the institution than senior faculty were very receptive to change and saw it as a necessity that resulted in flexibility and freedom. Another important finding was that time and patience was necessary for change to truly take place.

In a related study, Locke & Guglielmino (2006a), expounded specifically on how planned institutional change impacts the subculture of student services staff, namely academic advisors. They found that respondents appreciated a greater emphasis on structure and accountability. They also found that this subculture responded in a unique

way from the other subcultures; this implies that planned change should be tailored to the specifications of each group.

In creating a culture of data, researchers involved with the Achieving the Dream initiative noted the importance of including faculty when fostering organizational change as a best practice. Faculty are key stakeholders at the institution and should be included at every level of planning and implementation; this includes assuming leadership roles as committee co-chairs and coordinators as well as serving as members on student-success related teams. In addition, faculty serve as student advocates, advisors, success coaches, and mentors as well as lead professional development opportunities such as stakeholder dialogues and community-wide conversations (Birnback et al., 2009).

River Parishes Community College worked to develop an organizational culture of collaboration on campus by implementing an Education for Success through Partnerships Rallies on Instruction and Teaching (ESPRIT) program (Lee, 2004). The program implemented a brown bag lunch series as an intentional strategy to change the culture through guided conversations. These conversations were based on topics related to issues that impact student success such as student career counseling needs, student activities, technology, transfer, and student-faculty relationships. The intended outcomes were to create student-centered support services, teaching, and learning; increase student participation and engagement; and create cross-departmental partnerships. The researcher found that the program filled an important need at the institution to build a sense of collaboration and community.

McLeod and Young (2005) report that creating an atmosphere for institutional change is a top-down approach that is driven by leadership. Reflecting on Fayetteville State University's institutional culture change as a result of a Freshman Year Initiative (FYI), the Chancellor noted that the reform was enacted to create an institutional environment that focused on the developmental needs of students. The FYI included the addition of an academic advising center, assigning the first year seminar instructor to serve as the advisor for first year students, employing student-centered instructional strategies, and ensuring student responsibility for their success through signed pledge cards. Graduation and retention rates increased, and an institutional culture shifted towards student success as a result of these strategies coupled with a comprehensive assessment program.

As related to academic advising, organizational culture must also be taken into account when determining how faculty will perceive their responsibilities as an advisor. Often the organization framework is built around a prescriptive approach to advising; members of the institutions are often resistant to a more faculty-based approach (Holmes et al., 1983). The researchers found that breakdowns may occur when leadership has not given proper attention to the need of assigning advising to a particular person or department. Further, the authors see cultural challenges around advising as a systemic issue in cultures resistant to change:

> The problem of improving academic advising must be seen as a problem of change. Organizational obstacles, including aspects of faculty culture, must be approved systematically and lessons from the change literature

> should be exploited. After assumptions about change become more overt, the basis for evaluation of progress is then established. More importantly, the conscious use of organizational change strategies are likely to improve the prospects of genuine improvement. It is time to shift from ad hoc, conceptually naïve approaches to more measured, conceptually sound approaches. The task is too important to work otherwise. (Holmes et al., 1983, p. 29)

An overall framework for advising is needed to provide a structured flow and connect components and participants at an institution that may otherwise feel disconnected (Holmes et al., 1983). Change in the organizational function of advising is unlikely to happen as a top-down directive. The change often occurs laterally with the introduction of a staff member and an advising center to serve as a catalyst and hub of information dissemination (Holmes et al., 1983). The researchers recommend that institutions seeking change undergo an analysis of their advising problems to define the barriers as related to the formal structure, support systems, or human resources. Analysis of these dependent factors lends opportunity for an institution to develop solutions to address the issues.

Russell, Evans, Fielding, and Hill (2016) asserted that organizational interventions were beneficial to employee behavior change in the workplace. While this study was related to electricity reduction, their premise that employees seek organizational cues for effective workplace practices relates to other research on organizational culture theory that employees seek reassurance from leadership (Schein, 2010).

Organizational culture and faculty's perception thereof is critical to providing quality academic advising that will best serve students. Therefore, this study sought to

understand faculty's perception of the impact of an academic advising plan at a community college through a qualitative research design. Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Academic advising has been the subject of much research in recent years (Cook, 2009; Goomas, 2012; Grites & Gordon, 2009; Habley, 2009). Much of that research relied on quantitative methodology, often in the form of surveys (Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Goomas, 2015; Smith & Allen, 2014; Smith & Allen, 2008; Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). While quantitative research provides a snapshot of the outcomes of academic advising and its successes and challenges, it does not account for the deep and rich understanding that comes with an explanation of the perception of faculty advisors or their experiences as related to the organizational culture surrounding academic advising. Guba and Lincoln (1982) assert that qualitative research takes advantage of the "power of the human-as-instrument" that may be found in naturalistic inquiry (p. 235). According to Yin (2014), case study is an appropriate method to research this question because it emphasizes longitudinal associations rather than a focus on frequencies or incidents often found in quantitative research. The use of a case study design is best used: a) when research is answering a question that focuses on how and why questions b) when behavior cannot be manipulated by those involved in the study, c) to cover contextual conditions that are perceived to be relevant to the phenomenon under study, or d) when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014). Yin

states that a case study inquiry focuses on understanding of complex social phenomena such as organizational and managerial processes. Additionally, Stake (2000) notes that when a case is of intrinsic interest to the particularities of the organization, the focus is not on theory building but on teasing out the experiences of those that are living the reality of the phenomenon.

For this study, an intrinsic case study was undertaken, as the nature of the organizational culture surrounding academic advising is of intrinsic interest due to the uniqueness of how the change was accomplished through an institutional quality enhancement plan. The research sought to answer the following questions:

1) What is faculty's perception of the impact of academic advising on organizational culture?

2) How does organizational culture influence faculty roles and expectations as advisors?

Background to the Case

Directional Hills Community College (DHCC) is located in the southeastern region of the United States. This site was chosen because it recently underwent the implementation of an academic advising Quality Enhancement Plan as a partial requirement for regional accreditation. Additionally, this site was chosen because of the researcher's access to the information as a current employee.

The following information on history and strategies, both pre- and post-QEP, was informed by the institution's QEP document and personal correspondence communications obtained with permission from the leadership of Directional Hills

Community College. The document was made available by request only and is not publically identified due to efforts to protect the institution's anonymity.

DHCC is a multi-campus institution serving approximately 2,600 students between two counties with distinctive demographic and economic differences. DHCC has three curriculum schools of study. The School of Arts and Sciences is for students who seek to complete general education courses and transfer to a four-year institution. The School of Applied Science is for students seeking certificates, diplomas, or associate degrees in career and technical education programs of study. The School of Allied Health and Nursing prepares students for careers in the medical field (Personal communication, 2016).

From 2010 to 2011, the institution prepared for a regional accreditation reaffirmation visit scheduled for October 2012 (Institutional leadership, personal communication, 2016). As a partial requirement of reaffirmation, the institution was charged with developing a five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (1) includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning environment, which accomplishes the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement (SACSCOC, 2011).

The college solicited ideas from key stakeholders to determine the major areas of concern that needed attention from the institution. Feedback from students, faculty, and staff consistently identified three recurring themes: (1) frustrations with the delivery of distance learning, (2) inadequacy in student oral and written communication skills, and (3) dissatisfaction with academic advising. Members of the college formed subcommittees to examine institutional data on these three topics.

National and institutional surveys were used to identify areas of improvement in academic advising. DHCC's performance on these surveys consistently showed advising as an area that needed improvement to enhance student and institutional success. The institution ultimately selected academic advising as its topic based on the research and support of the constituents. (Institutional leadership, personal communication, 2016)

National Surveys

In 2008, DHCC participated in the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). The SENSE serves as a tool to aid colleges in identifying factors contributing to persistence among first year students (SENSE website, 2016). Analysis of survey results showed multiple concerns with academic advising. At 49%, nearly half of DHCC students reported that they never used academic advising and or planning. The majority of respondents were not aware that they even had an advisor. Despite the institution's use of faculty advising assignments for students, almost three-fourths of respondents answered "no" to the following: "a specific person is assigned to you so you could see him/her each time you needed information or assistance." Given this lack of awareness

of advising support, it was not surprising that 45% of students who responded cited friends, family, and others students as their main advising source (Institution report, personal correspondence, 2016).

Students who did seek advising support experienced challenges in having their needs met. Only 26.8% of respondents reported that they were "very or completely satisfied with academic advising." Less than half of respondents indicated that they received assistance with goal setting, an established student need on the SENSE survey. Furthermore, 68% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that "a college staff member talked with me about my commitments outside of school to help in figuring out how many courses to take." The building of advising relationships was challenging if not impossible with such disconnection between student needs and college advising practices.

In Spring 2011, DHCC participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The survey, as cited on the CCSSE website, "assesses institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning" (Center for Community College Student Engagement website). The instrument uses five benchmarks to describe college performance: Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners. The Support for Learners (SL) benchmark encompasses items related to support services such as academic advising. While all scores were above the national average for similarly sized institutions, students rated "Support for Learners"

significantly lower than the other four benchmarks (Institution report, personal communication, 2016).

Institutional Surveys

DHCC uses a non-completer survey to request feedback from former students who have not re-enrolled for two consecutive semesters as a method to improving retention. The 2010 non-completer survey revealed that 30.2% of responding stop-out students cited dissatisfaction with the quality of academic advising as a contributing factor to their lack of enrollment. While respondents did not identify specific problems with academic advising, other institutional surveys indicated potential weaknesses in college processes related to advising. For example, DHCC administered a 2010 climate survey to employees that showed 42.6% of faculty/staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was appropriate cross training to "get the job done" in the absence of others.

An institutional survey administered to students in Fall 2010 revealed that 42.6% of student respondents have never met with an advisor. When asked to provide a reason, 30.2% of respondents reported that they did not know who their advisor was. An institutional survey administered to faculty during this same time revealed only 22%, about 1 in 5, of responding faculty were confident in advising students majoring in programs different from their discipline. However, 77.1% felt confident advising students in their own programs. This is significant because all faculty members at the institution advised new students regardless of their program. Several additional themes emerged from an analysis of the open-ended comments, including:

- The need for overall comprehensive advising training/professional development
- Faculty request for an advising handbook/manual
- Request for procedural training on the student information system
- Request for more developmental training for student needs

After a review of the research, the institution formed an interdivisional team in September 2011 to develop the components of a new five-year academic advising quality enhancement plan. The team was charged with creating an advising plan focused on addressing the needs of the institution while fulfilling the requirements for the QEP outlined by the *SACSCOC 2011 Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation*. The work was concluded in August 2012.

The team researched organizational models and best practices that would strengthen academic advising at the organization, advisor, and student levels. The final plan focused on implementing five key strategies to remove barriers impeding student learning in academic advising: (1) placing an organizational emphasis on advising, (2) restructuring the advising process to create intentional partnerships, (3) integrating technology into the advising process to increase efficiency, (4) fostering a culture where "advising is teaching" through professional development, and (5) redistributing advising loads to strengthen advising connections. (Institution records, personal communication, 2016)

Strategy 1: Organizational Emphasis on Advising

Pre-QEP.

Prior to the implementation of the QEP, the term "advising" was synonymous with registration at DHCC. After admission, counselors and available faculty advisors prescriptively advised students during the registration process. The availability of faculty members during registration events was based on convenience rather than specialization; the top priority was to meet registration needs, not to advise students. Additionally, students who enrolled over the summer for a fall term were registered by college counselors since faculty were generally not available. Students were assigned to a cluster of faculty advisors based on their program. However, no training was given to students regarding how to identify their advisor, utilize services, or the benefits of advising. Once new students began their first semester, little to no interaction with their assigned faculty advisor occurred unless the student initiated a meeting. Students were often uncertain of the advising process and consequently requested assistance from a counselor or peer. This was standard practice until the registration period when students were encouraged to discuss their course selections with their faculty advisor. During this time, typically known as "advising month", few students took advantage of this service. As indicated by institutional research, various factors played a role in the limited engagement in "advising month": advisor assignment ambiguity, uncertainty about when and where to meet with facility for advising, and an overall lack of clarity on the process. In essence, advising functioned as an afterthought.

Post-QEP.

To shift the college's perception from advising as an extension of registration to an ongoing process of student development, the institution put an intentional emphasis on advising. This was accomplished by adding in an academic advising department into the organizational chart, hiring qualified personnel, and providing dedicated space for the effort.

The first step was to create an academic advising department in the Student Services division; this would serve as a hub for information and resources as well as provide ownership for the advising process. Two existing classrooms at each campus were renovated to make advising centers. A director of academic advising was hired in September 2013 to oversee the department. The responsibilities of this position include oversight of all advising processes carried out by full-time faculty as well as supervision of the two physical centers. The centers are staffed by a cohort of faculty who elected to work in the advising center for an hourly wage as secondary employment. Faculty working in the center are titled "master advisors" and receive a one-year renewable contract after receiving supervisor approval. An advising coordinator was hired in November 2014 to assist the director and master advisors with coordination of services and clerical tasks. The institution believed these changes would allow advising to transcend the predefined limits of "advising month" and become an integral part of the institution.

Strategy 2: Redefining the Advising Process

Pre-QEP.

Prior to implementation of the QEP, the institution did not have a clearly defined organizational model for advising. New and current students were collectively registered each semester during established "arena registration" days, but a review of institutional records revealed that there was no formal documented advising process prior to the development of the QEP. The shift in focus and support for advising laid the groundwork for redesigning the process.

Post-QEP.

After the implementation of the QEP, the institution employed a total intake organizational model. The total intake model allows advising center staff to provide support to all students but specifically serve as the "advisor" for first-time students who were new to the college. Institutional data from 2009 to 2011 revealed that, on average, 66% of first-time students were only enrolled part-time; the majority of these students took four to nine credit hours during their first semester. Based on this, students remain assigned to the advising center until the completion of nine credit hours. This provides part-time students with more support as they make a stronger connection to the college during their first set of courses. During this period, students meet with advising center staff to develop an academic plan, obtain guidance on course selection, and learn about resources available at the college. Upon completion of nine credit hours, students are reassigned to a faculty advisor in their program of study and are able to make an advising

appointment through the institution's student success software, Starfish Retention Solutions. The transition to the faculty advisor after the completion of nine hours also offers an early opportunity for the advisor and advisee to discuss the feasibility of the student's initial academic plan and make necessary adjustments based on student needs and programmatic specifications. The new process is designed to fostered ongoing and continuous interactions between the advisee and advisor beyond the scope of registration.

Strategy 3: Advising Technology

Pre-QEP.

Prior to the implementation of the QEP, faculty advisors reported a range of strategies for tracking advising interactions with students; these ranged from paper files stuck in a desk drawer to no record keeping at all. Faculty advisors had limited access and familiarity with the existing electronic student information system because they only used it once a semester for student registration. In addition, student physical records are housed with the registrar, and faculty advisors do not have immediate access to this information.

Post-QEP.

The institution saw the need for integrating software into the advising process to improve efficiency and better serve the needs of both advisors and students. The institution selected "Starfish Retention Solutions" which allows advisors to make notes, refer students to college resources, and flag students in academic distress. It gives students the ability to schedule appointments with their faculty advisor and the advising

center and provides access to their academic records including academic plans. The use of an electronic system allows for the ease of sharing records when students were reassigned advisors and encourages students to be become active partners in the advising process (Lowenstein, 2005).

Strategy 4: Fostering A Culture of "Advising is Teaching" through Professional Development

Pre-QEP.

Prior to QEP implementation, the institution did not provided advising training to faculty advisors. New faculty members were paired with experienced faculty to observe the registration process for approximately two hours during their first semester. This occurred right before the beginning of the semester when student volume was high and faculty were also preparing instructional materials for the first week of classes. No further training was provided; upon the completion of the two-hour training, the new faculty member was considered ready to independently advise students.

Post-QEP.

The QEP team decided that ongoing training to demonstrate how "advising is teaching" was needed for faculty to understand the importance of their role in the advising process (Lowenstein, 2005). The advising center staff developed several professional development options for faculty and staff in order to change the culture and improve the level of advising currently offered; these include seated workshops, online training modules, and training manuals.

Strategy 5: Implementation of Advising Assignments

Pre-QEP.

Prior to the QEP, students at DHCC were assigned to a cluster of advisors based on their program of study. This was an attempt by the institution to lighten the advising load for individual faculty members, but the ambiguity led to confusion. Students were uncertain which advisor to choose or if they needed to contact all advisors. With no tracking in place, advisors were unable to identify whether students had met with someone from their cluster, which compounded the confusion. A diffusion of responsibility occurred as everyone assumed someone else would handle the advising load. In other instances, students simply selected the first advisor on the list; this created disproportionate workloads for these faculty advisors. Additionally, students who were seeking entrance into competitive health programs were assigned randomly to a faculty advisor irrespective of their program of study. This system created frustration for the faculty advisors who reported feelings of limitations of expertise to assist students outside of their academic discipline.

Post-QEP.

Students are now assigned to an individual advisor (rather than a cluster of advisors) within their program discipline by the academic advising coordinator. The academic coordinator regularly monitors advising assignments to ensure equal distribution among faculty. Students may find their assigned advisors by logging into the Starfish Retention Solutions software. Students who are seeking to enter a program with

competitive admission, such as allied health programs, are assigned to the advising center where they receive support in creating a plan for admission. These students remain assigned to the advising center until they are accepted into their selected program of study or change their majors (Institutional leadership, personal communication, 2016)

DHCC was an appropriate selection for a case study on the impact of an academic advising QEP on organizational culture. It identified institutional issues with advising and actualized a process to remedy the issues. The institution was within the first four years of implementation of the plan, which made an assessment of DHCC as a case both timely and relevant.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was done to include representation from each school and different advising roles. The sample for this study included 10 faculty advisors with representation from each school of learning within the institution: School of Arts and Sciences, School of Applied Sciences and Technology, and School of Allied Health. Care was taken to select faculty members from each school who served in the standard role of a program advisor and those who assumed the additional responsibility to serve as a master advisor. A total of 10 interviews were conducted. Only faculty who were employed in the role of an advisor prior to 2012 were eligible to participate in this study. This time frame was selected as it was prior to implementation of any QEP components. The sample size of 10 participants is representative of the identified population for the study. Of the 60 total currently employed full-time faculty members at DHCC, less than

half were with the institution prior to 2012 in the same teaching and advising capacity. Of those faculty members, eight have served as master advisors who staffed the college's advising centers.

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from both DHCC and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, the researcher contacted currently employed full-time faculty advisors who were present at the institution and served as faculty advisors prior to 2012. Participants were invited for interviews via institutional email. The email specifically listed the criteria for inclusion of being employed with the institution in the role of a faculty member with advisee assignment during or prior to fall 2012. Respondents were matched against the institutional information database to confirm date of hire and title. If multiple participants from the same academic school responded to participate, a random selection process was conducted to select participants. Alternate participants were also chosen should the selected participants be unable to complete the study. A similar process occurred for master advisors.

Of the participants, four were faculty who had a standard advising load as a faculty program advisor but had never served a master advisor in the advising centers, three participants were faculty program advisors who previously (but not currently) served in the advising centers as master advisors, and three were faculty program advisors who were currently serving as master advisors in the advising center at the time of the study. Eight participants were female; two were male. Seven were Caucasian, two were African-American, and one was Hispanic. In terms of discipline, four participants

were faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences, three in the School of Allied Health, and three in the School of Applied Sciences and Technology. Participant employment by DHCC ranged from five years to 23 years. A profile of each participant is found below.

Participant Profiles

Participant 1: Candace

A Caucasian female developmental math instructor in the School of Arts and Sciences who has been employed at DHCC for 19 years. Candace was a faculty program advisor and currently serves as a master advisor.

Participant 2: Dee

A Caucasian female practical nursing instructor in the School of Allied Health who has been employed at DHCC for five years. Dee is a faculty program advisor only.

Participant 3: Carlos

A Hispanic male computer information technology instructor in the School of Applied Science and Technology with seven years of service at DHCC. Carlos is a faculty program advisor only.

Participant: Princess

A Caucasian female medical assisting instructor in the School of Allied Health who has been employed with the institution for 10 years. Princess is a faculty program advisor and is currently a master advisor.

Participant 5: Sally

A Caucasian female criminal justice instructor in the School of Applied Sciences and Technology who has been employed with DHCC for eight years. Sally is a faculty program advisor and formerly served as a master advisor.

Participant 6: Jefferson

A Caucasian male history instructor in the School of Arts and Science with 23 years of service to the institution. Jefferson has served as a faculty program advisor only.

Participant 7: Angel

An African-American female business administration instructor in the School of Applied Sciences and Technology who has been employed at DHCC for 17 years. Angel is a faculty program advisor and is currently a master advisor.

Participant 8: Karen

A Caucasian female early childhood instructor in the School of Applied in Science and Technology who has been faculty at DHCC for eight years. Karen is a faculty program advisor and formerly served as a master advisor.

Participant 9: Savannah

A Caucasian female medical sonography instructor in the School of Allied Health with five years of service to the institution. Savannah is a faculty program advisor only.

Participant 10: Mary Anne

An African-American developmental English and reading instructor in the School of Arts and Sciences who has been employed with DHCC for 11 years. Mary Anne is a faculty program advisor and is currently a master advisor.

Data Collection Strategy

In qualitative research, a face-to-face interview data collection method allows for a deep and richly descriptive understanding of the case. (Yin, 2014). The data collection method consisted of interviews of the faculty advisors and master advisors. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) note that interviewing is "an active process where interview and interviewee through their relationship produce knowledge" (p. 21). The authors put forth that interview knowledge is neither pre-existing in the interviewee nor solely constructed by the interviewer. Rather, the interviewer and interviewee co-construct knowledge through the interplay of the narrative and context of the experience.

Interviews followed the seven practical steps of interviewing outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015): 1) thematizing an interview project, 2) designing, 3) interviewing, 4) transcribing, 5) analyzing, 6) verifying, and 7) reporting (p. 23). Interviews took place during the period of June 30, 2016 to July 13, 2016. Interviews were conducted face-to face on the institutional campus in private offices, library study rooms, and the academic advising centers when not in use. Interviews were conducted with each participant individually, and only the researcher and participant were present for the interviews. Since the researcher is employed at the institution, proactive measures

were taken to ensure that coercion nor a sense thereof was present nor perceived. The researcher does not directly supervise any participant.

Participation was voluntary and participants were not compensated in any manner for their participation. Informed consent was gathered from all participants; all were provided a description of the study, given full identification of the researcher's identity, provided the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or retribution, and assurance that all information will be treated in a confidential manner (Bowen, 2005). Aliases were used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The interviews varied in length from 26 minutes and 32 seconds to two hours, 22 minutes and 15 seconds, with the majority of the interview lasting approximately 50-55 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The qualitative interviews included semi-structured interview questions to promote consistency in the data collection process. The semi-structured questions were informed by cited literature and the results of previously cited surveys that the institution administered during QEP development. The interview protocol used for this study may found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is a systemic process that is used to make sense and meaning of interview responses (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998). A constant comparative data analysis strategy was be used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This constant comparative method requires multiple units of data; otherwise, the independent

units are void of their nuances due to their inability to be related to the broader of context of the research study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process includes the steps of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser & Straus, 1967).

The process entailed analyzing transcriptions using open coding to generate broad general codes and then reducing to more refined coding categories (axial coding). The analysis was a two-step process that involves the broader line-by-line coding, which leads to the production of narrowed and focused categories (Charmaz, 2001). In doing so, the researcher compared these units of data to identify similarities. Those similarities were labeled by a code generated by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); codes were then be reviewed and clustered based on similarities and assigned a categorical code (category). This is called axial coding. The second step of the coding involved clustering and collapsing of coding categories into similar concepts to develop more meaningful, selective themes that yielded a better understanding of the impact of the advising process on organizational culture based on the interview data collected from the faculty advisors. This final step was selective coding. The resulting themes were used to organize the report of the findings.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness involves the establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, there was no advantage for the faculty advisors to be dishonest in the interviews. They were not being compensated, and the researcher was not positioned to reward the participants for their responses. Credibility was also established by using multiple sources of the data (Merriam, 1998). Thick, rich data from the participant interviews, the use of advisors across multiple schools and disciplines maximized the richness of the experiences, and consistent efforts to clarify meaning also increased credibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Transferability refers to the notion that findings are usable or can be transferable to another similarly situated group. This particular study and location were not selected at random but specifically as an illustrative example of academic advising and organizational culture. Rich descriptions of the institution's organizational structure and demographics increased the opportunity for transferability of this study. Other similarly organized institutions are able to determine if the finding might be useful for their organizations as a result.

Dependability is the notion that, while the results of a qualitative study are not necessarily replicable, the research design should be. Shenton (2004) states that, in qualitative research, the observations of the researcher are linked to the situation of the study in the moment in time that they occurred. The results are therefore subject to interpretation based on the context of future studies and the perspective of the researcher. The model for developing a qualitative study is essentially a prototype which future

researchers should be able to follow without question. Thus, a researcher should take steps to document the research design with accuracy and great detail.

Confirmability refers to “intersubjectivity agreement” which emphasizes the qualitative confirmability of the data as informed by the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). In this study, confirmability was demonstrated by the inclusion of multiple advisor voices across multiple schools.

Ethical Concerns

Care was taken to be transparent about the identity of the researcher throughout the course of the study. The researcher serves in the capacity of a Student Affairs dean that oversees several support services including the academic advising department; an indirect supervisor of advising processes. The researcher conducted the interviews and analyzed the data. There was potential for participants to perceive the administrative role held by the researcher as a power role over participants since they are advisors, thus impacting the openness and depth and responses. Therefore, it was critical that participants were made aware of the absence of retribution based on the researcher’s role and identity as both an administrator and researcher. The researcher was not the direct supervisor of any of the participants and does not have a role in the evaluation of any advisors; their respective department chairs conduct annual evaluations. All advisors report to their respective department chairs or academic deans in the division of academic affairs. Faculty who are serving in the additional role of master advisors report to the Director of Academic Advising who subsequently reports to the researcher.

When determining whether to utilize an outside researcher to conduct the interviews, careful consideration was given to recognizing that an insider has unique knowledge that may be obscured by an external party (Merton, 1972). Conversely, while an outsider does have the ability to highlight salient points that an insider may miss, there is a very delicate balance in the consideration of the confidence in the interpretation of the advisor experiences that must be struck. The researcher has been an employed with the institution for nine years, during which time she has served in other roles such as a counselor for five years and co-chair of the QEP for two years. With personnel changes, the researcher was the only remaining member of the institution who has been involved in every stage of the QEP from committee member, to co-chair, to administrator. Shenton (2014) advocates for early familiarity with the culture of an organization prior to the undertaking of qualitative research. The researcher's level of familiarity allowed her to highlight and hone in on concepts that may be missed by an outsider as well as work from a place of established trust.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to understand the impact of the implementation of an academic advising model on the organizational culture of one community college. Data collection took place during the summer of 2016. Results were analyzed utilizing the aforementioned strategies to address the research questions. Results of the study and a thoughtful discussion on implications for policy and practice as well as further research are outlined in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty perceptions of the impact of an academic advising quality enhancement plan on the organizational culture of a community college. There were two research questions.

1. What is faculty's perception of the impact of academic advising on organizational culture?
2. How does organizational culture influence faculty roles and expectations as advisors?

As the data was analyzed to address these questions, three main themes emerged. The themes were an expressed need of safety, the emergence and shaping of a professional identity of advising within the institution, and the impact of process on shaping institutional ideologies. Each theme was explored in terms of categorical clusters, codes, and keywords.

Theme 1: Safety

Safety manifested in the forms of three categories: physical safety, cognitive safety, and emotional safety. Physical safety related to the environment that was cultivated by the institution before and after the QEP implementation as well as the perception of the advisor on how that environment impacted students. Cognitive safety

explored the scope of which participants felt security in their knowledge and abilities. Lastly, emotional safety referred to the breadth of feelings participants expressed that they and the students experienced in advising and the vulnerability that accompanied it. Each category is detailed.

Physical Safety in the Advising Environment

The category of physical safety included the codes of privacy, comfort, institutional stimuli, and accessibility. These categories represented the elements that the advisors perceived needed to be present in the physical environment for advising to occur effectively for the student. Findings for each category are explored.

Privacy.

Participants discussed how the physical advising environment prior to the QEP was not conducive to a feeling of privacy for the student. Privacy was defined using words such as “intimate”, “quiet”, “one-on-one,” “cubicles”, and “whisper”. Privacy was mentioned by the participants as necessary for students to feel welcomed and to trust the advising process. Words such as “open” or “no privacy” were used to describe its absence. Savannah, a faculty program advisor with the shortest time of service to the college, reflected on her first experience in the environment for student advisement prior to the implementation of the QEP:

> Okay, I first started in the arena. It was called arena, I believe. Arena registration. In the salons in Building A on the West campus. So, big open room. They [the students] came in, they were greeted probably somebody in Student Success [Student Affairs division] or whatever it was called then. (Recruiter’s name omitted). Um, they would sign in. They sat in chairs, like chairs that were lined up.

> And then we were at tables and laptops, had our laptops with us around the room. And they would come one by one to our table when we were available. I guess (recruiter) or whoever would walk around and say "you ready for another one?" And they would come. And thinking…I haven't thought about that in a long time. It wasn't very personable, or welcoming. Or private. Like there was no privacy, you know? And that bring up a great point too. When a student scores low on a college placement test, I mean that's not something you want to…. [trails off]. Even in advising now when we're in private little cubicles I mean I still say [participant lowers voice to a whisper] 'okay this score right here?' You know, I whisper. Because I don't want them to feel, I mean they know what they made. I mean I know how I would feel. I mean I haven't had any math in years. You know? Like, I just, there was no privacy. If you, if they had financial aid issues or anything like that. Um, anything payment wise. Like everything was handled in that big open room. So there was really no, no privacy for the student.

Words such as "open" were used to describe the lack of privacy in the previous use of a multi-purpose campus space for registration. Later, during the interview, Savannah described the physical setup of the current advising center in comparison:

> ...so now our students have an advising center to go to where, like I said earlier, they're greeted with a happy place. It is a small, I feel like intimate setting but more private and more inviting. It's colorful and has cool furniture. It has computers available if they need to do anything online, where we can help them online. And it has, you know, nice cubicles that are more private than anything we've had before I felt like. So that's better. They um, I think that you know shows we care. I mean we have a whole center just for advising the student. We care about you and making sure you reach your goals and we're going to help you get there.

The faculty perceived the institutionally created space afforded privacy for the student which, in turn, demonstrated a sense of caring for the student.

Comfort.

The lack of the physical center prior to the QEP led to expressed discomfort, not only physically for the student, but also emotionally for the advisor due to watching their students wait in an uncomfortable environment for multiple hours. Participants used

terms such as “wait”, “standing”, and “lines” to express perceived discomfort. Carlos, a faculty program advisor for computer information technology describes his feelings of seeing students lined up in a makeshift advising environment:

> It was very frustrating. Um, I feel for them. Like I was seeing those people standing and you know we had some chairs, but I remember you know some of the people, some of my students. And I couldn't say you know, ‘come with me let me help you’. No, if you were number 20 on the line you have to wait. Um, and I couldn't do anything. So they felt, and I saw that, well they were like "you know what, I took off from work to come here and do this but I need to get back to work." So they would actually have to leave, get out of the line and go to work and come back on a different day. So that is definitely not a good way of advising and you know.

After the implementation of the QEP, a dedicated space was allotted to advising which allowed students to come at their leisure instead of coming to a conference room during a set time period. The participants perceived the short waiting time as more comfortable for the student. In comparison, Carlos stated, “So today it's so much better, like I said. There is no line. There is nobody waiting.”

Sally, a criminal justice program advisor and former master advisor, noted her observations of the students’ comfort in the advising center even when there are lines:

> I do think that it’s more of a one-on-one, you know with cubicles, the way its set up. I think it's a very welcoming environment, again a very open environment. Um, you know, you might have to wait a few minutes if it's short staffed. And that happens, that happens everywhere. But at the same time I've never seen anyone get mad and stomp off because they're comfortable. They're fine in there and normally we're working together to move them out to help them with stuff, that type of thing. So I do think that is a huge thing.

Interestingly, “when “open” was used to previously describe the large conference room used for arena registration, it was used to mean a lack of privacy. However, it is important to note that Sally used “open” to mean “welcoming” in this sense.

Angel juxtaposed the makeshift seating accommodations of arena registration with the current set up as rationale for the students’ comfort. “And the students just come and they're relaxed back there. They're not sitting in this hard chair, they're relaxed. And then they'll say ‘oh take your time, take your time’.”

Candace, a developmental math instructor and current advisor, noted that the students’ physical comfort encourages them to be emotionally comfortable and to see the advising center as a safe place. She noted, “They come here and I've had students that continue to come here. And, just because they feel comfortable here. And, um, that's always the last question is, ‘well, where do I go from here’?”

Institutional Stimuli.

A recurring keyword in the data analysis was “green”. Participants positively referenced the color green multiple times in their description of the advising center. The terms “green wall”, “green room”, “bright”, and “colorful” were noted in multiple interviews as the participants described the fluorescent green paint and furniture choice in the center. The unique color choice for an advising center was a nod to the college’s new logo, an unrelated but well-timed institutional change implemented by the college president and marketing department to rebrand the institution. Correspondence obtained from the institution noted that a bright shade of green was added to the college logo in

2012 to symbolize the rolling foothills of the college's geographic location and also to inspire a belief of hope for future institutional prosperity. As the institution's community adjusted to the color inclusion in the college logo, students also adjusted to the new advising center. It used the logo color as paint for an accent wall in the advising centers and in furniture patterned with bright green fabric to invoke a sense of school spirit and tie the QEP to the rebranding efforts.

The current and former master advisors who spent significant time in the center each week were quick to note that the inclusion of the school's color into the decor drew students to the center and provided a sense of direction. Karen described the colorful advising center as the "front door" of the college:

> Karen: It's uh, it's one of the best things at Directional Hills.... This [the advising center] is our front door and it's the best green door in the world (laughs). Yeah.
> Researcher: The green door?
> Karen: The green door. The green room. You know it's just...bravo. I know whoever designed it, people still when they walk in they're like, 'cool chairs' and it's inviting. And there's so...I've never seen anyone waiting for a computer in there which is fantastic.

Sally a former master advisor, described the accent wall as a landmark. She stated:

> You can't miss that bright green paint, you just can't. It's great, because it's eye catching and it's eye catching for a reason, you know? That's how people identify, because that's what's of most about students say. 'Oh the bright green room at the end of the hallway?' Yep, that's exactly where you need to go.

Similarly, Princess, a medical assisting program advisor and current master advisor, noted how the change in advising gave students a sense of direction.

> Researcher: So let's change our focus and now shift towards the current system. Think about today. How is it different than before?

> Princess: Oh, so different. So different. It's different, um, in just the whole process. The students they know to go to those green rooms. They know that this is where there um, where they're going now. And it's just not a mass 'huh, where do I go from here?'

Angel, a current master advisor, mused on the bright color's role in attracting students to the center and how the center's environment and activity impacted her mood:

> And I'm just overwhelmed with joyfulness. Because it's like, these people are coming. And then, I don't know too, is it the green wall? That the advising center, the advisees and the advisors who come, they're excited. Like myself, I'm so excited when I see student. I'm upset if a student not coming in.

Accessibility.

Accessibility occurred in a myriad of ways. First, accessibility was achieved through the centrality of the advising center's location and operational hours. The physical location of the center, namely its centrality, was a participant topic of discussion. Terms were used such as "physical place", "place to go", "place", "advising center", "center", "central", "central place", or "central point". Candace, one of the longest serving faculty advisors at the institution, noted the evolution of the institution to include a space for students after nearly two decades.

> Candace: Nineteen years, I've been here now and it really has taken us a long time to get to where we are. And I think we are still evolving but I think that um, gosh it's a million times better than what it was.
> Researcher: Really?
> Candace: Oh my goodness, yes. Because you know who to go to now. You have that centralized location. Um, where there is somebody that knows, you know, a little bit about everything.

Participants also defined centrality in terms of proximity to related support services on campus. Sally spoke about the advising centers' ability to meet student needs with relative ease due to its location.

> I think that the fact the location, how that was picked for the advising center was very wise just because it is in the same building as our Student Service division. So if there is a problem in admissions, if there is something they're missing, something they need, a financial aid problem, a business office thing, something like that. You can walk them down or you can tell them "listen just go down this hallway, make a left, right there on the right is the business office. You need to pay a quarter for your library fee that you forgot last year...or go to the library and do it.

Karen discussed the center's proximity to instructional classrooms as a safe place in which students can quickly stop in without fear of missing instructional time:

> And the availability of it, just the accessibility. They can be between classes and pop in and ask a question and then go back. They would get done with a test early and come in before their next class because it's right around the corner and ask a couple of questions because their mom asked them or whatever. They didn't know the answer. And I think just accessibility is what students have to really love. Because I just see them coming in all the time with little questions, or major questions. And they get answers.

Participants also defined it as a central place where the student has a "point of contact" with the institution. Karen described it as follows:

> I think it's completely different in that when you come, it doesn't matter who is or where that person shows up. Whether she shows up at an office…or she shows up at the front desk, or she shows up or just runs into a faculty member or somebody comes into the library, they're going to say "Oh you need help with that? Oh go to the advising center." I mean it's just like, it's the dumping ground for all new students [laughs]. It's, like, where you go first, it's a point of contact and for me it just has changed the student experience completely.

Jefferson**,** a transfer program advisor, touched on the difficulty that advisors experienced at a multi-campus institution when meeting with advisees whose classes were on the other campus. Participants saw having a physical space as the solution to mitigate that concern for the student.

> My perception is, I think there is still that issue of geography; it's not as bad as it was. And now at least when I do have that problem, here's a student that I never met before and never meet that person, well at least if they email me I say 'well I can't meet you at this time and place but we do have the advising center and that can be your go to place.'

Carlos echoed the same sentiment of a "go-to" place, but approached it from the student's perspective.

> Also, the advising center has been a tremendous help. A tremendous help because of the fact that the students feel, you know, 'if my advisor is not present at the college for some reason, then I can go to the advising center and I know I'm going to find somebody there that will help me.

The notion of a "go-to place" or "place to go" came up repeatedly during interviews as something necessary but lacking in the past. Mary Anne, a former master advisor, stated:

> Students, I think actually appreciate having a place to go called the advising center. And actually sitting down and actually working out a plan well ahead so they can see where they're going. Where before I don't think there was that much time put into it.

Karen, a former master advisor, noted the idea of a "go-to place" as a break from the conventions of the previous advising model:

> It's 180. It's completely different. Because now a student comes to Directional Hills and there is a central place for them to go. There is a place, a physical place, on both campuses for them to go to get quality help by people who know what

> they're doing. And before it was you walked in [to the college] and just hoped somebody gives you an answer. And you probably have to come back a few times.

Accessibility was also defined by the students' ability to reach someone during operating hours. Participants used phrases such as "all the time" and "all year". Karen noted:

> What's great is that it's at both campuses so it's available to all the students. And it open, all year, I mean all the time. So it's not like it's only open a couple hours a day while school is in session. That would do nobody any good. So it's open in the summer, it's open all the time so that students at any time know they can get quality help from somebody who is trained to know about all programs.

The notion of having generous operating hours to meet student needs was echoed by participants throughout the interviews. Dee, a practical nursing program advisor, expanded on the institution's emerging culture change. Faculty and staff now refer a student to the advising center continuously throughout the year instead of only at peak registration times.

> I think the other thing is that we're here. We're not just here doing enrollment, during enrollment. We're here, come into the advising center, go seek an advisor. The other thing is that um, I never really heard prior to the QEP send them to the advising center. What was that? You know, now it's constantly and we hear it verbalized a lot. You know when you have a student, 'don't forget we have the advising center. Don't forget we have master advisors.' So I think, um, the fact that we are here for the students….And beforehand? They showed up for open enrollment, or enrollment dates and we put them in a class and that was it. So I think availability, yeah.

Dee further stated her belief that the availability of advising works well for the students:

> The availability of someone that they can get their hands on...you know I think we have done a good job having someone available to them. Whether it's the people in the advising center all the time, or the master advisors. I mean I think, whether

> you're calling a bank, a college, or whatever, people want to talk and see a real person. And I think we've done that and I think students like that. They, you know have somebody face to face that they can communicate with and they like having that one-on-one.

The consistency in hours of operation projects the center's stability and dependability to students. As a whole, the centers were perceived by advisors as a physically safe place; they were private, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, and accessible.

Cognitive Safety

The need for cognitive safety was expressed during the interviews in addition to the need for a physically safe environment. Faculty discussed the personal need to ensure accuracy of the information they provided to students. Inversely, the faculty perceived that the students need to feel that the information that they received could be trusted. Faculty perceived that students experienced anxiety if they felt uncertain about the credibility of advisor information. Codes of uncertainty, collaborative decision-making, and college knowledge were identified.

Uncertainty.

The participants noted that both faculty advisors and students came into advising with high levels of anxiety about the uncertainty of their knowledge of the institution. Terms and phrases such as "didn't know", "lack of knowledge", "don't know", "not sure", "not right", 'realm of knowledge", "out of comfort zone", "what", and "red flag" highlighted their anxious feelings. The researcher also made note when participants posed lots of questions as they mimicked their interactions with students. An example of this is

in Angel's reflections: "They were concerned about having good teachers to be able to tutor them. Show them what's important. 'What classes I need to take? What can I learn from this? What can I gain? And what is expected of me?'" Even with the implementation of the advising centers, participants noted that any level of uncertainty still creates an anxious atmosphere for the student. When Angel was asked about current concerns of students, she offered a list of parallel concerns; however, the advising center was added to the list of questions:

> A lot of the times students come in there their concerns are: "Will I make it through? Will I be able to pass this course? Is it too much? In high school they gave us, many chances. What are they going to do here? What are the instructors like? Will I be able to talk with them? Will I be able to come back here? If it's packed in there, in the library and in the academic lab, and I just need a computer to do some work can I come back here?"

The advising center was perceived simultaneously to be a place of safety for first-time students and as a source of anxiety due to fear that they would be cut off from access to the center after their initial sessions.

Participants noted that students experienced anxiety when they sensed a lack of knowledge on the part of the advisor. Sally explained that, prior to QEP implementation, many advisors were checking with other people during arena registration. That triggered uneasiness in the student.

> The biggest thing I think for them [the student] was more so the knowledge of the person and the confidence in the person that they were putting them, that they were advising them correctly. You know is making sure that part was done. If you had someone who was 'well I don't know, well my goodness I don't know about this. Well you know what let me just go ask this person'. And you come back and well then they have another question. 'Well I don't know', and then you go back

> and you're asking the other person the same question. That would raise red flags, even for me you know as far as that's concerned.

Savannah, the least experienced of the participants, felt that she played a role in creating anxiety for students due to her own uncertainty:

> They can read us, you know they knew in those early years in the arena or in the library that I was just as disheveled and you know, anxious as they were. Nervous, it would make me nervous. I was like I don't want to do anything wrong, I don't want the student to, you know. But, and you can see that. You know when I'm asking for help.

The need for the student to feel secure in the confidence of the advisor was seen as critical because of the weight of the work that was being done. Sally stated:

> You know, I think for them it's just more the confidence of the advisor and feeling confident that they know what they're doing... they're relying on you to make a very strong decision and a very important decision for their, the longevity in their life and what they're gonna do for their career.

At a more immediate level, the advisors noted that students expressed anxiety over the information that they received. Karen stated that students expressed concern about:

> …getting the wrong advice. Like really being told something not right. Or uh, yeah taking, having to take a math class they didn't really need. Or their schedules being a two-year program turning into a three-year program because they got bad advice.

The wrong advice sometimes resulted in students not meeting their requirements for degree completion.

Faculty shared that, in addition to their perceptions of student anxiety about advisors' lack of knowledge, they too were nervous because they felt that they had to

know all of the answers. Karen reported how she felt about this. “I mean, if you didn’t know, who would know? I had no idea who would know.” Savannah shared that she felt that she knew her program but was unhappy with the previous model where all faculty would register students during arena registration:

> I would have a Medical Sonography student and I would be like “Yes! I know what I can tell them and what to do" or what they needed to do. I felt comfortable. But anything outside of that I was out of my comfort zone or out of my realm of knowledge I felt like.

Similarly, Karen shared that she was anxious about advising students due to a lack of knowledge about the process.

> I didn't know anything. I don't, I didn't feel like I knew very much...if I was friends with someone in a program or my office was near somebody in a program, I tended to know more about her program or his program only because I heard about it...But otherwise I didn't know. I think that's why it made me so nervous about advising.

Jefferson stated that he was nervous about the complexity of the ever-changing landscape of advising.

> There were so many things you had to keep track of. Especially as we became more complex and especially as financial aid became more complex, you know. What kinds of things do you need to tell the students, what do you need to warn them about, what kind of opportunities do you need to present to the students.

This uncertainty was not limited to the period before the QEP. It continued in the minds of those seeking to be master advisors even after the changes were implemented. Karen, a former master advisor, talked about her uncertainty when she first considered becoming a master advisor:

> I, a year and a half ago, I walked in and told (the former director of advising) I was just shaking in my boots about doing this Master Advising thing and she said why? And I said well, people are going to come in and I'm going to mess up their lives and I'm going to tell them the wrong thing...And I was most worried about health programs because I knew nothing about health. I didn't even understand, I didn't even know what an RN was. I didn't understand anything. She was like "these are the books, and we basically walk them through these books". And I'm like "it can't be that easy." And now looking back, it's like "it's that easy."

Karen noted that, with the revised model of advising, faculty now feel a sense of safety: it is okay not to know the answer. She believed the culture supports that belief and stated:

> Whereas before, if I didn't know, I just gave the best answer I could give. Now if I don't know the answer, any faculty member can go "Oh, I really don't know about that program, go to the advising center. Make an appointment at the advising center". So that is a relief off faculty who aren't trained, who have no idea. Hopefully what they're doing is not trying to give answers and they can just say, "Hey, this is the best thing for you. You need to go over there."

Similarly Candace stated:

> And I feel better about the process as faculty. I feel as though, if I'm in my classroom and the students are you know asking me questions, I don't have to find John in computer science or Suzy in English. I can say, if you'll go to the advising center, they'll tell you all of that. So, um, I think that has been another big shift. We don't have to find another specific person, we have a place where they can go for those answers.

Additionally, the faculty reported that they now feel safe asking questions. Candace detailed:

> And also, I feel more comfortable asking questions. I feel more comfortable. It does not bother me to get up and say, "Hello? I need some help down here with this class," this, you know. And that's been another thing that I think has been, you know, ask the questions. If you're not sure, ask. Because we'd rather make sure we get it right than get it done. So that's, I think to me, that's been another thing, um, ask the questions. Don't hesitate to ask.

Karen echoed those sentiments:

> I know when I'm there, if I don't know about a program I will find the answers. So I think the people there are trained to not just give an answer, but to find out what the answers are before giving them. And I think that's a change completely in the culture here and it has just, it has been a relief from the people who don't want to advise or don't want to advise people outside of their program. And it's been such a benefit for the students coming in.

Angel, a current master advisor, expressed that she is learning more just from being in the center; its presence resolves her feelings of uncertainty. "I can get back there and Ellie (the Director of Advising) can say 'Angel, this is what we're doing now'. I say okay. Now I'm listening to her, she gives me the answers, so I say 'okay I got this'."

The advising centers' presence, coupled with a sense of collaborative advising between program advisor and center, was reported to increase confidence and reduce feelings of advising anxiety. Jefferson described it as:

> Having the backup, having people there who can advise the advisors, which to me is very important. Like I said the enhanced sense of confidence that we are doing the right things for the students and that we can, kind of collaborate and find solutions for the students when we have questions. About "Okay, what's this student need to take next?" because there so many, there is a hundred different things. Like the student I was talking about earlier who is a history pre-major. Well, let's see, if we move this class over here and we can fulfill that requirement and we need to do a waiver for this, and then we also need to do a course substitution for this, you know. And having someone who is able to walk us through that, walk me through that, is very helpful.

The Director of Advising's willing attitude set the open tone for the center, and that seemed to calm faculty advisors' anxieties about possible lack of knowledge. As one former master advisor noted:

> And the culture there, at least when I was there, was very open to asking questions. I think that would be really important. And the person who is the head has got to be okay with the people under them to ask those questions because they

> really just don’t know. It’s like "no they’re not trying to irritate you, they’re learning." You know so that was always so helpful... Just always knowing, no one is going to be upset if I ask another question today. I wouldn’t ask questions that I didn’t already know the answer to, so I really needed the help’ [laughs].

The freedom to ask questions promoted a feeling of cognitive safety for the faculty advisors.

College Knowledge.

The participants spoke about the jargon or internal language by members of the institution, but they perceived that the students had not acquired the knowledge to properly acculturate to the community. The code college knowledge was used to group terms that participants used; an example is “eval”, which is an institutional term for the degree audit. Additional terms in this code were “information”, “course”, “pre-req”, “section number”, and “classes”.

Jefferson, a history instructor, noted that he perceived students to lack the basic knowledge for college navigation.

> Just to give you an example, when I'd register a student, and lots of students probably still now, don't, would not understand how the, um, section numbers related to you know [campus location]....and I know of students that would show up on the wrong campus, especially for a night class... and nobody had explained it to him that all you have to do is look at that section number if it's 2 it's here [west campus], if it's 1 it's there [east campus].

Jefferson stated that there was a misperception by faculty, prior to the QEP, that students held a higher level of institutional knowledge than they really did.

> So I had to kind of think through this of, what kinds of things do the students need to know, that I. . . and we, kind of have to figure that for ourselves as advisors of what kinds of things needed to be explained to the students that they we assume that everybody knows but reality they didn't always know.

Participants noted that many of their colleagues did not have a full grasp of institutional knowledge themselves which resulted in advising errors. Mary Anne, an advisor for transfer programs, shared her concern about these errors.

> Researcher: Did the students know they were misadvised?
> Mary Anne: No, that's the scary thing. They um, they just looked at you and they took your word for it because you're supposed to be the expert in what they needed. Um, we're supposed to be able to look at an EVAL, or an academic evaluation, and just say, "Okay, you need this, you need this." . . . And, um, they trusted. They just didn't know.

The universal problem of knowledge inadequacy was a source of frustration for both the faculty and student. Participants saw the total intake advising model as a balm to cure the rampant ignorance of college information through teaching since it required all first-time students to go through the advising center. Candace stated:

> I think coming here, it gives them a starting point. We may have to figure out where they are going when we get finished, but here it gives them a beginning step-by-step process. And I know that they like that. I know that they like that they sit here and we talk about their classes. And I teach them to read the eval and we talk about what that is. So from the very beginning, um, they know exactly what they're expected. Just by going through an eval with them. And, um, I think they like that. Because I can give them all of the information right here before they actually get to their advisor. Because once they get to their advisor they are fine. They can email them, go by and see them, or set up an appointment or whatever. But here in the advising center, I think we are to the point where we have gotten everybody, I don't want to say the old crowd, but we've gotten that past crowd just about through, if not finished. And we're to the point now, where everybody is starting out in the advising center. And then it's like, dispersing them with knowledge that they would not have had without the advising center.

Collaborative Decision-Making.

Faculty perceived that students still needed reassurance once they received proper advising knowledge; they needed affirmation regarding their right choices. The students had the knowledge but also needed cognitive support in the application of that knowledge. The code collaborative decision-making was defined by phrases such as “tell them”, “hear you”, “assist”, and “help”. Savannah described this concept as:

> They want you just to tell them. Not necessarily do it for them but they want to hear you say it. “You’ve got to do this, this, and this.” Just like that. "There, here’s your goal, this is what you got to do to get there.”

The need for reassurance was also expressed in course selection or changes to programs of study. Angel stated that the students felt cognitively safe coming to the advising center to adjust their program.

> They are satisfied because they know they can come back, they can change. And um, they know we'll just say “Okay, what would you like to change to?” If they want to change and they shouldn't, they know we're gonna tell them.

In the instance of helping a student make a choice about a course required for graduation, Angel stated that advisors would allow the student to make the decision but still be present in the process. She told a student, “You're gonna have to take courses anyway so I would recommend that you go ahead and take it and get it out of the way because you're gonna need that course. And you can do this.” The advisor added that, “You can see this student really needs, not just your opinion, but you're letting them know, ‘that's your decision to make, but allow me to assist you’....that's all they need, is

just a little push." Participants noted that, with proper levels of support, students would make the right decision.

Emotional Safety

In addition to cognitive safety, the data presented a need for emotional safety. Emotional safety included the categories of negative emotions, positive emotions, and confusion.

Negative Emotions.

The terms such as "dread", "scary", "overwhelming", "worry", and "embarrassing" were grouped together to express negative emotions felt by both faculty advisors and students about advising at DHCC as perceived by the participants.

Karen, an early childhood faculty member and former master advisor, describes her feelings of fear during the institution's previous model of advising:

> It scared me into wanting to know more. Like I knew, I came to know, that I didn't know very much. And so I would try to absorb from conversations, from asking questions... I, I personally tried to absorb as much as I could but it just wasn't enough. I couldn't, I just never got my head around what to do in those arenas. I just dreaded arena. Twice a year, I just dreaded getting in there.

When asked to explain further about the cause of her intense emotions, Karen explained:

> I think one of the worst feelings for me, because I know how much advising means to a life, to give someone poor advice that would literally take away a year of their life or disrespect whole years' worth of effort on their part. Like that was, because I could put myself in that place. Like you can get bad advice from one person in a half hour and it would change the course of your next year or two and mess it up. And I just I didn't want be THAT person that was responsible for that [laughs]. That would worry me, yes.

Savannah, a medical sonography program advisor also expressed feelings of fear and dread as a new faculty advisor coming from the field as a practitioner to the educational environment:

> Researcher: So you said you were new. How long have you been here?
> Savannah: Five years in January.
> Researcher: Five years. So when you were coming in you were new faculty at that time?
> Savannah: New faculty and I was totally clinical. Like, I had worked in a hospital for eight years. So I had never worked at a college. I was a graduate of Directional Hills but I mean, that was in '04. So my job alone was very overwhelming. And then just to be sent to registration, this is your link to Datatel (the student information system), and this is your sign-on. There was, it was very overwhelming and it was scary. Because I didn't want to... I left every time thinking, "I hope I registered that student for the classes they need".

Feelings that participants "messed up" created lasting impacts well after the event occurred. It seared an emotional tattoo on their psyche that affected how they interacted with advisees well into the future. Sally, an eight-year veteran, recalled an event from her second year of faculty advising that negatively impacted her:

> Researcher: What was your belief about what was most important about advising back then?
> Sally: Not messing up [laughs]. Not messing up. ...I do not take pride at all for being at fault for mistaking um, making a mistake for putting someone or advising someone for the wrong class. I can remember one that I did. And you fixed it. I won't ever forget that, that was my second year. And I can tell you the student as well [laughs]. It just broke my heart because I had advised somebody that was in the A.S. program...I thought I had done it right at this point in time and something had come up and she ended up having to go to Student Services. And you were like, "No, we need to take you out of this one and put you in this one."...I was like ooh! And I felt horrible about it because I had really tried my best to look at this thing and figure out what she needed...And I won't ever forget that. I will never forget that. And again, it's a conscience, it's a conscience thing.

The idea of experiencing negative emotions after "messing up" showed up repeatedly in the data. In addition to feeling remorse for accidentally providing erroneous information, the advisors also expressed feelings of professional humility. Jefferson recalled a personal incident that was emotionally troubling for him in which his supervisor corrected an advising error:

> Researcher: How did you know what you know? How did you know what to do as an advisor back then?
> Jefferson: I didn't always. Um, which led to some embarrassing moments. You know, I remember one particular incident um, where the, at that time, she's no longer here but was a department chair or dean at that time. I was advising a student, and I think there was a rule at one time that you couldn't take a class more than three times. Or you couldn't take it with financial aid more than three times, I couldn't remember. And apparently I misadvised the student about that. And the department chair or dean caught it and was able to fix the problem but it was very embarrassing episode for me, uh that I should have known better. But I felt like no one had ever informed me of you know, what are the changes. And that was one of the biggest problem, you know, what are the changes? This was the rule last semester, now it's not the rule and nobody's told anybody and that's always very frustrating when you're telling someone information that's out of date but nobody's told you it's out of date information. And that has always been very frustrating and embarrassing.

Positive Emotions.

Positive emotions were defined as feelings that participants experienced or perceived that others felt in advising. Terms such as "happy", "relaxed", "relief", "joy", and "free" were grouped in this category.

Sally used terms such as "relax" and "relief" to describe the removal of pressure by just being present in the advising center:

> The whole environment over there is so relaxed. You know you walk and you have that friendly face that is there to greet you, you know, "How are you? What I

> can do to help you today?" That type of thing. Oh and you know "I need to see this", and it's something really complicated. And then they got these cool lounge chairs. And it they need help with something online there's tons of computers there and they have people there to assist with that part of it. And you've got somebody who is fully staff there who is the wealth of knowledge. And if she's not there I know who else to call. Um, and so it so, it's just so, it's almost like a sense of relief.

The new advising model created an emotional safe haven for the participants. Angel described the new model as a sense of freedom.

> So, it's, I'm free. I'm free to make a mistake over there. I'm free to call someone, because sometimes I know the answer but I look at every student that comes in and talk to me, they're in the palm of my hand. And what I tell them has to be right because I need to leave from there knowing I have helped someone to make a good start in life. And I don't want that mistake.

Jefferson described the advising center's presence as removal of "pressure":

> We always had the arena registration and I'm the kind of person that personally that, because of all of the missteps that I think we all of have made in advising...You know, I'm always second guessing myself. And so having the advising center here as a resource, as a backstop for, okay, I think this is the way it but let's double check with you know (Director of Advising) or (Advising Coordinator) or whomever, you know, and make sure that what I'm telling you is correct. I think that's, that takes a lot of the pressure off of the faculty. That we do have a resource, we do have somebody we can turn to when we're not absolutely sure of what we're telling the students. And that increases the confidence level I think.

Carlos, a faculty program advisor, expressed feelings of happiness that students are now seeing their advisor:

> You don't see any students frustrated with, you know "I don't see my advisor" "I have to make these long lines to register" "I don't know which classes to register". I don't hear those comments anymore. And that to me is tremendous; it makes me happy. Because even though I don't hear those bad comments it makes me happy to see that the students are doing what they're doing. And completing the

> programs and know what courses they need to take. I think that is the most reward when it comes to what we have done is that it is actually working.

Angel stated that she now believes the most important thing is "that everyone that works back there are sincere and will learn the different programs and keep the warm atmosphere for the students. Keep it in a non-threatening atmosphere." As a whole, the participants saw the need for an advising environment where both faculty advisors and students felt emotionally supported.

Connectivity.

The code of connectivity was used to capture the void of emotional connection that the participant either described feeling or perceived from students. The terms that were used were "isolated", "lost", "confused", "lonely", and "loneliness". In addition, connectivity was also expressed as the feeling of belonging in the use of terms like "dependency", "safety zone", and "attached".

Participants explained that they felt very alone before the QEP's implementation. They used terms such as "lone ranger", "on my own", "floundering", and "keeping head above water" to describe this loneliness. Candace said:

> Um, we were just kind of just living in our own worlds. Developmental lived in their own world. The Art and Sciences lived in their world, and we really did. And we really did. We truly did live in our own world.

Karen recalled:

> I just kind of, keep your head above water. Um, and I think I didn't know where to get information about advising, or about making that. And we didn't even know what to call it, I don't think we even called it advising.

The development of the advising center created a hub for advisors where they could be connected to advising through the master advisors. Jefferson described that he values:

> Having the master advisors, people that we can turn to, like I said, for help, for back up. It's kind of like the old police shows, call for back up, you know kind of thing. Having that, so you're not necessarily just floundering around on your own in your office, "Well I think this was the case last semester, but I don't know now." And now you can go and get some answers.

The participants also perceived that students' confusion with the old process gave way to clarity under the new model. The organization and structure eased student anxiety about the processes. Dee stated that students under the old model were "lost":

> Um, what do I think the student thought about the process? I think they thought it was chaotic. I think a lot of the students I encountered were lost. They had no idea of what to do, where to go. I don't, I don't even think the students thought that we even had an advising process. Yeah, yeah. That's, that's the feeling I got from students.

Savannah also noted that students looked lost:

> It just looked very, they weren't informed. They didn't know what to do. How did they get to registration? Someone probably pulling them down there or showed them where they need to go, but they didn't know anything. You know like, they had no idea what, what they were doing. Then they come to me and I didn't know what I was doing [laughs]. I felt so bad for them but I'm sure I made them feel good and we were fine. I smoothed it over by the end but I just felt like it wasn't. They just probably felt lost, you know? I feel like they probably felt, just lost. Like "what am I doing? What did she just registered me for? I had no idea what I wanted to do and now I'm registered for all of these courses." You know? And overwhelmed. Probably lost, overwhelmed. Mmhmm. There was no, no place really for them to go.

With the implementation of the new advising model, the participants noted that students now felt like they had a "safety net". Princess says,

> They're very dependent on us now. So they think we can answer every one of their questions when it comes to everything. That's their, they feel like this is my safety zone. This is where I can go. I know that I will get an answer. Somebody in there is going to give me an answer...So I think that we have created a safety net for our students in this process. Not that we take, that we do it for them. I just feel like they feel comfortable. They feel like this is where they are going to get their answers. They are not going to get a runaround.

Sally, a criminal justice program advisor and former master advisor, noted that the students are free to come to advising to get emotional support but mentioned limitations because faculty staffed the center. She stated,

> The other thing too is that we have an open door policy. Not only as a college but at the academic advising center. I mean anybody can come in there that has a question, you know as far advising is concerned. Now if you want to come in there and complain about an instructor then you have came into the wrong place [laughs].

The security that came with emotional safety, as well as physical and cognitive safety, was identified as a key theme by the advisors.

Theme II: Professional Identity of Advising

The theme of professional identity of advising refers to the components that influenced the shaping of institutional beliefs. Categories include “defining a system”, “professional development”, “role”, and “stakeholder response”.

Defining a System

Prior to the implementation of the QEP, participants felt that little to no attention was given by the institution on defining the role of advising. Jefferson, a typically expansive speaker, described the advising environment as, “It was just there. It is the best way to describe it.”

Advisors discussed a lack of knowledge about advising roles coupled with a lack of focus by the institution about advising. Princess, a current master advisor, noted that before the QEP, “I don't think I was an advisor. I was a registerer. I just registered students. I never looked at myself as advising.” When asked what was meant by the term “registerer”, Princess defined it as, “I wasn't an advisor. I was a registerer. I was just somebody who would say okay ‘take these classes, these classes, and sign up for them. Okay, now go to the next step’." In essence, the participants saw a separation between the prescriptive mechanics of picking classes and the interactive developmental scope of engaging with the student.

Since the focus was on registering students, participants spoke about how advisors mainly put effort into making sure they had a full class. When asked what advisors knew about their role before the QEP, Angel quipped, “At this point, some of the advisors probably didn't because they just know ‘I'm teaching this course. Hey, hey, I got three seats left.’ It was like, more like campaigning [laughs].”

Faculty did not fully understand or believe in the prior system; they reported acting in ways that they thought best served the student but actually undermined the system. Lack of role knowledge and the absence of a true advising system resulted in a vigilante advising model. Each faculty advisor tried to help the student in a makeshift manner. This was done by taking advantage of inconsistency and loopholes within a broken system. Participants reported encouraging people to search for the answer they want because a right answer did not seem to exist. One method consisted of telling

students to call back to get different answers from different member of the institution.

Karen described her experience in helping students shop for answers:

> I think, as a college, what I remember is getting different answers from different people. Like that was, that was a big concern of you know, people are coming here and they'll call and I can remember, I'm so guilty of this, telling parents of friends of mine "Call, and if you don't get the answer you want or whatever, call again. You'll get somebody else, and you'll get another answer". And I remember being a part of that culture. Like I believed that too. And you just hoped you got somebody that knew what they were talking about or that would help you. And, and I think it was more of, I mean I don't think that the college is full of others who want to lead others astray, I just think they don't know what to say and they don't want to look stupid so they say something but it's not right. And then they can really mess people up.

Jefferson reported his methods of undercutting the system if he did not believe students were being properly advised; he told students to see whomever they want instead of attempting to correct the problem:

> Researcher: So how did that culture of advising, as you explained it back then, impact how you conducted your own work as an advisor?
> Jefferson: [sighs]. I usually, okay what would have and just like now when we announce to the students rolling around. Courses are available for you to register for and see, get with your advisor. I would always tell the students, I would make the announcement, if you don't know who your advisor is, or if you never see your advisor, or you're not happy with your advisor, talk to one of us. In a sense it was almost undercutting whatever system we had.

While the desire to make sense out of chaos stemmed from needs to protect the student, the resulting actions plagued the institution. Participants highlighted a need for internal reform because advising was coming from all sources. Dee, a faculty program advisor, describes her belief surrounding advising prior to the QEP:

> Researcher: What do you think propelled the college to want to change the process?

> Dee: I think that everybody started being all vocal about it. These students have no sense of direction. We as faculty have no sense of direction. We are sticking students in classes that are either inappropriate for their field of study, they don't like it. And I think that as an institution, the faculty, I know from the faculty that I engage with and um, interact with, we all um, talked about it. So I think as a group of people we started talking and then administration heard, okay we have no sense of direction with advising these students. Students don't know what they're doing, staff don't know what they're doing, [and] faculty don't know what they're doing. And we're also just participating in one big chaotic mess. That's my perception on what...and then once that got heard, somebody said we need to fix this process.

After the QEP implementation, participants reported that they were happy to advise. Mary Anne's response serves as an example:

> And I'm happy to do it. I'm happy to do it because of the process that's in place. Because it's a formal thing. It's a formal process. And there's been more importance placed on it by the college and people see it as a more valuable thing to the college now. A more valuable thing to the students now. And people are making that, I've make that connection more.

Professional Development

Professional development was defined using the grouping of keywords such as "workshops", "training", "hands-on", "conference", "manual", and "resource".

The participants spoke about their lack of training before the QEP as well as the training put in place afterwards. As Carlos noted, "I had no idea of what to do. Nobody told me what to do, nobody gave me any orientation. There was no training, nothing. So now it's different, even for the new employees. So it is working." Mary Anne spoke about her increase in knowledge with the shifted focus of the college.

> We actually got a lot more training through different professional development. Um, then a director for QEP came in and there was that piece that was put in for

> having a Master Advisor. And, actually there was a formal training put together, and I went through the training.

Carlos, the computer information technology program advisor, used similar language to discuss faculty advisor workshops put in place by the Director of Advising:

> Ellie (the Director of Advising) provides some workshops and I registered for those workshops, and that's good because before that's something I forgot to mention. Before, we didn't have any workshops! They didn't exist. So today we are actually having workshops, not every month but whenever Ellie feels, especially for new faculty, when she sees there is a need for, we need to tell faculty that they need to know this, this, and this. Changes in programs, how are we going to handle this, uh, the Starfish for instance. We implemented the Starfish a few semesters ago and made it mandatory that all faculty need to attend. We went there and asked all the questions we wanted. We did it with the computers in front of us. It was hands on training. That's what we need. That's what we all need.

With education, participants reported no further need to undermine the system. The training enabled participants to feel that there was a process in place for the safety of the student. They no longer had to protect the student from the institution. Professional development was key in role definition, particularly in separating the mechanics of the registration process with the developmental experience of the advising process. Karen reflected on her appreciation of professional development as a planning-stage QEP team member.

> I've been part of the QEP process for a long time, so I had the wonderful advantage of understanding the difference between registration and advising way back at the beginning and the light bulb going off and being able to go to a wonderful conference in Denver. I have a great advantage I feel because of being part of this for so long but advising um, just the definition of it revolutionized the way that I, and what I learned during advising and empowering a student? It impacted the way I teach, the way I, because teaching is advising. Just learning those concepts it, it really changed the way I look at students. I, before this, I was

> one who wanted to take over for the student. Help them and do everything for them. Um, rescue them from all the evil things at Directional Hills and shield them from all the, and help them. Whatever I can do. And I don't see my role as that anymore.

Participants discussed the role that resources played in shaping their understanding of their role as advisors. Angel, a current master advisor, spoke about how resources and increased communication about advising helps her to understand:

> When things change, she (the director of advising) sends email messages out to us so we're able to read that. And then she also, I'm telling ya, she just, whew!, So good. She created a book for us. This manual. And she's working on it right now to improve it. So we have this book that we can open up and look and read and know all the changes as well. So that helps.

Participants noted that even with training, there were areas that were still perceived as barriers such as knowledge of allied health programs and financial aid.

Role Definition

Mary Anne explained the scope and boundaries of the role of advisor as she saw it:

> My personal belief is that I'm here for the student. My personal belief is that, I'm responsible for making sure that I stay abreast of changes that are being made. I'm responsible for knowing, how what I do now is going to impact them when they leave here. Um, and responsible for keeping those boundaries, in that the student is interactive.

The order now helps students understand the identity and expectation of the advisors. Savannah suggested that the structure helped to establish boundaries and their roles. "The confusion, all that's gone. Very organized. It make the students feel when they come into academic advising...like knowing more of what's expected of us and what we're supposed to do helps them too. They can see that."

In addition, participants felt that students now had a better understanding of their own roles as students. Carlos commented:

> We have different things that we are implemented now, that we implemented now. They were not before in place and was kind of the students were all over the place trying to find you know, solutions and who's gonna and this question and what not. Well today they know where to go. They're more you know, "I need to speak with my advisor. If I need to find out information about the school I need to speak with this person."

Stakeholder Response

The code of stakeholder response refers to the various reactions of members and others' perceptions about the emerging advising identity at DHCC. The keywords of "pride", "respect", "relieved", and "ownership" are included in this group.

In general terms, Mary Anne described the institutional response as "I think there is a lot of respect for, hopefully, for the fact that it's there. I think a lot of people are happy about it being there. Some might even be relieved [laughs]."

Participants noted that the advising center was now a legitimate resource on campus. Although it was relatively new, advisors compared it to other established resources on campus such as the library and the academic support center. Sally said, "As far as the service that they get over there? It's top notch. Top notch...I put them, put that center right equivalent with the library."

Participants who were faculty program advisors expressed a general feeling of respect and relief. The current master advisors articulated feelings of pride. Princess, a

medical assisting advisor, gave a glowing description of her feelings regarding the master advisors and advising center:

> I think that we are, we are the shining star. We are the ones who um, get it all started. We're the ones who um, take out the hiccups along the way. Because we've started them right and if they stick with their plan, and even if they go off track, we get them back on it. And that's, that to me that's just awesome. And I love when a student makes an appointment with me through Starfish because she knows I'm gonna be there during that time.

Mary Anne recounted the sense of personal pride she had in her role as a master advisor; she audited select student records to determine if there was a route to completion for students who had a high number of credits but had yet to earn a degree.

> Mary Anne: One woman was extremely happy because her husband passed away at the end of the semester and there's an instructor that she got and, however it was assigned she got an F. But there was something on the back of her evaluation, her EVAL, that I can use to substitute to, for that class she failed. And that was her degree, right there. So I think you know, those things, um have an impact.
> Researcher: Yeah, how did that make you feel?
> Mary Anne: I felt like a rock star [laughs]. I mean, when you can call someone and say "Hey, regardless of whether you want to participate in the graduation ceremony, fill this out before March 15th." And they're like, "Oh my gosh." The woman is in tears on the phone and that just made her day because she had lost her husband, she didn't get her degree, and she gave up. She had essentially given up. And here I am saying I can substitute this, get your degree.

The interviews with former master advisors who returned to faculty program advisor status after their time in the center revealed a level of respect for the services rendered. Sally spoke of the confidence that she felt in the advising center due to her experience as being a master advisor. As a result, she felt comfortable with the advising center serving her assigned criminal justice program students in her absence:

> I mean, I've been in out and out of the office a lot. And so I have not been available as much as my students are used to me doing in the summer. And so, I would tell them over email if they've got questions about, you know, advising [or] registration, I always tell them "just go on over there to the advising center." I have 110% confidence with the people over there. I've worked over there before. I know how tough they are with the training as far as being a master advisor.

Karen, a former master advisor, discussed that she now felt comfortable referring friends or community members to the institution because she knew that they would have quality service.

> But now, I mean as long as somebody's in there, in the green room, you get help. And I think that, I know the way I feel, the confidence I feel in Directional Hills, to recommend to students, to recommend to my youth group, to recommend to my friend's kids. It's like, "oh no, you can, we're the same as Competitor Hills Community College. You can come here, we're the, it's same, you'll get more individualized help."

As a result of that credibility, the participants were willing to refer students to the advising center because they knew first-hand about the quality of their services.

Students also seemed to see that the advising center was moving beyond the scope of registration towards true advising. Mary Anne gave an example of her perception that students are developing an increased respect for the advising center.

> I had a student come in the advising center in West Campus and she just came to get advice. And she was thinking about switching over to Directional Hills and she says, "Well, this." I asked her, I knew the right questions to ask her. "Well what do you want to do?" And she said um, "I want to do x, y, and z." And I said, "That's going to require that you go to a four-year college or university after you get this, these requirements in." And I said um, "I think you need to take this class, based on what the requirement is." I'm not trying to do the job of the university advisors but, you know, I want to set her up for success so she doesn't waste time when she transfers. And um, I had a whole suggestion, a whole plan laid out for her. She said "This really is an advising center." So um, I think the fact that she got that, and we laid out a plan for her, I think the students really

> appreciate, "Okay I have a plan, I know what I'm going to do for the next year. I know how this going is going to fit into my bigger plans." And they didn't have that before.

Theme III: The Impact of Process on Ideologies

The third and final theme that emerged was the impact that institutional processes had on the perceived ideologies of the participants before and after the QEP implementation. The categories of "relationship", "time as function of enrollment", and "shifted responsibility" fall in this group.

Relationships

The code relationship was defined using words such as "with", "personal", "one-on-one", "collaborative", "interdivisional", and "intimate".

Before the QEP, relationships between student and advisor occurred in pockets but was not system-wide. The participants perceived that the institutional design of advising led to an impersonal experience for both the student and the advisor. Princess, a medical assisting faculty member, likened it to the sterile environment that is often experienced in government offices:

> They would be in rows. Like rows of students waiting to go. And then somebody would send them to the next open person. So it was almost like, it reminded me of um, now it reminds me of the social security office [laughs]...When I went to the social security office I was like amazed at the number of people lined up in chairs just waiting for their number to be called...I felt like the students were a number. Not actually viewed as someone with goals and advisement needs.

The participants talked about how the institutional culture and physical layout for arena registration changed their perception of the importance of creating a personal

relationship; the old process led to student dehumanization. Participants used terms such as “chop shop”, “assembly line”, “sweatshop”, “boxing match”, and “Wild West” to describe the process, revealing a grouping code of “dehumanization” that intermingled with the code of relationships.

The pre-QEP notion of churning students out of the advising space as if they were a manufactured product was consistent throughout the interviews. Participants viewed the previous registration setup that occurred once per semester as choppy. Karen noted that, before the QEP, “We only had registration, like, two days or something. So, 2000 people had to register in two days and it was, yeah, it was just not.” Sally observed how the current model of an advising continuum was a break from the mechanized process of the past.

> I think we just do a much better now, is taking the time with the students. Not feel like we're rushed, not feel like it’s a, you know, it's a chop shop, a sweatshop. Or something where you've got to turn them out really, really quickly.

Mary Anne observed:

> If you got a new student coming in arena…they might have been in a, in a large room with waiting for the next faculty member to, to you know, be available to help them. I mean what kind of conversation are you going to have with that student? It’s just like an assembly kind of thing.

In addition to the advising relationship being described like a manufacturing process, the terminology used by the institution created another barrier for student-advisor relationships. Throughout the interviews participants freely used the word “arena”, a name given to the large, open, one-room set up previously used by institution

for registration days. The institution's encouragement and marketing of that term gave the image of a "boxing ring" to Karen, a former master advisor. It created a connotation of a contentious relationship between the student and the advisor. Karen recalled "I remember um, being assigned to arena and it was exactly that. Whenever people use the word arena, I always think of fights, like boxing fights [laughs]."

The negative process perceptions influenced the lens through which the advisee-advisor relationship was viewed within the organization. Participants perceived this message from the institution: students were a number. As a result, faculty used animalistic terms to describe the students and experience. Participants used keywords such as "herded", "herding", and "cattle" to represent an environment similar to a livestock ranch. Candace stated:

> When we started the bullpen concept, it [sighs]...I don't wanna say it took the, um, what do you call it? It took the one-on-one? It took that away, I think. So, um...so when we were all in that room together it was like herding cattle. It was come on, get in, let's get to the next one.

After the change, Candace noted that the process made it easier.

> Now of course, with the step-by-step process, it's much easier. It's not as um, it's not as bad as it used to be. You dreaded it, because you knew it was just this bullpen and you were just herding cattle, and now you are not dreading it so much because you know that there is a master advisor with you.

Sometimes the participants were aware of what they were saying, but sometimes they used animal terms unconsciously. Savannah stated:

> It's almost like, herding cattle keeps coming to mind. I just thought I'd laid that out there. They'd come in and they line up in chairs and then they would just move them where they need to go. And that was my first experience. With a

> program director that only had registered once also. So it was not a positive experience you know.

The participant made the connection to animal terms during the interview for the first time. The light bulb went off as Savannah realized:

> Well, it was called arena registration, and I said I felt like I was herding cattle. I mean it was, I don't know it felt like, that's what I thought about that. That was just something that just popped in my head. I just felt like I was at a, they probably did too.

In one particular instance, Jefferson described the former overall advising style as "a very Wild West approach." He noted that, as he would speak with students, he would say, "come talk to me and I'll steer you through it and that's what we'll do." While the term "steer" perhaps referenced the notion of navigating or guiding, the Wild West reference he had previously mentioned also alluded to an unconscious double entendre with bovine animals.

Another example of the participants' unawareness of how they perceived the advising process prior to the QEP implementation was in their description of the line of students waiting to be seen. Sally described it as:

> And I can remember the first day, I don't know why, but usually I always got stuck on the first, to do the first or second day of arena registration. And you'd have the line starting up where [the front desk] is. And it would snake all the way down to the hallway.

The imagery of the vile and sinister nature of the serpent may have had an impact on how the advisors saw the students.

The participants noted that the QEP brought a change in how the institution saw students in the advising relationship. It was now about the one-one-one personal relationship instead of just numbers as in the past. Savannah noted that the students "liked the small, smaller feel...they enjoy the one-on-one time they have with an advisor." Savannah recounted an example of the personal connection a student now had with her advisor to illustrate her point:

> I had a student who just graduated from our program and (another faculty advisor)…I can't recall her last name right now. In Nurse Assistant? She was her advisor before she got into Medical Sonography program. And she encouraged her and helped her you know? And set that plan for her and she was so thankful for her. And on the last day she came and told her bye, she invited her to her wedding. Like, she (the faculty advisor) would encourage her or pat her on the back when she would see her. It was just so, more on a personal level.

The previous process dehumanized the student, but the revised structure enhanced student personification for advisors and vice versa due to the consistency and flow of information. Candace described this relationship between the student and the advising center.

> It makes it more of a personal relationship. And I think the students feel more comfortable knowing that they've got a personal relationship with the advising center. They like that, and I've had them say, "Are you going to be here?" and I'll say, "Well, no I'm not, but there is another master advisor and they know exactly what I do."

Similarly, Princess noted, "A lot of them look at master advisors as their advisor. Um, and I think that's okay because I think they have more, they can get with that particular person. That they trust that person."

Candace noted the now-intentional effort of advising relationship formation:

> I think more so now um, we definitely want the relationship with the student. I know now we're on a list that our director is sending out and we're calling students. Um, so that is a, that's something that is stressed is making contact with those students. Um, making it more of a personal, you know, I want you, we want you at DHCC. We, we want to help you. We want to provide you with the classes and programs that you want, and I think that that's one of the more important things about advising now.

The participants' positive perception is that the advising center serves as the ambassador; now, students feel that the whole institution has a relationship with them. Candace described this:

> Advising has moved up as here of what's important for the school and it makes a difference. It's made a difference with our students, and it's made a difference in us, [those who] have become master advisors. We knew a little bit before but we know a lot now. So I think the way, the way that it's evolved, it's definitely become very important. Very, very important. And for the advising center, you know we're the first person that a lot of them see, and um, for not only getting from the step-by-step process getting it right, but also that personal relationship so they get the impression that the whole college has that personal relationship with them. So, it's definitely, the culture has taken a turn that advising is definitely important.

In addition to the cultivation of the student-advisor relationship, there was also a perception of improved relationships between college divisions. Sally believed that the QEP selection process provided an opportunity for multiple departments to work together for a common goal of improving the student experience:

> I don't think that people really got it until we put academic advising as the QEP. And put it as this is what we are going to improve on at this college and this is why. You know? And not only was it that, the QEP team was phenomenal because it had so many different facets from the college who realistically don't have anything to do with, individually with the student. You know? They have a support part of student, whether it's marketing, whether it's maintenance, whether it's whatever, but it's you don't every single day look at the student and have to deal with the student. So I think it was eye opening from that perspective. And

> they're just, like, "Wow, you know this is really important for this college" on that part. And I think that make a big difference too.

Participants noted that the two largest divisions that needed to work together were those that had the greatest interaction with students. Sally stated;

> Faculty, in my opinion, have the number one most contact with students. Student Services, number two, and realistically they're probably close to tying more so with faculty than anything else. Um, I believe, I think it's really gonna to take a collaborative effort between those two departments um, that to make sure the students understand how important academic advising is.

The advising center is responsible in part for the institutional onboarding of students, so it needs to work together with other departments. Karen said,

> I think the way the advising center and library works together for IDs or questions, or like Google passwords can be changed here and we're right around the corner from each other. And the other campus, they're near each other. So I think it's just a great partnership. It's, um, the collaboration that happens definitely benefits and supports the student. And they see us as being seamless then because "I was here, and I just went over to the library, and I got my ID made, and then I came back and we did a plan" or whatever. It's just, um, easy for the student.

The QEP implementation was perceived by participants to positively shift the relationships between the student and advisor, advising center and other departments, and the various departments of the institution as a whole.

Time as a Student Enrollment Function

The code of enrollment was denoted using terms such as "get 'em enrolled", "butts in seats", "numbers", "registration", and "FTE". References to increase enrollment by pushing registration were made in excess of thirty times over the course of the ten participant interviews. Participant after participant recited the same concept of "just get

the student enrolled." The consistency in the wording between the interviews was telling of the explicit message marketed by the institution. A small sampling is below:

> Dee: I felt like before the QEP was implemented it was stressed to get students enrolled. Just get 'em enrolled. Get 'em in a class and get our numbers up. That what I felt like was important. If a student comes to you, get them in and get our numbers up...the enrollment numbers was a big push. Our numbers are down, our numbers are up, this is what we had last semester, this is what we are shooting for. So growth. Growth in the number of students was what valued.
>
> Sally: The advising culture back then it was all registration, registration, registration. Um, and for us it was all numbers. You had to have certain numbers in your classes.
>
> Angel: The bottom line was getting the students in...as stressed to us, FTEs. We met the FTEs. It was all by the numbers, getting the numbers.
>
> Karen: Getting students registered. Butts in seat. Like, bottom line, we have to affect the FTE, this is important, we need to make sure as many.

The participants reported that, prior to the QEP, there was a large focus by the administration of the problem of declining enrollment; the institution operated under an assumption that what was needed to fix the problem was excellent customer service. The institutional leaders believed that customer service was acknowledging that student time was valuable and that the advisor should not waste the student time. As a result, advisors were encouraged to move quickly. Candace described the impersonal style as:

> It was, it was a revolving door. And it was a revolving door in the sense that the students were, um, "This is not really what I wanted to take" or "This is not the correct class", um or...it was just get 'em in, get 'em out, get 'em in, get 'em out because we just had to move [claps her hands]. If, if there is another word for quick advising, you know, that's what it was.

Mary Anne describes how the fast pace impacted her advising style.

> You just kind of went with it [laughs]. You just, I just, you just talk to the students and say, “okay, what’s your major?” and that was kind of the extent of your conversation. What’s your major and I would ask them you know what kind of things I have to. I would run into registration, there wasn’t much time spent on advising.

However, participants reported that administration and advisors operated under separate understandings of the mathematical equation needed to solve the complicated problem of improved enrollment. Participants reported that they felt the need for more time and were stifled by the institutional idea that more time spent by faculty members with students meant fewer enrollments. Angel spoke about the charge given to her by her supervisor to “enroll them, get ‘em in”, as well as the conflicting beliefs on how best to accomplish this that resulted in her write-up:

> Researcher: How did that culture of advising impact how you conducted your own personal work as an advisor?
> Angel: Well, um, I got in trouble a lot...the person that was my supervisor at the time, I got in trouble.
> Researcher: Trouble?
> Angel: Yeah, trouble...written up.
> Researcher: For taking time with the students?
> Angel: Insubordination [laughs]. You know, you had a lot of chiefs. So, um, and I was explaining to them from what I come from. I came from the corporate world and my purpose were getting them in, take my hand, follow me, I will lead you. That was my motto. But I had to stop. And it was, I was confused because you want me to get my number up, get enrollment up...this is what I need to do.

Sally shared a related story:

> Researcher: What was criticized about advising back then?
> Sally: Taking too much time [laughs]. Taking too much time. I can remember that. Um, there was one time and this was in my old office ...I had this one student that whenever you'd answered one question, they'd have five more that followed. And I had a line that was, that developed outside my door. My supervisor at the time came by and came in the office and said "You know, what's going on? You

> know you have these students waiting for you." And I said, “You know I've been with this student." "Well, what time did your appointment start?" And I told them. And they were like, "well, you've been with the student for 45 minutes". And I was like "Yes, well there has been some confusion, that we need to you know [clear].” And I was told that I was taking too much time. Um, so I need to move on along when it came to that student. So that student ended up going with my supervisor. Um, so that person could help them faster. So whether or not that student got exactly what they needed, I do not know.

Angel spoke of her perception of negative student interactions caused by the brevity of the advisor-advisee interaction. “A lot of students felt rushed. They felt like they couldn't ask a question. They had nowhere to go because, once you enrolled it, that's it.” The narrative the participants believed was pushed by the college was that the best way to increase enrollment was to see more students by spending less time with each one. Time was seen as a finite resource that could not be wasted since the institution equated time with money, specifically full-time equivalents or FTEs. In a sense, an equation was developed: more students/less time = increased FTEs.

The QEP implementation brought a shift in the perception of time and how it works with student advising and institutional funding. When asked about the changes in importance in regards to advising, Sally replied, “taking the time with the student to do that.” Savannah noted that, as an institution:

> We spend more time. So that’s a reward to me. I mean the college as a whole is probably rewarded because the student are more successful in completing courses and degrees. I remember my students that I spend time with in advising and see them out and about and ask them how they’re doing. How it’s going. And I don’t question myself as much: "did I do the right thing, did I", you know?

Time was no longer the divisor in the formula of increasing enrollment; instead, it now functioned as the multiplier. Taking necessary time with a student resulted in greater student satisfaction, which leads to word-of-mouth marketing. The participants believed that, with the new model, students would tell other students about their experience. The effect would be an increase in student enrollment and funding. Angel described an encounter that illustrated her current belief in this:

> Enrollment comes from word of mouth....and that's what the advising, advisors, need to be well aware of that. That once we get the student in the door, we keep them in there. And they enrolled and then the retention was be there.

Princess expanded on this belief:

> Researcher: What do you perceive the students think about the current process?
> Princess: I think they love it. I do. I think they are just um, the ones that are going through their now? They don't know any different. So the ones that do have any negative feedback they just haven't saw what it used to be like [laughs]. Um, and I don't think we spoil them. I think that they are just getting so much of what they need from the advising center that they leave happier. And then you know, you get one satisfied person? They're gonna tell three, or four, or five people and that's how the cycle. That's why our enrollment is up. You've gotta have that extra special touches.

Sally also noted that each faculty advisor needs to take time with students to increase enrollment.

> So I don't know the best way to do it, I think it's going to have to be a college wide thing. But if you can get the students, and get, students are a wealth of information unfortunately. Okay? That can be good thing or a bad thing, alright? But if you can get them to start, if every, if every program here could get them to start to do the online registration portion of it. Do academic advising either through their program advisor or going to the center. And then going right to those computers and going online and doing it. If every program could just start with five to ten students to do that, word will spread.

The participants now perceived the formula for improved funding and enrollment to be represented as (in simplified terms): students x increased time = increased FTEs.

Participants also perceived the current education focus on completion, as well as state-level conversations about performance-based funding, were the perfect storm of external forces to leverage the QEP and usher in institutional acceptance. Some participants, like Carlos, simply alluded to it by saying, "In fact I think that is going to be more of a pushing for, make sure that the college has a specific number of completers. And it's going to be based on, FTE is going to be based on that." Other participants, such as Sally, explicitly linked the role between advising and funding:

> You know, I'm looking at it from what's trickling down, you know. And I think academic advising is going to be a key element in that because the college is going to be put on the burner eventually when it comes to performance based funding. I'm not saying it's coming next year, but it is coming down the lines. You know as good as I do it's in talks. Um, and I think if we are already on the right page with being prepared versus waiting for it to hit and then trying to be prepared, we will be better off. So the only thing I see is making academic advising stronger. We're already on that path, but what's the next step of making it stronger on that part of it.

Jefferson additionally made the connections between advising, student completion, and funding as he recalled the former college president's words regarding performance based funding:

> You remember, you recall (the former college president) saying sometime back that more and more of funding is going to be based on these performance measures. You know raising our graduation rate, completion rate, you know. Having those things. And one of the big secrets to that is going to be getting the students in the proper courses in the proper sequence. And that will smooth out the way for these students to complete. And that will make the students happy and that will make us good and uh, that makes everybody happy.

Responsibility

Terms such as “for them”, “controlling”, “accountable”, “taking the reins”, and “responsible” were used to capture participants’ perceptions of a change in responsibility in the advising relationship between the student and the advisor. Before the QEP, participants expressed a high level of responsibility placed on them in the role of advisor by the student. Dee said that students wanted to:

> Have someone do the advising for them and put them in those classes for them. Having a person that they can come to and say, “I need, I need help.” You know, so instead of making it more um, independent, more of them controlling their own future, I think they were um, they thought worked well was having someone there to say, “Dee, you need to register me for this.” And for me to tell them, “this is what you need to do.”

Dee expressed that, early on, she thought it was her responsibility to decide the student’s future.

> In the beginning, I thought it was my responsibility, for me to figure out what Mark, Lucy, Jane, Tom wanted to do with their life. So I was trying to say, “OK, do you like this? Do you like that? Do you wanna do this? Do you wanna do that?” And when they said, “Yeah”, I was like, good, check mark let's go! So I think I was trying to find them a future, and that doesn't work. So I think I was just trying to um, I guess take the lead.

After the QEP, the culture changed. The participants now saw responsibility as a shared partnership instead of watching it swing wildly to extremes like a pendulum. The sharing led to student empowerment. Faculty advisors saw their main responsibility in the relationship to be that of a teaching role. When asked about the importance now, Princess said:

> Actually advising the student. Making sure the student is on the right track. Giving that student responsibilities. Um, I think not just doing it for them but teaching them to do things. Giving them more um, I guess giving them more responsibilities is a huge um, because in our society today our students, students that I see just want you know everybody to do it for them. Just here, here, um "I'm here to register". Well that's not our culture anymore so we teach them our culture when they come in here as far as how to actually...it's not registration anymore. It's advising.

Mary Anne note that she perceived a change in students as a result of the QEP.

> They weren't held accountable for being proactive and being um, an active part of that process. The just kind of took what somebody said, if they said anything at all. And, that was the end of that. They're taking the reins more. Um I think they're becoming more resourceful. Um, more responsible. Um, and a bit more ready to take on their academic journeys and in their careers.

Carlos also noted a change over time in the level of preparedness of the students as well as the attitude in which they approached the advising relationship.

> I've been here several years now and I can see the change. And how we went from the system we had before to now and I can tell you this is better. To me, it's working. I see the progress on the students. I see less complaints. I see people doing stuff on their own. They're independent, they're responsible for what they are doing. That is so much better than the way it was before.

Mary Anne, discussed how engaging in advising helped her to understand her personal responsibility in the process.

> I think it made me, once I started advising people, I think it made me um, really stop and realize the difference between what my roles and responsibilities were as an advisor and the responsibility that student had to pick up. That's one thing um, it made me actually slow down and talk to the student and actually find out what they were interested in, where they were going, where they were going, and then I took on my responsibility to actually say, "Okay, this is the direction I think is best for you to go in." And I gave them things to think about so that they ultimately made the choice.

Karen, a former master advisor, interestingly used an animal metaphor to describe why students should be responsible in the advising relationship. This time, instead of cattle, the student was compared to a delicate, almost fragile, specimen of life that needed to be watched over and supported but not necessarily protected:

> Now I am, I'm here for you if you need help, but you need to stand up and walk the walk and you know, move forward. It's almost like a baby bird coming out of its shell. If you stand there and help them by tapping that shell, he won't have the muscles that he needs when he gets out to fly. Like, there is a reason why you have to go through all that and I think students need to go through this planning. They need support and help but they do not need us to do it for them. They need to decide.

The role of technology aided in the shift to shared responsibility. At first, the advisor was registering all students by paper; with the introduction of the student portal, the student could take over that level of responsibility. Karen noted that providing students with information was part of the empowerment process.

> It's good when information is available for them to find out, and it puts the responsibility of their future on them because that's really empowering the student is what advising is really all about is saying, "Okay what are you going to do? What are you going to do? Here are the tools to get there but what do you want to do and how are you going to get there? We're here for you if you need help getting there."

As a result, the faculty advisors felt that their advising interactions were more productive with students. Dee explained that advisees were now coming to appointments more prepared:

> Researcher: What do you perceive the students think about the current process?
> Dee: I think that they um, feel more secure. I think they feel, um more organized. At least they appear to be [laughs]. When they come in it's almost like, where as before, almost all of them that would sit down. That would come in the door and

> want to talk about you, advising or where they were going had no plan. Now I would say that the students, it's probably 50/50 or maybe even more, higher, have a plan versus don't have a plan. At least they know what classes they want to sign up for. Whereas before I felt like nobody knew anything. Nobody knew what to take. I do think that um, that they are coming to, to us with a plan more so than they were in the past.

Princess summed it up as:

> We're now teaching our students responsibilities. To be accountable. We can't go to class with them. I think it has completely shifted as far as what we do now for our students versus um, how we help them not what we do for them. Doing is registration, helping is advising.

Summary

A thorough analysis of the data revealed three themes: the need for safety in all aspects of advising, a professional identity of advising, and the shift of institutional ideologies. Chapter Five delves into these concepts in the context of the research questions of the study and the implications as they relate to the greater theoretical framework of organizational culture.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand faculty advisors' perceptions of the impact an academic advising quality enhancement plan had on the organizational culture of one community college. The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are faculty advisors' perception of the impact of academic advising on organizational culture?
2. How does organizational culture influence faculty roles and expectations as advisors?

The findings of this study revealed that faculty advisors perceived a positive shift in organizational culture as a result of changes to academic advising. They perceived that a safe environment was now present for both the faculty advisor and the advisee and that a professional identity of advising was established as a result of newfound procedures and professional development. Faculty advisors reported having a defined role with clear expectations which were previously lacking. Lastly, the findings suggests that the campus experienced a shift in institutional ideologies as related to advisor-advisee relationships, enrollment management strategies, and ownership of advising responsibilities.

Findings of the study are discussed in the context of the literature and the organizational culture theoretical framework. This is followed by a discussion of how the

findings of this study inform policy and practice on academic advising as an institutional student success reform. Finally, the chapter concludes with implications for future scholarly research

Discussion of Findings

Safe Environment

Schein (2010) noted that the design of physical spaces, procedures, and systems serve as reinforcement mechanisms and secondary articulations of the values and beliefs of leadership. This articulation encourages a sense of safety. Faculty advisors were able to articulate that the design of the QEP created a realm of safety within which the advisor and advisee could both conduct their work. Faculty advisors perceived that academic advising was now a stabilized and permanent function of the College as a result of the plan elements and structured processes that were put in place. The most prominent institutional artifact in sending this message were the newly created advising centers. The centers' college-themed decor embedded the belief that academic advising was the front door of the institution. The faculty advisors reported that having a centralized, comfortable, dedicated physical space created a feeling that the advising environment was reliable. The accessibility of the centers' location and hours created a layer of security that academic advising was a dependable service of the college. This signaled to the advisees and advisors that this institutional change was more than just the latest initiative: it could be trusted.

Previous research concluded that the physical advising environment is a variable in student mood (Eckerty, 2011; Strain, 2009). Students reported being happier in an academic advisor's office that was free of clutter and gave a clear indication of where the student should sit (Eckerty, 2011). Chair placements that promoted advisor-advisee collaborations were seen as more welcoming than layouts that created a superior-subordinate hierarchy such as the advisor's chair behind a desk (Eckerty, 2011; Folsom, 2011). .

Environmental psychology studies have primarily been conducted in the context of how elements of a counseling office impact the client-psychotherapist relationship (Aslam, 2013; Miwa & Hanyu, 2006; Nasar & Devlin, 2011; Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). Folsom (2011) gives guidance to consider privacy and confidentiality when designing academic advising space layout however overall, the extant literature is relatively silent on the importance of psychological safety through the design of the physical academic advising environment. This is particularly true when studying the cognitive safety of the faculty advisors. This study highlights the critical role that the physical environment plays in the development of psychological safety, which in turn increases trust between the advisees and advisors as well as between those populations and the organization as a whole.

Similarly, faculty noted that students appreciated and trusted the increased faculty advisor knowledge and availability that came as a result of QEP implementation. These findings were consistent with Harrison's (2009) study regarding faculty's perceptions of

the characteristics of effective advising. The top two characteristics of effective advising were knowledge and accessibility. Other effective advising characteristics include communication, moral virtue, advocacy, authenticity, accountability, and approachability (Harrison, 2009). While all of these elements were not explicitly stated by the participants, the overarching theme was that trust is necessary in an advising environment. Harrison's study points to the level of vulnerability students feel during academic advising. Having a secure attachment to both the advisor and advising environment works to ease the feelings of discomfort a student experiences and allows them to perform at their best. Elements of this concept were seen in this study as faculty reported that students developed greater connections to both master advisors and faculty advisors after the QEP implementation.

In their work researching institutional subcultures, Locke and Guglielmino (2006) noted that senior faculty felt personal responsibility in ensuring that planned change had integrity and vitality to stand the test of future institutional processes. This study's findings aligned with the research as faculty advisors reported that they felt confidence in the advising plan and felt that they could also endorse it when speaking to new faculty advisors. The intentionality behind the design supported the espoused values from leadership that academic advising was a priority for the institution. The congruency in the communicated messages and tangible evidence resulted in buy-in from the faculty advisors.

Professional Advising Identity

Another finding of this study was that a professional identity of advising was developed as a result of the institutional change. Where previously there was a perception that faculty advisors primarily registered students, the participants were now able to find an identity beyond one who prescribes courses (Drake et al., 2013) or a "registerer", as one participant coined it. The notion that advising was simply a conduit to registration and enrollment was the biggest challenge faculty had to overcome as this was a deeply embedded assumption of the institution. Darling (2015) states:

> Impactful advising programs move far beyond the simple act of registering for courses. Advisors must acquire the body of knowledge to address and navigate these complex issues, apply the critical thinking and analysis needed to mentor and guide students through identifying challenges and defining alternatives, and co-create educational plans with the students that lead them to successful completion of programs, a rich array of undergraduate experiences, and a promising transition to continued studies or work and career.

As institutional leaders seek to implement advising programs that bring about shifts in institutional thinking, consideration should be given to the practices that affect the advising identity. Transformational advising practices such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence have been rated higher in terms of advisor effectiveness, student satisfaction, and extra effort by students in comparison to those practices labeled as laissez-faire or transactional (Barbuto, Story, Fritz, & Schinstock, 2011). The faculty advisors described the previous culture as a very laissez-faire advising approach because there were holes in the former model but no real actions were in place to address them by administration prior to the

QEP. Advising was, for the most part, inaccessible to students due to the limited time allotted for advising for each student. Yet, after the implementation, there was a perceived shift to a more proactive active and engaged approach: a move on the continuum of full-range of advising to a more proactive, engaged transformational approach (Barbuto et al., 2011). While not all elements of transformational advising were presented in this study, the shared stories of the faculty advisors indicated that the institution as a whole desired to move further away from the passive practices that characterized the advising culture of the past.

Faculty advisors noted that advising was previously dreaded and that they felt it was something done once a year but, with appropriate professional development, advising was now seen as teaching: an extension of their current professional role (Lowenstein, 2005). Participants noted that their understanding of what they were doing and why they were doing it came from the formal and informal communications from the academic director and coordinator. In a survey of member institutions of the National Association of Academic Advising (NACADA), Abelman, Atkin, Dalessandro, Snyder-Suhy, and Janstova (2007) noted that supervisory personnel in academic advising are the connecting piece between the institutional mission and advising operations. The professional development provided a platform for the institution to hear the espoused values of the college administrators. This allowed for greater integration of the new culture; previously, it was challenging for faculty advisors to develop a professional identity of advising since it was not championed on campus. Schein (2010) suggest that

the "leaders of an institution can create a space of psychological safety for students and advisors through formal and informal training, role modeling, and systems and structures that are consistent with the new way of thinking" (p. 306). The artifact of professional development shaped and reinforced a new institutional lens, in essence, that allowed faculty to see their identity as advisors.

Strayhorn (2015) says that advisors are actually 'cultural navigators' (p. 56) that educate students in maneuvering through institutional jargon. Once students develop the skills to maneuver through the institution, they gain confidence and are empowered. Bensimon (2007) referred to the key people on campus that connect a student to the resources needed as "institutional agents" (p.43). This ambassador-like role invokes a sense of power and respect for the faculty advisor, which leads to ownership of the identity. Aiken-Wisniewski, Johnson, Larson and Barkemeyer (2015) found that inconsistently defined roles challenged the building of a professional identity of advising. This study supports that finding; without an institution-wide understanding of the advising role, the faculty advisors could not operate in the full scope of the role.

In addition to the faculty having a self-identity as advisors, the participants perceived that all institutional stakeholders had a greater understanding of academic advising due to the QEP. Campbell and Nutt (2008) state that "the trends in academic advising indicate that institutional recognition of academic advising is a campus wide responsibility in which all constituencies—administrators, students, faculty, and staff — work together to promote student success" (p.1). While leadership of academic advising

must be assigned to an individual, the responsibility of promoting the professional identity belongs to the entire institution.

Institutional Ideologies

Time.

Participants noted that values had changed at the college; the assumption now was that faculty advisors were expected to take adequate time when meeting with advisees. The faculty advisors perceived that there was previously an inadequate amount of time spent with students to make a true connection. This was consistent with Barker and Mamiseishvili's (2014) finding that there was a need for personalization in advising relationships; negativity developed around the advising relationship when inadequate time was allotted to the process. While Barker & Mamiseishvili's (2014) study was on student perceptions, this study highlights the dyad of the advising relationship. The culture of the institution changed to take into account the needs of both advisor and student.

The participants noted that students felt at ease and were more likely to open up when time was taken to establish rapport. Several noted that students would tell them to take their time, if an advisor was meeting with another student, because they were comfortable in the environment. The extended operating hours of the advising center also provided comfort to students because they did not have to rush. Dunker and Belcastro (1993) found that students perceived the relationship to be warmer, thus removing anxiety, when community college faculty advisors took more than 30 minutes,

specifically with evening students who had less flexibility to come to campus due to their work schedules. Finding this time can be challenging as many community college students have full-time jobs that create time constraints that do not allow them to engage outside of the classroom (Bensimon, 2007). The AACC (2016) reported that, of students attending community college, 62% were part-time enrollees; 73% indicated being employed either full- or part-time. Institutions may need to be creative in their delivery strategies to increase advising accessibility. Campus leaders could address these concerns by using technology and integrating advising into mandatory existing activities (Cooper, n.d.).

Relationships.

Previously, a haphazard assignment of advisors did not encourage personal relationships, which led to the unconscious belief that students were "numbers" and not people. An interesting finding was that when this assumption changed, it did not translate to all areas of the advising relationships. While all participants espoused that stronger advisee-advisor relationships were now valued at the institution, few discussed it specifically in reference to their assigned advisees. Many of the advisors discussed how the advising centers transformed the organization; however, they sparingly described how the QEP shaped their one-one-one relationships with their assigned advisees. In any shared model, it is hoped that a center is supplementary and not a replacement of the program advisor. Most centers will have a breadth of knowledge to provide introductory information regarding most majors, but the depth of knowledge about program

requirements is often lacking. Faculty advisors must make certain that they are not missing an opportunity to engage fully in the advising relationship with the student.

The connection to the advisor is the umbilical cord that tethers the student to the institution as it provides the nutrients to sustain the student's growth and eventual independence. Deil-Amin (2011) says that students face multiple struggles in "their attempts to strategize academically, overcome self-doubt, and become stable and grounded in their college student identity" (p. 71). This is the role that the academic advisor can and should play in providing the support the student needs for a successful integration into the institution.

Oftentimes social integration is discussed in terms of peer relationships (Deil-Amin, 2011); at a small to mid-size community college, the concept of social integration may extend to relationships with faculty advisors due to the close and dual relationships found in less populated communities. Student satisfaction in academic advising is the evidence that students are well served and connected to the institution (Campbell & Nutt, 2008).

Enrollment to Completion.

A consistent finding among all participants was the previous assumption that advising was only a function of course registration. The institutional artifacts of arena registration, advising check off list, moving quickly with students, two days dedicated to advising, and a multi-purpose space for advising and registration were indicative of the values and beliefs that enrollment headcount was the priority. Participants noted that

leadership reinforced the espoused values to all faculty advisors. During arena registration days, the message was heard clearly to “get’em in and get’em out”. While perhaps not eloquent, this message was effective in embedding the cultural belief that the most important facet of the advisor's role was registration.

The underlying assumption was that higher enrollment numbers were driven by getting students registered for a class, any class. This process was often done with little to no consideration of the path for degree completion. As Schein (2010) noted when discussing how cultural messages are embedded, “It is the consistency that is important, not the intensity of the attention. (p. 237).” Consistency, in this case, was attention to enrollment and not accuracy of course selection. Degree completion and the personal development of the individual student were not a priority.

Participants noted a shift in the culture after the QEP implementation. The new belief was that students should be seen as individuals and that their success mattered. The underlying assumption was that students would continuously enroll and completion rates would increase if faculty advisors properly advised them. There is power in the word, particularly when being espoused from a person with formal or perceived power. An institution’s philosophy is enacted through its policies and standard operating practices by institutional agents and can be one of the more powerful shaping influences on student persistence (Kuh, 2001).

Responsibility.

Participants perceived students as lost and confused prior to the reform. An underlying assumption was that the advisors were responsible for the decision-making and direction of students' academic lives because the student did not know what to do. Yet, paradoxically, the faculty also believed that they were powerless to truly shape a student's life. Both assumptions resulted in students being kept out of communication loops. After the QEP, participants observed that students went through a structured onboarding process that including orientation, technology bootcamps, and education on interpreting their degree audit. Faculty perceived that, as a result, students exhibited a greater degree of engagement and were more prepared when meeting with their program advisor.

Previous research suggests that community college students who were part of information networks or were "in the know" felt confident with their decision-making (Karp, 2016). The current study findings are consistent with Karp's. Students who are empowered with information and are encouraged to apply it are more likely to take responsibility for their academic career.

Institutional leaders hold a great responsibility in recognizing that the terms that they use to describe processes has an influence on the direction of the culture. In the context of advising, administrators should frame faculty responsibility as duty rather than ownership: duty to serve, duty to know the scope and boundaries of the role of the advisor, and the duty not to cross those lines and infringe upon the student's need to

assume their role as advisee. This creates a foundation for an advising relationship of shared responsibility.

Overall Impact

The institution experienced a culture shift to reflect the newly embedded values of advising at the organizational, departmental, and individual levels. The level of consistency in the faculty advisor interviews was substantial. While participants of this study all belong to the faculty subgroup, there were faculty advising subgroups within the collective group. Locke & Guglielmino (2006) found that subgroups often demonstrate differences and commonalities in their perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions of planned institutional change. There was total agreement regarding the positive change in how advising impacted the college; however, the emphasis with which this was felt varied. Current and former master advisors were more expressive of the feelings associated with change than faculty who were only program advisors. This may be indicative of the vested interest in the initiative developed by working in the advising center.

Pellegrino, Snyder, Crutchfied, Curtis, & Pringle (2015) administered a 360 degree survey to institutional stakeholders to determine what was needed to correct the acknowledged institutional disconnect in advising. They determined that an institution must have:

> A common mission and role expectation for advisors across the institution; an institutional approach to professional development and recognition of academic advisors; dual foci of student relationships and institutional advocacy by academic advisors for student development needs; and mutual relationships existing between individual students, staff, and the institution (p. 4).

The findings of Pellegrino et al. (2015) are supported by this research.

Participants noted that the adoption of an advising model was an evolutionary process for the institution that would continue to change in the future. Schein (2010) indicates there are three stages of change. Stage one is unfreezing, or "creating the disequilibrium or motivation to force change" (p. 301). Stage two is learning new concepts, new meanings for old concepts, and new standards for judgement, and stage three is internalizing new concepts, meanings, and standards. This case study served as a demonstrative example of these stages.

This study supports that cultural change must be intentionally cultivated for reforms to take root within an institution. Drake (2011) notes that creating an institutional culture responsive to advising is now the expectation. "We have long since left in the dust the notion that simply opening our doors to students is enough, that, once here, they can negotiate their own way through our often byzantine, labyrinthine curriculum, processes and hallowed halls" (p. 9). Advising reforms must now be intentional and restructure advising in a way that continues the advising relationship from a front door only model to one that maintains a consistent relationship between the student and members of the institution throughout their time with the institution (Karp, 2013).

Implications for Policy and Practice

Schein (2010) outlines six mechanisms that leader use as tools to embed their beliefs and assumptions into an organizational culture. These are "1) what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis, 2) how leaders react to critical

incidents and organizational crises, 3) how leaders allocate resources, 4) deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching, 5) how leaders allocate rewards and status, and 6) how leaders recruit, select, promote, and excommunicate" (p. 236). Several of these mechanisms have direct implications for ways to enhance institutional academic advising through policy and practice.

The first implication is to develop an advising policy if one does not already exist within the institution. When an institution seeks to implement change, having clear values and missions outline the expectation for members of the institution to act in accordance with the explicit norms of the campus. Kuh (2001) stated this is a "cultural pull" that teaches what is "important and causes students to act in ways that will help them succeed academically and socially" (p. 27). Findings of the study speak to the uncertainty that both advisors and advisees felt because of vague and unclear expectations about the roles and responsibilities of both parties in the advising process. When the advisors were unclear of the values and beliefs regarding advising, the system was chaotic and undefined. Institutional leaders can create a written plan for reference and that promotes a vision and clearly articulates the values of the subculture of advising.

Included in that plan should be an institutionally created definition of advising. For an institution to move towards a culture of student success, they must truly cultivate an institutional definition of advising including an acknowledgement of what it truly means to be present in the advising environment for the student. This should go beyond the scope of meeting obligatory requirements of offering support services as often noted

by external accreditation agencies, such as listing services offered in campus publications such as a college catalog or the website. Rather, the definition should incorporate the needs of the student and the elements of the advising plan designed to address them. The findings of this research demonstrated that this organizational definition of advising can effectively communicated through professional development workshops and disseminated in print literature: e.g., advising handbooks, email distribution lists, and reference documents. The multiple forms of communication and repetitions of the message are key to ingraining the definition into members of the organization.

Once an advising policy is in place, institutions must take into consideration the needs of the participants in developing their advising models. The research finding of safety in advising has implications for how institutions develop their physical advising space, train advisors so they feel confident in their knowledge of the institution, and create an emotionally secure environment for both the advisor and advisee. Inclusion of elements as simple as college themed décor can provide comfort and set the stage for the formation of a secure advising relationship.

Drake (2011) noted that leadership is the key in improving advising reform. With a few cursory statements to the importance of the relationship between the student and the advisor, there is a lack of a true campaign for most community colleges to facilitate or bolster the interaction between the student and advisor. It is necessary for the institution to have a consistent message of support behind student success initiatives, and this message must come from leadership. Participants shared that hearing the college

president emphasize the focus on completion helped to cement the importance of academic advising. Senior leaders can focus attention to the initiative by positioning academic advising as the top goal within the strategic plan as was done by the former Chancellor of the University System of Georgia (Drake, 2011). A documented strategic goal sends a clear message to constituents that there will be accountability to ensure quality advising.

Oftentimes, administration overlooks the power in being present and providing that stamp of approval for institutional constituents to come aboard an initiative. It demonstrates that this change is constant, which is important in the ever-changing world of educational reform. The participants noted that they valued hearing reports on the progress of the QEP from senior administrators both prior to and during implementation. It also helped them to feel included and connected to the initiative. The presence and assurance of administration sends a clear message that this initiative is aligned with the institution's mission, and it is a safe investment for faculty's mental and physical energy.

Perhaps one of the most visible ways to show support is through decision making regarding budgetary allocations. Leaders embed their beliefs in their assumptions in their fiscal budgets (Schein, 2010). So often support services have been ignored or viewed as an afterthought while the lion's share of community college funding goes to the instructional needs of teaching and learning. As noted in one interview, they previously felt that "lip service" was given to the notion of advising; consequently, the faculty advisors did not place a high a level of importance on this service. Yet a clear message

was sent that advising was a priority when action was taken to form an interdivisional team and resources were put in place for personnel, space, and student resources. McLeod & Young (2005) assert that solely having an institutional commitment to student success is not enough to create an actual institutional cultural change for student success. "Organizational structure must provide specific offices and individuals who have as their primary responsibility keeping the institution focused on the importance of student success and informing the campus of the progress of students" (p. 85). While instruction is clearly the primary and critical responsibility of the institution, there must be a shift in organizational thinking that teaching and learning is not limited to the four walls of a classroom; it is also happening informally within all pockets of student support services.

Additionally institutional leaders should encourage interdivisional collaboration for a shared experience in the goal. Oftentimes, community college student success initiatives target student affairs staff, but buy in from the faculty is key to the success of an academic advising initiative. The findings of this study point to the synergy that occurs when academic affairs personnel collaborate with the student affairs division. The inter-divisional collaboration leads to a consistent message provided to students by all members of the institution. Kiker (2008) notes that academic supports such as advising are stronger and more efficient when faculty are integrated in reforms. Including the faculty from the very beginning helps an institution move academic advising change forward more effectively. The endorsement of faculty master advisors in this study helped gained the respect of peers and created trust in the system, specifically with

former master advisors who could speak to the credibility of the advising model. Institutions that do not yet have faculty master advisors can solicit help from key faculty members such as a faculty senate leader or a senior tenured member. Faculty inclusion creates a sense of shared responsibility and can serve as a conductor of the current of change throughout the institution (Birnback et al., 2009). The right faculty leader has the ability to frame academic advising not as an institutional requirement but as an initiative with which all faculty have a common goal and interest.

Institutional leaders also must create a reward system for advising. One of the factors that the participants of the study highlighted in creating a professional identity of advising was the addition of the role of master advisors and additional compensation for the position. Creating an academic faculty advising career ladder within a community college is crucial to continuing the fostered sense of professional identity. The tiered approach of having program advisors and master advisors allowed an increased level for which advisors could strive. The research showed that the identity of the advisor was reinforced within the institution by creating the position of master advisor and connecting it with a financial incentive. The next step is to continue to add levels of prestige where faculty who are interested in additional advising opportunities may move into so that they do not become stagnant in their role.

Pellegrino et al. (2015) advocates for putting skilled advisors in leadership roles that can influence policy. This can be in the form of committee chairs, task force members, or in collaboration with the faculty senate. The faculty master advisors develop

expertise based on their experiences, which is unique to them. Bensimon (2007) calls this cache of information "funds of knowledge" (p. 451) which practitioners call upon to accomplish their work as practitioners. The faculty hold a body of information that is unique to their experiences, education, and time with the institution and help them to make sense of various occurrences. The master advisors in this study, both former and current, now hold a level of expertise that, when utilized correctly, could contribute to continued cultural change for the institution.

Many participants privately wondered if they were the only one who held a certain perception. The researcher would offer that institutional leaders should provide opportunities for campus conversations that incorporate the stories of various stakeholders when trying to move forward with change. The results should be recorded and then articulated to the greater community. The ability to hear the similarities across experiences helps normalize the change as well as document its occurrence.

Multiple studies noted that institutional change was established as a result of a directive by senior leadership to implement and embrace strategies for student success (Brice, 1998; Locke & Guglielmino, 2006, 2006a; McLeod & Young, 2005) or other influential forces such as accreditation requirements (Balog & Search, 2006; The Chronicle, 2014). At first glance, these mandates could appear to be burdensome. However, the researcher would encourage institutional subgroups to embrace the opportunity to be part of an initiative that can change the landscape of student success.

Institutional leaders can also help by reframing the initiative as part of a larger state or national movement. Leveraging efforts with current initiatives bolsters support for the change and provides the perception that all areas of the institution are moving in the same direction instead of in separate compartmentalized initiatives that present as competition.

Implications for Future Scholarly Research

This study opens the doors for future research, particularly for community colleges with similar demographics. The researcher noted, more often than not, the participants discussed the small town feel of the institution, which perhaps helps to move forth the cultural change ushered in. Abelman et al. (2007) noted that the size of the institution plays a role in the trickling down of the institutional mission's connection with the advising mission. While findings from qualitative studies are not designed to be generalized, research designs can be replicated (Shenton, 2004). Elements of this study could be incorporated in action-based research. McGrath & Tobia (2008) call on institutional decision makers at the administration, faculty, and staff levels to engage in research to determine the elements of their culture and begin to play around with new programs and practices to impact student success. Additionally, Bensimon (2007) asserts that the practitioner is missing in scholarship. Application of the study's design to other community colleges as they implement academic advising initiatives will help to further the larger conversation around student success reform.

Locke & Guglielmino (2006) suggest that, for effective change to occur, the organization's subcultures must be known. Subcultural differences should be factored in and acknowledgment that differences in subcultures can both facilitate and hinder change must occur. This holds true when ushering in an academic advising culture at an institution. The success of the model depends on faculty advisors' receptiveness to the change and their actions to champion it among their peers. However, the influence of the other subgroups cannot be ignored. Schein (2010) notes that meaning is built through sharing perceptions and articulated feelings. While the study shares the thoughts of multiple participants, a greater work needs to be done to incorporate the shared experience of other subgroups such as staff, administrators, and students. Community colleges have close ties to the geographic regions that they serve; the perceptions of industry partners and advisory board members also aids in understanding the holistic impact of organizational culture change.

Previous studies have discussed needed components when implementing advising models (Habley, 1997; King, 2002), but this study differs in offering an additional element: safety is necessary for both the student and the advisor when creating planned change around academic advising. Schein (2010) discuss the need for leadership to create "psychological safety" for the members of the institution by articulating a positive vision, creating formal and informal training, and putting into place structures and systems that are congruent with the direction in which the organization desires to move (p. 305). Future research on perceptions of safety in the advising relationship would create further

knowledge regarding factors associated with student-faculty connections. As institutions continue to implement faculty advising programs and other student success reforms, consideration must be given to the cognition of the participants. Otherwise, their programmatic efforts may yield unfruitful results despite the best intentions.

The total intake model that was employed by the institution lends itself to a discussion about how the organizational model impacts the success of the initiative. Multiple positive effects were seen as a result of the centralized total intake faculty-based model use in this study. The model allowed all students to have the same starting point with the institution, which creates a consistency in the message given to the student. Furthermore, the advising model required collaboration between faculty master advisors, faculty program advisors, and student affairs staff; this also increased the consistency in message (Goomas, 2012).

As advising models vary in design, they also vary in the level of faculty involvement (King, 2002). Attachment theory purports that children develop either secure or insecure attachment styles based upon their early interactions with their caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). Psychological theory on attachment has previously been applied to advising in order to understand how students' attachments to their original caregivers impacts their relationship with their faculty advisor (Kirkland & Siegel, 2013). However, faculty advisors are considerably influential and in some aspects are caregivers; they serve as a role model, mentor, and authority figure that may not exist elsewhere in a student's life (McArthur, 2005). No research on attachment theory was found that

framed the faculty advisor as the caregiver. Although advising models employed by an institution is contingent on institutional size and resources (Habley, 1997), implications for advising models as a conduit for a healthy student attachment to the faculty advisor warrants further study.

Institutional student success reforms, such as academic advising, are powerful tools that can influence the roles and perceptions of member of the institution. Implementing small changes creates a ripple effect that change the culture of an organization. Students develop confidence in the advisor; the advisor develops confidence in the system; and, in turn, the institution develops confidence in promoting academic advising. Once an institution has established a culture of academic advising, the conversation about student success and completion can begin.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee: _____Interviewer: _____Date: _____

Procedure

1. The researcher will introduce the interview procedure.
2. Participant will be provided with a copy of the informed consent form.
3. The participant will be asked if the interview may be audio recorded.
4. If the participant verbally provides his/her consent, the recording will begin.
5. The researcher will ask the interview questions.

Interview Guidelines

Thank you for participating in this study. My name is (Interviewer's name). The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of the impact an academic advising Quality Enhancement Plan had on organizational culture. I am going to ask you a series of questions. Your name will not be reported. There are no wrong answers, so please answer as freely as you can. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You may stop at any time for any reason. Would you still like to proceed?

- If no, the researcher will stop the interview and ask whether the participant is willing to be interviewed at another time.
- *If yes, the researcher will continue the interview.*

Interview Questions:

I want you to think about the academic advising culture at this college prior to the implementation of the new system.

1. What was stressed as important to you about advising then?
    a. What aspects of the process did you feel were most valued?
    b. What was rewarded?
    c. What were you criticized about?
2. What did you perceive the students thought about the process?
    a. Were they satisfied?
    b. What were their concerns?
    c. What do you think they thought worked well?
3. How did that culture of advising impact how you conducted your work as an advisor?
    a. What was your belief about what was important in advising then?
4. What do you think propelled the institution to want to change the process?

Now I want you to think about advising after the implementation of the new system.

5. How is it different?
6. How is it the same?
7. What is now stressed as important to you about advising?
    a. What aspects of the process did you feel are now most valued?
    b. What is rewarded?

    c. What are you criticized about?

8. What did you perceive the students think about the current process?
    a. Are they satisfied?
    b. What are their concerns?
    c. What do you think they think works well?
9. How does the current culture of advising impact how you now conduct your work as an advisor?
    a. What is your belief about what is now important in advising?
10. How would you describe the academic advising culture now?
    a. What are the priorities?
    b. Have the priorities shifted?