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## Motivational Factors Underlying College Students' Decisions to Resume Their Educational Pursuits in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

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Motivational Factors Underlying College Students' Decisions to Resume  
Their Educational Pursuits in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
The Counselor Education Program

by

Theresa M. Phillips

B. S., Jackson State University, 1997  
M. S., Jackson State University, 2000

May, 2007

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my four wonderful parents, Marshall and Beatrice Phillips, and Martha and the late Jacob James, with love and appreciation. Thanks for being that beacon of light that has helped guide and mold me into being the person that I am. I am forever grateful for all of your support and guidance.

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## **ABSTRACT**

College student persistence has been the central focus of higher education for decades. Specifically, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have directed their attention to increasing the retention and graduation rates of African American college students. Postsecondary institutions face greater challenges with college student persistence after a major crisis. This study explored college student persistence at a historically Black university ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Given the devastation caused by the storm, this study examined college students' decisions for continuing their educational pursuits at the historically Black university which is a temporary trailer campus created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The temporary campus has 45 trailers designated for classrooms, science labs, a library, a dining facility, and office space for faculty and staff.

Students enrolled for the 2007 Spring Semester ( $N= 301$ ) were asked to complete the Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP) instrument that was designed specifically for this study. Predictor variables including, sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and having parents or another close relative attend SUNO were used to predict educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status as the reason college students continued their education after Hurricane Katrina. The ANOVA for the regression of educational aspirations revealed that the model predicted an overall significant  $F(7,241) = 4.824, p < .01$  and 10% of the variance in educational aspirations was explained by the model. No significant relationship was found with campus environment. As was the case with educational aspirations, the ANOVA for the regression of financial aid eligibility status revealed that the model predicted an overall

significant  $F(7,241) = 4.309, p < .01$  and 9% of the variance in financial aid eligibility was explained by the model. A multiple regression model resulted in a statistically significant relationship for attending SUNO before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations. Also, results from multiple regression resulted in a statistically significant relationship for sex and financial aid eligibility, along with a relationship for Pell Grant status and financial aid eligibility status.

**Keywords:** Hurricane Katrina, college student persistence, college retention and crisis

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an introduction to the study of college student persistence in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Background information is presented. The rationale for the study and significance of the study are stated. The conceptual framework is also presented. Research questions and hypotheses are stated. Also, definitions of terms relevant to the study are presented in this chapter.

### **Background**

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc on the city of New Orleans, leaving 80% of the city flooded. The city was inundated when several levees, used to protect the city, were breached. Many homes and businesses were completely destroyed as a result of the storm. In addition, colleges and universities suffered tremendous losses. Many students, faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education were displaced for several months. Students, scattered across the nation, were forced to attend other universities as a result of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath. Additionally, many faculty employed at postsecondary institutions were encouraged to continue their work at other institutions away from the city, leaving the higher education system in New Orleans in a state of devastation and disarray.

A decline in student enrollment and a reduction in faculty and staff plagued the higher education system after the storm. With damaged buildings, and displaced students and faculty, postsecondary institutions in New Orleans were faced with a unique situation. Specifically, Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) faced the most unusual circumstances. All 11 buildings on SUNO's main campus were flooded by 4 to 11 feet of water with an estimated cost of \$350 million to repair (Fogg, Hoover, & Mangan, 2006; Hamilton, 2006; Walters, 2005). The

destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina forced the discontinuation of all educational activities and functions on SUNO's main campus.

SUNO is a small, nonresidential institution situated on a 17-acre site within the Pontchartrain Park subdivision, which was the first middle-class African American neighborhood developed in New Orleans (Francis, 2004). SUNO was founded September 4, 1956, by Act 28 of the Extraordinary Session of the Louisiana Legislature (SUNO Catalog, 2004). Further, the university is the only publicly supported historically Black institution in New Orleans. Most of the students attending the institution are nontraditional, first-generation college students, of whom approximately 98% receive federal financial aid. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, SUNO's enrollment, including full-time and part-time students, was approximately 3,600 (Walters, 2005). According to the Louisiana Board of Regents (2006), SUNO's enrollment one year prior to Hurricane Katrina was 3,647, of whom 1,040 were males and 2,607 were females.

Again, Hurricane Katrina caused severe damage to SUNO's main campus, which forced the institution to cancel Fall 2005 Semester classes. SUNO's faculty, staff, administrators, and students were encouraged to seek refuge at their branch campus located approximately 80 miles away in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Many other students and faculty affiliated with the institution relocated to other cities outside of the state of Louisiana. With a reduced population of faculty and students at the branch campus, SUNO, in the spring of 2006, reopened and continued to function as an institution committed to providing educational services. In addition, SUNO administrators and staff contacted their students and provided information on the university's website. The website was a communication link for students to contact the university and provide information on their intent to resume their educational pursuits at the institution.



For years, college student persistence has been a major concern not just for SUNO but for many postsecondary institutions. Today, more students, especially minorities, are enrolling in college than ever before (Seidman, 2005). However, retaining those students until they ultimately earn a baccalaureate degree has been a challenge for many institutions. SUNO itself saw a decline in enrollment for several years prior to Hurricane Katrina. One of the biggest challenges for SUNO is that the university is primarily a commuter institution. Most of the students, as well as faculty, resided in New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina. With a large number of homes destroyed by the storm, SUNO was compelled to provide living accommodations for staff and students after Katrina. SUNO, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), made arrangements with one of the local hotels in New Orleans to secure approximately 400 rooms for staff and students. Because SUNO's campus was submerged in water, the administrators arranged for SUNO to begin the 2006 Spring Semester at its local elementary charter school located in uptown New Orleans. Several months after the storm, college administrators, faculty, and students began their new semester in New Orleans (Fogg, Hoover, & Mangan, 2006).

A temporary trailer campus was constructed for SUNO with assistance from FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Hamilton, 2006). Just one quarter mile north from its main campus, on an undeveloped 38-acre site that SUNO originally intended to utilize for dormitories, a trailer campus was created. The two agencies, FEMA and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, planned and built 45 temporary trailers for classrooms, office space, and labs. The site became known as the SUNO North Campus. Additionally, approximately 400 travel trailers were obtained for temporary housing for students and staff. During the middle of the 2006 Spring

Semester, SUNO relocated from the charter school and the hotel to the temporary trailer site and newly developed North Campus.

Even though SUNO's temporary trailer campus was established, the institution faced greater challenges. SUNO lost many of its traditional academic programs. Due to reduced enrollment and budgetary cuts, 19 academic programs were eliminated from the university offerings (Fogg, Hoover, & Mangan, 2006). Additionally, 40% of the university's faculty members were furloughed (Mangan, 2006). Many of those faculty members were forced to retire as a result of the storm's impact on the institution. Likewise impacted, a large number of students were unable to return to the temporary site and were encouraged to take on-line courses. As such, despite a decline in student enrollment, cuts in academic programs, a reduction in faculty, and the destruction of the main campus, some college students have resumed their educational pursuits at SUNO. This study examined their reasons for continuing their education in the aftermath of such a major crisis.

Postsecondary institutions are being held accountable for their retention and graduation rates; however, what contributes to college student persistence needs to be further explored (Titus, 2004). Student departure from higher education is a major phenomenon that has many implications for students as well as colleges and universities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). College student persistence is one of the most salient issues in higher education. More students leave their postsecondary institution before earning a college degree than students who remain at their institution (Tinto, 1993). There are many variables affecting college student persistence. Some of those variables include educational aspirations, college environment, college grade point average, on-campus housing, and financial aid eligibility status. Several researchers (e.g., Astin, 1982; Fleming, Howard, Perkins, & Pesta, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; St. John,

Paulsen, & Carter, 2005) have found that the aforementioned variables impact persistence. For example, Astin found that minority students were more likely to persist toward degree completion when they possessed high levels of educational aspirations. In a study relating to the college environment variable, Fleming et al. found that students are more likely to earn a college degree when they are comfortable with the academic and social systems of the college environment.

Grade point average is very significant because grades determine the academic status of the student. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), students' grades are responsible for the largest contribution to college student persistence and degree completion. In a study related to on-campus housing, Astin (1982) found that minorities living away from their homes while attending college is positively related to college student persistence. In a recent study on financial aid availability, St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005) found that minority students who chose to attend their university because of the financial aid availability were more likely to persist toward degree completion than students who did not choose financial aid availability as their reason for attendance.

College student persistence has become the focus of attention and research for many postsecondary institutions. Although countless studies have examined college retention, little extant research has examined college student persistence in the aftermath of a major crisis. As a result, the study focused on college student persistence at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

### **Rationale for the Study**

To further examine college student persistence, this study explored college students' decisions to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This study

assessed motivational factors underlying students' decisions to continue their postsecondary education at one particular university. The university has relocated to a temporary trailer site as a result of the damage caused by the storm. Many of the students attending the university also experienced losses of property, employment, family, and friends. However, suffering losses is common for many of these students. Overcoming challenges and adverse conditions are usual among African Americans (Miller, 1999). Many of them have experienced other crises within their environment. Resilience has played a significant role in assisting many of them to have the strength to recover and cope with various hardships. Hurricane Katrina was a major hardship that denied students the opportunity to continue their educational pursuits immediately after the storm. However, there were many students who returned one year after the university reopened from temporary closure due to a crisis. Therefore, there was a need to explore college students' reasons for continuing their education after Hurricane Katrina.

### **Significance of the Study**

College student persistence has captured the attention of many researchers and university officials because of its impact on many variables in higher education. Attrition results in a major loss of resources for students, the community, and postsecondary institutions that spend to increase their retention and graduation rates (Seidman, 2005). Therefore, when students choose not to continue their education, the outcome tends to have an effect on society as a whole. This study was important in expanding the literature because it relates to college student persistence in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, this study increases knowledge and awareness of the reasons why college students continue their education after experiencing one of the worst crises in United States history. Having a precise understanding of why college students continue

to persist after a tragedy provides college administrators with information to help them promote retention at their respective institutions.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The most appropriate conceptual framework for the study of college student persistence is the Theory of Individual Departure derived from the work of Tinto (1993). As cited in Tinto's study of college student persistence, his model was based on the work of Durkheim (1951) and Spady (1970). In Durkheim's Theory of Suicide, egotistical suicide was seen as failure to become integrated socially and intellectually into society. Tinto viewed this concept as parallel to college students' departure caused by inadequate intellectual and social integration in postsecondary institutions. Tinto's Theory of Individual Departure, also referred to as the Student Integration Model, focuses on student integration into academic and social systems of higher education. Postsecondary institutions are composed of faculty, staff, and student communities as well as academic and social systems (Tinto). Academic and social systems are equally important in students' decisions to persist or withdraw from the institution. In fact, it is imperative that college students are fully integrated into their postsecondary institutions. Integration is defined as the degree to which a student shares common attitudes with peers and faculty at an institution and follows the requirements for membership at the institution to which the student belongs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

In Tinto's longitudinal and interactional model, students' decisions to persist or withdraw occur within the institution over time. The model also explains how students' background characteristics and their interactions with the academic and social systems of the institution impact college student persistence. Students enter college with various background characteristics and with the intention of earning a college degree. According to Tinto, some of

those characteristics include socioeconomic status, skills, financial resources, motivations, and high school grade point averages. The model hypothesized that both pre-entry characteristics and characteristics formulated while at the institution influence students' decisions to remain in college. The model concludes that student background traits have an impact on college student persistence as well as on student academic performance.

According to Tinto (1993), students are more likely to persist when they possess a higher degree of social and intellectual integration into the academic and social systems of the institution. He referred to academics as the formal education of students, and social system as the frequent interactions among students, faculty, and staff. Social integration refers to the quality of the students' interaction with the social system of the university environment (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Tinto emphasized that students can become fully integrated into the social system of the institution but withdraw for failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress. Conversely, students may become incorporated into the academic system of the institution but leave the institution due to a lack of social integration (Tinto). Additionally, the model hypothesizes that weak academic and social systems may influence college students' decisions to withdraw from the institution.

Academic integration and social integration influence intention and commitment. The intentions and commitments are consistently modified through the interactions between the student and the members of the academic and social systems of the university (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Tinto (1993) postulated that the student's intent reflects educational aspirations and expectations. He also concluded that committed students utilize their energies and resources to accomplish their goal of earning a college degree. When students' experiences with the academic and social systems of the institution are pleasant, then student integration and

college student persistence are more likely to occur (Pascarella & Terenzini). On the contrary, negative encounters can subsequently lead to withdrawal from the academic and social systems of the institution.

The Student Integration Model indicates that there must be a match between the student and university (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). College student persistence is more likely to occur if there is a match between the student and institution. Cabrera et al. found that academic and social integration as well as goal and institutional commitments had an effect on college student persistence. The model also suggests that external forces play a significant role in what occurs within the institution (Tinto, 1993). Tinto implied that certain external forces such as employment and family support play a role in the students' decisions to resume their educational pursuits. Supportive external forces may also encourage academic and social integration into the college environment. For students to be fully integrated into the college environment, separation from the student's past environment must occur (Tinto). Tinto stated, "For virtually all students, separation from the past is at least somewhat isolating and stressful, the pains of parting at least temporarily disorienting" (p. 96). However, Tinto argued that dissociation does not need to occur for students attending commuter institutions. Students attending commuter institutions may avoid the stress of separating from their past because their social and intellectual environments are weaker than those of students attending residential institutions (Tinto). Students attending non-residential institutions are less exposed to social interactions because they do not reside on campus. Many students leave campus after completing their classes, leaving little time for social interactions.

The academic and social progress of college students is tantamount to the institution's success (Fleming, Howard, Perkins, & Pesta, 2005). The success of the institution depends heavily on

high retention and graduation rates. Therefore, postsecondary institutions should ensure that retention programs are in existence and college student persistence is promoted. Many colleges and universities offer social and institutional programs to enhance their retention rates. For example, Federal TRIO Programs such as Student Support Services and Ronald E. McNair have been implemented specifically for first-generation and low-income college students. These programs seek to enhance the persistence and graduation rates of first-generation and low-income college students at postsecondary institutions. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), Student Support Services is the best example and most well-known comprehensive program that provides services to increase retention rates. In addition to increasing persistence rates, the aforementioned programs foster academic and social integration in higher education.

Overall, college student persistence can be understood as a complex process. The Student Integration Model can be used as a basis for assisting colleges and universities with enhancing their retention and graduation rates. “It is achievable within the confines of existing institutional resources” (Tinto, p. 212). The model reveals that persistence is related to the match between a student’s academic ability and motivation and the university’s academic and social characteristics (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). The Student Integration Model focuses on goal commitment and institutional commitment. The more robust is a student’s goal of completing college and commitment to the institution, the more likely the college student will persist (Cabrera et al.).

### **Research Questions**

There were three research questions addressed in this study:

1. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or



- another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of educational aspirations for returning students after Hurricane Katrina?
2. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of campus environment as the reason for returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina?
  3. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of financial aid eligibility status as the reason college students continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina?

### **Research Hypotheses**

To examine the aforesaid research questions, the following seven research hypotheses were posed:

1. There is a significant relationship between students' sex and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
2. There is a significant relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
3. There is a significant relationship between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
4. There is a significant relationship between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

5. There is a significant relationship between students' college grade point average and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
6. There is a significant relationship between students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
7. There is a significant relationship between students' parents or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

### **Definitions of Terms**

#### *Academic System*

Academic system refers to faculty and staff in higher education whose primary responsibility is the education of students (Tinto, 1993). The system also includes classrooms and laboratories in higher education.

#### *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)*

Black institutions established before 1964 with a mission to educate African Americans. HBCUs represent 3% of America's 4,084 postsecondary institutions and enroll 14% of African Americans students (<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whbcu/edlite-index.html>).

#### *Integration*

The degree to which an individual shares common attitudes with peers and faculty in college and follows the requirements for membership at the college to which the individual belongs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

#### *Non-traditional College Student*

A student attending college for the first time at the age of 25 or older, who may be employed with dependents, and is considered financially independent.

### *Persistence/Retention*

Persistence and retention will be used interchangeably in this study. For the purpose of this study, persistence is defined as college students who have continued their educational pursuits after Hurricane Katrina.

### *Resilience*

The ability to recover or bounce back after a traumatic experience (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005; Jenkins, 2005; Miller, 1999).

### *Social System*

The social system refers to interactions among students, faculty and staff in higher education. These interactions occur in dormitories, hallways, and other places outside the academic domain of the institution (Tinto, 1993).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature and research that is related to the study. The chapter is organized into five primary sections that build a framework for understanding why college students have continued their educational pursuits at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In the first section, the history and current status of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are examined. The differences between private and public historically Black institutions are addressed. This study focused on college student persistence at a public historically Black university (SUNO); therefore, the history and development of that institution also is addressed. Retention variables affecting college student persistence are explored in section two. In the third section, the resilience of African Americans is described. Coping with crisis situations is examined in the fourth section. A summary of the literature is presented in the final section.

#### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are institutions created before 1964, whose primary mission is to provide education for African Americans. Since their creation, HBCUs have played a significant role in educating a very large number of African Americans and other ethnic groups. The unique history and commitment of HBCUs to African Americans have been ongoing for decades. Additionally, HBCUs have made significant contributions to American society since their beginnings (Redd, 1998). Since the development of HBCUs in the early 1800s, low-income and academically disadvantaged Blacks have been afforded the educational opportunity needed to be productive citizens. According to Bennett and Xie (2003), HBCUs were instrumental in

producing the first large group of Black professionals in the United States, educating preachers and others who became leaders in the battle against racial inequality. During times of racial inequality, HBCUs were the driving force for many African Americans to continue their post-secondary education. Despite the challenges African Americans have faced in the past, many of them have been very successful as a result of their educational experiences at HBCUs.

African Americans generally were restricted from attending post-secondary institutions prior to the Civil War. Therefore, most HBCUs were created as a result of racism (Evans, 2002). Racism played a significant role in prohibiting African Americans from pursuing any kind of education. Several HBCUs, with a focus on religious education, were established by White philanthropists (Redd, 1998). The institutions were Cheyney State University in 1837, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania in 1854, and Wilberforce University in 1856. These institutions made it permissible for African Americans to enroll and pursue higher education.

After the Civil War, more HBCUs were created for African Americans and to accommodate the newly freed slaves (Redd, 1998). Evans (2002) asserted that most HBCUs were created in the highly populated Black areas of the United States such as the Southeast, Southwest, and the Northeast. With the sponsorship of Freedmen's Bureau, Black churches, and White philanthropists, most HBCUs were established in the southern states (Redd). There was a great need for HBCUs in the South and other areas where discrimination and segregation against Blacks were prevalent. Also, the South was considered the poorest geographical region in the country, with high levels of poverty and low levels of educational attainment (Mykerezi & Mills, 2004).

By the 1900s, more than half of the nation's African American teachers were educated at HBCUs (Redd, 1998). Bennett and Xie (2003) asserted that HBCUs were active in the process

of training Black teachers and educating masses of newly freed slaves. During the early 1900s, HBCUs began expanding their course offerings and growing significantly. There were 77 HBCUs with a combined enrollment of approximately 14,000 students by 1927 (Redd). According to Redd, by the end of World War II, one-third of the enrollment at HBCUs was African American veterans.

Significant progress in post-secondary education was made for African Americans when the decision of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)* ended segregation in public education. This court decision authorized institutions other than HBCUs to open their doors to African Americans. Despite this groundbreaking decision, HBCUs have continued to play a major role in educating African Americans. Today, there are 103 HBCUs in the United States. Of that number, 51 are public institutions and 52 are private. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), these institutions represent only 3% of all 4,084 institutions of higher education in the nation.

Since their humble beginnings, HBCUs have educated and provided many African Americans with the tools needed to succeed professionally in mainstream America. African Americans and others have been granted the opportunity to pursue degrees in various fields at these institutions. According to Brown and Davis (2001), HBCUs have made critical gains in ensuring that an increasing number of African Americans will be capable of serving as leaders in society. Many African Americans view HBCUs as institutions that possess nurturing and supportive environments. According to Redd (1998), HBCUs consist of environments that are more supportive of African Americans than the environments of institutions that are not HBCUs. Support systems are an integral component of HBCUs that benefit African American students as well as other minority groups (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2004). Students tend to feel

comfortable and less alienated as a result of the social environments at HBCUs (Bennett & Xie, 2003).

In essence, HBCUs are culturally and contextually different from other institutions. The historical orientation of HBCUs toward offering educational opportunities for African American students is different from other four-year institutions (Bennett & Xie, 2003). According to Bennett and Xie, HBCUs not only admit and nurture African American students who might not be permitted to attend other universities; HBCUs also reinforce their graduation, with graduation rates higher than those for African American students at predominantly White universities. There is a different campus climate at HBCUs. Minority students are encouraged to pursue advanced degrees and set higher goals as a result of the existence of supportive professors on HBCU campuses (Stahl, 2005).

Although HBCUs have been demonstrated to provide excellent educational opportunities for African Americans and other ethnic groups, they face serious challenges. Many institutions are suffering financially. According to Evans (2002), HBCUs have always experienced problems with securing sufficient funding and they have been confronted with disparities in state and federal funding. Many HBCUs have experienced declines in enrollment and threats of closure or merger with predominantly White institutions. Some HBCUs have struggled to attract highly trained and competent faculty scholars. According to Evans, maintaining faculty salaries equivalent to those at predominantly White institutions has been a major problem for HBCUs. Also, private HBCUs have endowments and tuition rates that are lower than predominantly White institutions that are comparable in size and mission (Nettles, Wagener, Millett, & Killenbeck, 1999). A lack of funding from both the state and federal levels has crippled many HBCUs.

Despite reduced enrollments, limited budgets, and other challenges, HBCUs continue to succeed in graduating more teachers, preachers, lawyers, doctors, journalists, engineers, social workers, and scholars (Hawkins, 2004). The graduation rates of students involved in sports at HBCUs have surpassed expectations (Evans, 2002). The ability of HBCUs to retain and graduate African American students is remarkable considering the fact that African Americans possess higher risk factors that impede graduation as compared to their White counterparts (Bennett & Xie, 2003). In a study conducted for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Provasnik and Shafer (2004), found that 289,985 students were enrolled in 2001 at HBCUs. Of that number, 112,871 were men and 177,111 were women. Additionally, Provasnik and Shafer reported 28,846 bachelor degrees were conferred by HBCUs in 2001-2002. Of that number, 87.1% were awarded to African American students.

#### *Private and Public HBCUs*

There are two types of Black institutions, private and public, that are educating African Americans. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), there are 40 four-year public institutions, 11 two-year public institutions, 49 four-year private institutions, and 3 two-year private institutions. Private and public institutions possess unique mission and vision statements. As mentioned earlier, HBCUs foster climates that are supportive and conducive to learning for many African Americans. Although private and public institutions share the purpose of educating African American students, there are significant differences between the two types of institutions. One of the main differences between private and public HBCUs is funding. In comparison to public HBCUs, private institutions have different levels and sources of funding (Lamb, 1999). Private institutions receive funding from several entities such as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), churches, and the Federal Government. Private institutions are



considered nonprofit institutions and do not receive any state funding. Student enrollment, tuition cost, and retention and progression are stable sources of revenue for private HBCUs (Nettles, Wagener, Millett, & Killenbeck, 1999). Several researchers (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993) postulated that private institutions have higher rates of college student persistence and degree completion than public institutions. Many private institutions rely heavily on support from their alumni (Nettles et al.). Private HBCUs have tuition costs that are much higher than public HBCUs. Many students attending private HBCUs receive federal financial aid to assist them with tuition and fees. Nettles et al. found that more than 98% of the students attending private HBCUs receive need-based federal financial aid. Additionally, over one-third of the students who come from families with a total annual income of less than \$25,000 are enrolled in UNCF institutions (Nettles et al.). Most private institutions are residential and students reside on or in close proximity to the institution instead of commuting (Laanan, 2003). According to Laanan, private institutions are likely to promote college student persistence and high graduation rates as a result of their residential nature.

Public HBCUs are quite different from private HBCUs. In 1862, the National Land-Grant Colleges Act established land and funding for public institutions (Redd, 1998). Many Whites benefited from the National Land-Grant Colleges Act of 1862 and enrolled in public universities. Public HBCUs began to expand when the Second Morrill Act in 1890 made provisions for African Americans. The agricultural, mechanical, and industrial training of African American students was the main focus of HBCUs under the Second Morrill Act (Lamb, 1999). Also, dual segregated higher education systems were established for Whites and African American students (Redd). According to Redd, the dual segregated higher education systems mandated that funding used to institute and sustain White institutions had to be equivalent to Black institutions. As a

result, HBCUs benefited from the dual segregated higher education systems. Public HBCUs receive state funding, federal funding, and donations from certain businesses. In comparison to private institutions, public institutions tend to be under-funded. Many public HBCUs have struggled financially and suffered declines in enrollment, far more than private institutions. Despite declining enrollments, a higher percentage of commuting students tend to enroll at public institutions (Laanan, 2003). The tuition cost at public institutions is likely to be lower than at private institutions (Laanan).

### ***Southern University at New Orleans***

Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) is a four-year historically Black commuter institution. The university was founded September 4, 1956, by Act 28 of the Extraordinary Session of the Louisiana Legislature (SUNO Catalog, 2004). SUNO was founded after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which was a major milestone for African Americans. SUNO was established during the desegregation period which started in 1954 and ended in 1975 (Francis, 2004). According to Francis, many African Americans were outraged about the establishment of SUNO. Francis, in her study of the history and development of SUNO, indicated that African Americans believed that SUNO's founding was another attempt to prohibit them from attending the predominantly White Louisiana State University in New Orleans (LSUNO). African Americans had a legitimate concern that SUNO's creation would cause higher education to revert to the "separate but equal" era, because they believed that the institution was established in an effort to exclude many of them from attending the predominantly White institution located a mile away.

On September 21, 1959, the university opened its doors for enrollment on a 17-acre site. SUNO was built on the outer limits of Pontchartrain Park, which was the first African American

subdivision in New Orleans. During the initial operation of the university, there were only one building, 15 faculty members, and 158 college freshmen (SUNO Catalog, 2004). SUNO students were afforded the opportunity to take courses in four academic disciplines: humanities, science, social science, and commerce. The university was under the direct supervision of the Louisiana State Board of Education during the early years of operation. Four years after SUNO opened its doors for enrollment, the first graduation ceremony occurred in May, 1963, with 15 graduates.

In the early 1960s, two significant events affected the direction of the university. First, Amendment 26 was established which stipulated that SUNO should remain a branch unit of Southern University Agriculture and Mechanical College (SUNO Catalog, 2004). Second, a lawsuit filed by a White high school teacher resulted in the university opening its doors to all individuals regardless of race, sex, color, or creed (SUNO Catalog). The first significant event prohibited SUNO from approaching a status of autonomy, and the second event allowed for diversity to exist at the university.

By 1975, SUNO's supervision was transferred to the Board of Supervisors of Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College from the Louisiana State Board of Education (SUNO Catalog, 2004). SUNO became part of the Southern University System which is the only HBCU system in the nation. Today, there are five campuses under the auspices of the Southern University System. Those campuses are: Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), Southern University in Shreveport (SUSLA), Southern University in Baton Rouge (SUBR), Southern University Law Center (SULC), and Southern University Agriculture Research and Extension Center (SUAREC).

Since its creation, SUNO has experienced many public insults and much criticism. Lack of longevity in leadership has been one of the biggest problems at the university (Hawkins, 2004). The university chancellor's position has been a revolving door for the past several years. The Board of Supervisors has appointed four different chancellors within the last five years at SUNO. Additionally, cuts in academic programs, a decline in student enrollment, and low graduation rates have affected SUNO's reputation. SUNO has been faced with threats of closure or merger with the University of New Orleans, formally known as Louisiana State University in New Orleans (LSUNO), which is a predominantly White institution. For years, SUNO has fought untiringly to remain open and justify its existence and significance to the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana. Fleming (1984) stated that historically Black colleges and universities constantly will be forced to provide self-justification because separate institutions are state supported. Today, SUNO is the only state-supported historically Black institution in New Orleans. It is one of two universities in the state of Louisiana that operate with an open admissions policy. Despite these challenges, SUNO has remained open for nearly 50 years.

### **Variables Affecting College Student Persistence**

Attention to college student persistence and attrition has become vital in post-secondary education and is especially critical with African American students (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985). College student retention has been viewed as one of the most salient issues in higher education, and nationwide, higher education institutions are focusing on increasing student retention (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). At the start of the twenty-first century, graduation rates and college student persistence became an increasingly relevant issue (Titus, 2006). That students persist from one semester to the next and continue their education through graduation is very important for several reasons. First, more students leave college before completing their degrees

than remain in college (Tinto, 1993). Second, college student persistence affects enrollment, university budgets, graduation rates, and the college student. According to DeBerard, Spielmans, and Julka (2004), colleges and universities lose thousands of dollars in tuition, fees, and contributions when students withdraw before degree completion. Many variables can affect whether or not a student will persist toward graduation. In this study, several variables were explored: educational aspirations, campus environment, students' grade point average, students' housing status, and students' financial aid eligibility status. The aforementioned variables were chosen for this study because past research has shown that the variables have a significant impact on college student persistence (Astin, 1982; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Smith & Allen, 1984; St. John, Paulsen, & Carter, 2005; Thomas, 1981; Tinto, 1993).

### *Educational Aspirations*

Where students begin their post-secondary education is related to their educational aspirations and persistence, and subsequently their educational attainment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Bean and Metzner (1985), educational aspirations are identified as the maximum level of college education that a student seeks to obtain, traditionally determined by the highest degree sought. Allen (1999) viewed students' educational aspirations or desire to complete college as a non-cognitive dimension of college student persistence. Allen also postulated that, other than grade-point average, educational aspirations for minority students have the most significant effect on college student persistence. When students are motivated about attending college, they tend to perform better. Students believe that they will and can succeed because they aspire to do so. Sidle and Reynolds (1999) found that students who chose to enroll in a freshman-year experience course had a tendency to be more motivated to succeed. Students who participated in the freshman-year experience course persisted at a significantly higher rate than

students who chose not to participate in the course. Sidle and Reynolds added that the freshman-year experience course offered orientation activities for students to learn more about their institution and faculty expectations. The course also provided students with the opportunity to become more acquainted with their peers and faculty. Using a sample of 431 first-time students enrolled at a four-year public university, Sidle and Reynolds conducted multiple quantitative analyses to determine second year persistence and completion rate of the first academic year. Their study, of first-year students only, differs from this study; this study explored college student persistence for all grade levels.

In their nexus model, St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005) used a logistic regression analysis to examine the impact of student background, college choice, college experience, financial assistance, and current aspirations on college student persistence. They tested 16 variables related to student background, a set of dichotomous variables, college experience variables, educational aspiration variables, and financial aid variables. They found that probability of college student persistence increases when students aspire to finish some college. According to St. John et al., a large percentage of African Americans aspired to earn a master's degree, even though they had lower college grade point averages than their White counterparts. St. John et al. used data sets from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey of 1987 in their study, which also differs from this study. This study utilized a multiple regression model to explore college student persistence.

Several researchers (Astin, 1982; Smith & Allen, 1984; Tinto, 1993) have found educational aspirations to have an impact on college student persistence. Astin focused on minorities gaining educational access, their choice of institutions, fields of study, degree attainments, and factors influencing their educational development. In this longitudinal study of minority college

students, Astin found that African American students who enter college with high aspirations or a desire to attend graduate school have the best chance of persisting and earning a college degree. These students bring their hopes of earning a baccalaureate degree with them when they enter college. In other words, they formulate goals and make a commitment to obtain those goals.

In a national study of Black college students ( $n = 695$ ), Smith and Allen (1984) postulated that Black students who resided on campus and received financial aid also possessed high educational aspirations. Smith and Allen tested predominant variables, which consist of variables with the most significant effect on educational aspirations such as gender and size of the student's university. They found that males were more likely to have high aspirations and better grades than females. Additionally, Black students attending larger universities were more likely to have good grades along with their high aspirations (Smith & Allen). In a later study, Tinto (1993) found that students were more likely to complete college when they possessed higher educational goals. He also hypothesized that the first-year experience influences college student persistence. Tinto conducted a study on the first year of college because more students leave college during their freshman year. He posited that high attrition rates occur prior to students beginning their second year at the institution. Tinto also asserted that a very large number of students withdraw from their institutions within their first year. He found that the attrition rate was higher at four-year public institutions than at private institutions for first year college students. He discovered that attrition was lower for first time college students at private two-year institutions as compared to public two-year institutions.

Nettles, Theony, and Gosman (1986) found minorities' and non-minorities' educational aspirations toward a college degree affected their academic performance. College students who

possessed a desire to complete college were more likely to persist toward degree completion.

Nettles et al. hypothesized that improvements in African American students' high-school grade point averages and test scores lead to higher college grade point averages. They concluded that students with strong study habits earn higher grades and possess higher rates of college student persistence.

Allen (1992) posited that students with high levels of educational goals are more likely to earn a college degree. Using 16 postsecondary institutions, data were analyzed from the National Study on Black College Students with findings based on 2,500 African American college students. He investigated relationships between the student outcomes of several variables including educational goals and the college environment. Allen emphasized that African American students with high grade point averages also had high educational aspirations. Allen also found that academic achievement was the highest for students who had high educational aspirations. He concluded that minorities with high educational aspirations were more likely to possess high self-confidence and establish a more positive relationship with faculty.

Using secondary data collection, Cardoza (1991) conducted a study of 1,252 Hispanic women. The data were from the first-year follow-up of the 1982 High School and Beyond (HS&B) longitudinal survey. The study consisted of the cohorts from 1980 and 1982 high school seniors and sophomores in the United States. She postulated that educational attainment is a significant factor for minority women to gain socioeconomic mobility and independence. She found that educational aspiration was the most significant predictor of attendance and college student persistence in minority women. Cardoza also found that minority women whose mother earned a college degree were more likely to remain in college until they earn a degree.



Using quantitative and qualitative analyses, Mason (1998) found several variables including educational goals to have an affect on college student persistence. Mason conducted his study at a non-residential community college where 97% of the population of students were African Americans. The study examined background variables, academic variables, and environmental variables affecting college student persistence for African American males. According to Mason, the more precise African American college students are about what they desire to be or would like to accomplish, the more likely they are to persist through college.

Students' educational aspirations are highly related to their self-efficacy. Lynch (2006) defined self-efficacy as a student's ability to complete a task and degree of confidence in completing the task. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to predict college grades and self-efficacy of 501 college freshmen and upper class undergraduates. Lynch found that self-efficacy was a strong predictor of academic performance for college students. He concluded that self-efficacy and goal orientation predicted grades for college freshmen and upper class undergraduates' grades were associated with effort and self-efficacy. Leppel (2005) emphasized that students are less likely to persist when they possess a low academic self-efficacy. She concluded that students' attitudes of self-efficacy in their academic ability are changed after students enter college. Students tend to modify their attitudes toward their academic ability throughout their college experience. This may be a result of their academic performance as well as the overall college experience.

### *Campus Environment*

The campus environment plays an important role in college student persistence. Tinto (1993) suggested that the involvement of colleges and universities in the social and intellectual development of their students might be key to college student persistence. According to Leppel

(2005), students are more likely to persist toward degree completion when they are socially and intellectually integrated into the institution. Students enter college with a variety of background traits such as academic aptitude, socioeconomic status, skills, abilities, and high school experiences which may lead to a commitment to persist toward graduation and a commitment to the university (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). The commitment of students to the university increases their chances of remaining until degree completion. When the student's characteristics or traits interact with the campus environment, the student's college experience is created (Leppel). Students' background traits and commitments are relevant not only to how students will perform but also to how they will be integrated into the university's academic and social systems (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Pascarella and Terenzini conducted a longitudinal study of 763 college freshmen, using several statistical procedures including factor analysis, multivariate analysis of covariance, and discriminant analysis. They hypothesized that the student's informal contact with faculty increases the likelihood of college student persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini measured student-faculty relationships using two scales-the interactions with faculty and the faculty concern for student development. They determined that students who persisted and integrated into the institution's social system scored one standard deviation higher on both scales than students who did not persist.

Limited or unpleasant interactions with academic and social systems impede integration and diminish the likelihood of college student persistence (Napoli & Wortman, 1998). Students are more likely to withdraw from the institution when they encounter academic or social problems that seem impossible to resolve. Academic problems often promote withdrawal from the institution through academic probation or suspension. Students who do not meet the academic requirements to remain in their particular academic major or at the institution may be forced to

leave the institution. Similarly, students who fail to meet the demands of interaction with their peers and faculty may also be more inclined to withdraw from the university. These students may experience alienation which often leads to departure from the institution.

The institution's type, size, and location play a significant role in shaping the campus environment through such factors as administration, closeness of residences to campus, and the overall feel of the university (Berger & Milem, 1999; Fleming, Howard, Perkins, & Pesta, 2005). Titus (2004) postulated that persistence is related to institutional characteristics such as size of the institution and selectivity. He used a hierarchical generalized linear model to examine the influence of institutional context on college student persistence. Titus conducted a longitudinal study of 5,151 first time students at 384 four-year institutions using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) survey. He found that the probability of college student persistence increases when there is an increase in college grade point average. Additionally, students living on campus had an increase in persistence compared to their counterparts. Titus' study also revealed an increase in persistence when student interaction increased. Titus concluded that a commitment to the institution increases the chances of college student persistence.

Smith and Allen (1984) found that the size of the institution had an effect on African American students' grades and educational aspirations. High achieving African American students who also possessed high educational aspirations were found to be more comfortable on campus. The quality of the institution plays a significant role in making students feel more comfortable. Smith and Allen postulated that high achieving African Americans at larger institutions become compelled to compete with other students of their caliber. For some African American students, it is about proving to others and themselves that they can achieve at a large

prestigious institution. Also, the size of the institution affects student involvement with faculty and peers, which promotes persistence, degree attainment, and enrollment in graduate school (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When exposed to positive interactions with faculty and peers, students tend to perform better and persist toward degree completion. The students form study groups with their peers for academic enhancement. Additionally, students' interactions with faculty allow the faculty to serve as an academic resource for students.

College and universities must offer a variety of degree programs, maintain a campus-friendly environment, and support the academic and campus life of their students. Students are more likely to persist through graduation when they feel at ease with the academic and social transition to the collegiate environment (Fleming et al., 2005). Students who are integrated into the college environment are less likely to leave the institution (Baker & Velez, 2000). Baker and Velez asserted that a significant way for students to become integrated into the college environment is through formal and informal social systems. The informal interactions with the faculty and staff, coupled with the formal interactions of extracurricular activities, promote social integration. In turn, social integration should foster a greater intellectual integration into the academic system of the institution. According to Berger and Milem (1999), institutional and student characteristics influence college student persistence. Berger and Milem conducted a longitudinal study using a subsample of 387 first-time freshmen at a highly selective private institution. Data were collected during three different periods of the study from the Student Information Form (SIF), Early Collegiate Experience Survey (ECES), and the Freshman Year Survey (FYS). Berger and Milem postulated that faculty involvement was a positive predictor of academic integration for college students. They found that peer involvement had a statistically significant effect on institutional commitment and academic and social integration. Berger and Milem also posited

that students who perceived a supportive peer environment were more likely to be academically and socially integrated into the institution. In an earlier study, Paulsen and St. John (1997) found that persistence is highly related to the ongoing behavior and perception of students and aspects of the campus environment. They examined the effects of college choice variables and financial variables on college student persistence in a study from the 1987 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

### *Grade Point Average*

Academic failure is a result of over 15% of all institutional departures (Tinto, 1993). The single and best predictor of college student persistence, degree attainment, and graduate school enrollment may be college grade point average (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students earning poor grades may be more likely to withdraw from the institution (Bean & Metzner, 1985). These students may view their poor grades as a measure of their ability to adjust to the college environment. Receiving failing grades, from their perspective, means not being able to adjust to college. Therefore, many withdraw with the mindset that “college just isn’t for them.”

Pascarella and Terenzini have noted that grade performance as it relates to persistence and degree completion has received more attention than any other variable. Pascarella and Terenzini asserted that grade point averages are critical, emphasizing that grades affect continued student enrollment, admissions into academic majors with enrollment caps, degree completion, and admission into graduate and professional institutions.

College grades also may have an effect on students’ emotional well-being and self-esteem. If students place significant value on grades received, then poor grades will have a negative effect on their confidence level. As a result, the student may be more inclined to withdraw from the university. Bean (1990) suggested that, in addition to the student’s academic background,

campus involvement, and institutional commitment, college academic performance may play a significant role in college student persistence. In a three-year longitudinal study, Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrum, Clifton, and Chipperfield (2005) found that students with higher cumulative grade point averages were more likely to persist than their counterparts. Perry et al. used a sample size of 524 to determine if students who were more concerned about failure possess higher grade point averages. Their study revealed that students who were less concerned about academic failure were more likely to have lower cumulative grade point averages than their counterparts. Perry et al. also found that students who were more concerned about academic failure withdrew from fewer courses than students who were not concerned about failing academically. They concluded that students who were concerned about academic failure worked harder, received better grades and were less likely to withdraw from the institution.

#### *Campus Housing Status*

Living in campus housing encourages interaction with peers and faculty, promotes involvement with campus activities, and increases college student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggested that living on campus rather than commuting positively influences persistence as a result of the peer interactions gained from living in campus housing. Students are able to interact more with their peers when residing on campus.

Velez (1985) found that living on campus encourages studying and increases achievement of goals. He also found that student housing status has a significant effect on students' probability of finishing college. Velez concluded that students living on campus are more integrated into the college environment. In a later study, Giles-Gee (1989) used a multi-method approach with 128 African American college freshmen. She found that students who resided on campus performed

better academically than commuter students. Students in the study participated in a comprehensive advising program, received study skills training, and attended a series of workshops.

Tinto (1993) indicated that reasons for students' departures at commuter colleges are not the same as for students at residential institutions. Smith and Allen (1984) emphasized that campus housing and receiving financial aid were associated with minority students earning good grades and having high educational aspirations. Astin (1984) concurred that students living on campus have an increased chance of persisting and possess high aspirations of earning a graduate or professional degree. Students living on campus may also express a higher degree of satisfaction than students not residing in campus housing. Astin also found that living on campus rather than at home promoted college student persistence in minority students. Students become more involved with campus life when they live in campus housing which may lead, in turn, to degree completion.

#### *Financial Aid Eligibility Status*

Tuition and financial support offered by the institution are likely to influence a student's decision to attend an institution (Laanan, 2003). Financial problems may directly influence departure from the institution. Changes in a student's financial situation can lead to institutional departure (Tinto, 1993). Hensley and Kinser (2001) conducted a qualitative study using 74 adult learners enrolled in a required student success course. Students from three sections of the success course who had attended more than one institution, and who had withdrawn from their institution for at least one semester since their initial enrollment, were used in the study. After eliminating 15% of the adult learners who had continuous enrollment, the remaining 63 participants in the study indicated that financial difficulties were the reason they chose not to

continue their education. In an earlier study, Astin (1982) found that financial support such as scholarships or grants had a positive influence on college student persistence. He conducted a longitudinal study on minority college students. According to Tinto, researchers agree that financial aid in the form of work-study and grants is more effective in enhancing persistence than are loans and other forms of financial aid.

Colleges and universities have some responsibility for securing sufficient funding for their students. Thomas (1981) found that the financial aid status of the institution was the most crucial factor in college student persistence. Thomas concluded that the ability of historically Black colleges and universities to graduate and retain African Americans may depend significantly on obtaining more state and federal financial assistance. College student persistence is enhanced when students feel secure about having enough finances to pay for college (Sherman, Giles, & Williams-Green, 1994). Rice and Alford (1989) conducted a quantitative study on African American undergraduate students at a large, predominantly White institution. According to Rice and Alford, African American college students have a tendency to withdraw from school due to financial and personal problems rather than for social or academic problems. Students who withdrew for financial reasons indicated that they did not have the finances to pay for college and needed employment as the reasons for withdrawing from the institution. Tinto (1982) found that the financial needs of students have a significant impact on college student persistence. He posited that this impact is greater for economically disadvantaged college students. Boyer (2005) concurred that students receiving financial support from the institution or their parents were more likely to persist. Boyer conducted a logistic regression study, using background variables, college experience variables, and type of financial



aid variables of 286 first-time freshmen. It was concluded that students who received financial assistance from the institution were more likely to persist.

According to Paulsen and St. John (2002), 64% of low-income college students chose a university because of the low tuition cost, student financial aid, or both. They also found that the financial aid amount for low-income students is usually greater than for other student populations. Paulsen and St. John concluded that financial aid availability had a positive effect on college student persistence. Students not receiving financial aid are less likely to persist than students who are receiving financial assistance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1992) conducted a longitudinal study on a sample of 466 college students attending a large state-supported, non residential institution. Using quantitative methods, they found that receiving some form of financial assistance facilitates students' social interactions with other students which may lead to persistence. They suggested that financial aid plays a significant role in the academic and social interactions of college students. Cabrera et al. asserted that academic and social involvements of students impact their decision to persist or withdraw from the institution. St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005) found that large numbers of African Americans chose their institutions as a result of financial aid offers and tuition cost. They also found that African Americans possess a greater financial need for assistance than their White counterparts. They concluded that African Americans received larger grants and loans and attended less expensive institutions than Whites.

### **Resilience and African Americans**

African American and Caucasian families differ in their structures and ways of functioning as a result of their existence in social and cultural environments (Allen, 1978). Historically, African Americans have endured many hardships and suffered socially and economically for

many years. With large numbers of African Americans unemployed or under-employed and battling certain diseases (such as cancer, diabetes, and HIV infections) at an alarming rate, this group has been able to transcend blatant racism and institutional racism by raising the conscious level of all Americans and fighting for justice and equality. This ability to transcend environmental constraints since the times of slavery and segregation has been attributed to resilience.

Resilience has been defined as the ability to adapt despite negative environmental conditions (Miller, 1999) and as an individual's ability to withstand traumatic conditions (Jenkins, 2005). The relationship between suffering and resilience is evident within the African American community more than any other ethnic group. It is the strength of African Americans families that permits them to function optimally even in the midst of trouble or crisis. Hill (2003) defined family strength as the ability to meet the needs of the family and demands outside the family unit. Hill asserted that there are five attributes that contribute to stability, advancement, and survival of African Americans as a result of their struggle with slavery and oppression. Those attributes are strong achievement orientation, strong work orientation, flexible family roles, strong kinship bond, and strong religious orientation. These attributes play a significant role in the resilience of many African Americans.

African Americans face many external societal forces such as social stratification, lower paying jobs, and racism (Hill, 1993). Racism includes individual and institutional racism which manifest in different ways. According to Hill, African American families were severely affected by unemployment in the 1970s which led to a resurgence in poverty. Since that time, many African Americans have remained socially and economically powerless. Many seek religious affiliations for strength to overcome unfortunate circumstances. Brodsky (2000) found that

religion has a strong impact on the lives of resilient urban, African American, single mothers. Similarly, Bradley, Schwartz, and Kaslow (2005) asserted that positive religion coping is a resiliency variable. A positive religious coping method is viewed as an effective method of spirituality such as seeking a connection with God, providing religious help to others, or seeking support from church members. Examples of negative religion coping consist of questioning God's charity or viewing God as a punisher (Bradley et al.).

Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, and Stephens (2001) defined resiliency as the ability to recover from difficult situations and unpleasant experiences. Resilience is a paradigm that includes both behavioral and psychological signs of effectively coping with life events (Todd & Worell, 2000). Using quantitative and qualitative analyses, Todd and Worell used a measure of psychological well-being to assess resilience for 50 low-income African American women. These researchers found that many people living in poverty are resilient and do not display poor mental health conditions. Floyd (1996) found that those who were resilient were warm, came from supportive families, had favorable personality traits, and had external supports. Overall, African Americans are able to transform themselves despite the oppressive circumstances that have plagued their communities.

### **Coping with Crisis Situations**

Many African American college students enter higher education with multiple barriers and stressors. Some of them live below the poverty level and are the first in their families to attend college. Many come from impoverished neighborhoods where violence is common. Hill (2003) described African American communities as being in a state of crisis. Despite living in substandard housing and crime-infested neighborhoods, many minority students have not been discouraged from attending college. Miller (1999) suggested that the ability to cope with

stressful situations encourages educational involvement and academic achievement. According to Miller, racial socialization and racial identity improve the disadvantaged minority student's ability to cope with stressful situations caused by an unpleasant environment. Consequently, minority students become familiar with coping with certain crisis situations because those situations are prevalent in their communities. In essence, they are not merely products of their environment, even if the environment is horrendous, hostile, and deplorable (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005). Minorities' abilities to cope with crisis situations may be closely linked to their resilience. According to Stanton-Salasar and Spina (2000), resiliency may be viewed as a developmental path where an individual learns to effectively cope with crises or environmental stressors.

Crisis is an event that emerges often without notification and poses a tremendous threat to an individual or group (Heath, Sheen, Young, & Lyman, 2005). Specifically, situational crises can occur unexpectedly at any time in an individual's life (Collins & Collins, 2005; Pitcher & Poland, 1992). Entire communities have been exposed to crisis situations that have had a significant impact on every individual (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005). For instance, Hurricane Katrina was a devastating crisis that abruptly changed the lives of many people residing on the Gulf Coast in August, 2005, including college students. Many college students experienced this situational crisis without notification that the city of New Orleans would completely be submerged under water. Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst ecological crises ever to occur in a major city, and many people were not certain how to handle a situation of that magnitude. According to Heath et al. (2005), responding to the difficulties that arise from a crisis involves greater resources than are readily available to the individual or community. For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was unprepared to address the

needs of thousands of people who did not evacuate the city of New Orleans. Colleges and universities had to temporarily close their doors during fall semester, 2005, as a result of the unexpected crisis. Many students, especially those attending Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), were left wondering how they would continue their post-secondary education. Students attending the university lost their homes, jobs, friends, and family members. Stevenson (2002) stated that crises have associated losses that include loss of hope, security, friends, employment, health, or feelings of trust. Many students were separated from their families and forced to relocate to places that they had never visited, causing an interruption of the equilibrium of normal daily living.

From a multimodal perspective, six significant facets of the crisis experience provide a description of individuals who have experienced crises (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005). The acronym BASICS is used to describe the experience of an individual who may have gone through a crisis situation. The first facet of the crisis experience is behavior. The individual may cry frequently and later feel powerless as a result of crisis situation. A lack of interest in normal activities may be displayed. The second facet involves affective responses. According to Echterling et al., the individual may be very emotional, discouraged, and confused. A range of emotions may be felt including negative and positive feelings about the activating event. The third facet of the crisis experience is somatic. Many individuals display physical pain such as headaches, muscle tension, and back pains as a result of crisis situations. Individuals may also experience a change in their sleep pattern. The fourth facet is interpersonal behavior. Many individuals desire to share their story of the crisis event with others. They develop closer relationships with family members and friends. Others, however, may isolate themselves as a result of the traumatic event. Cognitive is the fifth facet of the crisis experience. Individuals

who have experienced a crisis initially may deny the event. These individuals separate themselves from the crisis as a way of coping. They express that the crisis is not as horrific as it may appear to be. The final facet is spirituality. Many people who have experienced a crisis, especially African Americans, seek spiritual consultation for growth. They often quote biblical scriptures for strength and endurance. This, in turn, may lead to resilience and a better coping method for crisis situations for many African Americans.

Resilience is imperative for individuals of any age who are facing a crisis (Echterling, et al. 2005). Researchers (Bradley, Schwartz, & Kaslow, 2005; Brodsky, 2000)) have found that religion is associated with resilience in African Americans. According to Stevenson (2002), it is through religion that people discover hope, and find meaning and strength to cope with difficult situations. Echterling et al. stated that many people display great resilience by depending on their personal strengths, creativity, and resourcefulness.

Generally, crisis situations have a major impact on the lives of people. Behavior, affective responses, somatic, interpersonal relationships, cognitive, and spirituality are the phases that describe the experience of people in the aftermath of a crisis. Unlike previous crises or traumatic events that have overwhelmed the lives of minorities, Hurricane Katrina was a very significant and unique event. Many college students suffered and experienced the destruction of the storm. Despite the devastation, many of them returned to Southern University at New Orleans to continue their educational pursuits.

## **SUMMARY**

Historically, Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have given the retention of African American students a considerable amount of attention. In keeping with their institutional mission of educating a large number of African Americans, these institutions have coped with

limited resources, high turnover of leadership, and budget deficits. As discussed in the literature, private HBCUs differ from public institutions by their funding source. Public institutions receive state funding and have lower enrollments, more financial issues, and greater problems with attrition. As a public HBCU, Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) continues to strive to educate African Americans and others as the only state-supported Black university in New Orleans. Despite the negative criticism it has received, the institution has remained in existence for approximately 50 years.

For years, college student persistence and the variables affecting retention rates in higher education have been examined. Educational aspirations, campus environment, college grade point average, campus housing status, and financial aid status have been shown to affect retention rates at post-secondary institutions. This study explored several variables affecting college student persistence in hopes of enhancing the knowledge of how they impact higher education. With this added knowledge, university officials may be better prepared to work diligently to create services and programs to address the aforementioned variables as they relate to college student persistence. As presented in this chapter, extant studies have focused primarily on first-time freshmen. This study examined college student persistence at all grade levels after Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, there was a significant need for this study.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of the resilience of African Americans and coping with crisis situations. As presented in the literature, this group has suffered tremendously from numerous factors. Their way of coping with stressful events and crisis is quite different from other ethnic groups. Religion has been cited most often as one of the resiliency variables used by African Americans to handle unpleasant events. In spite of the hardships, the resilience of African Americans is apparent as they continue to persevere in times of adversity.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for the research study is presented in this chapter which is organized into eight sections. The first section describes the purpose of the study. The second and third sections provide information on the research questions and hypotheses, respectively. The fourth section gives a detailed description of the selection of participants. Instrumentation, including instrument development, is discussed in section five. Data collection and characteristics of the sample are described in sections six and seven, respectively. Data analysis concludes the chapter.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The main campus of Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) was determined to be completely unusable for carrying out educational and related activities as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, SUNO, with assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), established a temporary trailer campus on SUNO's North Campus located 0.36 miles north of the main campus. The students enrolled at the university attend classes in trailers and many of them live in travel trailers that are situated behind the North Campus.

There are approximately 45 trailers which are designated for classrooms; office space for faculty, staff, and administrators; a dining facility; an infirmary; and a computer lab. Most of the office furniture, student desks, supplies, telephones, and computers were purchased by FEMA and donated to the university.

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons why college students at Southern University at New Orleans chose to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Relevant variables revealed in the literature were explored. The intent of



this study was to expand the knowledge base regarding college students' decisions to resume their educational pursuits under difficult circumstances after a major crisis.

### **Research Questions**

There were three research questions addressed in this study:

1. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of educational aspirations for returning students after Hurricane Katrina?
2. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of campus environment as the reason for returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina?
3. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of financial aid eligibility status as the reason college students continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina?

### **Research Hypotheses**

To examine the aforesaid research questions, the following seven research hypotheses were posed:

1. There is a significant relationship between students' sex and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

2. There is a significant relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
3. There is a significant relationship between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
4. There is a significant relationship between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
5. There is a significant relationship between students' college grade point average and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
6. There is a significant relationship between students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
7. There is a significant relationship between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

### **Selection of Participants**

It is imperative that university faculty, staff, and administrators understand the reasons why students have chosen to attend an institution that has suffered tremendous losses as a result of one of the worst natural disasters in United States history. The three historically Black universities in the city of New Orleans have seen a substantial decline in their enrollment since the storm. This study investigated the factors associated with college students resuming their educational pursuits at one of these institutions in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. College students who were attending SUNO for the 2007 Spring Semester were participants in this study.

The damage from Hurricane Katrina was very severe at SUNO and has caused a substantial decline in enrollment. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, SUNO had an enrollment of approximately

3,600 students (Hamilton, 2006). According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2006), SUNO is primarily a small, four-year, commuter institution. Most of the students attending the university were residing in the city of New Orleans prior to the storm. A change in enrollment since the storm is reflected in the spring, summer, and fall semesters. For 2006 Spring Semester, one semester after Hurricane Katrina, approximately 2,051 students enrolled at the university. For the 2006 Summer Session, SUNO enrolled 962 students. Preliminary data indicated 2,394 students were enrolled for the 2006 Fall Semester at SUNO. SUNO's preliminary data also indicated 2,344 students enrolled for the 2007 Spring Semester.

Students who enrolled for the 2007 Spring Semester were surveyed. Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans just before the beginning of the 2005 Fall Semester. SUNO reopened one semester after Hurricane Katrina for the 2006 Spring Semester. Thus, this study was conducted over one year after the university reopened to investigate college students' reasons for continuing their education. The participants were asked to respond to a series of items on a survey instrument. Conducting research utilizing a survey design was appropriate for this study because of the population and nature of the variables. According to Wallen and Fraenkel (2001), the major purpose of a survey is to determine how members of a population distribute themselves on one or more variables.

A representative sample was taken from the students who enrolled for the 2007 Spring Semester. There were 301 students who were administered the survey. The number of students who were surveyed was a large enough sample to represent the population at SUNO and provided adequate power for the data analysis. The students were surveyed in person. Students were administered the survey in their classes and each student enrolled in the classes was given an opportunity to participate in the study.

Students were informed that the information collected would be used for research purposes only. Students did not include any identifying information on the survey.

### **Instrumentation**

The participants were administered a survey instrument that was created by the researcher. The Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP) Instrument is divided into three sections and contains 39 response items. Additionally, there was an open-ended response section at the end of the instrument for participants to disclose their thoughts, opinions, and experiences relating to their decisions to resume their educational pursuits. Of the 39 response items, 36 items relate to college students continuing their postsecondary education. Three response items request demographic information: (1) primary descent group, (2) age group, and (3) classification status.

The DREP utilized a 7-point Likert scale. Items 1 through 10, located in Section I, asked participants to respond to basic demographic information which is common for survey studies. Item 1 required participants to indicate their primary descent group. Item 2 required participants to indicate their sex. Participants responded to item 3 by indicating their age group. Items 1, 2, and 3 are similar to items on the College Student Needs Assessment Survey (ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, 1996). The College Student Needs Assessment Survey is an instrument created by the ACT Evaluation/Survey Services that focuses on personal and educational needs of college students. The DREP is an instrument that focused on college students' decisions to continue their postsecondary education after a major crisis. Item 4 required participants to indicate their current residence status; this item determined those students who were Louisiana residents and those who were not. This item is comparable to an item on the ACT Entering Student Survey which is usually administered to incoming freshmen

(ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, 1997). Item 5 asked participants to indicate their student classification status. A student's classification status options are freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate student. Knowledge of the student's classification status at the university provides some understanding to the reasons students chose to resume their educational pursuits. Also, item 5 is parallel to an item on the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) created by Pace and Kuh (1998), which measures the progress toward educational goals, student experiences, and students' perceptions of the campus environment. Item 6 required participants to indicate their Pell Grant status at the university. Item 6 is related to an item on the ACT Entering Student Survey (ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, 1997). Item 7 referred to students residing on campus in temporary trailer units, and item 8 required participants to indicate their current grade point average. Item 9 required participants to indicate whether or not they attended the university before Hurricane Katrina. The final item in Section I, item 10, required participants to indicate if their parents or a close relative attended the university.

The survey response items correlate to the variables revealed in the literature, which are educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. The aforementioned variables are commonly explored in studying retention in higher education. For example, Tinto (1993) postulated that the likelihood of college completion is related to the level of one's educational aspiration. Additionally, Allen (1992) found that African American students with strong educational aspirations also had high educational achievement. Students who possess a desire to achieve in school will more likely accomplish their goals.

Various campus environmental contingencies affect student persistence (Astin, 1975). Campus environmental contingencies may include factors controlled by the institution as well as

the academic and social integration of the student. Also, living on or near campus has positive implications for persistence and degree completion (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

A student's financial aid status also has proven to have an impact on college student persistence. The source and amount of financial aid can be a key factor in students' ability to finish their postsecondary education (Astin, 1975). Astin also posited that the amount of grant support appears to be a significant factor in student persistence, specifically among African American college students. This brief summary of the literature supports the variables that were utilized in this study.

One item on the DREP, plans to reside in New Orleans, did not correlate with either dependent variable and was not included in the data analysis. Independent variables, age group and classification status, produced a high correlation; therefore, these variables were used to obtain a description of the participants. Table 1 depicts how the DREP and variables correlate and the number of items for each variable. Eleven items related to educational aspirations, 15 to campus environment, and two items to financial aid status. The demographic items were examined as independent variables and used to provide a description of the sample.

Table 1

*DREP Sections and Dependent Variables*

DREP	Educational Aspirations	Campus Environment	Financial Aid Status	Total
Demographics	0	0	0	0
Institutional Influences	0	13	2	15
Personal Influences	11	2	0	13
Total	11	15	2	28

*Reliability*

A reliability coefficient was computed to determine if the items on the DREP were consistent with one another. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the DREP (total of 28 items) was .885. The Cronbach's alpha was used for a total of 28 items from Institutional Influences and Personal

Influences. The reliability statistics for each item related to the dependent variables are presented in Table 2. An alpha range of .60 to .90 offers a reliable measure of a concept (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005).

Table 2

<i>Reliability Statistics for Items Related to Dependent Variables</i>		
DREP	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Educational Aspirations	.840	11
Campus Environment	.844	15
Financial Aid Eligibility Status	.652	2

Section II of the DREP is identified as Institutional Influences. This section required participants to respond using a Likert scale ranging from *extremely unimportant (1) to extremely important (7)*. For example, respondents were asked to rate the importance of: (1) Size of University, (2) Cost of Attendance, and (3) College Entrance Requirements.

Section III, Personal Influences, required participants to respond using a Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)*. Some sample items from this section include: (1) my desire to graduate from a historically Black college or university, (2) the influences of relatives, and (3) influences of friends. As mentioned earlier, three open-ended items located at the bottom of the DREP allowed participants to disclose additional information relating to their decisions to resume their educational pursuits at SUNO.

## DREP

*Section I: Demographic Information.* Items 1-10 requested basic demographic information used to identify certain independent variables. Basic demographic data usually are collected in college student surveys for background information.

*Section II: Institutional Influences.* The items in this section asked participants to respond to items relating to institutional factors. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, and 15 are analogous to items

on the ACT Entering Student Survey. The ACT Entering Student Survey focuses on incoming students, mainly college freshmen (ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, 1997). However, the ACT Entering Student Survey was not appropriate for this particular study because this study gathered data from students classified as college freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, or graduate students. Another survey created by the ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, College Outcomes Survey, was not appropriate for this study. The College Outcomes Survey assesses the satisfaction of college students with certain aspects of the university's programs and services (ACT Evaluation/Survey Services, 2000).

*Section III: Personal Influences.* The items in this section asked participants to indicate their responses to personal reasons for resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO. Item 2 is comparable to an item on the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory. The Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory is another instrument that was not appropriate for this study. The Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory, created by Stratil (2006), is concerned with how students learn best and focuses on those students who may possess a higher chance of stopping or dropping out of college. This study focused on college students' decisions to persist at SUNO after a natural disaster.

Items 3, 4, and 5 are comparable to items on the ACT Entering Student Survey. Also, item 10 is equivalent to an item on the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The CSEQ is an instrument developed by Pace and Kuh (1998). Similar to the previously mentioned instruments, this particular instrument was not useful when investigating students' reasons for resuming their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The DREP Instrument explored factors that are not addressed on other survey instruments.



## Instrument Development

This study focused on college students' decisions to resume their educational pursuits at SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The data collected from participants are useful in understanding retention at the university. Although there are countless surveys used for persistence and retention studies, no survey instruments related to Hurricane Katrina were available at the time of this study. No other study has examined college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, there is no published research on college student persistence at other universities as it relates to Hurricane Katrina. To ensure the clarity of information presented on the survey instrument, an expert panel was selected to further assist with instrument development. Six individuals employed at SUNO were identified because of their knowledge and experience with working with survey instruments and college persistence. All members of the expert panel have been employed at the university for more than five years. The expert panel provided written feedback on the DREP which allowed the researcher to modify the instrument. Members of the panel suggested that the DREP contain an item that required participants to indicate their residence status. Therefore, response item number four was added to the DREP under Section I Demographic Information. Additionally, five students were asked to complete the survey to check for clarity of items. According to Wallen and Fraenkel (2001), it is essential to select a group of respondents to test the survey instrument before the actual study. All five individuals, who were students enrolled at SUNO during the 2006 Summer Session, met with the researcher. Background information on the study was presented and the researcher discussed the instrument with the students. The participants were one female and four male students. All identified themselves as African

Americans. One respondent was classified as a graduate student, two were seniors and two were juniors. All five individuals indicated that the DREP provided clear and precise response items.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher obtained approval to conduct the study from her dissertation committee and from the University of New Orleans Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB). Additionally, approval from the Southern University at New Orleans IRB was obtained.

The researcher obtained permission from college professors at SUNO to administer the surveys in the classrooms. Direct administration has the major advantages of affording the researcher an opportunity to verbally explain the instrument and permitting participants the opportunity to ask questions (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Additionally, a researcher can obtain a response rate close to 100% when participants complete surveys in the classrooms (Bastian, 2000). The computer labs on SUNO's main campus were severely destroyed as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Also, computers belonging to some of the students probably were damaged during the storm. As a result, there was a possibility that some potential participants did not have access to a computer to complete an on-line survey.

The researcher identified five professors to gain entry into their classrooms: one professor each from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the College of Education, the School of Social Work, and the Graduate Studies Program. The researcher chose to identify one professor from each academic college in order to obtain a variety of participants from the various academic disciplines and encourage faculty involvement. According to Creswell (2005), researchers should gain permission and acquire individuals' involvement at the location of the study. The researcher gained entry into the undergraduate and graduate classrooms. In the

classrooms, the researcher provided an explanation of the research and students were informed that their participation was not mandatory. Participants were also informed of any potential risks involved in recalling their reasons for resuming their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. After completion of the DREP, all participants were thanked for their participation in the study and informed that they may contact the researcher by phone or email at the conclusion of the study for a copy of the results. Surveying 301 students in the classrooms was sufficient, taking into account that some survey instruments yield missing data. There were no returned surveys with half of the items or fewer than half answered.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

In this section, a description is presented of the participants by primary descent group, sex, age group, residence status, student classification, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative. Participants were asked to indicate their primary descent group. Descriptive data for participants' responses are depicted in Table 3, along with a description of SUNO's population.

Table 3

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Primary Descent Group*

Primary Descent Group	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%	SUNO	%
African-American	273	90.7	2224	95.0
Anglo-American	3	1.0	47	2.0
Asian-American	3	1.0	15	1.0
Hispanic-American	3	1.0	8	0.0
Bi/Multiracial	6	2.0	0	0.0
Other	12	4.0	32	1.0
Missing	1	.3	18	1.0
Total	301	100.0	2344	100.0

*Note.* Other = self-identified nationalities of Puerto Rican and Spanish.

African-Americans accounted for the overwhelming majority (90.7%; 273) of participants in the study. The large population of African-Americans reflects SUNO's status as a Historically Black University. Six participants (2%) self-identified as Bi/Multiracial; Anglo-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic-Americans each accounted for 1% (3) of the participants in the study. One participant did not respond to this item.

The majority of the participants in my study were females. Females (70.4%; 212) outnumbered males (29.6%; 89) by a ratio of 7 to 3. Frequencies by sex are depicted in Table 4, along with SUNO's population by sex.

Table 4

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Sex*

Sex	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%	SUNO	%
Female	212	70.4	1738	74.1
Male	89	29.6	606	25.9
Total	301	100.0	2344	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate their age group based upon the categories listed in Table 5. The majority of participants were of traditional age for college students. Participants aged 19 to 21 comprised the largest age group category, representing 32.6% (98) of the participants. Participants aged 22 to 25 comprised 18.6% (56) of the participants, and 16.6% (50) indicated their age group was 26 to 33. Participants aged 18 and below comprised 15.3% (46) of the sample. Older students accounted for 7.3% (22) of the sample in the 34 to 40 category, and 9.3% (28) in the 41 and older category. One participant did not indicate an age group.

Table 5

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Age Group*

Age	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%
< 18	46	15.3
19-21	98	32.6
22-25	56	18.6
26-33	50	16.6
34-40	22	7.3
41 or >	28	9.3
Missing	1	.3
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate their state residence status. The results are presented in Table 6. The majority of the participants (97.7%; 294) reside in the state of Louisiana. The remaining 2.3% (7) reside in a different state.

Table 6

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Residence Status*

Residence Status	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Out-of-State	7	2.3
In-State	294	97.7
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate their classification status at the university. The results by class level are presented in Table 7, along with a description of SUNO's population. Freshmen comprised 42.6% (128) of the sample; 17.3% (52) were sophomores, 11% (33) were juniors and 18.9% (57) were seniors. Graduate students comprised 10% (30) of the sample. One participant did not indicate a classification status.

Table 7

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Student Classification*

Classification	Total Sample		SUNO	
	<i>F</i>	%		%
Freshman	128	42.6	709	30.0
Sophomore	52	17.3	342	15.0
Junior	33	11.0	277	12.0
Senior	57	18.9	535	23.0
Graduate	30	10.0	377	16.0
Missing	1	.3	104	4.0
Total	301	100.0	2344	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate their Pell Grant status. The majority of the participants (67.8%; 204) indicated that they were receiving a Pell Grant, while 30.2% (91) indicated that they were not receiving a Pell Grant. The results are depicted in Table 8.

Table 8

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Pell Grant Status*

Pell Grant Status	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Receiving a Pell	204	67.8
Not Receiving a Pell	91	30.2
Missing	6	2.0
Total	301	100.0

According to the Carnegie Classification Foundation (2006), SUNO is classified as a non-residential institution. As a result of Hurricane Katrina which increased the lack of housing in New Orleans, temporary FEMA Trailers were established for faculty, staff, and students. Participants were asked to indicate their campus housing status. The results are presented in Table 9. The majority (81.4%; 245) indicated that they do not reside on campus. Only 17.9% (54) of the participants indicated that they do reside on campus. Campus housing was not available to students before Hurricane Katrina. Two participants did not respond to this item.

Table 9

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Housing Status*

Housing Status	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Reside on Campus	54	17.9
Do not Reside on Camps	245	81.4
Missing	2	.6
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate their college grade point average category. Slightly more than one quarter (26.9%; 81) of the participants indicated their grade point average was between 2.50 and 2.99. Approximately one-fifth (20.6%; 62) of the participants reported their grade point average was between 3.00 and 3.49, and 14% (42) of the participants indicated 3.50 to 4.00 as

their grade point average category. Participants who did not respond to the item totaled 16.3% (49). The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by College Grade Point Average*

GPA	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%
< 1.00	3	1.0
1.00-1.49	3	1.0
1.50-1.99	12	4.0
2.00-2.49	49	16.3
2.50-2.99	81	26.9
3.00-3.49	62	20.6
3.50-4.00	42	14.0
Missing	49	16.3
Total	301	100.0

In Table 11, the distribution of participants who attended SUNO and who did not attend SUNO before Hurricane Katrina is displayed. Slightly more than half of the participants (57.5%; 173) did attend the university before Hurricane Katrina, while 41.2 % (124) did not attend the university before Hurricane Katrina. Four (1.3%) participants did not respond to the item.

Table 11

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Attendance before Hurricane Katrina*

Attendance before Katrina	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%
Yes	173	57.5
No	124	41.2
Missing	4	1.3
Total	301	100.0



Participants were asked to indicate if their parents or another close relative attended the university. The results are presented in Table 12. Slightly more than half of the participants (51.2 %; 154) indicated their parents or another close relative did not attend SUNO. In comparison, 47.5% (143) of the participants indicated that they did have parents or another close relative who attended the university. Four (1.3%) of the participants did not respond to the item.

Table 12

*Frequency Distribution of Participants by Parents or Relative Who Attended SUNO*

Parents or Relative Attended SUNO	<i>F</i>	Total Sample %
Yes	143	47.5
No	154	51.2
Missing	4	1.3
Total	301	100.0

### **Data Analysis**

A review of the literature provides information on various statistical procedures in studying college student persistence. Logistic regression, probit analysis, simple linear regression and multiple regression are common statistical procedures when examining college student persistence. From a statistical standpoint, logistic, probit, and linear regression analyses are techniques that can be utilized to study and understand college student persistence (Dey & Astin, 1993). Logistic, probit, simple linear regression and multiple regression are associated with prediction. According to Dey and Astin, the aforesaid techniques are related; however, their theoretical approaches to problems are different. For example, simple linear regression allows the prediction of one variable from another variable (Cronk, 2004). On the other hand, multiple regression allows the prediction of one variable from several other variables (Allen, 1997; Cronk, 2004; Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005). Regression methods have become an essential

component of any data analysis related to describing the relationship between a response variable and one or more explanatory variables (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Additionally, regression analysis can indicate the statistical significance of a relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Allen, 1997). Regression analysis is also a straightforward method for examining practical relationships among variables (Chatterjee, Hadi, & Price, 2000). For the purpose of this study, a multiple regression model was utilized.

Multiple regression is a commonly used statistical procedure for studying the impact of postsecondary institutions on students (Allison, 1999; Huck, 2004). According to Huck, there are two reasons a researcher would consider utilizing a multiple regression model. First, he or she might be interested in prediction by focusing on the dependent variable. The dependent variable is known as the Y variable. Next, the researcher might have an interest in studying explanation of factors with a focus on the independent variables. The independent variables are considered as the X variables. According to Huck, multiple regression consists of two or more independent variables and has only one dependent variable. For example, a researcher interested in examining students who did not return to the university for a particular semester using financial instability, poor grades, and inadequate study habits as independent variables could apply a multiple regression model to understand this phenomenon. Best and Kahn (1998) described multiple regression as predicting the Y variable from two or more X variables combined. Utilizing an entire set of variables to predict another variable ensures that a multiple regression model was an appropriate method to use to study college students' decisions to persist after Hurricane Katrina. Multiple regression makes it possible to join numerous variables to create optimal predictions of the outcome variable (Allison, 1999). Also, multiple regression is general and very flexible (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Therefore, multiple regression

is an appropriate technique that was used to study college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

Three multiple regression models were used to predict the factors associated with college students' decisions to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina because of the nature of the independent and dependent variables. The dependent variables were educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. The independent variables were sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative. In order to predict a relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the aftermath of a major storm, descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression models were employed to investigate the following hypotheses.

### **Hypothesis 1**

There is a significant relationship between students' sex and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 2**

There is a significant relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression

was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 3**

There is a significant relationship between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 4**

There is a significant relationship between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 5**

There is a significant relationship between students' college grade point average and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 6**

There is a significant relationship between students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

### **Hypothesis 7**

There is a significant relationship between students' parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. ANOVA was used to determine if the predictor variable contributed to a significant  $F$  statistic. Multiple regression was utilized to determine if the variable significantly contributed to college students resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO.

An alpha level of .01 was set for statistical testing. The results of this study offer suggestions for future research that will be beneficial to college students and universities.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine a set of predictor variables including sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative, that best predicted educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status as the reasons college students continued their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina. The goals of this study were to (a) explore the reasons college students have continued their post-secondary education after the major crisis of Hurricane Katrina; and (b) increase understanding of college student persistence after a major crisis. In this chapter, the results of the data analyses are presented.

Participants in this study were college students recruited from 12 classrooms at SUNO. Five professors, one professor each from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the College of Education, the School of Social Work, and the Graduate Studies Program, were contacted to gain permission to administer the survey instrument in their classrooms. The five professors were chosen in order to obtain participants from different college grade levels and because of their willingness to participate. Permission was granted from all five professors. Data were collected in the classrooms from January 16 through February 2, 2007. Participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study and two copies of the informed consent form that further explained the study. They were asked to sign and return one copy and keep the second copy for their files. A total of 301 participants completed the survey. Time to complete the survey ranged from 10 to 15 minutes. Participants were asked to review the survey after

completion to reduce the potential for any missing data. Surveys were returned immediately after completion.

In Section II of the DREP, Institutional Influences, participants were asked to indicate the importance of each item regarding their decision to attend SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. The response choices ranged on a Likert scale from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important.

In Table 13, results for the size of the university are depicted. The mean for importance of university size was 4.196 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.910. Nearly one-third of the participants (30.2%; 91) indicated neutral as their response, which indicated that the size of the university was neither unimportant nor important in their decision to return after Hurricane Katrina. Relatively few participants indicated that the size of the university was extremely important (16.6%; 50), slightly important (13.6%; 41), or moderately important (10.3%; 31). Only 6.6% (20) indicated that the size of the university was slightly unimportant, which was the smallest percentage indicated.

Table 13

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Size of the University*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	43	14.3
Slightly Unimportant	20	6.6
Moderately Unimportant	25	8.3
Neutral	91	30.2
Slightly Important	41	13.6
Moderately Important	31	10.3
Extremely Important	50	16.6
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate how important was the cost of attendance in their decision to continue their educational pursuits. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important for the cost of attendance with a mean of 5.408 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.811. Over 40% of the participants (42.5%; 128) indicated that the cost of attendance was extremely important, while an additional 27.3% indicated cost was slightly or moderately important. Only 14% indicated that the cost was extremely unimportant, slightly unimportant, or moderately unimportant. The frequencies are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Cost of Attendance*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	18	6.0
Slightly Unimportant	9	3.0
Moderately Unimportant	15	5.0
Neutral	49	16.3
Slightly Important	37	12.3
Moderately Important	45	15.0
Extremely Important	128	42.5
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the university's entrance requirements in their decision to continue their postsecondary education. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important for SUNO's entrance requirements. The mean was 5.146 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.865. Entrance requirements were extremely important for 32.9% (99) of the participants and were slightly or moderately important for an additional 32.9% (99). Only 15.2% (46) of the respondents indicated that the university's



entrance requirements were extremely, slightly, or moderately unimportant. The results are depicted in Table 15.

Table 15

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Entrance Requirements*

Responses	Total Sample <i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	23	7.6
Slightly Unimportant	16	5.3
Moderately Unimportant	7	2.3
Neutral	57	18.9
Slightly Important	42	14.0
Moderately Important	57	18.9
Extremely Important	99	32.9
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the location of the university in their decision to continue their postsecondary education. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 5.059 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.932. Approximately one-third of the participants (34.2%; 103) indicated that the location of the university was extremely important, and nearly one-third (27.9%; 84) stated that location was slightly or moderately important. Only 17.7% (53) indicated that the location of the university was moderately, slightly, or extremely unimportant. The results are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Location of the University*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	28	9.3
Slightly Unimportant	11	3.7
Moderately Unimportant	14	4.7
Neutral	61	20.3
Slightly Important	38	12.6
Moderately Important	46	15.3
Extremely Important	103	34.2
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the student/teacher ratio in their decision to continue their postsecondary education. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 5.398 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.758. Over one-third (37.2%; 112) of the participants indicated that the student/teacher ratio was extremely important, and over one-third (34.2%) stated that the ratio was moderately or slightly important. A small percentage (5.6%; 17) indicated the ratio was extremely unimportant. Only 3.7% (11) of the participants indicated that the student/teacher ratio were slightly unimportant, and 3.7% (11) of the participants indicated that the ratio was moderately unimportant. The results are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Student/Teacher Ratio*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	17	5.6
Slightly Unimportant	11	3.7
Moderately Unimportant	11	3.7
Neutral	47	15.6
Slightly Important	37	12.3
Moderately Important	66	21.9
Extremely Important	112	37.2
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the racial composition in their decision to continue their postsecondary education at SUNO. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 3.973 and with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 2.009. Neutral was the response choice indicated by 30.6% (92). Approximately one-fifth (20.9%; 63) of the participants indicated that the racial composition was extremely unimportant, and 12% (36) indicated that it was slightly or moderately unimportant. More than one-third (36.5%) assigned some degree of importance to racial composition: 14.6% (44) indicated that the racial composition was extremely important, and 25.9% (78) indicated that it was slightly or moderately important. The results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Racial Composition*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	63	20.9
Slightly Unimportant	15	5.0
Moderately Unimportant	21	7.0
Neutral	92	30.6
Slightly Important	32	10.6
Moderately Important	34	11.3
Extremely Important	44	14.6
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the university offering online courses. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 4.485 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.965. As was the case with racial composition, the most frequently chosen response was neutral (27.6%; 83). Approximately half (50.2%) of the participants indicated that offering online courses was extremely important, moderately important, or slightly important. The results are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Offering Online Courses*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	46	15.3
Slightly Unimportant	10	3.3
Moderately Unimportant	11	3.7
Neutral	83	27.6
Slightly Important	48	15.9
Moderately Important	42	14.0
Extremely Important	61	20.3
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of supportive services on campus. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 5.608 and a standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.665. Supportive services were rated as extremely important by 43.5% (131) of the participants. An additional 31.5% (95) indicated that supportive services were moderately or slightly important. Only 10% (30) of the participants indicated that supportive services were moderately, slightly, or extremely unimportant. The results are presented in Table 20.

Table 20

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Supportive Services on Campus*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	12	4.0
Slightly Unimportant	10	3.3
Moderately Unimportant	8	2.7
Neutral	45	15.0
Slightly Important	35	11.6
Moderately Important	60	19.9
Extremely Important	131	43.5
Total	301	100.0

Due to the fact that Hurricane Katrina caused a significant amount of damage to the homes in New Orleans, participants were asked to indicate the importance of temporary housing in their decision to continue their postsecondary education. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 4.833 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 2.156. A total of 34.2% (103) of the participants indicated that temporary housing was extremely important. Approximately one-fourth (24%; 72) indicated that temporary housing was moderately or slightly important, while 17.9% (54) selected the neutral response choice. Approximately one-quarter (24%) of the respondents indicated that temporary housing was extremely, slightly, or moderately unimportant. The results are presented in Table 21.

Table 21

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Temporary Housing Availability*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	45	15.0
Slightly Unimportant	13	4.3
Moderately Unimportant	14	4.7
Neutral	54	17.9
Slightly Important	27	9.0
Moderately Important	45	15.0
Extremely Important	103	34.2
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the university's recruitment efforts in their decision to continue their postsecondary education, which is a question that is commonly asked on college surveys. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 4.880 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.954. Nearly one-third of the participants (29.2%; 88) indicated that recruitment efforts were extremely important. Another 27.3% (82) indicated that these efforts were slightly or moderately important. A few participants indicated that recruitment efforts were extremely unimportant (10.3%; 31), and 8.3% (25) indicated that the university's recruitment efforts were slightly unimportant or moderately unimportant. The results are presented in Table 22.

Table 22

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Recruitment Efforts*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	31	10.3
Slightly Unimportant	15	5.0
Moderately Unimportant	10	3.3
Neutral	75	24.9
Slightly Important	30	10.0
Moderately Important	52	17.3
Extremely Important	88	29.2
Total	301	100.0

In Table 23, results for major availability are depicted. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 6.093 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.613. Over 60% of the participants (66.1%; 199) indicated that major availability was extremely important. This was the largest percentage indicated despite the significant cut in academic programs at the university. Relatively few participants indicated that major availability was moderately important (12.6%; 38) or slightly important (4%; 12). Only 7.6% (23) indicated that major availability was slightly, moderately, or extremely unimportant.



Table 23

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Major Availability*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	13	4.3
Slightly Unimportant	6	2.0
Moderately Unimportant	4	1.3
Neutral	29	9.6
Slightly Important	12	4.0
Moderately Important	38	12.6
Extremely Important	199	66.1
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of the university's small class size. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 5.010 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.767. Nearly one-third of the participants (27.9%; 84) indicated that small class size was extremely important, while another one-third (32.9%; 99) indicated it was slightly or moderately important. Approximately one quarter (24.3%; 73) of the participants indicated neutral as their response choice, while 7.6% (23) indicated small class size was slightly or moderately unimportant. Only 7.3% (22) indicated that the small class size was extremely unimportant. The results are presented in Table 24.

Table 24

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Small Class Size*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	22	7.3
Slightly Unimportant	7	2.3
Moderately Unimportant	16	5.3
Neutral	73	24.3
Slightly Important	50	16.6
Moderately Important	49	16.3
Extremely Important	84	27.9
Total	301	100.0

The importance of scholarship availability was an item to which participants were asked to respond. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 5.714 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.752. Over half of the participants (52.8%; 159) indicated that scholarship availability was extremely important, while 14.3% (43) indicated neutral as their response choice. A few participants (13.3%; 40) indicated that scholarship availability was moderately important, and 9.6% (29) indicated that scholarship availability was slightly important. Only 10% (30) participants indicated that scholarship availability was slightly, moderately, or extremely unimportant. The results are presented in Table 25.

Table 25

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Scholarship Availability*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	18	6.0
Slightly Unimportant	4	1.3
Moderately Unimportant	8	2.7
Neutral	43	14.3
Slightly Important	29	9.6
Moderately Important	40	13.3
Extremely Important	159	52.8
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of attending a commuter campus. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 4.558 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.813. Approximately one-third of the participants (35.5%; 107) indicated neutral as their response for preference to attend a commuter campus, while 18.9% (57) indicated that their preference to attend a commuter campus was extremely important. Only 17.3% (52) indicated their preference to attend a commuter campus was extremely unimportant, slightly unimportant, or moderately unimportant. The results are presented in Table 26.

Table 26

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Preference to Attend a Commuter Campus*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	35	11.6
Slightly Unimportant	8	2.7
Moderately Unimportant	9	3.0
Neutral	107	35.5
Slightly Important	43	14.3
Moderately Important	42	14.0
Extremely Important	57	18.9
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of their financial aid eligibility status in their decision to continue their postsecondary education. The responses ranged from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. The mean was 6.033 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.582. Over 60% of the participants (62.5%; 188) indicated that financial eligibility status was extremely important, which was the largest percentage indicated. An additional 18.3% (55) of the participants indicated that financial eligibility status was slightly or moderately important. Only 7% (12) of the participants indicated that financial eligibility status was extremely unimportant, slightly unimportant, or moderately unimportant. The results are presented in Table 27.

Table 27

*Distribution of Responses for Importance of Financial Aid Eligibility Status*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Extremely Unimportant	12	4.0
Slightly Unimportant	3	1.0
Moderately Unimportant	6	2.0
Neutral	37	12.3
Slightly Important	14	4.7
Moderately Important	41	13.6
Extremely Important	188	62.5
Total	301	100.0

In Table 28, a summary of the findings for Section II of the DREP, Institutional Influences, is depicted. Participants were asked to indicate the importance of each of the items to their decision to attend SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. Academic major availability, financial eligibility status, and scholarship availability had the highest mean scores in this section. Academic major availability had a mean of 6.093 and standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.613, which was the highest mean score in this section. Over 60% of the participants (66.1%; 199) indicated that major availability was extremely important. For financial eligibility status, the mean was 6.033 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.582. Again, over 60% of the participants (62.5%; 188) indicated that financial eligibility status was extremely important. Over half of the participants (52.8%; 159) indicated that scholarship availability was extremely important. The mean was 5.714 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.752. The three items with the lowest mean scores were offering online courses, size of the university, and racial composition. Offering online courses had a mean of 4.485 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.965. Neutral was the response choice indicated by 27.6% (83) of the participants for offering online courses. As was the case with

offering online courses, the most frequently chosen response was neutral (30.2%; 91) for size of the university and racial composition (30.6%; 92). The mean was 4.196 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.910 for size of the university, and the mean was 3.973 and standard deviation (*SD*) of 2.009 for racial composition.

Table 28

*Means and Standard Deviations for Items presented in order of Score for Section II Institutional Influences*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic major availability	6.093	1.613
Financial aid eligibility status	6.033	1.582
Scholarship availability	5.714	1.752
Supportive services on campus	5.608	1.665
Cost of attendance	5.408	1.811
Student/Teacher ratio	5.398	1.758
College entrance requirements	5.146	1.865
Location of the university	5.059	1.932
Small class size	5.010	1.767
University recruitment efforts	4.880	1.954
Temporary housing availability	4.833	2.156
Preference to attend a commuter campus	4.558	1.813
Offering online courses	4.485	1.965
Size of the university	4.196	1.910
Racial composition	3.973	2.009

In Section III, Personal Influences of the DREP, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the items regarding their decision to attend SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. For desire to attend an HBCU, the mean was 5.730 and standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.713. Over

50% of the participants (51.2%; 154) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item. Nearly one-third of the participants (27.6; 83) slightly agreed or agreed with the item, while 7% (21) disagreed that their desire to attend an HBCU was related to their attendance after Hurricane Katrina. Only 6.4% (19) strongly or slightly disagreed that their desire to attend an HBCU was related to their attendance at SUNO after the hurricane. The results are presented in Table 29.

Table 29

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Desire to Attend an HBCU*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	14	4.7
Slightly Disagree	5	1.7
Disagree	21	7.0
Not Sure	24	8.0
Slightly Agree	34	11.3
Agree	49	16.3
Strongly Agree	154	51.2
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that their decision to return is related to their classification status. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree for classification status. The mean was 5.518 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.817. Over 40% of the participants (43.9%; 132) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item, which was the largest percentage indicated. Approximately one-third of the participants (30.9%; 93) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed that classification status is related to their return. Only 14.7% (44) of the participants strongly disagreed, slightly disagreed, or disagreed with the item as related to their return to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. The results are presented in Table 30.

Table 30

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Classification Status*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	21	7.0
Slightly Disagree	5	1.7
Disagree	18	6.0
Not Sure	32	10.6
Slightly Agree	34	11.3
Agree	59	19.6
Strongly Agree	132	43.9
Total	301	100.0

Table 31 presents the results of participants' responses regarding the influences of relatives in their decision to continue their education. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean for this item was 4.405 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 2.135. Approximately one-fifth of the participants (22.3%; 67) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item, while an additional 29.3% (88) slightly agreed or agreed that the influences of relatives are related to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina. In contrast, over one-third (36.9%; 111) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement that the influences of relatives were related to their decision to continue their education.



Table 31

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Influences of Relatives*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	50	16.6
Slightly Disagree	14	4.7
Disagree	47	15.6
Not Sure	35	11.6
Slightly Agree	30	10.0
Agree	58	19.3
Strongly Agree	67	22.3
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked about the influences of friends, in addition to the influences of relatives. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean for this item was 4.235 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 2.094. Nearly one-fifth of the participants (19.3%; 58) indicated that they agreed with the item, 17.9% (54) strongly agreed, and 10.3% (31) slightly agreed. Nearly 40% (39.7%; 119) indicated some degree of disagreement that the influences of friends were related to their decision to return. The results are presented in Table 32.

Table 32

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Influences of Friends*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	54	17.9
Slightly Disagree	11	3.9
Disagree	54	17.9
Not Sure	39	13.0
Slightly Agree	31	10.3
Agree	58	19.3
Strongly Agree	54	17.9
Total	301	100.0

Table 33 presents the results of the influences of a school advisor. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 4.810 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 2.085. Approximately one-third of the participants (29.2%; 88) indicated that they strongly agreed that the influences of a school advisor are related to their decision to return, while an additional 20.9% (63) indicated that they agreed with the item, and 9% (27) slightly agreed. Nearly one-third (27.9%; 84) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement that the influences of a school advisor were related to their decision to continue their education after the hurricane.

Table 33

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Influences of a School Advisor*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	40	13.3
Slightly Disagree	9	3.0
Disagree	35	11.6
Not Sure	39	13.0
Slightly Agree	27	9.0
Agree	63	20.9
Strongly Agree	88	29.2
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that their educational goals are related to their decision to continue their education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 6.382 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.115. An overwhelming majority of the participants 69.4% (209) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item. Approximately one-fifth of the participants (19%; 57) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed that educational goals were related to their return after Hurricane Katrina. Only 1.9% (6) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement that educational goals were related to their decision to continue their education after the hurricane. The results are presented in Table 34.

Table 34

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Educational Goals*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	1	.3
Slightly Disagree	1	.3
Disagree	4	1.3
Not Sure	29	9.6
Slightly Agree	15	5.0
Agree	42	14.0
Strongly Agree	209	69.4
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that career aspirations are related to their decision to attend SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 6.322 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.237. Over 60% of the participants (68.4%; 206) indicated that they strongly agreed with career aspirations, while an additional 18.3% (55) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed with the item. Only 3.3% (10) indicated some degree of disagreement that career aspirations were related to their reason for returning. The results are presented in Table 35.

Table 35

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Career Aspirations*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	4	1.3
Slightly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	6	2.0
Not Sure	30	10.0
Slightly Agree	11	3.7
Agree	44	14.6
Strongly Agree	206	68.4
Total	301	100.0

In Table 36, the results for desire to improve myself are depicted. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 6.445 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.055. Over 70% of the participants (70.8%; 213) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item, which was the largest percentage indicated. Nearly one-fifth of the participants (19.6%; 59) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed that their desire to improve was related to their return after Hurricane Katrina. Only 1.4% (4) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement with the item.

Table 36

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Desire to Improve Myself*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	2	.7
Slightly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	2	.7
Not Sure	25	8.3
Slightly Agree	13	4.3
Agree	46	15.3
Strongly Agree	213	70.8
Total	301	100.0

Participants' perception of the campus was an item that required a response. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 5.438 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.570. Over one-third of the participants (35.5%; 107) indicated that they strongly agreed that their perception of the campus was related to their reason to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina. Approximately one-third of the participants (33.9%; 102) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed with the item, and one-fifth (20.9%; 63) of the participants were not sure. Only 10% (12) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement that their perception of the campus was related to their decision to return. The results are presented in Table 37.

Table 37

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of My Perception of Campus*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.3
Slightly Disagree	2	.7
Disagree	17	5.6
Not Sure	63	20.9
Slightly Agree	41	13.6
Agree	61	20.3
Strongly Agree	107	35.5
Total	301	100.0

In Table 38, results for the desire to finish where I started are depicted. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 5.900 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.676. Over 60% of the participants (61.1%; 184) indicated that they strongly agreed with the item, and an additional 15% (45) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed. Not sure was the response choice for 14.6% (44) of the participants. Over 9% of the participants (9.3%; 28) indicated some degree of disagreement that the desire to finish where they started was related to their return after the hurricane.

Table 38

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Desire to Finish Where I Started*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	12	4.0
Slightly Disagree	4	1.3
Disagree	12	4.0
Not Sure	44	14.6
Slightly Agree	14	4.7
Agree	31	10.3
Strongly Agree	184	61.1
Total	301	100.0

In Table 39, results for the desire to earn a college degree are depicted. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 6.418 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.207. The majority of the participants (76.1%; 229) indicated that they strongly agreed that their desire to earn a college degree was related to their reason for returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. Over 10% of the participants (10.3%; 31) slightly agreed or agreed, and 11.3% (34) of the participants indicated not sure as their response choice for this item. Only 2.3% (7) of the participants indicated some degree of disagreement that their desire to earn a college degree was related to their decision to continue after the hurricane.



Table 39

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of Desire to Earn a College Degree*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	3	1.0
Slightly Disagree	1	.3
Disagree	3	1.0
Not Sure	34	11.3
Slightly Agree	7	2.3
Agree	24	8.0
Strongly Agree	229	76.1
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that their college grade point average was related to their reason to continue their postsecondary education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 5.661 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.626. Over 40% of the participants (47.8%; 144) indicated that they strongly agreed. Approximately one-quarter (24.9%; 75) of the participants indicated that they agreed that their college grade point average was related to the reason they returned, while not sure was the response choice for 16.9% (51) of the participants. Relatively few participants (10.3%; 31) indicated some degree of disagreement that their college grade point average was related to their reason to continue after Hurricane Katrina. The results are presented in Table 40.

Table 40

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of My College Grade Point Average*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.0
Slightly Disagree	4	1.3
Disagree	18	6.0
Not Sure	51	16.9
Slightly Agree	29	9.6
Agree	46	15.3
Strongly Agree	144	47.8
Total	301	100.0

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that their personal involvement on campus was related to their reason for returning to SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The responses ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The mean was 4.747 and the standard deviation (*SD*) was 1.824. Over one-quarter of the participants (26.2%; 79) indicated that they strongly agreed, which was the largest percentage indicated. Approximately one-quarter of the participants (25.6%; 77) indicated not sure as their response choice, and 24.6% (74) indicated that they slightly agreed or agreed. Over 13% of the participants (13.6%; 41) indicated that they disagreed, while only 10% (30) indicated that they slightly disagreed that their personal involvement on campus was related to the reason they continued after Hurricane Katrina. The results are presented in Table 41.

Table 41

*Distribution of Responses for Agreement of My Personal Involvement on Campus*

Responses	Total Sample	
	<i>F</i>	%
Strongly Disagree	22	7.3
Slightly Disagree	8	2.7
Disagree	41	13.6
Not Sure	77	25.6
Slightly Agree	37	12.3
Agree	37	12.3
Strongly Agree	79	26.2
Total	301	100.0

In Table 42, a summary of the findings for Section III of the DREP, Personal Influences, is depicted. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with 13 items regarding their decision to attend SUNO in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Desire to improve myself, my desire to earn a college degree, educational goals, and career aspirations were the items with the highest mean scores. Desire to improve myself had the highest mean (6.445) and had a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.055. Over 70% of the participants (70.8%; 213) indicated that they strongly agreed with the desire to improve myself. Desire to earn a college degree had a mean of 6.418 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.207. Over three-fourths of the participants (76.1%; 229) indicated that they strongly agreed with returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina because of their desire to earn a college degree. As was the case with desire to improve myself and desire to earn a college degree, strongly agree was the most frequent response choice for educational goals (69.4%; 209). The mean was 6.382 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.115 for educational goals. Career aspirations had a mean of 6.322 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.237. Over 60% of the participants (68.4%; 206) indicated that they

strongly agreed that career aspirations were related to their decision to return to SUNO after the hurricane. The items with the lowest mean scores were influences of friends, influences of relatives, and my personal involvement on campus. My personal involvement on campus had a mean of 4.747 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 1.824. For influences of relatives being related to their decision to return after Hurricane Katrina, the mean was 4.405 and standard deviation (*SD*) was 2.135. Influences of friends had a mean of 4.235 and a standard deviation (*SD*) of 2.094.

Table 42

*Means and Standard Deviations presented in order of Score for Items in Section III*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Desire to improve myself	6.445	1.055
My desire to earn a college degree	6.418	1.207
My educational goals	6.382	1.115
My career aspirations	6.322	1.237
My desire to finish where I started	5.900	1.676
My desire to attend an HBCU	5.730	1.713
My college grade point average	5.661	1.626
Student classification status	5.518	1.817
My perception of campus environment	5.438	1.570
Influences of a school advisor	4.810	2.085
My personal involvement on campus	4.747	1.824
Influences of relatives	4.405	2.135
Influences of friends	4.235	2.094

## **Research Questions**

Three research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of educational aspirations for returning students after Hurricane Katrina?
2. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of campus environment as the reason for returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina?
3. Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of financial aid eligibility status as the reason college students continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina?

## **Research Hypotheses**

To examine the research questions, the following seven research hypotheses were posed:

1. There is a significant relationship between students' sex and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
2. There is a significant relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
3. There is a significant relationship between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

4. There is a significant relationship between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
5. There is a significant relationship between students' college grade point average and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
6. There is a significant relationship between students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.
7. There is a significant relationship between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

#### *Research Question 1*

Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of educational aspirations for returning SUNO students after Hurricane Katrina? The first step to address this question was to calculate scores from the DREP that represented educational aspirations. The Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP; see Appendix A) was designed specifically for this study by the researcher with the purpose of examining factors that influenced college students to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Section I of the DREP pertains to demographic information including primary descent group, sex, age group, current residence status, student classification status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance of parents or another close relative at SUNO. These items comprised the independent variables. Section II represents institutional influences. This section contains 15 items that ask participants to indicate the importance of

each item as it relates to their decision to attend SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. Response choices ranged on a 7-point Likert scale from (1) extremely unimportant to (7) extremely important. Section III represents participants' personal influences and contains 14 items that ask participants to indicate the extent to which they disagree or agree with the items. The range extended from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

There were 11 items that represented educational aspirations. The responses from items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 of Section III of the DREP were added together and summed for ease of analysis. The items are related and are aspects of educational aspirations. Means and standard deviations for the items for educational aspirations are presented in Table 43. The higher the mean scores, the more strongly participants agreed that the items related to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Table 43

*Means and Standard Deviations for Items Related to Educational Aspirations (N=301)*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Desire to improve myself	6.445	1.055
My desire to earn a college degree	6.418	1.207
My educational goals	6.382	1.115
My career aspirations	6.322	1.237
My desire to finish where I started	5.900	1.676
My college grade point average	5.661	1.626
Student classification status	5.518	1.817
Influences of a school advisor	4.810	2.085
My personal involvement on campus	4.747	1.824
Influences of relatives	4.405	2.135
Influences of friends	4.235	2.094

To determine the ability of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and having parents or another close relative attend SUNO to predict educational aspirations, a simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted. A simultaneous regression is used to consider all the predictor variables at the same time (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005). As a result of missing data for one or more of the independent variables for 52 participants, a regression analysis was conducted for 249 participants. The ANOVA for the regression of educational aspirations, reported in Table 44, revealed that the model predicted a significant  $F(7,241) = 4.824, p < .01$  with an  $R^2$  of .12, which is a low effect size, suggesting a low or minimal relationship.

Table 44

*ANOVA for Regression for Educational Aspirations (N=249)*

Source		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	Regression	3868.48	7	552.64	4.824	.000
	Residual	27610.85	241	114.57		
	Total	31479.33	248			

*Note.*  $R^2 = .12$ ;  $F(7,271) = 4.824, p < .01$ .

Simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to determine the combination of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attending SUNO for predicting educational aspirations. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are found in Table 45. According to Leech et al. (2005), highly correlated variables at .50 or above suggest multicollinearity problems. High correlations among variables may lead to ambiguous or inaccurate results (Leech et al.). Low correlations among predictors are shown in the tables, which indicate multicollinearity does not exist among the variables.



Table 45

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Educational Aspirations and Predictor Variables (N=249)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Educational Aspirations	61.333	11.266	.111	.100	.144	-.029
Predictor Variables						
1. Sex			-	.018	.194	.043
2. Residence status				-	.120	-.101
3. Pell Grant status					-	-.064
4. Campus housing						-

(table 45 continued)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	5	6	7
Educational Aspirations	61.333	11.266	-.099	.236	.123
Predictor Variables					
5. Current College GPA			-	.055	-.130
6. Attendance before Katrina				-	-.022
7. Parents or Relative Attend					-

*Note.* The mean and standard deviations are not listed for categorical variables, sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college GPA, attendance before Katrina, and parents or relative attend.

The results of the regression of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attending SUNO on educational aspirations are presented in Table 46. One of the seven variables, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, was a significant predictor of educational aspirations. Attendance before Hurricane Katrina was related to participants' educational aspirations. The adjusted  $R^2$  value was .10 which indicates 10% of the variance in educational

aspirations was explained by the model. The regression was significant for attending SUNO before Hurricane Katrina ( $t = 4.330, p < .01$ ).

Sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college GPA, and parents or another close relative attending SUNO were not related to educational aspirations. The regression was not significant for sex ( $t = .757, p > .01$ ), for residence status ( $t = 1.521, p > .01$ ), for Pell Grant status ( $t = 2.301, p > .01$ ), for campus housing status ( $t = -1.042, p > .01$ ), for current college GPA ( $t = -.670, p > .01$ ), or for parents or another close relative attending SUNO ( $t = 2.282, p > .01$ ). There was a significant relationship between attendance at SUNO before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations. Attendance at SUNO before Hurricane Katrina was the only significance found in the model.

Table 46

*Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Sex, Residence Status, Pell Grant Status, Campus Housing Status, Current College GPA, Attendance before Katrina, and Parents or Relative Attended SUNO Predicting Educational Aspirations as the Reason for Returning (N=249)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	SEB	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sex	1.178	1.557	.047	.757	.450
Residence Status	6.918	4.549	.094	1.521	.130
Pell Grant Status	3.573	1.553	.147	2.301	.022
Campus Housing Status	-1.100	1.055	-.064	-1.042	.298
Current College GPA	-.382	.571	-.042	-.670	.504
Attendance before Katrina	6.363	1.470	.268	4.330	.000*
Parents or Relative Attended	2.470	1.082	.142	2.282	.023
Constant	48.093	6.043			

*Note.*  $R^2 = .12$ ;  $F(7,241) = 4.824$ ,  $*p < .01$ .

### *Research Question 2*

Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of campus environment as the reason college students continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina? Responses from items that represented campus environment were calculated to address this question.

There were 15 items that represented campus environment. The items were added together and totaled for ease of analysis. The responses from items 1-12 and 14 of Section II, and items 1 and 9 of Section III of the DREP were totaled to obtain a total summative score. The items are related and consistent with campus environment. Means and standard deviations for the items for campus environment are presented in Table 47. The higher the mean scores, the more important participants rated the items in their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Table 47

*Means and Standard Deviations for Items Related to Campus Environment*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic major availability	6.093	1.613
My desire to attend an HBCU	5.730	1.713
Supportive services on campus	5.608	1.665
My perception of campus environment	5.438	1.570
Cost of attendance	5.408	1.811
Student/Teacher ratio	5.398	1.758
College entrance requirements	5.146	1.865
Location of the university	5.059	1.932
Small class size	5.010	1.767
University recruitment efforts	4.880	1.954
Temporary housing availability	4.833	2.156
Preference to attend a commuter campus	4.558	1.813
Offering online courses	4.485	1.965
Size of the university	4.196	1.910
Racial composition	3.973	2.009

To determine the predictive ability of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance of parents or another close relative at SUNO for campus environment, a simultaneous multiple regression was conducted. The ANOVA for the regression of campus environment, reported in Table 48, revealed that the model does not significantly predict with an  $F(7,241) = .936$ ,  $p > .01$  with an  $R^2$  of .03. The results indicate that none of the predictor variables were related to campus environment.

Table 48

*ANOVA for Regression for Campus Environment (N=249)*

Source		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	Regression	1605.88	7	229.41	.936	.479
	Residual	59083.13	241	245.16		
	Total	60689.02	248			

$R^2 = .03$ ;  $F(7,271) = .936$ .

Multiple regression was conducted to determine the combination of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attending SUNO for predicting campus environment as the reason participants returned after Hurricane Katrina. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are found in Table 49. There are low correlations among the predictors ranging from -.064 to .194.

Table 49

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Campus Environment and Predictor Variables (N=249)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Campus Environment	76.763	15.643	.063	-.080	.042	.081
Predictor Variables						
1. Sex			-	.018	.194	.043
2. Residence status				-	.120	-.101
3. Pell Grant status					-	-.064
4. Campus housing						-

(table 49 continued)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	5	6	7
Campus Environment	76.763	15.643	-.069	.060	.069
Predictor Variables					
5. Current College GPA			-	.055	-.130
6. Attendance before Katrina				-	-.022
7. Parents or Relative Attend					-

*Note.* The mean and standard deviations are not listed for categorical variables, sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college GPA, attendance before Katrina, parents or relative attend.

The results of the regression for campus environment are presented in Table 50. The regression was not significant for sex ( $t = .590, p > .01$ ), for residence status ( $t = -1.203, p > .01$ ), for Pell Grant status ( $t = .613, p > .01$ ), campus housing status ( $t = 1.013, p > .01$ ), for college GPA ( $t = -.985, p > .01$ ), for attendance before Katrina ( $t = .867, p > .01$ ), or for attendance of parents or another close relative ( $t = .605, p > .01$ ). Sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college GPA, attendance before Katrina, and attendance of parents or another close relative at SUNO are not related to campus environment.

Table 50

*Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Sex, Residence Status, Pell Grant Status, Campus Housing Status, Current College GPA, Attendance before Katrina, and Parents or Relative Attended SUNO Predicting Campus Environment as the Reason for Returning (N=249)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	SEB	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sex	1.344	2.278	.039	.590	.556
Residence Status	-8.003	6.654	-.079	-1.203	.230
Pell Grant Status	1.392	2.272	.041	.613	.541
Campus Housing Status	1.563	1.543	.066	1.013	.312
Current College GPA	-.822	.835	-.066	-.985	.326
Attendance before Katrina	1.864	2.150	.057	.867	.387
Parents or Relative Attended	.958	1.583	.040	.605	.546
Constant	84.838	8.840			

Note.  $R^2 = .03$ ;  $F(7,241) = .936$ .

### *Research Question 3*

Which variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attendance at SUNO) are significant predictors of financial aid eligibility status as the reason college students continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina? In order to address this question, responses were totaled to obtain a total summative score from the DREP that represented financial aid eligibility status.

There were 2 items that represented financial aid eligibility status. The responses from items 13 and 15 of Section II of the DREP were added together and totaled for ease of analysis. The items are related and consistent with one another. Means and standard deviations for the items for financial aid eligibility status are presented in Table 51. High mean scores indicate that participants rated these items as important in their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Table 51

*Means and Standard Deviations for Items Related to Financial Aid Eligibility Status (N=249)*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Financial aid eligibility status	6.033	1.582
Scholarship availability status	5.714	1.752

To determine the predictive ability of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance of parents or another close relative at SUNO as the reason participants returned after Hurricane Katrina, a simultaneous multiple regression was conducted for the dependent variable, financial aid eligibility status. The ANOVA for the regression of financial aid eligibility status, reported in Table 52, revealed that the model did predict a significant  $F(7,241) = 4.309, p < .01$  with an  $R^2$  of .11, but with a low effect size.

Table 52

*ANOVA for Regression for Financial Aid Eligibility Status (N=249)*

Source		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	Regression	209.89	7	29.96	4.309	.000
	Residual	1676.90	241	9.96		
	Total	1886.80	248			

$p < .01$ .

Multiple regression was conducted to determine the combination of sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and parents or another close relative attending SUNO for predicting financial aid eligibility status as the reason participants continue their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina. The dependent variable was financial aid eligibility status. Means, standard



deviations, and intercorrelations are found in Table 53. Low correlations among predictors are shown and are not significant.

Table 53

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Financial Aid Eligibility Status and Predictor Variables (N=249)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Financial Aid Status	11.855	2.758	.217	-.027	.273	.031
Predictor Variables						
1. Sex			-	.018	.194	.043
2. Residence status				-	.120	-.101
3. Pell Grant status					-	-.064
4. Campus housing						-

(table 53 continued)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	5	6	7
Financial Aid Status	11.855	2.758	-.104	.027	.057
Predictor Variables					
5. Current College GPA			-	.055	-.130
6. Attendance before Katrina				-	-.022
7. Parents or Relative Attend					-

*Note.* The mean and standard deviations are not listed for categorical variables, sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, current college GPA, attendance before Katrina, parents or relative attend.

The results of the regression for financial aid eligibility status are presented in Table 54. Two of the seven predictor variables were significant predictors of financial aid eligibility status as the reason for returning after Hurricane Katrina. Receiving a Pell Grant contributed most to predicting financial aid eligibility status. Sex also contributed to the prediction. The adjusted  $R^2$

value was .09 which indicates 9% of the variance in financial aid eligibility status was explained by the model. Thus, a low effect size, the regression was significant for Pell Grant status ( $t = 3.867, p < .01$ ) and for sex ( $t = 2.531, p < .01$ ). Receiving a Pell Grant and sex are related to financial aid eligibility status as the reason participants returned to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina.

Residence status ( $t = -.892, p > .01$ ), campus housing status ( $t = .421, p > .01$ ), college GPA ( $t = -.523, p > .01$ ), attendance before Katrina ( $t = .763, p > .01$ ), and parents or relative attended SUNO ( $t = .487, p > .01$ ) were not related to the dependent variable, financial aid eligibility status.

Table 54

*Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Sex, Residence Status, Pell Grant Status, Campus Housing Status, Current College GPA, Attendance before Katrina, and Parents or Close Relative Attended SUNO Predicting Financial Aid Eligibility Status as the Reason for Returning (N=249)*

Variable	B	SEB	$\beta$	t	p
Sex	.971	.384	.159	2.531	.012*
Residence Status	-1.000	1.121	-.056	-.892	.373
Pell Grant Status	1.480	.383	.249	3.867	.000*
Campus Housing Status	.109	.260	.026	.421	.674
Current College GPA	-.074	.141	-.033	-.523	.601
Attendance before Katrina	.276	.362	.048	.763	.446
Parents or Relative Attended	.130	.267	.031	.487	.626
Constant	11.225	1.489			

Note.  $R^2 = .11$ ;  $F(7,241) = 4.31$ ,  $*p < .01$ .

## Qualitative Themes

Participants were asked to respond to three open-ended items for the purpose of identifying factors not addressed in the DREP. The three open-ended items were: “I came back to New Orleans because \_\_\_\_\_,” “I view Hurricane Katrina as \_\_\_\_\_,” and “Thoughts, opinions, and experiences regarding educational pursuits at SUNO after Hurricane Katrina are \_\_\_\_\_.” The participants’ responses were qualitatively analyzed by identifying themes, which is a procedure used in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A total of 246 participants commented on the first item (return to New Orleans), 229 responded to the second item (view of Hurricane Katrina), and 116 participants commented on their thoughts, opinions, and experiences of their educational pursuits after Hurricane Katrina. After listing and coding, data were reduced. Participants’ responses were retrieved from the DREP and placed in three categories that represented the three open-ended items. Similar responses from each item were highlighted and examined for themes.

The first open-ended item required participants to respond to the statement, “I came back to New Orleans because\_\_\_\_\_.” Ten themes emerged for this item. Frequencies for each theme are presented in Table 55. The theme that emerged most strongly from this item was Birthplace. Of the 246 participants who chose to respond this item, 35% reported that they were born and raised in New Orleans. Educational Growth emerged as a second theme; 23% of respondents indicated a strong desire to finish their higher education degree. In a third theme, 13% of respondents reported that they returned because of their Love for New Orleans. Participants also felt a need to return to New Orleans because of their family; 11% reported family obligations played a significant role in their return. Other themes that emerged less strongly included Homesick (participants reported that they missed home; 5%); Love for SUNO

(4%); Job Commitment (participants reported that they were committed to their jobs and needed to return to New Orleans; 3%); and Role in Rebuilding New Orleans, Unaffected by Storm, and Property Owner, each indicated by 2% of the participants.

Table 55

*Distribution of Responses of Coming Back New Orleans*

Theme	<i>F</i>	%
Birthplace	85	35
Educational Growth	56	23
Love for New Orleans	31	13
Family Obligations	28	11
Homesick	13	05
Love for SUNO	11	04
Job Commitment	7	03
Role in Rebuilding New Orleans	6	02
Unaffected by Storm	5	02
Property Owner	4	02
Total	246	100

The second open-ended item asked participants to respond to the statement, “I view Hurricane Katrina as \_\_\_\_\_.” Nine themes emerged from this item. Frequencies for each theme are presented in Table 56. Themes relating to participants’ view of Hurricane Katrina include Catastrophe, Chance for a New Beginning, Revelation, Learning Experience, Blessing in Disguise, Minor Setback, Act of God, Good/Bad Event, and Method of Obtaining Something. The most prominent theme that emerged was viewing Hurricane Katrina as a Catastrophe (22% of the responses). In contrast, 16% indicated that the storm provided them with a Chance for a New Beginning. Additionally, 15% reported they view Hurricane Katrina as an eye opener or wake-up call resulting in the theme, Revelation. Although the storm caused severe damage to

New Orleans and to the higher education system in New Orleans, 11% of those who responded to this item viewed the storm as a Learning Experience and 10% saw it as a Blessing in Disguise. Two additional themes, Minor Setback and Act of God, each were mentioned by 9% of the respondents. Finally, themes that emerged less clearly were Good/Bad Event (5%), which perhaps refers to participants achieving more after the storm although homes and other material possessions were lost, and Method of Obtaining Something (3%), in which participants reported that they view Hurricane Katrina as a stepping stone or a means of access.

Table 56

*Distribution of Responses of View of Hurricane Katrina*

Theme	<i>F</i>	%
Catastrophe	51	22
Chance for a New Beginning	37	16
Revelation	35	15
Learning Experience	24	11
Blessing in Disguise	23	10
Minor Setback	20	09
Act of God	20	09
Good/Bad Event	11	05
Method of Obtaining Something	8	03
Total	229	100

The final open-ended item prompted participants to share any thoughts, opinions, and experiences with regard to resuming their educational pursuits at SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. Eight themes emerged from this item. Frequencies for each theme are presented in Table 57. Themes relating to participants' thoughts, opinions, and experiences include Impressed with SUNO, Supportive Professors/Instructors/Advisors, Higher Education Attainment, Attracted to Academic Programs, Historical Attraction, Collegial Environment, Comfortable at SUNO, and

Family Legacy. Thirty-five participants (30%) indicated responses that resulted in the theme Impressed with SUNO. Along a similar theme, 26% of the participants provided responses regarding their feelings toward the university's faculty and staff. They expressed feelings of support and comfort from the institution. A strong desire to earn a college degree was reflected in the theme Higher Education Attainment (17%), while 8% of the participants were Attracted to the university's Academic Programs. Although SUNO lost some of its academic programs, some of the participants returned as a result of the remaining programs at the university. Seven participants (6%) expressed their return to SUNO because it is an Historically Black Institution. Two themes, Collegial Environment and Comfortable at SUNO, each were described by 5% of the respondents. Only 3% of the participants reported that they returned because a family member had attended the university (theme of Family Legacy).

Table 57

*Distribution of Responses of Thoughts, Opinions, and Experiences of Participants*

Theme	<i>F</i>	%
Impressed with SUNO	35	30
Supportive Professors/Instructor/Advisors	30	26
Higher Education Attainment	20	17
Attracted to Academic Programs	9	08
Historical Attraction	7	06
Collegial Environment	6	05
Comfortable at SUNO	6	05
Family Legacy	3	03
Total	116	100

## Summary

In this chapter, the results of this study were described. The DREP was used to obtain information from participants regarding their reasons for continuing their education after Hurricane Katrina. The first research question utilized a set of predictor variables (sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance of parents or another close relative at SUNO) to determine if they predicted educational aspirations as the reason for returning to SUNO after Hurricane Katrina. The overall *F*-statistic was significant for educational aspirations. The variable, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, was the only predictor related to educational aspirations. The regression showed 10% of the variance in educational aspirations was explained by the model.

The second research question also utilized the same set of predictor variables. The variables were used to determine if there was a relationship with campus environment. Regression coefficients were not significant on any of the variables and campus environment.

The third research question used the same predictor variables to determine if there was a relationship with financial aid eligibility status. The overall *F*-statistic was significant for financial aid eligibility status. Two predictor variables were significant. Receiving a Pell Grant and sex were significant predictors related to financial aid eligibility status. The regression indicated 9% of the variance in financial aid eligibility status was explained by the model.

The three open-ended items on the DREP offered additional reasons participants have resumed their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and their view of the storm. The majority of the participants who responded to the first open-ended items indicated that they returned because they were born and raised in New Orleans. They viewed Hurricane

Katrina as a catastrophe, and the majority of the participants who responded to the last open-ended item indicated that they were impressed with SUNO.

Chapter Five further discusses the results of this study, provides limitations of the study, implications for counseling, and offers recommendations for future research.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings. The results of this study support prior research, as is discussed in this chapter. Limitations of the study are presented, along with implications for college counselors, crisis counseling, and college administrators. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons college students at SUNO chose to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, this study examined a set of variables including sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative, that best predicted educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status as the reasons college students continued their post-secondary education after Hurricane Katrina.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

College student persistence can affect every aspect of the higher education system. As a result, many university officials have become very concerned with retaining their students until degree completion. Additionally, policy makers at the state and federal levels have become interested in college student persistence and graduation rates (Titus, 2006). The primary goal for institutions of higher learning across the nation is student persistence (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). This study examined several variables affecting college student persistence after one of the worst natural disasters in the United States history.

Prior research has shown that educational aspirations, campus environment, college grade point average, residence status, and financial aid eligibility status impact college student retention (Astin, 1982; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Smith & Allen, 1984; St. John, Paulsen, & Carter, 2005; Thomas, 1981; Tinto, 1993). This study built on the work of Tinto and his Theory of Individual Departure, also referred to as the Student Integration Model. The model focuses on student integration into academic and social systems of higher education. According to Tinto, background traits and pre-entry characteristics influence a student's academic performance and college retention. Additionally, academic and social systems are relevant to a student's decision to persist or withdraw from higher education. Academics refer to the formal education of students such as college grade point average, and social systems refer to the constant interactions among students, faculty, and staff. According to the Student Integration Model, strong academic and social systems increase college student persistence. Findings in the present study support this tenet of the model: 72.7% of the participants in this study indicated some degree of agreement that college grade point average was related to their decision to persist after Hurricane Katrina. Results add to the knowledge base, because no other research studies have examined college student persistence in the aftermath of the hurricane.

The Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP) was designed by me specifically to explore factors that influenced college students to resume their educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Also, predictor variables including sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative were examined. The

variables were used to predict educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status as the reasons college students continued their education after a natural disaster.

The ANOVA for the regression of educational aspirations revealed that the model predicted at an overall significant  $F(7,241) = 4.824, p < .01$  and 10% of the variance in educational aspirations was explained by the model. Using all of the predictor variables simultaneously produced significance for the model for educational aspirations. Educational aspirations have been found to impact college student persistence (Astin, 1982; Smith & Allen, 1984; Tinto, 1993). On a scale of 1 to 7, two of the items with the highest mean scores related to educational aspirations were desire to improve myself ( $M = 6.445$ ) and desire to earn a college degree ( $M = 6.418$ ). Over 70% of the participants strongly agreed that their desire to improve themselves was related to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, 76.1% of the participants strongly agreed that their desire to earn a college degree was related to their decision to continue their education after the hurricane. Of the 246 participants who responded to the first open-ended item, 23% reported that they returned to New Orleans to pursue educational growth. Additionally, 17% of the 116 respondents to the last open-ended item reported higher education attainment as their reason for returning. Research has shown that students' educational goals are linked to their educational aspirations. According to Tinto, students are more likely to complete college when they possess higher educational goals. Over 60% of the participants strongly agreed that their educational goals were related to their decision to return after the hurricane. Similar to educational goals, over 60% of the participants strongly agreed that their career aspirations were related to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Campus environment was not related to college students' decisions to continue their education after the hurricane. The ANOVA for the regression of campus environment revealed that the model did not significantly predict with an  $F(7,241) = .936$   $p > .01$  and an  $R^2$  of .03. Although the model did not predict significance, participants assigned some degree of importance to several items related to campus environment. For instance, 78.8% of the participants indicated some degree of importance to their desire to attend an HBCU. Also, 69.4% of the participants assigned some degree of importance to the item, "my perception of campus environment." According to Berger and Milem (1999), the institution's type, along with other factors, plays a role in determining the campus environment.

As was the case with educational aspirations, the ANOVA for the regression of financial aid eligibility status revealed that the model predicted an overall significant  $F(7,241) = 4.309$ ,  $p < .01$  and 9% of the variance in financial aid eligibility status was explained by the model. In fact, over 60% of the participants indicated that financial aid eligibility status was extremely important to their decision to continue after Hurricane Katrina. Financial aid availability influences college student persistence (Boyer, 2005; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992; Paulsen & St. John, 2002). Over half of the participants indicated that scholarship availability was extremely important to their decision to return after the hurricane. Overwhelmingly, the majority of the participants in the study were African Americans. According to St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005), a significant number of African American college students choose their institutions of higher learning because of the financial aid offers and tuition cost.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 1*

Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' sex and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. The findings

for this study revealed that there is no relationship between sex and students' educational aspirations. Also, there was no relationship between students' sex and campus environment. However, the findings revealed a relationship between students' sex and financial aid eligibility status. The regression showed significance for sex ( $t = 2.531, p < .01$ ). In this study, 70.4% of the participants were females. These results lend support to prior research. There has been an increase in the population of female students enrolled in colleges and universities over the past decade (Peter & Horn, 2005). According to Peter and Horn, college student persistence has increased more for female students in comparison to their male counterparts.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 2*

Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. The findings for this study revealed no relationship between students' residence status and educational aspirations. No relationship was found between students' residence status and campus environment. Additionally, the regression showed no significance for students' residence status and financial aid eligibility status. Although 97.7% of the participants reside in-state, no significant difference was found related to their decision to continue their education. However, the most prominent theme in the first open-ended item was Birthplace. Of the 246 participants who responded to the item, 35% reported that they returned after the hurricane because they were born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 3*

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. No relationship was found between students' Pell Grant status and educational aspirations, and no

relationship was found between students' Pell Grant status and campus environment. However, a significant relationship was found between students' Pell Grant status and financial aid eligibility status. The regression was significant for Pell Grant status ( $t = 3.867, p < .01$ ). Over 60% of the participants indicated that their financial aid eligibility status was extremely important to their decision to continue their education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, over 40% of the participants indicated that the cost of attendance was extremely important to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina. Over half of the participants indicated that scholarship availability was extremely important to their decision to continue after the hurricane. Additionally, 67.8% of the participants indicated that they were receiving a Pell Grant. These findings are consistent with a considerable body of previous research. According to Laanan (2003), students are more likely to persist when offered financial and tuition support from colleges and universities. Astin (1982) found that scholarships and grants have a significant impact on college student persistence. According to Tinto (1982), the financial needs of economically disadvantaged students affect college student persistence. Paulsen and St. John (2002) concurred and found that low-income college students choose post-secondary institutions because of low tuition cost and student financial aid. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that students receiving financial assistance are more likely to persist toward degree completion.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 4*

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. Although research suggests that living on campus influences college student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), the regression for this study revealed that there is no relationship

between students' campus housing status and educational aspirations. The findings for this study revealed no relationship between campus housing status and campus environment. Also, no relationship was found between campus housing status and financial aid eligibility status. However, over one-third of the participants indicated that temporary housing was extremely important in their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, SUNO did not offer student housing because it is a commuter campus. Over 30% of the participants returned as a result of campus housing. The majority of SUNO's student population resided in areas that were significantly damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, the temporary housing provided by FEMA allowed many of the participants an opportunity to return to college after the hurricane.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 5*

Hypothesis 5 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' college grade point average and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. No relationship was found between college grade point average and educational aspirations, between college grade point average and campus environment, or between college grade point average and financial aid eligibility status. However, over 40% of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed that their college grade point average was related to their decision to continue after Hurricane Katrina. Bean and Metzner (1985) found that earning good grades influences college student persistence.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 6*

Hypothesis 6 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. The findings for this study revealed that there was a significant relationship between

students' attendance before Hurricane Katrina ( $t = 4.330, p < .01$ ) and educational aspirations. Over half of the participants indicated that they attended SUNO before the hurricane. However, no significant relationship was found between attendance before Hurricane Katrina and campus environment. Also, there was no significant relationship between attendance before Hurricane Katrina and financial aid eligibility status.

#### *Discussion of Findings for Hypothesis 7*

Hypothesis 7 stated that there is a significant relationship between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status. No relationship was found between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and educational aspirations. Also, no significant relationship was found between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and campus environment, or between students' parents' or another close relative's attendance at SUNO and financial aid eligibility status. The lack of significance for this hypothesis may be related to the fact that over half of the participants indicated that their parents or another close relative did not attend SUNO.

Overall, significant relationships were found on three variables. A significant relationship was found between attendance before Hurricane Katrina and educational aspirations. There was a significant relationship between Pell Grant status and financial aid eligibility status, and between sex and financial aid eligibility status. No research exists on the predictor variable, attendance before Hurricane Katrina. However, the findings for Pell Grant status and sex are supported by prior research. Tinto (1993) postulated that grants and other forms of financial aid enhance college student persistence, and Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1992) found that students who receive some form of financial aid assistance show an increase in persistence.



The findings for sex are supported by previous research that indicates women have a higher rate of enrollment and college student persistence than men (Manzo, 2004).

### **Limitations**

Limitations in research studies are considered to be conditions beyond the researcher's control (Charles & Mertler, 2002). Limitations of this study include the sample of participants who were recruited to complete the DREP, data collection procedures, and design of survey instrument. The first limitation of this study involved sampling bias. Participants were recruited from 12 classrooms at SUNO. Only participants who attended the classes at the time the survey instrument was administered were surveyed. Additionally, grade levels of participants were disproportionate. Over 40% of the participants were college freshmen (42.6%; 128), 17.3% (52) were sophomores, 11% (33) were juniors, 18.9% (57) were seniors and 10% (30) were graduate students. Therefore, the sample of participants may not have been representative of the population of all college students at SUNO who were continuing their education after Hurricane Katrina. However, SUNO's enrollment of college freshmen were 30% (709), 15% (342) were sophomores, 12% (277) were juniors, 23% (535) were seniors, 16% (377) were graduate students, and the remaining 4% (104) did not have a classification status listed.

The second limitation of this study relates to data collection procedures. Participants were asked to complete and return the survey while I was present in the classroom. As a result of my presence in the classroom, some of the participants may have provided socially desirable responses. Over 50% of the faculty at SUNO utilize Blackboard which is a web-based program used as an enhancement tool for teaching and learning. Therefore, an online survey placed on Blackboard could have been an option for participants.

The final limitation of this study includes the design of the survey instrument. The DREP did not reflect all of the participants' reasons for continuing their education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. There are many variables that affect college student persistence; it was not possible to include all the reasons a student would persist after a crisis. However, the three open-ended items on the instrument minimized this limitation by allowing participants to express additional reasons for continuing their education after Hurricane Katrina.

### **Implications for College Counselors, Crisis Counseling, and College Administrators**

#### *College Counselors*

The results of this study enhance the knowledge base of college counselors. Hurricane Katrina was a major crisis that severely affected the city of New Orleans and surrounding areas. It is imperative for college counselors in this geographic region to be aware of how college students are affected by a crisis. Also, special attention must be given to students' reactions to a crisis. According to Echterling, Presbury, and McKee (2005), awareness of how individuals respond to a crisis event is crucial. Counselors must be ready to assist students who have experienced a crisis and understand the reasons students continue their post-secondary education after the crisis. Supportive relationships should be fostered between students and counselors. Also, college counselors should establish rapport with students to build trust, which in turn, facilitates the establishment of a therapeutic alliance.

An important role of the college counselor is to assist with the retention rate of the institution by providing supportive services to students who have experienced a crisis. Because personal problems can lead to withdrawal from the institution (Rice & Alford, 1989), supportive services are critical to persistence. Retention is viewed as a holistic approach to keeping students in college. Every entity at the institution must play a role in retaining students. Therefore, college

counseling is an important tool that can further address the needs of students who have experienced a crisis. According to Tinto (1993), counseling is an integral part of the educational process and has been proven to be effective on college campuses. College counselors can play a significant role in assisting students during a major crisis such as a hurricane or other natural disasters. Therefore, college counselors should be available to respond immediately to students after a major crisis.

It is important for counselors to understand that ecological crises may result in loss of a community, job, family member, and other significant factors in a student's life. To effectively assist with retaining the student, approaches from a systemic perspective are warranted. From a systemic point of view, many African Americans are reluctant to seek counseling and to disclose their personal issues. College counselors should take into account that this reluctance is culturally normative for African Americans and should be sensitive to this population and other under-represented groups of college students who have experienced a traumatic event.

College counselors should refer students who have experienced a natural disaster to programs that can further provide assistance to help them remain in school. There may be a need to develop counseling groups to assist students who have experienced a crisis, to help them become aware that others may be facing some of the same challenges after a crisis. Also, collaboration with other departments is key to helping students cope with the crisis situation more effectively. In this study, 75% of the participants indicated some degree of importance to supportive services on campus as their reason for returning after the hurricane. Additionally, of the 116 participants who responded to the final open-ended item, 26% indicated that the support from the professors, instructors, and advisors was a reason they continued their education after the hurricane.

### *Crisis Counseling*

The results of this study may enhance the knowledge of counselors who respond to crisis situations. Counselors should be aware of how individuals view crises in order to effectively assist them. In this study, of the 229 participants who responded to the second open-ended item, 22% reported that they viewed Hurricane Katrina as a catastrophe. However, 10% of the participants viewed the crisis as a blessing in disguise. In other words, the same event is viewed differently.

Counselors responding to crisis situations must be aware of how individuals react to traumatic events. According to Echterling, Presbury, and McKee (2005), behavioral, affective, somatic, interpersonal, cognitive, and spiritual tenets describe how individuals react to a crisis situation. Behavioral describes what individuals do when exposed to a crisis. Affective describes how individuals feel and somatic explains how individuals physically respond to the crisis event. Interpersonal describes their reactions to others and cognitive focuses on how individuals think. Also, individuals' beliefs and values are related to their spiritual reactions to the crisis situations. For example, in the second open-ended item of this study, 9% of the participants viewed Hurricane Katrina as an act of God.

Counselors should understand that students who have experienced the same crisis must be treated differently, because students respond to crisis situations differently (Collins & Collins, 2005). For example, if two students experience the same traumatic event, and one student comes from a disadvantaged community where violence is prevalent and the other comes from a resource-rich community, then the students might respond to the crisis situation differently. It is recommended that counselors apply an approach that is applicable to the survivor.

### *College Administrators*

Results of this study may help to increase college administrators' awareness of variables affecting retention after a major disaster. The predictor variable of attendance before Hurricane Katrina was found to be related to participants' decision to return after the storm. Natural disasters can occur anywhere in the country, such as hurricanes on the Gulf and East coasts, tornadoes in the Midwest, and earthquakes on the West coast. These disasters can affect the higher education system and cause a significant reduction in student enrollment. The results of this study provide college administrators with information on factors that will help increase college student persistence after a major crisis. Non-residential campuses can benefit from the results of this study. Administrators at commuter institutions should develop a detailed plan for obtaining housing assistance and accommodations for their students in case of an ecological crisis such as a hurricane, tornado, or earthquake. Over half the participants in this study indicated that temporary housing availability was related to their decision to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Campuses that do not offer a variety of courses online or utilize Blackboard as a learning tool should adopt a technology component or enhance their current technology component to ensure that their students continue to matriculate in the event that the institution is temporarily closed due to a severe crisis. In this study, approximately half of the participants indicated some degree of importance to offering online courses as their reason for continuing after the hurricane.

College administrators should be prepared to assist students with securing adequate financial aid packages. Informational workshops and seminars on securing financial aid should be offered. According to Thomas (1981), obtaining more state and federal financial assistance is

vital for college student retention. In this study, Pell Grant recipient status was related to college students' decisions to continue their education after Hurricane Katrina.

Because attendance before the crisis was significantly related to the return of participants in this study, administrators must ensure that their students experience a smooth transition back to the university. Perhaps more faculty-student mentor programs could be established to assist students with becoming socially integrated into the institution. In Tinto's Student Integration Model, it has been noted that integration increases the likelihood of college student persistence. In this study, over 70% of the participants indicated some degree of importance to student/teacher ratio as their reason for continuing their education after Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, 26% of the participants who responded to the last open-ended item indicated that supportive professors/instructors/advisors were related to their decision to continue after the hurricane.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is a need to further understand college student persistence. Specifically, further study needs to be given to college student persistence after a major crisis. This study was conducted at one institution affected by a natural disaster. There is a need to expand the sample of participants by surveying students from all the institutions affected on the Gulf Coast Region by this natural disaster.

Other variables affecting retention could be explored; for example, mentoring or cultural variables could be examined. In the open-ended section of the study, approximately one-fourth of the participants indicated that they returned because of the supportive staff members at SUNO. Perhaps, participants viewed the staff as mentors because of the guidance and support received after the crisis.

Additionally, a similar study could be conducted from a qualitative perspective to gather more in-depth responses from students who have continued their education after a crisis. A large number of participants responded to the three open-ended items in this study, which is an indication that participants are willing to share their experiences. A qualitative study would provide additional information on their experiences with Hurricane Katrina and students' decision to continue their education.

A comparative study might be conducted with returning students who were enrolled before Hurricane Katrina and those who enrolled for the first time after the hurricane. Also, students who did not return might be studied to add knowledge of reasons for failing to return. Some students chose to attend other universities and others chose not to return at all after the hurricane. Understanding their reasons for not returning after a crisis would add to knowledge regarding how the severity of a crisis can affect post-secondary education.

This study could be adapted using a population of students who have experienced other kinds of crises such as a tornado, earthquake, or a loss of any kind. This will allow participants to indicate the reason they persist toward degree completion after any kind of crisis, regardless of the magnitude. Also, faculty and staff could be studied to add to the literature, given the fact that most of the affected universities experienced a reduction in staff after the hurricane.

### **Conclusions**

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused severe damage to the higher education system in the city of New Orleans. This study examined the reasons college students have continued their post-secondary education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The goals of this study were to (a) explore the reasons college students have continued their post-secondary education after a major crisis; and (b) increase understanding of college student persistence after a major

crisis. Several retention variables were explored: sex, residence status, Pell Grant status, campus housing status, college grade point average, attendance before Hurricane Katrina, and attendance at SUNO by parents or another close relative. The variables were used to predict educational aspirations, campus environment, and financial aid eligibility status.

In this study, multiple regression models were used to predict the reason why college students continued their education after Hurricane Katrina. The findings of this study suggest that attendance before Hurricane Katrina was related to college students' decisions to continue their education in the aftermath of the hurricane. Additionally, receiving a Pell Grant was related to students' decision to return after Hurricane Katrina. The majority of the participants in this study were receiving a Pell Grant. The results of this study support prior research that states financial assistance from the institution significantly influences college student persistence (Boyer, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Tinto, 1993). Also, the majority of the participants were females. The findings of this study indicate that sex was related to college students' decisions to continue their education after the hurricane. The findings support past research which indicates that women persist toward degree completion faster than their male counterparts (Manzo, 2004; Peter & Horn, 2005).

The Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP) was a survey instrument that contained an open-ended section used to collect data from the participants. The open-ended items allowed participants to further explore their reasons for returning after Hurricane Katrina. The most prominent theme in the first open-ended item was Birthplace; 35% of the participants reported that they were born and raised in New Orleans. Also, of the 246 participants who chose to respond to the first open-ended item, 23% reported a strong desire to finish their college



degree. This response is consistent with the findings of this study regarding attendance at SUNO before Katrina.

Additionally, participants were asked about their view of the hurricane since natural disasters are inevitable. This item produced several notable themes such as Catastrophe, Chance for a New Beginning, Revelation, Learning Experience, and a Blessing in Disguise. The responses provide data on how participants view one of the worst natural disasters in history.

The third open-ended item required participants to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences related to their return after Hurricane Katrina. The most prominent theme was Impressed with SUNO. Of the 116 participants who responded to the item, one-third of the participants indicated that they returned because they were impressed with the university. Participants expressed that the support of the university's faculty and staff was related to their decision to continue their education after the storm. Also, participants indicated that they were attracted to SUNO's academic programs despite the cut in some of the programs. In other words, participants still possessed a desire to matriculate at the university regardless of changes in some of the programs.

A large number of participants chose to respond to all three open-ended items. Participants were eager to further express their reasons for continuing their education in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The large number of participants who responded to the open-ended section of the survey suggests a need to conduct further research. Participants were willing to share their story, perhaps as a way to cope and further deal with the crisis. Additionally, they may believe that their stories can assist other college students who have experienced a crisis or eventually may experience a crisis.

It should be noted that natural disasters will continue to occur and affect the higher education system. Institutions of higher education must be prepared, if retention and graduation is their primary goal. Just as Hurricane Katrina inundated 80% of New Orleans, a tornado can wipe out a community in seconds, and an earthquake can destroy a city. University officials should develop disaster plans or review their current plans to help retain college students, and should be prepared to assist with restoring the higher education system when a natural disaster occurs.

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## Appendix A

### Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits (DREP)

## DECISIONS TO RESUME EDUCATIONAL PURSUITS INSTRUMENT “DREP”

**Directions:** Please answer the following items on this questionnaire. The information you supply will be used for research purposes only and kept strictly confidential. Provide **ONE** response for each item. Please do not indicate your name on this form.

### SECTION I Demographic Information

1. Please indicate your primary descent group
  - ☐ African American
  - ☐ Anglo-American
  - ☐ Asian-American
  - ☐ Hispanic-American
  - ☐ Native American
  - ☐ Bi/Multiracial
  - ☐ Other
2. Please indicate your sex
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Male
3. Please indicate your age group
  - ☐ 18 or below
  - ☐ 19-21
  - ☐ 22-25
  - ☐ 26-33
  - ☐ 34-40
  - ☐ 41 or above
4. Please indicate your current residence status
  - ☐ In-State Resident
  - ☐ Out-of-State Resident
5. Please indicate your student classification at the University
  - ☐ Freshman
  - ☐ Sophomore
  - ☐ Junior
  - ☐ Senior
  - ☐ Graduate
6. Please indicate your Pell Grant Status
  - ☐ Receiving a Pell Grant
  - ☐ Not Receiving a Pell Grant
7. Please indicate your campus housing status
  - ☐ Reside on Campus
  - ☐ Do not Reside on Campus

8. Please indicate your current college grade point average
- ☐ 3.50-4.00
  - ☐ 3.00-3.49
  - ☐ 2.50-2.99
  - ☐ 2.00-2.49
  - ☐ 1.50-1.99
  - ☐ 1.00-1.49
  - ☐ Below 1.00
  - ☐ Not Applicable
9. Did you attend SUNO before Hurricane Katrina?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
10. Did either of your parents or another close relative attend SUNO?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

## SECTION II Institutional Influences

Please indicate the importance of each of the following to your decision to attend Southern University at New Orleans **Post-Katrina** using the following scale. Circle the corresponding number.

	Extremely Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Moderately Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Extremely Important
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Size of the University							
2. Cost of Attendance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. College Entrance Requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Location of the University	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Student/Teacher Ratio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Racial Composition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Offering of Online Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Supportive Services on Campus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Temporary Housing Availability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. University Recruitment Efforts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Academic Major Availability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Small Class Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Extremely Unimportant	Slightly Unimportant	Moderately Unimportant	Neutral	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Extremely Important
13. Scholarship Availability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Preference to Attend a Commuter Campus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Financial Aid Eligibility Status	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Items 1-4, 6, 9, 13, and 15 in Section II, were with the permission of ACT, Inc. 2006, reworded and used on this instrument.

### SECTION III Personal Influences

Please indicate the extent in which you disagree or agree with the following statement regarding your decision to attend Southern University at New Orleans **Post-Katrina.** Circle the corresponding number.

**I chose to resume my educational pursuits at Southern University at New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina because of**

	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My desire to graduate from a historically Black college or university (HBCU)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My student classification status (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Influences of relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Influences of friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Influences of a school advisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. My educational goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My career aspirations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Desire to improve myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My perception of campus environment (nurturing)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My desire to finish where I started	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My desire to earn a college degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My plans to reside in New Orleans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My college grade point average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. My personal involvement on campus (social activities, clubs, organizations, etc....)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Please complete the following sentences:**

(1) I came back to New Orleans because \_\_\_\_\_

---

(2) I view Hurricane Katrina as \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Please use the space below to share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences with regard to resuming your educational pursuits at Southern University at New Orleans post-Katrina.**

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Items 3-5 in Section III, were with the permission of ACT, Inc. 2006, reworded and used on this instrument.

Appendix B  
Letter from Human Subjects Committee

Page 1 of 2

 You forwarded this message on 2/1/2007 8:22 AM.

**Theresa Michelle Phillips**

---

**From:** Laura Scaramella **Sent:** Fri 12/15/2006 5:32 PM  
**To:** Barbara J Herlihy; Theresa Michelle Phillips  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** 03dec06 approval letter  
**Attachments:**

***University Committee for the Protection  
of Human Subjects in Research***

**University of New Orleans**

---

*Campus Correspondence*

Barbara Herlihy  
Theresa Phillips

December 15, 2006

RE: Motivational factors underlying college students' decisions to resume their  
educational pursuits in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

IRB# 03dec06

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of  
New Orleans and federal guidelines.

Please remember that approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any

<https://mail2.uno.edu/exchange/tmphilli/Inbox/03dec06%20approval%20letter.EML?Cmd...> 4/16/2007

changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best of luck with your project!

Sincerely,

Laura Scaramella, Ph.D.

Chair, University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

<https://mail2.uno.edu/exchange/tmphilli/Inbox/03dec06%20approval%20letter.EML?Cmd...> 4/16/2007

Appendix C  
Letters to Participants and SUNO Faculty

January 8, 2007

Dear Potential Participants:

I am requesting your assistance with my dissertation study. The title of my study is: *“Motivational Factors Underlying College Students’ Decisions to Resume Their Educational Pursuits in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.”* I have developed a survey (Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits Instrument or DREP) that asks students attending Southern University at New Orleans to respond to statements regarding their reasons for retuning after Hurricane Katrina. I plan to use the data from the survey to examine college students’ decisions to persist at the university after one of the worst natural disasters in the United States history.

The information you provide on the survey is anonymous and there will be no way of identifying you after completion of the survey. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your responses on this survey will provide important information with regards to students’ decisions to resume their educational pursuits after Hurricane Katrina. It is my belief that your assistance with completing this instrument will be invaluable to all students at Southern University at New Orleans.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. There are minimal risks associated with this study. Some students may experience fatigue while responding to the items on the survey. If you would like additional information about this study or if you would like to discuss any discomforts you may experience, please send your request to the principal investigator for this study, Theresa Phillips, at [tmphilli@uno.edu](mailto:tmphilli@uno.edu). Additionally, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Barbara Herlihy for more information regarding this study by email at [bherlihy@uno.edu](mailto:bherlihy@uno.edu) or by phone at (504) 280-6661. Also, if you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Richard Speaker at the University of New Orleans at (504) 280-6607.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Phillips, M.S., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of New Orleans  
348 Bicentennial Education Building  
University of New Orleans, Lakefront Campus  
2000 Lakeshore Drive  
New Orleans, LA 70148

**Please indicate your participation by signing below.**

**Participant’s Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

January 8, 2007

Dear SUNO Professors:

I am requesting your permission to administer a survey in your class for my dissertation study. The title of my study is: "*Motivational Factors Underlying College Students' Decisions to Resume Their Educational Pursuits in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.*" I have developed a survey (Decisions to Resume Educational Pursuits Instrument or DREP) that asks students attending Southern University at New Orleans to respond to statements regarding their reasons for retuning after Hurricane Katrina.

The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

If permission is granted, please notify me by email at [tmphilli@uno.edu](mailto:tmphilli@uno.edu). Additionally, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Barbara Herlihy for more information regarding this study by email at [bherlihy@uno.edu](mailto:bherlihy@uno.edu) or by phone at (504) 280-6661.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Phillips, M.S., NCC  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of New Orleans  
348 Bicentennial Education Building  
University of New Orleans, Lakefront Campus  
2000 Lakeshore Drive  
New Orleans, LA 70148

Appendix D  
Copyright Permission Letter from ACT, Inc.

Page 1 of 7

You replied on 8/21/2006 10:31 AM.

**Theresa Michelle Phillips**

**From:** Theresa Michelle Phillips  
**To:** randy.mcclanahan@act.org  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: ACT's ENSS and COS  
**Attachments:**

**Sent:** Mon 7/24/2006 3:48 PM

Hi Randy,  
Thank you so much. I will make those notations on my instrument and forward a copy of the instrument to you.

Thanks for everything,

Theresa

---

**From:** randy.mcclanahan@act.org [mailto:randy.mcclanahan@act.org]  
**Sent:** Mon 7/24/2006 2:35 PM  
**To:** Theresa Michelle Phillips  
**Subject:** RE: ACT's ENSS and COS

Teresa,

I forgot to mention two things.

Credit ACT, Inc. and its Entering Student Survey as the source of the eight items (calling their placement and labeling on your instrument to the attention of the reader) in your dissertation.  
Place on your instrument a note to contain all of the following elements: "Selected items (XX - XX) were, with the permission of ACT, Inc. 2006, reworded and used on this instrument." This note can be in relatively small font (e.g., 8) and in the bottom corner either of the first sheet or on the sheet containing the items.

Thanks!

Randy

Randy R. McClanahan, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Associate  
Survey Research Services  
Phone: 319-337-1440  
FAX: 319-341-2284  
Email: Randy.McClanahan@act.org  
----- Forwarded by Randy McClanahan/ACTInc on 07/24/2006 02:26 PM -----

Randy McClanahan  
**To:** "Theresa Michelle Phillips" <tmphilli@uno.edu>  
**07/24/2006 02:25 PM** **cc:**  
**Subject:** RE: ACT's ENSS and COS(Document link: Randy McClanahan)

<https://mail2.uno.edu/exchange/tmphilli/Sent%20Items/RE:%20ACT%27s%20ENSS%20a...> 4/16/2007



Theresa,

I am pleased that you feel the use of the eight items, listed below, from our ENSS will be of help to you in your graduate research. ACT, Inc. grants you permission to use those items, in a reworded fashion. I would appreciate it if you would send me a copy of the eight items after you have completed them.

Good luck!

Randy

Randy R. McClanahan, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Associate  
Survey Research Services  
Phone: 319-337-1440  
FAX: 319-341-2284  
Email: Randy.McClanahan@act.org

"Theresa Michelle  
Phillips" To: <randy.mcclanahan@act.org>  
<tmphilli@uno.edu> cc:  
> Subject: RE: ACT's ENSS and COS  
  
07/24/2006 10:43  
AM

Hi Randy,  
Yes, your understanding is correct. I would like to revise those items only for an instrument that I am creating.

Theresa

From: randy.mcclanahan@act.org [mailto:randy.mcclanahan@act.org]  
Sent: Mon 7/24/2006 8:44 AM  
To: Theresa Michelle Phillips  
Subject: RE: ACT's ENSS and COS

Theresa,

As I looked again at your 7/21/06 explanation of what you intend to do, my assumption is that you want to use a revised version of only items 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 19, 20, and 21 from ACT's Entering Student Survey on an instrument that you will be creating. You will be using no other ENSS items.

<https://mail2.uno.edu/exchange/tmphilli/Sent%20Items/RE:%20ACT%27s%20ENSS%20a...> 4/16/2007

## VITA

Theresa M. Phillips is a native of Grenada, Mississippi. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice and Corrective Services and a Master of Science degree in Guidance and Counseling from Jackson State University. She completed her doctoral degree in Counselor Education from the University of New Orleans in May 2007.

Theresa is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Louisiana and is also a National Certified Counselor. She has been employed for five years as a counselor and instructor at Southern University at New Orleans. She has experience in working with college students and crisis situations. After Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc on the city of New Orleans, Theresa was compelled to help others overcome the crisis that left many homeless. In fall 2005, she spent time in Memphis, Tennessee at the University of Memphis working with displaced students from the Gulf Coast Region.

Theresa has also conducted presentations at local and regional conferences. Most recently, her presentation at the Regional Academic Advising Conference, received the Best in Region Award and the opportunity to present at the National Academic Advising Conference in October 2007.