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THE ROLE OF STUDENT SERVICES IN STUDENT RETENTION:
A CASE STUDY OF A UGANDAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

by

OLIVE KAJOINA

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2022

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Olive Kajoina

THE ROLE OF STUDENT SERVICES IN STUDENT RETENTION:
A CASE STUDY OF A UGANDAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

Olive Kajoina

University of the Incarnate Word, 2022

Student services play an essential role in higher education, not only by reducing student dropout rates but also by increasing student retention. This study explored the role of student services in promoting student retention which in turn addresses the problem of college student attrition at a private, non-profit Ugandan university. The purpose of the study was to identify the types of student services available at the university and understand how and to what extent such they promote student retention. A qualitative case study method was used to understand the role of student services in student retention from admission through graduation. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, documents and an institutional assessment tool based on Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP). Significant findings of the study may help student affairs personnel developing effective programs for increasing student retention.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 1997, the Ugandan government introduced universal primary education and a decade later, universal secondary education (Ochwa-Echel, 2016). Such initiatives were encouraging, but they also significantly increased the demand for post-secondary education. Given the limited capacity of existing public universities private universities were quickly established to meet this demand. According to Ochwa-Echel (2016), the growth of private universities in Uganda has significantly increased access to higher education for undergraduate students. However, this increased access has not equated to undergraduate student retention - a significant challenge for both private and public universities. Citing the 2016 Africa higher education student survey project and *New Vision: Uganda Leading Daily*, a government managed newspaper, indicated that “almost 30% of all students in Uganda who join university education for various degree programs, never finish their courses on time, or just drop out” (New Vision, 2019, p.1).

The undesirable effects of student attrition have become an issue of great concern for colleges and universities. Some of these effects include a negative impact on the university image, a significant loss of tuition revenue, and lost incomes and career development for students who drop out (Yu et al., 2010). Regardless of the stakeholders’ efforts to increase retention, Ugandan universities are still experiencing high rates of student dropout as indicated in the study by Aguti et al. (2009) that sought to understand how student services meet student needs and what strategies they use to encourage students to persist academically. In order to fully contextualize this issue, it is important to understand Uganda’s educational history, landscape, and system.

Background of the Problem

Uganda is a small country located in the East African region. Its neighboring countries are Tanzania, Kenya, South Sudan, and the Congo. The education system in Uganda follows a $7 + 4 + 2 + (4 - 5)$ model: 7 years of primary school (ages 6–12); 4 years of lower secondary school, also called ordinary level; 2 years upper secondary school, also known as advanced level (ages 13–18); and 4 to 5 years of higher education depending on the profession (Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

According to Musisi (2003), higher education in Uganda has experienced five developmental stages over the course of the country's history. The first stage was the period before the 1920s, when schools were operated by Christian missionaries. The second stage was from 1920 to the 1960s, when the country was under British rule which operated and managed higher education. The third phase, from 1963 to 1970, was comprised of major events such as Uganda's independence and expansion in enrollments. The fourth stage from 1970 to 1980 was characterized by underfunding due to civil wars which had an extraordinarily negative impact on the educational sector.

Government policies, including privatization of higher education and cost-sharing of educational expenses in 1987 and 2000, significantly increased access to higher education. In addition, the introduction of universal primary education in 1997 and of universal secondary education in 2007, increased the number of high school graduates applying for university education (Ochwa-Echel, 2016). According to the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE, 2018) report, higher education in Uganda is offered by both the public and private sectors. Currently, statistics show 73% of higher education institutions in Uganda are privately-owned, with only 23% owned by the public.

Context of the Problem

U.S. studies have discussed several proven factors which promote student retention or the ability of students to persist to graduation (Tilghman, 2012). These factors include student characteristics such as race, gender, age (Windham et al., 2014); academic achievement (Hu et al., 2012), and utilization of student services (Bettinger et al., 2013; Gansemer-Topf et al., 2014). The focus of this study centered on the utilization of student services to promote student retention. Leeds et al. (2013) indicated that student services increase retention, support student success, and consequently reduce student dropout rates. Colleges and universities provide a variety of student services that address the academic, social, financial, and developmental needs of their students - from new student orientation all the way through their commencement ceremonies (Bettinger et al., 2013; Canty, 2016; Tinto, 2012; Updraft et al., 2005). According to Canty (2016), American colleges and universities created student services programs in order to help underserved students gain access to higher education, persist in their studies, and successfully complete their college degrees (Canty, 2016). Students characterized as underserved include those from low-income backgrounds, those who are academically under-prepared, and first-generation college students. Some examples of student services programs outlined in Canty's (2016) study include "tutoring, academic advising, financial aid counseling, and in some cases direct financial assistance" (p. 16). Canty's (2016) work supports earlier studies and clearly confirms that student services play an essential role both in reducing student dropout rates and in promoting retention.

Although the focus of this study was on the role of student services in retention at a private-nonprofit Ugandan university, it utilized a theoretical framework based on student services found in American colleges and universities. These frameworks were used because there

are very few African theories related to student services in higher education. This study will be the first of its kind to investigate the role of student services in student retention at private Ugandan university using best practices that are proven to have benefited Western countries. Those best practices will be discussed in the literature review section of this paper.

According to the literature (Bettinger et al., 2013; Canty, 2016; Tinto, 2012; Updraft et al., 2005), American colleges and universities do not only provide student services that address students' needs, but also engage students in appropriate programs to support learning, development, and persistence (Kuh et al., 2005). In their book *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*, Kuh et al. (2005) describe a model called Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) currently known as high impact practices (HIPs). High impact practices engage students in appropriate activities that provide opportunities for learning, development, and persistence to graduation.

Kuh et al., (2005) indicated when students engage in high impact practices, they are more likely to be engaged in other useful learning activities that enriched their college experience. In addition, Kuh (2013) states that HIPs are called high-impact because students who are involved in such practices register more points on the national survey of student engagement measures such as “academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environment, than peers who have not had similar experiences” (pp. 86–87). According to Kuh (2013), HIPs help solidify students' connection with their institutions which impacts retention.

Some examples of high impact educational practices identified by Kuh (2008) and his colleagues at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) include: (a) first-year seminars and experiences to provide students opportunities to work together in small groups

with faculty or staff; (b) common intellectual experiences comprising of organized general education course covering broad themes; (c) learning communities involving groups of students taking two or more related courses together in consultation with faculty and peers; (d) writing-intensive courses to provide students opportunities to learn through writing at different levels; and (e) collaborative assignments to expose students to different points of view and people from varied backgrounds. An assessment tool was used to understand how university in the study was utilizing HIPs to facilitate student persistence to graduation. The university website was visited to gain knowledge of the types of student service available at the institution in the study.

According to the university website, the major categories of student services offered at the institution in the study include residence life, food services, health services, student unions, sports, counselling, and security services. Since the study used a theoretical framework based on American colleges and universities, it was important to compare elements of student services from both countries. Table describes similarities and differences of student services found in both American and Ugandan colleges and universities.

In Uganda, private universities have been an integral component of higher education particularly from 1988 to the present. The growth of private universities was accelerated by the 1987 and 2000 government policies of privatization of higher education and cost sharing of educational expenses (Ochwa-Echel, 2016). Private universities increased access to higher education which was previously reserved for only the highest academically achieving students. However, increased admissions were accompanied by high levels of student drop out at all levels of education. While the findings of Tukundane et al. (2014) explains high rates of primary school and secondary school student dropout, high rates of university student dropout were confirmed by Aguti and colleagues (2009).

Table 1*A Comparative Table of Student Services in Uganda and the United States*

Country	Differences	Similarities
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide limited number of programs on a small scale • Falls under the Office of the Dean of Students • Headed by the Dean of Students • Funded by the institution (if private university) • Majority of employees lack training in Student Affairs Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established to serve student needs • The goal is to address student needs and increase persistence to degree completion • Core departments include residence life, counselling, health services, student organizations and sports
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide many programs of student services on a large scale • Falls under the Office of Student Affairs • Headed by the Vice President of Student Affairs • Funded by the Federal government • Majority of employees are trained in affairs administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to address the needs of different student groups

Acknowledging the problem of student dropout, Professor Badru Kateregga, a Vice Chancellor at the private institution, Kampala University, in Uganda stated that “there is a high dropout rate in universities, partly because of tuition and other economic and social related issues. Students, especially girls, encounter so many problems and it’s gradually affecting our country’s university education” (New Vision, 2019, p. 14). He encouraged all stakeholders in higher education to implement strategies to increase retention. There are a variety of ways in which research has demonstrated that higher education institutions in the West have addressed college student retention. Yet, it is necessary to first understand the Ugandan context.

High dropout rates are not only a threat to private Ugandan universities, whose day-to-day operations and long-term strategic goals are financed by tuition (NCHE, 2018; Ochwa-

Echel, 2016), such high rates are also an obstacle to economic, social, and human capital development that is highly needed in Uganda. With a total population of 40 million in 2017 and an annual gross domestic per capita income of \$615 (The World Bank, 2017), Ugandan universities need to retain and graduate students so they can secure better paying jobs and increase their household income. Given the importance of student retention, there is need for university administrators to understand how student services can be utilized retain university students and reduce high rates of student dropout.

Statement of the Problem

Limited Models Exemplifying Best Practices for Ugandan University Student Services

According to Luescher-Mamashela et al. (2013), the field of student affairs in African countries began in the early 2000s. First, student services were established at South African universities followed by Ugandan universities starting with Makerere University in Kampala. Despite the presence of the divisions of student services in Ugandan universities for over fifteen years, there are still few studies explaining specific programs and types of student services available at Ugandan private, non-profit universities. The availability of such studies would aid researchers in understanding how a private, non-profit university in Uganda utilizes student services to address specific needs of students, which if not met, could lead to student dropout. This leads us to the first research question of this study: What student services and student programs are available at a private, non-profit Ugandan University?

Student Dropout Rate

Aguti et al. (2009) found that university student dropout rates are alarmingly high. Aguti et al.'s (2009) study on distance learning attributes dropout rates for external degrees at Makerere University in Uganda to be in the range between 35% and 84% for a bachelor's in

education, and 41% to 60% for a diploma in youth development. While the above data speaks to the grave retention problem with the distance learning format, problems also exist in brick-and-mortar institutions within traditional classroom settings. Data obtained through interpersonal communication with the institution's registrar in the study (2020) suggested a dropout rate between 13–35% depending on the academic major. This study sought to explore *how student services and student programs at a private, non-profit Ugandan University provide support for students to persist in their studies to graduation.*

High Impact Practices are Relatively New

The field of student services has evolved over time. In American colleges, student services were established in 1937, but over time, such services have been developed and expanded to address students' personal, academic, social, financial, and developmental needs (Kuh, 2013). To improve the overall student learning experience, researchers have discovered high impact practices (HIPs). Kuh (2013) indicates HIPs are called high-impact because college students who participate in such practices register more points on the national survey of student engagement measures such as “academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environment, than peers who have not had similar experiences” (pp. 86–87). HIP practices are part of a holistic approach to educating the whole person's body, mind, and soul. For example, high impact learning practices like first year seminars, learning communities, service learning, and undergraduate research can foster intensive student learning and increase retention. However, high impact practices, just like student services, are relatively new to Ugandan universities and little is known about how HIP can promote retention. This study lastly sought to understand *how a private nonprofit Ugandan university is utilizing high impact practices to promote persistence to graduation.*

Research Gap

Scholarship from academic databases and Internet search engines such as Academic Search Complete (EBISCO), Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, and ResearchGate were used to locate literature for this study. There are a very limited number of studies discussing the role of student services in student retention to reduce student dropout. Additionally, there is a scarcity of significant literature focusing on the nature and types of student services available in Ugandan private universities and how such services are utilized to address specific student needs which, if not met, would force students to dropout before obtaining a college degree. Student needs are related to academic, social, financial, and personal development. Different student groups have different needs. While some students may be academically under-prepared, others are first generation college students, and yet, others come from low economic backgrounds. In the United States, there is plenty of literature describing how student services are utilized to address these needs. However, in Uganda, there are limited studies, focusing on institutional efforts to provide student services to support students in their persistence to graduation.

This study, focusing on administrators' perceptions of the role of student services in retention, will be the first of its kind in Uganda that is specifically designed for private nonprofit universities. The high impact practices assessment tool was used to understand how a private Ugandan university was utilizing high impact educational to promote student retention. The purpose of the study was to understand how different programs and activities of student services were utilized to meet student needs and encourage them to persist in their studies to degree completion. With private universities enrolling 51.5% of the total student population in Ugandan universities as indicated by the NCHE (2018) report, special attention should be paid to the ongoing problem of student dropout at non-profit private institutions. Only one study was found

on student services in Uganda, and it was completed by Anumaka et al. (2013). The authors identified the need for universities to support holistic learning to produce a generation of well-rounded graduates. Their study was limited to educational services and was not intended to address the connection between student services and student retention which is the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the role of student services in student retention. I explored different programs of student services available at a private, non-profit Ugandan university in order to understand how such services are utilized to support students in their persistence to graduation. Also, I sought to understand how the private, non-profit Ugandan university in the study utilized high impact educational practices to increase retention. Since student services is a relatively new concept still in Uganda, it was imperative to better understand how these services are used and the benefit they may provide to students.

In conducting this study, I sought to provide relevant information that would expand on the existing body of literature related to role of student services in student retention at a private university. Such information would be useful for future researchers to study student services and retention in Uganda and develop Ugandan or African theories of retention in higher education.

Research Questions

The purpose of utilizing a case study methodology was to obtain an in-depth description about the role of student services in student retention from the viewpoint of student service administrators, who were studied in a natural real-life context. According to Yin (2003), case study design is used to investigate “a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 9). Case study design was used to understand the research topic based on

one overarching research question: How are student programs at a private non-profit Ugandan university utilized as a retention strategy to reduce student dropout rates? The study has three sub-questions:

1. What types of student services and student programs are provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University?
2. How are the student services and student programs provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?
3. How is the private, non-profit Ugandan University utilizing high impact educational practices to promote retention?

Significance of the Study

Identifying and utilizing student services as a retention strategy to reduce student dropout at Ugandan non-profit private university is an issue that needed further investigation. The results of this study will contribute to and expand on the currently limited available scholarly literature (Anumaka et al., 2013) and will also close the gap in literature as it pertains to the role of student services in student retention. This study will be the first of its kind to investigate student services in Uganda utilizing best practices proven valuable in Western countries. Findings of the study will be used as a benchmark to evaluate the effectiveness of student services for private non-profit universities in Uganda.

Results of the study will help university administrators understand which existing student services can successfully increase retention, and which additional student services may be beneficial for them to implement. Such information is useful in selecting programs which need more funding to combat the problem of student dropout and to increase retention. Increased retention will in turn lead to high graduation rates which are associated with a good school

image, sustained enrolments, and the ability to graduate a pool of skilled workers for the country's future workers and leaders.

Retention is significant for a non-profit private university because retention is used as a measure of institutional effectiveness as described by Roman (2007). Additionally, higher education stakeholders including the government and funding agencies use retention rates for accountability purposes when providing funding and financial aid (Roman, 2007). Also, some parents use retention rates to select an institution that best suits the educational needs of their children. The study is important for helping a private university focus on academic, social, and developmental needs of students which, if met, can increase retention and will, in turn, increase institutional effectiveness and accountability. Results of the study will benefit leaders and administrators of private universities in the decision-making process regarding budgeting and finance, prioritizing programs that would most successfully promote student retention.

According to the NCHE (2018) report, the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda allocates a small portion of its budget to research in public universities, with no mention of research funds available for private universities. Moreover, few private universities conduct research, since their major focus is on teaching rather than research (NCHE, 2018). Thus, there is a need for a study addressing the problem of high rates of student dropout among students enrolled at a non-profit private Uganda University and role student services in promoting retention.

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of ontology and epistemology are associated with people's views of reality and of knowledge (Egbert & Sanden, 2013; Leavy, 2017). Regarding ontology, I used a descriptive approach that embraces the notion of multiple realities leaning towards a more context-bound subjective reality. The study was guided by the belief that the

world is constructed and experienced by people as they interact with one another in a social context. Regarding epistemology which seeks to answer the questions of “what counts as knowledge; how knowledge claims are justified, and what is the relationship between I and what is being researched” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 19), I spent three months interviewing student affairs’ professionals and learnt a lot from them. I relied on participant’s narratives, quotes, and views to justify knowledge claims (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

The study utilized Tinto’s (1975, 1993) model of student departure and Chickering’s (1969, 1993) model of developmental vectors as conceptual frameworks. From 1975 to 1993, Tinto’s model underwent many revisions leading to the final version of Tinto’s (1993) model. The model asserts that when students become integrated into the academic and social systems of the university, they identify with the institution and that identification influences their decision to stay. Conversely, when students fail to adjust to the social and academic systems of the university, they feel left out which often results in their decision to leave the institution. Tinto’s later model (1993) emphasizes the significance of student assimilation into the social and academic practices of an institution. Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure, especially the elements of academic and social integration, was used to understand how student services were utilized to successfully increase retention. This theory is directly relevant to the problem statement and provides a framework for understanding how student services influence students’ decisions to depart or remain at the institution.

In addition, Chickering’s (1969, 1993) theory of developmental vectors was used to understand how the university was utilizing student services to address the developmental needs of students and support them in their persistence to graduation. The developmental vectors focus

on “the emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects of student development” (Patton et al., 2016, pp. 297–299). Chickering’s first model of student development, based on undergraduate students from thirteen colleges, was published in 1969. It was revised in 1993 to incorporate research findings from increasingly diverse and larger student populations. The model explains stages of development and identifies the needs of college students. It recognizes the significant impact of curricular activities on student development and explains the benefits of providing services that match student developmental needs while in college. Chickering’s (1993) developmental vectors emphasize the need for colleges and universities to design and implement various programs of student services that meet students’ developmental needs- intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Thus, institutions that have various interventions to engage students stand a stronger chance of retaining their students than those without such programs.

Chickering’s seven developmental vectors include (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Patton et al., 2016, pp. 297–299). This study utilized Tinto’s (1993) theory of student departure and Chickering’s (1993) model of developmental vectors to understand how student services were used to:

- facilitate academic engagement with the purpose of helping students maintain satisfactory grades and academic progress because low grades are associated with university dropout (Lotkowski et al., 2004);
- promote social engagement focusing on building healthy relationships with peers, staff, and faculty (Keup, 2005) because such relationships help students deal with the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation when they attend college education;

- support student development and active learning (Patton et al., 2016); and
- increase financial aid to support students from low-income backgrounds (Demetriou et al., 2012).

The two theories were used to inform the study that sought to explore and understand the role of student services at a private non-profit private Ugandan university.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the educational system in Uganda and a comparative analysis of the history of higher education in Uganda and the United States.

Education in Uganda: A Historical Perspective

According to Musisi (2003), the history of Ugandan higher education falls into five main phases with each phase representing the political climate in the country at the time and the impact that climate had on the development of higher education. These phases are first, 1922–1950; second, 1951–1961; third, 1962–1970; fourth, 1971–1992; and fifth, 1993 onwards. The first phase, from 1922 to 1950, comprised the formative years of Ugandan higher education. The British colonial regime established Makerere Technical College in 1922 to train Africans in carpentry, construction, and mechanics. It was not until 1949 that Makerere attained the status of a university and was able to serve the three east African countries of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. However, Makerere was awarded external degrees from the University of London until it became a fully developed university in 1970.

In the second phase of Ugandan higher education, from 1950 to 1961, the focus was on the modernization and development in the region. Musisi (2003) described the 1950s as years of rapid development. It was in this phase that the first group of Makerere students received London university degrees. This was an important achievement for the country as higher education provided an opportunity to develop human capital needed to replace expertise of the departing colonial patriates.

Musisi (2003) indicated that the third phase, 1962 to 1970, was comprised of major events such as: Uganda gaining independence from the British; the creation of the University of East Africa (UEA); and the Africanization of higher education. In 1963, the three east African

colleges of Makerere (Uganda), Royal College of Nairobi (Kenya) and University College of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) were merged to form UEA. During this period “higher education was approached from the perspective of its synergistic contribution to national and regional development” (p. 614). The three regional colleges made efforts to increase indigenous student enrollments, faculty, and make changes in the curriculum. As a result, Makerere undergraduate enrollments rose from 1,331 in 1964–65 to 1,805 in 1967–68. Also, during this phase, new courses in “technology, librarianship, forestry, commerce, law and agricultural education were added to the curriculum” (p. 614). However, in 1970, the UEA was dissolved and Makerere became the first public university in Uganda.

The fourth phase, 1971–1992, was a period of uncertainty. The army coup of 1971 which installed the dictator Idi Amin as president from 1971 to 1979 was the inception of the political and economic disintegration in the country. The political crisis created by Amin’s regime crumbled the economy leading to the underfunding and deterioration of higher education. After the overthrow of Amin in 1979, some attempts were made to rehabilitate the economy, but no significant changes were experienced in the landscape of higher education. The situation at Makerere was described as one with “bare laboratories, empty library shelves, and crowded halls of residence” (Musisi, 2003, p. 616).

Musisi (2003) indicated that after 1986, educational policies in Uganda were largely influenced by the “World Bank study on education in sub-Saharan Africa” (p. 615) which is comprised of three strategies. The first strategy emphasized “diversification of sources of funding, mobilization of revenues from the private sector, cost sharing and rigorous control of public funds” (p. 615). The second strategy focused on the need to restore quality and relevance

in the educational sector. The third strategy stressed the importance of increasing access to higher education especially for traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women.

Musisi (2003) concluded that last phase in the history of Ugandan higher education, from 1993 onwards, was a period of implementing various strategies, reforms, and renovations that were adopted to improve the state of higher in Uganda. Examples of such strategies include privatization of higher education and cost sharing of educational expenses. Government policies of privatization led to the establishment and expansion of private universities which increased access to higher education (Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

The Educational System in Uganda

The current educational system in Uganda follows a $7 + 4 + 2 + (4 - 5)$ model: 7 years of primary school (ages 6–12); 4 years of lower secondary school, also called ordinary level; 2 years upper secondary school, also known as advanced secondary (ages 13–18); and 4 to 5 years of higher education depending on the profession (Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

The first level of formal education in Uganda is primary school, followed by secondary school. Upon successful completion of primary school students join secondary school which lasts six years (4 years of lower level and 2 years of upper level). After successful completion of the lower level, students can join the advanced level of secondary school or enter other institutions of learning that award certificates. Upon successful completion of advanced secondary level, students are eligible to join tertiary education through either public or private university or non-university. For this study, the term tertiary education is used to refer to post-secondary education.

Higher Education Institutions

According to the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE, 2018), higher education institutions (HEIs) in Uganda are divided into three major categories: “Universities, Other Degree Awarding Institutions (ODAI), and Other Tertiary Institutions (OTI)” (p. 22). Admission into a degree program offered at the university level requires successful completion of the lower level of secondary education with at least five passes and the advanced level with two principle passes. Similarly, admission into a diploma program requires successful completion of lower-level secondary education with at least five passes and advanced level with one principal pass and two subsidiaries (NCHE, 2018).

By 2016, Uganda had 42 private universities and 9 public universities totaling 51 universities (NCHE, 2018). In 2016, the university subsector accounted for 179,067 or 70% enrollment of HEIs (NCHE, 2018) while other sectors accounted for the remaining 30%, with ODAI enrolling 7,761 or 3% and OTI enrolling 67,215 or 26.5% of the total student population in Ugandan. Private HEIs in Uganda enroll more students than public HEIs. By 2016, “private institutions had a total of 130,671 (or 51.5%) students while public HEIs had a total of 123,372 (or 48.5%) students” (NCHE, 2018, p. 34). The expansion of private institutions increased access to higher education and enabled Uganda achieve two out of the three World Bank proposed strategies for privatization and therefore significantly increased access to higher education.

Jacob et al. (2009) indicated that Uganda had achieved two of the national education development milestones. The two milestones were universal primary education applied in 1997 and universal secondary education fulfilled in 2007. Jacob et al. (2009) reported the need for future expansion of HEIs to accommodate the increasing demand for higher education in Uganda and recognized the growth and contribution of HEIs in training the needed skilled labor force.

However, Jacob et al. (2009) described the size and scope of Ugandan HEIs as ranging from “private colleges with nothing more than one or two rented classrooms in an office building to HEIs that comprise large campuses with thousands of enrolled students” (p. 2).

The two major regulatory organizations of HEIs in Uganda are: (a) the National Curriculum Development Center established in 1973 to develop curricula for the education sector at all levels (primary, secondary, technical, and other tertiary education levels); and (b) the National Council for Higher Education founded in 2001 to coordinate all activities of HEIs including awarding degrees, diplomas, and post primary certificates. As one can garner from the previous sections, there have been many changes in higher education in Uganda throughout the years. It is important to note that not only have regulatory organizations and the educational system evolved, but college students as well. In collecting data for this study, student services professionals noted that the academic and learning needs of students have changed over time. Thus, in discussing how student services may aid student retention, one must acknowledge that services have transformed in response to the changing needs of college students. Since this study used theories based on American higher education to study retention in Uganda, it was important to provide a comparative analysis of the histories of higher education in both American and Ugandan institutions as seen below. The analysis provides information on the historical similarities and differences of both nations.

A Comparative Analysis

While American colleges have been in existence for over 300 years as reported by Seidman (2012), HEIs in Uganda will be celebrating 100 years of existence in 2022. Just as the American colleges and universities experienced changes in mission, curricular, student demographics, and financing over the years (Seidman, 2012), the Ugandan HEIs experienced

similar changes (Musisi, 2003). However, Ugandan HEIs have been and are still significantly underfunded (Jacob et al., 2009; Musisi, 2003; NCHE, 2018; Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

Unlike American colleges that had some institutions of higher education in the 1600s, including Harvard, founded in 1636, and William and Mary established in 1693 (Seidman, 2012), Uganda had limited or no institutions of higher education in the 1600s (Musisi, 2003). The first college in Uganda was established in 1922 as a technical college receiving university status in 1950 and granted external degrees from the University of London. It became a fully developed university in 1970 (Musisi, 2003).

Just as American colleges struggled to keep HEIs open in critical moments including the establishment of colonies, the period of slavery, and during the civil war (Thelin, 2011), Uganda struggled to keep her HEIs open during the civil war period from 1970s to 1980s which led to underfunding of higher education and deterioration of the overall quality of education (Musisi, 2003; Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

While American colleges experienced expansions in locations and in student enrollments between 1800s and 1900s, Uganda had limited to no HEIs in the 1800s. Uganda did not experience country-wide expansion of HEIs and enrollments until recently (2000s). It was not until the introduction of privatization policies by the Ugandan government and cost sharing of educational expenses that religious institutions and wealthy entrepreneurs started establishing private universities which resulted in the growth of HEIs and increased access to higher education (NCHE, 2018; Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

American colleges experienced growth and development due to various initiatives established by the government and by philanthropists including: (a) Benjamin Franklin's concepts of diversity 1840 to 1880 changed the student population in American colleges because

it allowed American colleges to enroll specific groups of students like women and African Americans who were initially excluded from college education (Thelin, 2011); (b) the establishment of the United Negro College Fund, which increased access to college education for African Americans; (c) the establishment of the Morrill Land Grant in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln provided land for establishment of HEIs in America which increased the number of colleges and universities in various locations; and (d) when the government assumed the role of financing higher education, it increased access for all (Thelin, 2011). However, Uganda HEIs did not experience similar achievements in the 1800s, 1900s, or to date. Nonetheless, the government provides funding for academically capable students which is a very small portion of the student population in higher education. Unlike the American colleges where the government assumed the role of funding college education a long time ago, in Uganda, higher education is broadly funded by the private sector comprised of entrepreneurs and religious organizations (NCHE, 2018).

Unlike American colleges which experienced expansion in 1945–1970 accelerated by government sponsored programs such as the 1944 GI Bill and 1958 National Defense Education Act as described by Seidman (2012), Uganda has limited government sponsored programs and funding for higher education especially for students enrolled in private universities. While American colleges have been providing financial aid packages including scholarships, loans, and grants to increase access to college education since 1960s or even before, Uganda had limited financial aid opportunities in the 60s and it still does today. Studies show Ugandan HEIs have been and are still underfunded (Musisi, 2003; Ochwa-Echel, 2016). The situation worsened in the 1980–90s when higher education budgets were reduced to provide education for all at the primary and secondary education levels (Musisi, 2003).

While American colleges experienced a massification of higher education between 1970 and 2000, including the establishment of community colleges and the Pell grant to support low-income students (Thelin, 2011), Uganda has yet to experience massification of higher education due to limited government funding. Ugandan universities have been and continue to struggle with the problem of underfunding, thus the country is unable to achieve its development goal of poverty eradication.

HEIs from both nations have experienced advances in knowledge and technology at different levels. American HEIs (Thelin, 2011) and Ugandan HEIs (Juma et al., 2016) utilize technology on college campuses for teaching, learning, and day to day operations. Advances in technology have had positive impacts on the functioning of HEIs including designing and implementing on-line classes and increased graduate programs among others (Thelin, 2011). In Ugandan HEIs, technology has been used to help administrators manage admission programs; maintain student records; plan school activities; develop the curriculum; and effectively manage financial operations of HEIs (Juma et al., 2016). Technology enables information exchange among stakeholders of HEIs and may facilitate retention.

Student Retention, Attrition, and Persistence

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), there is no universal standard definition of student retention. They define student retention as “the progressive reenrollment in college, whether continuous from one term to the next or temporarily interrupted and then resumed” (p. 374). Correspondingly, Hagedorn (2005) defines retention as staying in school until graduation and drop out as departure from school without achieving the initial goal of obtaining a college degree. Yet, Wild and Ebbers (2002) proposes that the definition of student retention should include institutional characteristics and the changing demographics of the student body.

According to Seidman (2012), institutional retention refers to the percentage of students that persist in their studies at the same institution every year to degree completion.

Hagedorn (2005) indicated that students can be classified as either persisters or non-persisters. She specified that students who remain enrolled until they obtain their college degrees are called persisters while those who depart from college before earning their degree and never returns are called non-persisters. The process of persisting until graduation is called retention. The topics of attrition and retention have not only become a priority in higher education but also a topic of concern for parents looking for colleges that best fit the needs of their children (Seidman, 2005).

Hagedorn (2005) noted that retention and persistence are sometimes used interchangeably. She defines attrition as the decrease in “number of students resulting from lower student retention, and a dropout as a student who enters college but leaves before graduating and never returns to that school or any other school” (Hagedorn, 2005, p. 6). Students can leave school voluntarily or involuntarily. Voluntary departure happens when the student drops out of school due to personal or nonacademic issues such as isolation, feeling homesick, family problems, and the need for transfer to another school. Conversely, involuntary departure happens when a student leaves the institution due to financial, judiciary, and family issues (Tinto, 1982).

History of Retention

This section describes literature that pertains to retention. Berger et al. (2012) divided the development of student retention studies into nine chronological eras. These eras provide a basic understanding of how retention studies have evolved in the history of higher education. The nine eras begin with the prehistory of retention, a period when graduation was not a topic of

contention among institutions of higher learning, and end with the current era which is a time when graduation rates are used as a measure of success, of financial stability of the institution, and of program sustenance.

According to Berger et al. (2012), the nine eras of retention studies are further divided into two main categories. The first category comprised of the first four eras includes: retention prehistory, evolving towards retention, early developments, and dealing with expansion which happened before the 1960s. In this phase, there was limited concern for retention, partly because graduation was not the main goal of college attendance. Berger et al. indicated that this era was comprised of events which led to the emergence of retention as a distinguishable topic of concern to be “addressed, studied, and improved in higher education” (p. 8).

The second category from 1960s onwards comprised the last five eras. These eras include: preventing dropout, building theories, managing enrolment, broadening horizons, and the early twenty-first century to today. During this phase, retention became an issue of great concern and theoretical frameworks were fully established and developed (Berger et al., 2012). Although there were some studies on attrition before the 1970s, research shows that such studies only focused on individual student characteristics and neglected the role of college environments (Panos & Astin, 1968; Summerskill, 1962). For instance, Summerkill (1962) focused on the student personality attributes of maturity, motivation, and disposition as the main reasons for attrition. Retention models focusing on students’ relationships with college environments did not emerge in literature until the late 1960s and 1970s (Panos & Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970, 1971; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977; Tinto, 1975). Spady’s (1971) work was the first model of student retention, and his study recognized the link between individual student characteristics and campus environments and how such interactions can influence attrition and retention.

Foundational theorists who contributed to the development of retention studies including Spady (1970), Tinto (1975), and Bean (1980) cite three theoretical models that inspired their work. These models include the suicide model of Durkheim (1951) from the field of sociology, the rites of passage model by van Gennep (1960) from social anthropology, and the labor turnover model of Price (1977) from the field of human resources. Considered as the father of sociology, Emile Durkheim studied the topic of suicide and created awareness about types and causes of suicide.

Durkheim's (1951) work on suicide identified four categories of suicide: Anomic, which happens due to low levels of regulation; Fatalistic, which is mostly linked to too much regulation; Egoistic, which is connected to a low level of group integration; and Altruistic, which is associated with high levels of group integration. In higher education, Durkheim's concept of suicide was equated with student's departure from colleges due to lack of academic and social integration. This implies that attrition rates may increase if there are limited opportunities for social and academic integration on college campuses. Early researchers of student retention models link suicidal behaviors and student attrition behaviors to lack of social and academic integration (Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975). The concept of suicide was used as a guide to study student departure and retention. It does not imply that institutional departure necessarily leads to suicide; rather, it was a framework to inform studies on student departure.

Arnold van Gennep's (1960) work on the rites of passage in tribal societies explains how he "saw life as being comprised of a series of passages leading individuals from birth to death and from membership of one group to another" (Tinto, 1993, p. 92). van Gennep (1960) revealed how the process of "transmission of relationships between succeeding groups was marked by three distinct stages" (p. 92): separation, transition, and incorporation. In higher education, van

Gennep's (1960) concepts of separation, transition, and incorporation were used to study retention. First, separation happens when students graduate from high school and are admitted to college. They are separated from their high school community as they join their new community at the university. Second, transition occurs when students begin to interact in new ways with members of the new group. Some of them may experience feelings of isolation and homesickness; that is why it is important for institutions to ensure that students are connected and transitioning appropriately in the new community that is unfamiliar to them. Third, incorporation occurs when a student creates new patterns of integration by interacting with members of the new group. Consequently, students start to develop a sense of belonging leading to persistence in their studies leading to eventual graduation.

Another foundational study on retention is Price's (1977) work on the concept of employee turnover which provided a basis for Bean's (1980) theory of student attrition. Price (1977) defines employee turnover in a workplace as "the degree of individual movement across the membership boundary of a social system" (p. 4). Drawing from Price's (1977) work, Bean (1980) equates student attrition to employee turnover acknowledging that students, much like employees, leave the institution when they are not satisfied. Just as employees are motivated to stay with the organization because of its internal factors such as an attractive salary, students will be motivated to persist in their studies by such internal factors as good grades and having their social, academic, and developmental needs met.

Models of Student Retention

Literatures identifies the following models as the major theories in the history and development of retention studies: Spady's (1970, 1971) model of undergraduate dropout; Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993); Bean's model of student attrition (1980, 1982); Astin's

model of student involvement (1984); and Bean and Metzner's model of non-traditional student attrition (1985).

Spady's Model

Spady (1971), cited as the first model of student retention, provided a foundation for other researchers to explore the topic of retention. His work provided insights into the link between student characteristics and the institution. This connection is expressed in Spady demonstrating how a student's decision to depart from a given social setting is influenced by a complex societal process of family and educational background including "academic potential, friendship support, intellectual development, grade performance, social integration, and institutional commitment" (p. 38). Spady's work provided a foundation for Tinto's (1975) model of student departure.

Tinto's Model

Utilizing Spady's (1970, 1971) work on the undergraduate students' dropout rates, Tinto (1975) published his first model of student departure which is also referred to as the student integration model. Tinto's focus was on campus environments and how student interactions with campus environment, either via social or academic systems impacts their decision to stay or leave the institution. From 1975 to 1993, Tinto's model underwent many revisions leading to the final version which was published in 1993. The model asserts that when students become integrated, they identify with the institution which influences their decision to stay. When students fail to adjust to the social and academic systems of the university, they feel left out which often results in their decision to leave.

In addition, Tinto (1993) utilized van Gennep's (1960) work on the rites of passage comprising of the concepts of separation, transition, and incorporation to study college retention.

He indicated that students' ability to successfully navigate these stages can impact attrition and retention. Tinto further stated that new students need to experience separation from their previous environments in order to establish new norms, expectations, and values in the new environment. Tinto's work reinforces Spady's (1971) claims that the level of student integration in the academic and social systems of an institution will influence attrition and retention. The distinguishing feature of Tinto's study, and of previous studies on retention is that he identified the role of student interaction with campus environment, and how these commitments and intentions impacted student attrition and retention. Other researchers have used Tinto's work to study retention.

Bean's Model

Bean's (1980) work on student attrition utilized Price's (1977) concept of organizational employee turnover. Price employed the concept of turnover to explain organizational loss of personnel and Bean (1980, 1982) utilized the same concept to describe the process of colleges losing students. Bean argued that the process of student departure from colleges is like employee turnover in businesses, recognizing that both students and employees leave for similar reasons. In the context of postsecondary education, Bean replaced the concept of "pay" as the major contributing factor for employee turnover with students' GPA, student development, quality, and practical value of the institution. Bean's (1980, 1982) work utilized a total of 21 variables grouped into the dependent variable of student dropout, the intervening variables of satisfaction and institutional commitment, the organizational determinants, and background variables. The study concluded that the concept of employee turnover in business is beneficial in explaining the process of student attrition in higher education.

The work of Terenzini and Pascarella (1977) focused on voluntary freshman attrition. The findings from their study emphasized the significance of academic and social interaction in influencing students' decisions to depart from postsecondary education. Their work documented the importance helping new college students to transition to campus life and adjust to the new culture while establishing relationships with faculty, staff, and peers.

University Student Dropout and Retention

Factors affecting retention and attrition are classified into two major categories, institutional factors (Ardent, 2013; Desjardins & McCall, 2010), and individual student characteristics (Bowden & Wood, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2013). While institutional factors range from access to student services to availability of financial aid (Arendt, 2013; Desjardins et al., 2010), student factors range from race, gender, to family background (Bowden et al., 2010; Dwyer et al., 2013). According to Tinto (2006), some of the factors contributing to student attrition include, being academically underprepared for college level course work; issues related to social economic background; and the inability to successfully transition to campus life. Such issues can be mitigated through the provision and utilization of student services. Other issues contributing to student attrition include personal issues, social and academic issues, unmet expectations, and financial pressures among others (Tinto, 1993).

Why Care about Retention?

High rates of student attrition from colleges and universities have negative impacts on institutions, students who drop out, families, and the community. According to Yu et al. (2010), some of the undesirable effects of student dropout include: negative impact on the university image, loss of revenue in tuition, and the related negative effects on incomes and career development for students who dropout. Dropping out of the university can mean a substantial

decrease in one's income earned over a lifetime. Individuals with college education earn higher incomes compared to high school graduates and the gap increases with the level of degree (Barefoot, 2004). Earning a college degree provides a foundation for a better future and success in life for students.

Private institutions may be adversely affected even with a small number of student dropouts because such institutions depend on tuition for their operating budgets (Barefoot, 2004). Retention rates are used as a measure of institutional effectiveness and for accountability purposes for both public and private institutions (Roman, 2007). While the funding agencies will look at retention rates to confirm whether the funds are used effectively, students and parents will check retention rates to select an appropriate institution for their college education. Low retention and graduation rates can spoil the reputation of the institution (Barefoot, 2004). To maintain a positive brand name, create a stable financial base, and sustain academic programs, colleges and universities need to solve the problem of attrition and increase retention.

Types of Retention

Hagedorn (2005) describes four categories of retention including institutional retention, system retention, major or discipline retention, and within- the- course retention. She indicated that institutional retention is a “measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the *same* institution from year to year” (p. 14). The second form is system retention, and it measures retention when students transfer to other institutions. This measure accommodates lawful transfer and re-enrollment of students to and from different universities. The third form is major or discipline retention. Its focus on the discipline or major better serves the individual university rather than the nation. The fourth measure is within course retention which focuses on course

completion. These measures provide specifics about which courses have been completed or uncompleted even if a student has been retained by an institution.

Institutional Factors Affecting Student Attrition and Retention

When discussing the dimensions of institutional action on student retention, Tinto (1993) claims that there are several successful retention programs which can be implemented to mitigate the problem of student dropout. Such programs differ in structure, implementation, operation, and focus. He further states that the principles of effective student retention are “an enduring commitment to student welfare, a broader commitment to the education for all students and an emphasis upon the importance of social and intellectual community” (p. 145). He proposed the following as principles of effective student retention programs. The first principle consists of an institutional commitment to students which states that “effective retention programs are committed to the students they serve, they put students’ welfare ahead of other institutional goals” (p. 146). The second principle, grounded on educational commitment, states that “effective retention programs are committed to the education of all, not just some of their students” (p. 146). The third principle centered on social and intellectual community, states that “effective retention programs are committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members” (p. 146).

When explaining institutional support programs that promote retention, Tinto (2012) discussed specific types of academic, social, and financial programs necessary for student success. He stressed the importance of academic support programs such as first-year seminars, summer programs, learning communities, and tutoring centers in facilitating retention. He emphasized the need to offer such programs early enough in students’ academic lives because their first-year experience is critical for their retention. He highlighted the importance of social support programs like mentoring services to help students identify with the institution which

influences retention. Tinto (2012) maintains that financial aid including scholarships, grants, and work study can influence students' decisions to stay or leave the university.

Best Practices in Retention

This section will discuss selected types of student services discussed in literature as best practices in student retention. The section will end with the work of George Kuh, an expert in retention who describes what high performing institutions do to increase student success and retention. Student services are part of the institution's support programs designed to improve student learning experiences from admission to graduation. Several studies indicate that access to student services plays an essential role in helping deal with various challenges faced while in college (Gansemer-Topf et al., 2014). Student services fall under the functional areas of student affairs which manages different programs of student services including, admissions, new student orientation programs, academic advising, career development, community service, enrollment management, registration, and financial aid (Dungy, 2003).

In *Making Learning Meaningful*, Kuh (2016) identified eight student characteristics which threaten student retention in higher education. They include students being academically underprepared, first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, students working over 30 hours a week, single parent students, and having children at home. Although such issues are beyond the control of the university, Kuh (2016) claims that offering student service programs geared towards meeting these student needs can mitigate the problem of student dropout and increase retention.

While some institutions have combined offices of academic affairs and student affairs in one department, others have separate departments. However, Tinto (1993) provides the following recommendations on how institutions can support students from admissions to graduation:

1. During recruitment and admission, the staff set realistic expectations so that new students can select the university which fits their needs.
2. Orientation programs should be designed in a way that bridges the gap between new students and the institution.
3. First-year college student programs should be offered to help students successfully transition to college.

These and many other programs can help students navigate social and academic challenges experienced on college campuses. The section below provides an overview of literature discussing different programs of student services proven to be best practices in student retention from admissions to graduation.

Admissions Offices

In addition to providing useful information about the institution and its programs to prospective students, admissions officers accept applications and recruit students. Tinto (2012) and Upcraft et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of providing accurate and timely information to prospective students utilizing modern technology. Such information is valuable for prospective students to make an informed decision when selecting the University to attend. Similarly, the study conducted by Curtis et al. (2019) recommends the practice of connecting prospective students with the university staff during recruitment. Such connections facilitate the process of building relationships which is essential in attracting and retaining students.

Citing the example of Florida College of Pharmacy, Curtis et al. (2019) confirmed that relationship building initiatives benefit both the university and students. For relationship building, Florida College of Pharmacy created a task force on recruitment, admission, and retention to connect students with the university. In the first step of relationship building, the goal was to improve students' experiences during the interview session. In the second step, the

goal was to provide a warm welcome to newly admitted students. In the third step, the goal was to establish personal contact with the student through phone calls from the university representatives. The prospective student received phone calls from three different school officials with each phone call serving a different purpose to benefit the student. When assessing the effects of the initiative, the majority of the students who participated in the study expressed feelings of satisfaction with the initiative. Findings of the study revealed that the initiative increased the admission yield from 72.5% in 2015 to 79.5% in 2016 and 81.9% in 2017. This implies that the initiative increased persistence and retention of students who accepted admission (Curtis et al., 2019).

Barbatis (2014) contends that technological advances can promote student retention if used effectively. He discusses four types of emerging technologies including “the admissions pipeline, smart-device applications, customized educational planning and financial aid program compliance” (p. 61) that can promote retention. Confirming that current prospective students are technology savvy, Barbatis (2014) encouraged admission officers to communicate with them using new technologies. He suggested that crucial information can be delivered to prospective students via the phone, through text messages, or emails. This approach was used by Palm Beach State College in Florida and the results were impressive. They experienced a 5% increase in their enrollment (Barbatis, 2014). Effective communication with prospective students is necessary for promoting retention and lack of proper communication channels has threatened some institutions with dropout rates as high as 60% (Barbatis, 2014).

Barbatis (2014) explains that smartphones can be beneficial during the admission process. For example, GPS applications on smart phones can be used on large university campuses to locate classes and buildings during orientation. Similarly, the financial tracker

application can be used to track the application process for financial aid. Smart phones and other advanced technologies can help students navigate their new collegiate environments which may reduce stress and anxiety, hence influencing the student's decision to stay at the university. Since students expect to receive a full range of support services, Barbatis (2014) encourages student affairs professionals to collaborate with the information technology department to provide those services that enhance students' learning experience especially during New Student Orientation (NSO) programs.

New Student Orientation Programs

It is common for a new student to have many unanswered questions about the institution and its operations. NSO programs are designed to answer such questions and welcome new students on campus in a way that makes them feel at home. They are designed to acquaint students with campus life and help them transition successfully. NSO programs are also designed to inform students and parents about history, mission, values, norms, and traditions of the institution as part of acculturation. Student affairs staff utilizes NSO programs to inform students about the available educational programs, academic requirements, and student life of the institution (Dungy, 2003). The duration of NSO programs is usually between one to three days but in some schools, it may last the entire semester. Unlike in the past, where NSO programs mainly focused on registration, housing, and funding, today, NSO has been expanded to include parents, faculty, student leaders, and community leaders (Dungy, 2003) all working together to enhance student persistence through graduation.

Research shows NSO programs promote academic and social integration which is associated with positive impacts on student retention (Tinto, 2012). In addition, NSO programs are considered retention tools because they help new students navigate institutional processes, overcome anxiety in the new environments, and ease the transition process to campus life

(Hollinger & Hogan, 2014). After admission and orientations, new students can start attending academic advising sessions to choose courses or ask questions pertaining to their classes.

Academic Support

Tinto (2012) states, “Nothing is more important to student retention than academic support, especially during the critical first year of college when student retention is still very responsive to institutional intervention” (p. 25). There are several studies explaining how academic support promotes student retention (Barbatis, 2014; Cuseo, 2003; Love & Maxam, 2011; Nitecki, 2011; Tinto, 2012; Upcraft et al., 2005). Academic support programs, including mentoring and advising, have been proven to increase retention (Nitecki, 2011). In addition, increased utilization of academic support services such as the library, student success centers, and tutoring centers has shown positive impacts on student grades and fulfillment, hence increasing students’ confidence to persist in their studies to program completion (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Tinto (2012) maintains that availability of academic support programs including remedial courses, tutoring, study groups, and Summer Bridge camps are beneficial to students and increase their ability to succeed in college. Tinto (2012) contends that academic support in the first year, first semester, and first weeks of academic year is essential for first-year students to set a foundation for their academic success which, if not handled well, may influence a student’s decision to drop out.

Academic Advising. Academic advising may fall under the department of academic affairs, student affairs, or be connected with other offices (Dungy, 2003). Several studies recommend utilization of academic advising to help students navigate their collegiate experience (Barbatis, 2014; Cuseo, 2003; Love & Maxam, 2011; Tinto, 2012). Combined with other

strategies, advising is said to be the best intervention in reducing attrition and promoting retention (Cuseo, 2003; Love & Maxam, 2011). Academic advisors assist students with issues ranging from academic to developmental needs. They help students register for classes, choose majors, connect with the institution, know themselves better, and utilize campus resources effectively to maximize learning opportunities (Cuseo, 2003; Love & Maxam, 2011). Academic advisors help students integrate into the academic and social systems of the institution which in turn, influences their decision to persist in their studies.

Citing Matzner's (1989) longitudinal study of undergraduate students at a public university, Cuseo (2003) indicated that students who perceived advising as good and utilized it exhibited low dropout rates of 25% compared to those who perceived advising as poor and did not utilize it. Their dropout rates were 40 %. In the study *Academic Advising: An Alternative Remedy to Student Retention and Persistence*, Zhanda and Chikohora (2016) discussed how advisors help students to better understand themselves and the value of education. They explained how those students that attend academic advising sessions tend to perform better academically, which motivate students to persist in their studies until graduation.

King (1993) discussed the role of academic advising in retention using Noel et al.'s (1985) work on themes of attrition. Below are Noel et al.'s (1985) themes of attrition and how academic advisors may help students avert attrition and promote retention:

- *Academic boredom*—Occurs when students are not challenged by course work. In such cases, advisors can place those students in appropriate courses or provide a justification for taking such courses, hence motivating students to persist in their studies.

- *Uncertainty about major and career goals*—Cuseo (2003) reported that 75% of new college students are undecided about their majors and career plans while others will change their majors several times (King, 1993, Tinto, 2012). Such students may leave school if not assisted. In such a situation, advisors may help students directly or refer them to appropriate offices on campus for further assistance.
- *Transition and adjustment issues*—New students may experience loneliness due to separation from family and friends (Tinto, 2012). They may also find it challenging to adjust to the campus environment thus if not assisted, they may decide to drop out. Advisors may help such students directly by referring them to other campus resources for help.
- *Relevance*—Advisors play a significant role in explaining why students need to take required courses, helping students understand the link between courses and careers providing reasons why students should complete their studies to obtain their dream career jobs.

Love and Maxam (2011) outlined the following goals for advising: (a) assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance; (b) assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills and abilities to careers, the world of work, and the purpose of higher education; (c) assisting students in developing decision-making skills; (d) providing accurate information about the institution; and (e) referring students to other institutional or community support services.

Career Services

Research shows that career services have played an integral role in higher education and in student retention (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Dungy, 2003; Tinto, 2012). The field of career

services has changed over the years to adopt different models dictated by the economic trends of the time, labor market demands, and different needs of stakeholders in higher education (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Career specialists help students by helping them in career planning, job searches, and career exploration. Career specialists support students by equipping them with career-related skills like resume writing, job interviews, and effective presentation skills, among others (Dungy, 2003).

According to Upcraft et al. (2005), career services facilitate persistence and retention particularly when students participate in internships to get hands-on experiential learning. This helps students connect class work with real-world life experiences, hence making learning more meaningful. Upcraft et al. (2005) propose the linking of career service with NSO programs and first year experience to introduce such services to students early on in college life so that they can take utilize them effectively to enhance learning and promote student success.

According to Dey and Cruzvergara (2014), career services in higher education have experienced changes in modes of delivery based on changes in the political, economic, and changes in student demographics. While careers services in early 1900s focused on vocational guidance, helping immigrants find jobs, for instance, career services in 1920 to 1930 shifted its focus to the need of increased demand for teachers. Yet, from 1940 to 1960, the attention changed to new job placements, with the 70s and 80s changing the focus to helping students identify jobs of their own choice. The advances in technology from the 1990s to 2000s transformed career services into networking hubs between institutions and organizations to facilitate recruitment.

Today, the focus of career services is on building connected communities to support students in their learning and linking them with prospective future employers. Networks built

from internships and community service sometimes result in employment opportunities for students which motivates them to persist in their studies to degree completion. Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) reported that career services continue to be an integral part of student experience and if well-funded, can engage students in meaningful learning experiences leading to persistence through graduation.

Financial Resources and Assistance

Studies show that the availability of financial resources plays a big role in promoting retention (Arendt, 2013; Tinto, 2012). They explain how receiving any form of financial assistance may reduce attrition rates and increase retention. In addition to social and academic integration, Tinto (2012) maintains that availability of financial support including scholarships, loan, grants, and work- study is critical in student retention. He added that the type and amount of financial aid received influences students' choice of institution whether public or private; two year or four-year. Limited packages of financial support to students from low-income families' impacts their ability to stay in school.

Fike and Fike (2008) evaluated the semester-to-semester retention of first year college students and found that financial aid was a predictor of retention. With a sample of 9,200 participants enrolled at the community college, results from the regression model confirmed the findings of other studies that financial aid plays a significant role in retention. Results of this study revealed that college students recounted financial problems as a major contributing factor for their departure from universities.

In the study *Unmet need and unclaimed aid*, Lopez (2013) investigated the experiences of community college students from the state of California who received financial aid and how that assistance contributed to their educational success. Students who participated in the study were

characterized as low-income and the focus of the study was the role of financial aid in persistence and college completion. The study analyzed the outcomes for 1,355 students who completed their studies between 2008 and 2011 and received different kinds of financial aid. Findings of the study revealed that students who were awarded financial aid were more successful than those who were not. Student success rates were demonstrated by their academic achievements such as, graduating with a degree or certificate, earning more credit hours, and transferring to a four-year university at a higher rate than those who did not receive financial aid (Lopez, 2013). Financial aid is a major contributing factor to student persistence and retention.

Since financial aid is central for the initial and continuing enrollment of students, especially those from low-income families, Upcraft et al. (2005) recommend that colleges and universities find ways to make it available for students. Discussing financial aid implications for first year students, Upcraft et al. (2005) suggested the following strategies for institutions. First, provide correct financial aid information focusing on student needs. Second, help students get access to financial aid packages that don't require repayments. Third, provide a clear picture about loan repayment whether the student drops out or graduates. Fourth, provide alternative forms of financial support for students whenever needed. Fifth, help students find employment opportunities including on campus jobs to support themselves. Just like financial support, community service and service-learning plays a big role in retention.

Community Service and Service-Learning

Community service and service-learning refer to volunteer programs that connect students with the community for hands-on learning experiences. Tinto (2012) stated that “service learning is another way of engaging students by requiring them to get involved in service activities beyond campus” (p. 75). Student experiences gained through service-learning help

them connect class work with real life. Such experiences help them realize how classwork can be applied to a real work environment. Tinto (2012) contends that “effective service learning requires collaborative efforts from faculty and student affairs to monitor activities deemed to be appropriate for relevant course” (p. 75). Through service-learning, students are able to build meaningful relationships with future employees which encourage them to persist through graduation.

Social Support

Student services programs such as learning communities (Tinto, 2012), and first-year seminars (Keup, 2005) are said to be key in facilitating social engagement and integration. In his study, *completing college rethinking institutional action*, Tinto (2012) indicated that student retention is shaped by social support provided by the institution especially for the first-year college students. Such support, he added, “influences students’ sense of belonging and membership to the social communities of the institution” (p. 26) which ease the transition process to college environment hence reducing academic stress level. Failure to successfully transition to college can lead to student departure. Tinto (2012) further noted that social support enables students to access knowledge from staff, faculty, and peers. Such knowledge enables them to navigate the foreign campus environments thus enhancing students’ commitments to the institution and their ability to persist in their studies to degree completion.

Social support programs help students forge connections with peers and provide opportunities for personal engagement (Tinto, 2012), thus contributing to students’ feelings of integration in the institution which further reinforces the student’s initial commitment to degree attainment. Retention expert George Kuh (2016) adds student engagement is “positively related

to persistence, satisfaction, and a host of desired learning and personal development outcomes” (p. 49) thus an important activity in retention.

The DEEP Model

According to retention experts Kuh et al. (2005), the model called Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) was used to explain what high-performing colleges and universities do to promote student success (year to year retention with a good GPA leading to graduation). The DEEP model discusses best practices which support student learning, development, and persistence to graduation. The DEEP model identified six characteristics of high performing colleges and universities including: “A lived mission and lived educational philosophy; an unshakable focus on student learning; environments adopted for educational enrichment; clearly marked pathways to student success; an improved oriented ethos; shared responsibility for educational quality and student success” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 24).

Although these features are discussed separately, they are not mutually exclusive, components of one feature can be found in other components and they work together to shape a high performing institution. All DEEP schools are called high performing institutions because they register high graduation rates. They also register high scores on student engagement than expected based on institutional characteristics and student characteristics (Kuh et al., 2005). Kuh et al. (2005) indicate that DEEP schools are marked by the following features:

1. a living mission which guides every practice at the institution;
2. a strong emphasis on student learning stressing a holistic approach of learning;
3. improved campus settings to enhance learning both on campus and off campus;
4. well-defined strategies for student success such as 1st year seminars and advising sessions; and

5. combined efforts to quality education to promote student success.

What Are HIPs?

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), high impact practices are “teaching and learning practices that have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds” (AAC&U, 2013, p. 2).

These practices are recognized for their contribution to deep learning outcomes, student engagement, and persistence to graduation (Kuh, 2008). Citing his previous work in 2008, Kuh (2013) indicates that HIPs are called high-impact because college students who are involved in such practices register more points on national survey of student engagement measures such as “academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environment, than peers who have not had similar experiences” (pp. 86–87).

High impact practices engage students in different learning activities such as learning communities, service learning, internships, and undergraduate research among others which contribute to student success. Engaging students in high impact educational practices, especially those that focus on learning by doing, provide opportunities for students to apply what they are learning to the real-world settings which provided them hands on work experience.

Kuh and his colleagues (2008) at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) identified 10 high impact educational practices which have proven to benefit student in areas of student learning, engagement, and persistence. These practices include

- first-year seminars and experiences which provide students opportunities to work together in small groups with faculty or staff;
- common intellectual experiences which are planned general education course covering broad themes;

- learning communities that engage students in taking two or more related courses together in consultation with faculty and peers inside and outside the classroom;
- writing-intensive courses which provide students opportunities to learn through writing at different level of learning;
- collaborative assignments to expose students to different points of views and people from varied backgrounds;
- undergraduate research to engage students in research processes in collaboration with the faculty;
- diversity/global learning to expose students to different cultural beliefs, ethnic, racial, religious and gender differences usually through study abroad programs;
- service learning and community based learning which allows students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom to solve real life problems in the community;
- internship programs which provide students opportunities to have hands on experiences in the area related to their major; and
- capstone courses and projects as well as final academic papers which culminate learning across students' entire undergraduate coursework.

Studies show that HIPs are associated with a wide range of positive outcomes ranging from personal, academic, to civil engagement. Due to their positive effects of retention and graduation rates, HIPs have been recommended for all kinds of universities to benefit the general student population as well as the underserved student populations; particularly underrepresented minorities, first generation students, and low-income students (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). Kilgo et al.'s (2014) study supports AAC&U claims that high impact practices promote student success.

High impact practices uphold a holistic approach of educating the whole person by providing services which help students achieve personal, academic, social, developmental, and other desired learning outcomes (Kuh, 2013). Gonzaga, a Catholic Jesuit University in Washington state, has been cited as one of the institutions that uses a particularly effective holistic approach in educating its students. The university's emphasis on educating the whole person's mind, body, and spirit is demonstrated by their educational philosophy of "integrating science and arts, faith and reason, action, and contemplation" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 38). The university emphasizes service learning and civic engagements. Such practices help students gain practical experience in "leadership, decision-making, and policymaking, forging meaningful relationships with peers, administrators, and professors" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 88). DEEP schools

- teach students the values of the institutions, what successful students do, and how to take advantage of school resources for their learning;
- provide academic and social support inside and outside the classroom;
- possess comprehensive campus teamwork to meet the needs of first year students (integrated enrollments, orientation, advising, cultural events etc.);
- emphasize developing the whole student (body, mind, and spirit); and
- expect students to perform at a high level.

High impact practices have been studied and proven to have various positive impacts on student learning, development, and persistence to graduation. They benefit the general student population as well as underrepresented minority, first generation, and low-income students. Kuh (2008) recommends that institutions implement HIPs and provide opportunities for all

undergraduate students to participate in one or more HIPs each year to increase their educational outcomes ranging from academic to social to civic engagement.

Obtaining Education at a Small Private University

Some characteristics of small private universities have small class sizes, availability of a range of social events, opportunities for developing relationships, and a focus on undergraduate learning. Their characteristics can help students identify themselves with the institution and this strengthens their commitment to stay at the university. According to LeBlanc and Slaughter (2012), several private religiously affiliated schools' missions, visions, or goals focus on educating the whole person - mind, body, and soul. They found that private schools strongly emphasize the need to nurture and support students in a holistic manner. LeBlanc and Slaughter (2012) claim that attending religiously affiliated institutions helps students in faith formation and spiritual growth and that may facilitate retention. Other factors associated with attending private institutions include building relationships with peers and engaging in personal spiritual exercises both of which promote student integration and retention (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012).

Citing the College Board (2011) report on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), LeBlanc and Slaughter (2012) indicate that test takers from Christian private schools outperformed those from public schools. For example, the average score for private schools in writing was 530, while that of public schools was 488. Similarly, the average score on critical reading for private schools was 533, while that of public schools was 498. This implies that students attending private Christian schools may perform better than their counterparts in public schools.

Commenting on the achievement level of students, LeBlanc, and Slaughter (2012) stated that "students in private schools exhibit higher levels of academic achievement and attend college at higher rates than students who attend public schools" (p. 63).

In the study *Research on University Teaching*, Hilton et al. (2015) contend that the main objectives for a church founded institution are faith formation and spiritual development. Founders of such institutions want their students live a deep moral life, following God's laws and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some institutions offer opportunities to increase discipleship amongst students. Hilton et al. (2015) state that the "goal of increasing faith in students is a part of many religious education endeavors" (p. 722). Using Waldron's (2013) work, Hilton et al. (2015) quoted one participant who said, "We cannot profess to teach the whole child without including the faith dimension and the spiritual development of the child" (p. 273). The goal of educating the whole person, emphasized by private universities, is reflected in the conceptual framework utilized in this study, especially Chickering's (1969) theory of seven developmental vectors. The commitment to educate the whole person is directly related to the research problem of student dropout and the need for institutions to adopt a holistic approach to support students in their learning.

According to Reisz and Stock (2012), studies on private universities were minimal until the 1960s and 1970s. Citing the work of Greiger (1986), Reisz and Stock (2012) indicate that the initial case studies on private universities in the U.S were published in the late 1980s. When comparing private universities and public universities, Reisz and Stock (2012) reported that private universities have multiple sources of funding which allows them to attract and recruit students from various religious and cultural backgrounds and students who wish to attend a college which fits their specific needs. Therefore, they can design and implement various types and programs of student service required to support students and promote retention.

In addition, Reisz and Stock (2012) indicated that some researchers believe that private universities provide "an education that is more, better, or different from that of their public

competitors” (p. 199). This makes private universities capable of accommodating the changing needs of different student populations. For example, Pei-Leng and Pang (2013) reported that 74.8% of the students enrolled at a private university were adults above the ages 30 and more than 50% were female. Also, the study revealed that 68% of the adult learners enrolled at the private university were married, and in some countries, private universities are enrolling more students than public universities. In Uganda for example, private universities account for more than 51% of the total student enrollments in university education (NCHE, 2018). Therefore, it is important to explore and understand how a private university in Uganda is utilizing student services to both support students in their learning and increase retention.

Ochwa-Echel (2016) described rationale for the existence of private universities to include: (a) the need to absorb the excess demand for higher education including large numbers of high school graduates who cannot be admitted to public universities because of limited capacity; (b) the need to provide better education to benefit communities in specific areas not addressed by public education; and (c) to provide specific academic programs not available at public universities. According to Ochwa-Echel (2016), the expansion of private universities in Uganda emerged from a need to absorb high demand for higher education which was not matched by new expansions of public universities. The above-mentioned characteristics of private universities have compelled I to conduct a study on the role of student services in student retention at a private nonprofit Ugandan university.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology and actions taken to complete this research study. Within this chapter, I discuss the methods used in this study and the rationale for selecting the specific methods used in the study. In reviewing the overarching research question and the sub-questions, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study which sought to understand how student services may impact college student retention at one specific private university in Uganda.

Qualitative Research Approach

There are multiple methodological approaches one could and should consider in conducting a study on college student retention. Creswell (2014) noted that research questions will guide the decisions related to the research methods. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows me to investigate the phenomena in its natural setting where human behaviors and interactions occur (Lichtman, 2013). This approach allowed me to contact participants directly in their natural setting and elicit their feelings, beliefs, and perceptions regarding the role of student services in student retention.

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) qualitative research approaches are used to explore and understand a phenomenon rather than measuring the difference among variables. Thus, the approach was used to understand the role of student services in student retention by identifying the different programs of student services available at a private Ugandan university and their impact on student retention. Since qualitative approaches “look deeper into the quality of social life and allocate the study within the setting” (Holliday, 2016, p. 6), this approach allowed the investigator to study the participants within their natural setting where the phenomenon takes place. A qualitative research approach was selected to allow me to collect data

directly from university administrators who design and implement student services and have direct contact with students, thus experiencing the problem first-hand. Such information was important in understanding the research topic. Moreover, the emergent process of qualitative inquiry allowed I to make beneficial and relevant adjustments as needed to facilitate deep exploration of the phenomenon.

Case Study Approach

According to Yin (2009), Stake (1995), and Merriam (2009), the concept of case study has several meanings. While Yin (2009) defines case study as “an empirical analysis that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (p. 18), Stake (1995) defines a case study as “the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning” (p. 237), and Merriam (1998) defined case study as “an intensive, holistic description, and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). According to Merriam (1998), a case can be a person, a program, or a school. The case for this study was a private Ugandan university and Merriam’s (1998) definition of a case as a holistic description and analysis of a single instance was adopted for this study. Yin’s (2009) definition of case study was utilized in designing interview questions to allow for an in-depth exploration of the research topic. Interview questions were purposefully designed to obtain detailed information on the research topic. Stake (1995) grouped case studies into three major categories: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. This inquiry utilized the instrumental type of case study which refers to selecting one case that is a representative of other cases in the same category. The private university studied in this research represents other private universities in Uganda which have similar characteristics in terms of size, student population, fees structures and others. The

goal of using an instrumental Stake (1995) type of case study is to allow the results of the study to be applied to other private universities with similar characteristics as the university studied.

Rationale for Selecting a Case Study Design

A case study design was selected for this study to allow I to explore the research topic in detail (Merriam, 2009). According to Parry et al., (2012) “a case study approach is especially appropriate when conducting exploratory research in a previously under-investigated area” (p. 715). Since the role of student services in student retention is an under-investigated topic in Ugandan private universities; it was appropriate to use a case study design to understand this issue through a detailed investigation of a single university as representative of other private, non-profit universities in Uganda. Findings of the study can provide lessons “assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average institution” (Yin, 2003, p. 41). In this case, the average institution can be any private, non-profit Ugandan university with similar characteristics as the institution in this study.

The case study approach was selected to allow I to “explore a real-life case, through detailed description of the phenomenon involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). I used different sources of information to confirm comparable facts about the phenomenon and increase validity and reliability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Sharan B. Merriam’s (2009) definition of case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40), provided additional rationale for the use of this method as I sought provide detailed description of the available student services and how they are utilized to promote student retention at Ugandan private university.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of ontology and epistemology are associated with people's views of reality and of knowledge (Egbert & Sanden, 2013; Leavy, 2017). Regarding ontology, I used a descriptive approach that embraces the notion of multiple realities leaning towards a more context-bound subjective reality. The study was guided by the belief that the world is constructed and interpreted by people as they interact with each other in social reality. Regarding epistemology which seeks to answer the questions of "what counts as knowledge, how knowledge claims are justified" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 19), I spent two months collaborating with administrators and gained insights from them. I relied on participants' narratives, quotes, and views to justify knowledge claims (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Informed Consent

I addressed the requirements of informed consent prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time if they changed their minds (Lichtman, 2013). Other issues addressed in the informed included the time of involvement, how privacy issues were handled, the type of data to be collected and how that data was to be used (Creswell, 2005). For more information on the informed consent, see Appendix D.

Ethical Assurance

The plan to ensure ethical consideration was based on Creswell's (2014) guidelines. Prior to the study, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained from the University of the Incarnate Word. The research site did not require an additional IRB. Formal access to the research was sought and obtained from the president of the university. After gaining access to the

research site, arrangements were made with the university representatives regarding the preliminary meeting with participants and the eventual process of data collection. The sample for the study did not fall in the high-risk category because all the participants were adults.

Participants were required to sign an informed consent form before enrolling in the study (Lawton, 2001).

Confidentiality

To respect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, I replaced their real names with pseudonyms. To protect the privacy of the institution a pseudonym Ugandan Private University (UPU) was created and used through the study. A spread sheet was created in Google drive with phone numbers, email addresses and real names of participants which correspond with the created pseudonyms. This spreadsheet can only be opened on a personal laptop which is password protected with the research being to sole user. This information will be deleted, and all printed copies shredded at the end of two years. All forms of collected data for the study was stored in a password-protected computer limiting the access of raw data only to I.

Validity and Reliability

Citing the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), Yilmaz (2013) noted rigor of qualitative research can be assessed by using the “concepts of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*” (p. 320). *Credibility* is safeguarded when participants confirm that the results of the study reflect their perceptions of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of different data points including interviews, documents, and institutional assessment, allowed I to build a coherent justification of themes and corroborated information collected using different methods (Creswell, 2014). The use of different sources of information allowed for clarity and confirmed research findings; thus, increasing external validity.

Member Checking

Rich and thick detailed description of the setting and participants was utilized to help individuals interested in the transferability of the findings have background information for comparison (Creswell, 2014). To enhance the accuracy of the findings the final report or specific description of the data was taken back to participants to check accuracy of interpretations through the process known as member checking. Participant validation aided in guarding against data misinterpretation by I (Creswell, 2014).

Reflexivity

I employed reflexivity to deal with personal biases relating to theories, beliefs, and prior knowledge about the topic (Lichtman, 2013). From the onset of the study, I recognized her role as a researcher and removed herself and any potential researcher biases from the study. This was done by maintaining a journal to track down her thought process. Journaling strengthened I's ability to identify any personal experiences and biases and ensure that such biases do not affect the interpretations and analysis data when analyzing the viewpoints of the participants. As previously mentioned, memoing was also employed to help minimize and avoid researcher bias.

Memo Writing

The use of memos allowed I to establish an intense relationship with the data, enabling I to feel a heightened sensitivity to the meanings contained in the data. Writing memos enabled I to better understand the research topic and facilitate the development of the study design. Rather than relying solely on the use of field notes, I was actively engaged in the practice of writing memos during data collection and analysis. The practice of writing memos allowed I to better reflect on the information provided and make connections with the research topic.

Field Notes

To obtain additional contextual information I also used field notes to enhance further understanding participants' meanings and situate the study within a larger communal context. Field notes for this study comprised of jotting down details regarding the participants' tone, emphasis placed on specific of information shared and the emotions experienced when sharing that information. Bullet points in an outline form were made during interview sessions and these notes aided in constructing rich descriptions about the context of the study. Collectively, the use of these multiple validity and reliability approaches ensured that the study was conducted in a meaningful, thoughtful, and purposeful way to increase its effectiveness and legitimacy.

Study Site

To protect the identity of the institution in the study, a pseudonym of UPU was assigned to the university. UPU is located in the central region of Uganda serving more than 5,000 students. The university enrolls both full time and part time students. By 2015, the institution had multiple facilities and several academic departments with an enrollment exceeding 5,000 students. The current president of the university has served the institution for a number of years. UPU was selected because its institutional characteristics such as ownership, governance, fee structure, and size are typical of non-profit, private universities in Uganda. UPU has been offering student services to individuals seeking certificates, diplomas, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in different fields. At UPU, the Office of the Dean of Students manages student services. Some of the programs of student services offered at UPU include enrollment and admissions, academic advising, health services, residence life, counseling services, student unions, athletics, and food services.

I sought and gained access to the research site through formal procedures. The president of UPU issued an official letter granting permission to conduct the study at the university including the recruitment of participants and data collection. Additionally, permission from the university of the Incarnate Word's Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to data collection.

Sample and Participant Selection

The population for this study was university student services administrators, directors, coordinators, and staff at UPU. Their positions of leadership and interactions with students made them a unique population to identify a sample size for the current study. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend purposeful sampling for selecting participants that will help I to better understand the problem. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend using purposeful sampling when the investigator seeks to discover and gain in-depth understanding of the research topic, thus, the need to “select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). I used purposeful sampling to select administrators and staff working in different departments of student services from whom the most can be learnt. The criterion for selecting participants was based on being employed in the functional area of student services, the years of service, positions of leadership, and availability. Research participants were selected from the following functional areas: admissions, academic advising, careers services, dean of student's office and residence life (Long, 2012).

The study followed Ritchie and Lewis' (2003) recommendations regarding the sample size for qualitative research. First, the research selected a sample size that will lead to saturation (a point where additional information yields no new evidence). Second, I acknowledged that qualitative studies are not about generalization and so there was no need certify that the “sample

is of sufficient scale to determine statistically significant discriminatory variables” (p. 83). Third, I was mindful that qualitative studies yield detailed descriptions with a lot of information, thus the need to utilize smaller sample sizes. Fourth, I remained cognizant that qualitative research is highly intensive in terms of the required resources to conduct the study; that it would be unmanageable to conduct and analyze hundreds of interviews and documents with limited time and resources. Thus, the sample for this study comprised of 10 participants selected from the functional area of student affairs. The sample size of 10 participants falls in a justifiable range of qualitative research in literature and previous studies. Participants were selected based on their positions of leadership in student affairs, years of service and availability.

After obtaining official permission to conduct the study, I contacted one of the administrators to start the process of recruiting research participants. The administrator provided a list of professionals employed in the functional area of student services who had been working at the same university for more than one year and were still employed during the summer of 2020. The list was comprised of 13 potential research participants. A list of email addresses with phone numbers was created and e-mails were sent to all thirteen individuals inviting them to participate in the study. Each of the participants who met the criteria of being enrolled in the study received an email solicitation including a self-introductory message, an invitation letter to participate in the study (see Appendix C) and a copy of the informed consent (see Appendix D). Individuals who accepted the invitation to participate in the study were asked to sign the informed which meant that they had read and understood the information included in the form.

This initial solicitation resulted in six potential research participants who agreed to participate in the study. Follow up emails were sent to those individuals who did not respond to the first email and four more people were added on the list making a total of 10 potential

research participants. The same group of participants that was interviewed also completed an online institutional assessment. The group of participants comprised of high-level administrators, middle-level administrators, and staff. The group of high-level administrators included the Deputy to the registrar, the Assistant Academic Registrar, the Dean of Students, and the Chief Financial Officer. The second group of comprised of middle-level administrators including the Assistant to the Dean of Students, the Alumni relations' officer, and two administrators from the Admissions' Office. The third group comprised of the staff including one academic advisor who was also a lecturer, and one staff from the library department.

Since all the procedures of participant recruitment and data collection were completed during the tough times of COVID-19, social distance guidelines were followed; documents for participant recruitment and data collected were completed online via email and telephone. Informed consent forms were e-mailed to volunteers who signed them and e-mailed them to I. A total of 10 participants signed informed consent, filled out an online questionnaire using google forms, and participated in a one-hour telephone interview. Participants provided the dates and times that were convenient for them to participate in interviews and I adjusted her schedule to accommodate participants' schedules. The same group of participants that was interviewed also completed the online assessment.

Methods of Data Collection

According to Yin (2018), methods for data collection in case studies lean towards multiple sources of evidence to capture the complexity and totality of the case being studied. Patton (2002) argues that a single source of information is not reliable to provide a complete perspective of the problem under the investigation. This study utilized three methods of data collection including semi-structured interviews, an online assessment, and document analysis.

The online assessment tool was based on high impact practices or the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) model. Through the use of three different approaches, the data was triangulated to ensure that information gathered through interviews was corroborated with information obtained from the assessment and documents to validate the claims made about the presence or absence of student services and the role in student services in student retention.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The first method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. The interview preparation process was guided by McNamara's (2009) eight principles:

1. Choosing a setting with minimal distractions.
2. Explaining the purpose of the study.
3. Addressing issues of confidentiality.
4. Explaining the design of the interview.
5. Specifying the duration of the interview.
6. Providing information on how I can be contacted.
7. Ensuring that participants questions were answered.
8. Using the recorder to capture all the information.

The duration for interview sessions was between 45 mins. to 60 mins. and each interview session was audio recorded using an Olympus VN-6200PC Digital Voice recorder and windows 10 voice recorder application. This allowed the research to listen attentively to participants' responses to better understand their perspectives. Also, attentive listening provided an opportunity for I to ask follow-up questions to obtain detailed information. An interview protocol was utilized to guide interview sessions (sees Appendix A) and the semi-structured questions allowed participants to provide different responses to the same questions (Merriam, 2009).

During interviews, I took notes in a bullet form which were used for probing and as well as asking follow-up questions to elicit further descriptions and clarification of participant responses. The study followed Yin's (2003) recommendations to use an ongoing strategy of data collection common in case study interviews which involve listening to responses, interpreting them, and asking to follow up questions to obtain detailed descriptions and clarifications on participants' responses. Interviews were transcribed and revised as soon as they were completed. Some of the interview responses were sent back to some of the participants via email to seek more clarification and confirm the accuracy of the information.

I created an interview guide that was used for semi-structured interviews with 10 professionals employed in the functional area of student services. Open ended questions provided an opportunity for I to obtain in depth descriptions of administrators' perceptions on the role of student services in student retention. Semi-structured interviews were particularly beneficial to participants because they afforded them the opportunity to talk about their thoughts, feelings, views, and experiences. It also afforded I an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of the participants' meaning making of the research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews permitted the use of a mixture of open-ended as well as probes and follow-up questions of who, what, when, why, and how to provide additional information and further clarification on some of the responses which were not clearly understood by I (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The use of open-ended questions was particularly useful in encouraging interviewees to give detailed explanations, provide more depth when probing questions were asked and to raise relevant issues which were not directly asked.

The study used the same interview guide (with a total of 13 questions) for all 10 participants (see Appendix A). Interview questions 1-3 elicited responses on participants'

background information; questions 4–11 sought for information on the programs of student services available, how they are utilized to promote retention and challenges faced when offering student services. Interview question 12 connected to the theoretical framework of Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student departure and Chickering's (1969, 1993) developmental vectors. Questions 13–16 requested additional information regarding student services at UPU.

Documents

The second method of data collection was document analysis pertaining to the types of student services provided and how they are utilized to promote retention. Documents were collected at the same time as interviews were being conducted. Participants were asked to share documents which they thought would provide more information on different programs of student services provided by their university. The website was also scanned for additional documents to get a broader understanding of the research topic, provide context, and validate information for accuracy. I utilized knowledge obtained from documents to corroborate information obtained from the institutional assessment and interview strengthened the findings of the study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), documents are an important part of the research process especially when they are easily accessible. Documents revealed the inner meaning of everyday events in relation to student services at UPU. They also provided descriptive information that was used to advance new categories as well as increasing clarity on the research topic. Documents were useful as they were integrated in the inductive process of building categories during data analysis. They provided sources of evidence to support findings of the study.

Institutional Assessment

The third method of data collection was the survey or institutional assessment based on high impact practices or the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) model by Kuh

et al. (2005). The institutional assessment questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section focused on demographic profiles and the second section focused on the six characteristics of high performing universities including a lived mission, unshakable focus on student learning, environments adopted for educational enrichment, clearly marked pathways to student success, improved ethos, and shared responsibility for educational quality (Kuh et al., 2005). The demographic information provided background knowledge about the participants and responses from the assessment provided answers for question number three - How is the private, non-profit Ugandan University utilizing high impact educational practice to increase retention? Yin (2009) recommends the use of multiple sources of evidence in data collection to provide “converging lines of inquiry” (p. 115). Methods of data collection used in this study included interviews, documents, and institutional assessment. Information collected using interviews was corroborated with information from the institutional assessment and from documents analysis. The approach of corroborating information from different sources strengthened the study and increased the trustworthiness of the findings to strengthen the findings of the study.

Data Analysis

After organizing data and saving it in different folders, the process of data analysis began by transcribing interviews and generating a verbatim text that was used to maintain the naturalness of the interviews. Each transcription was thoroughly reviewed multiple times. The first review of each transcript was to familiarize and remind I of the conversation with the participant. To begin the process of data analysis, I read and re-read the information to become more familiar with the data. While reading through transcripts, I made notations next to bits of data found to be relevant in answering research questions, a process known as coding. Any segment of data found to be useful was manually coded using Microsoft office in word

document; first using open coding, and then, focused coding (Meriam et al., 2016). Open coding was done in the first cycle of coding described by Saldana (2015). Focused coding was done in the second cycle of coding where related open codes were grouped together to form different types of themes. Codes were organized into broader themes with relevant information about the research question (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Themes were used to write descriptions of administrators' perceptions of the role of student services in student retention.

Documents Analysis

In order to conduct a meaningful analysis, I printed each document provided which included organizational charts, new student orientation schedules, pre-university camp schedule, internship policy, and other documents pertaining to student service programs at UPU. I also spent multiple hours regularly over multiple months reviewing and reading the institution's website to learn more about the types of student services provided and how they are utilized to promote retention.

The DEEP Assessment Analysis

Data from the assessment was analyzed using graphs generated by an online application called google forms. Participant responses were used to write descriptive information to explain whether or not UPU qualifies to be called a high performing university.

Interviews' Thematic Analysis

To analyze data from interviews, I utilized the thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clark (2006). This approach involves six steps:

1. Becoming familiar with the data.
2. Creating preliminary codes.
3. Searching for themes from the codes.

4. Reviewing the themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Using themes to describe the findings.

The six steps describe the thematic analysis process that I used to create themes from interview transcripts and documents.

Step 1: Become Familiar With Data. The first phase was to become familiar with data. This was achieved by I immersing herself in the data which aided in gaining deeper insights on the data content. Data immersion was accomplished by I personally transcribing or converting audial interviews into text. This was done immediately following the interview's conclusion and by reading and re-reading the transcripts. The process of data immersion also included visiting the university website to read documents related to student services as well as reading documents obtained from participants. Data immersion was important in gaining a thorough understanding of the data and identifying significant segments of data to develop preliminary codes. In addition, data immersion was fundamental in initiating the process of data reduction – “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming” (Miles & Herberman, 1994, p. 10) data from documents and transcriptions. Data immersion provided I with initial thoughts to create preliminary codes.

Step 2: Create Initial Codes. The second phase was to create initial codes. According to Saldana (2016), a code “is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and or evocative attribute to a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 11). The first task in creating initial codes was to organize the data in a systematic way for easy retrieval and processing. Since I's main goal was to find answers for the research question, any segment of the interview data connected to the problem statement, purpose of the

study, or the research questions was coded. I used a descriptive coding approach by assigning a descriptive label or code to significant segments of data describing the setting, actions, and experiences of participants in relations to the research topic. According to Saldana (2016), descriptive coding is an approach that “summarizes in a word or short phrase... the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (p. 102). The purpose of using descriptive coding was to allow the data to speak for itself as I constructed codes from data by assigning labels significant segments of data. All codes were thoughtfully derived from the interview data; I did not use any pre-set codes. Descriptive coding was used to create codes for both research questions one and two. Some of the descriptive codes created for research question one includes new student orientations, career services, and counseling services among others.

In addition, I utilized the gerund form of coding (i.e., adding “-ing” to the verb) to create codes which described a situation, process, or behavior of the participant (Charmaz, 2014). This strategy was used to generate codes for answering research question two: How is the private university in Uganda using student services to aid students in their persistence to graduation? The purpose of using this approach was to describe actions or processes implemented by UPU to solve the problem of student dropout and promote retention. Some examples of codes created using gerunds include showing student institutional resources, engaging students on campus, and providing financial aid.

Initial codes were created using Microsoft Word and its features by selecting and highlighting in different colors all significant sections of data related to research questions. This was done to help differentiate the nuances between codes. Each interview transcript with a student services professional employed by UPU was coded individually. Thus, each of the 10 transcripts had their own codes (some similar, some different). Once individual transcripts were

coded, the research developed a list of codes that reflected data generated from each study participant. I finalized the second phase by working through the transcripts several times generating codes and sometimes modifying the existing ones. Thus, the first round of coding produced over 50 preliminary codes, which were revised multiple times and sometimes modified and renamed.

Step 3: Search for Themes. The third phase was to search for themes. Saldana (2016) defines a theme as “an extended phrase or sentence that identifies and functions as a way to categorize a set of data into an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas” (p. 13). According to Miles and Herbmman (1994), to identify a theme or pattern we isolate “something that happens a number of times and happens in a specific way” (p. 253). Only those codes that exhibited patterns and were consistently noticeable across all the transcripts were selected. Frequencies were utilized to identify significant codes. The counting of how often a code was mentioned by participants was essential in determining which codes were important and qualifies to be included in the final list of codes classification and theme development.

The process of searching for the themes began by reviewing the initial codes created in stage two and compiling a list of codes from all the ten transcripts. Codes were compared with each other across all interview transcripts and as a result some codes were dropped while others were merged to create strong codes. Those codes which had similar meaning, although worded differently were modified and renamed. The process of revising codes reduced the number of preliminary codes from over 50 codes to 33 codes, and then to the final list of 28 codes which falls in the recommended “final list of no more than 25-30” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 190).

These codes were transferred into Excel to create a codebook. The codebook comprised of 28 codes and the names of research participants. To determine how many times a particular

code was mentioned, the letter “X” was placed in column against the code and the participant’s name. Then, the total count of each code was calculated. Codes with three or more participants were selected and a list of significant codes created. Those codes were placed in different categories to create themes. The grouping of codes was based on the shared characteristics that existed among the codes as described by Charmaz (2014) and Creswell and Poth (2018). Codes were placed in a particular group based on what they had in common thus, all the significant codes were grouped together to create five main themes. These themes included: (a) setting the stage for student success, (b) maintaining dedication to students and the work institution, (c) educating the whole person, (d) recognizing barriers to student success; and (e) engaging students on campus and in the community.

Step 4: Review Themes. During this stage, I reviewed and modified themes which were identified in step three by re-reading all interview transcripts, cross-checking with themes to ensure that the created themes were reflected in the entire data set rather than a single interview transcript. I used the copy and paste function in Microsoft word to identify all significant sections of data that were relevant to each theme. A table was created for each of the main themes with significant excerpts of data quotes when writing the findings. Themes were compared with one another to determine if ideas flowed relative to the research question.

Steps 5 and 6: Define Themes and do the Write-up. During this phase, I refined themes by explaining the meaning of each theme in relation to the study. The write up phase of thematic analysis comprised of the presentation of the findings under RQ2: How are the student services and student programs provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?

Limitations of the Study

While gender appears to be a limitation by the statistical standards where 70% of participants in the study were male and 30% were female; this is reflective of the employee population at UPU. The majority of employees at the university are male, therefore the sample was predominantly male.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the role of student services in student retention. To achieve this goal, I explored different programs of student services available at a private, non-profit Ugandan university in order to understand how such services are utilized to support students in their persistence to graduation. Also, I sought to understand how the private, non-profit Ugandan University in the study was utilizing high impact educational practices to increase retention. To find those answers, I reviewed documents and analyzed interview transcripts and responses from the DEEP assessment. I addressed three research questions:

1. What types of student services and student programs are provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan Private University (UPU)?
2. How are the student services and student programs provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?
3. How is the private, non-profit Ugandan University utilizing high impact educational practices to increase retention?

This chapter presents the findings of the study which were organized into three different sections based on the above research questions and the three methods of data collection.

Location and Sample

The university in the study is located in the central region of Uganda near to the metropolitan city Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. By 2017, the institution's enrollment exceeded 5,000 students. Some student service programs offered by the university include admissions, academic advising, career services, residence life, counseling services, financial support, and sports. Major offices in charge of the administration and management of student

affairs programs and services include the Registrar's office, the Dean of Students office, the Chaplaincy office, and the library.

A total of 10 participants, who had been working in the division of student affairs as administrators were interviewed and also completed an online survey. All of the participants were either high-level administrators, middle-level administrators, or staff. The first group consisted of high-level administrators including the Deputy to the Registrar, the Assistant Academic Registrar, the Dean of Students, and the Financial Officer. This group made up 40% of the sample size (4 out of 10). The second group consisted of mid-level administrators. This group included the Assistant Dean of Students, the Alumni Relations' Officer, and two administrators from the Admissions Office. This group accounted for 40% of the sample size (4 out of 10). The third group comprised of the staff including one academic advisor who was also a lecturer and one staff member from the library. This group accounted for 20% of the sample size (2 out of 10).

The years of service in the division of student affairs varied among the 10 participants who were interviewed and surveyed. Those participants whose years of service were between 1–2 years of experience represented 10% of the sample size. Those participants between 3–4 years and 5–6 years of experience represent 40% of the sample size each, and one participant had 9 years of experience. Seven out of 10 or 70% of the participants were males and three or 30% were females. The majority of the participants were young adults in the 25–44 age range and most of them had a master's degree. The graphic display of participants, age, gender, tribe, years of service, and level of education are provided in figures 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 in the findings section from the DEEP assessment.

Data Analysis

After documents related to the institution's student services were thoroughly reviewed; interviews concluded and transcribed and responses from the online institutional assessment downloaded, data analysis began with each individual data source connecting following each research question. I used a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data.

Document Analysis

My original intent was to conduct this research study in-person at UPU. It was my intent to review printed pamphlets, posted announcements, student catalogues, marketing materials, reports on semester-to-semester student enrollments, and other documents pertaining to student services at UPU. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, this study was conducted virtually. Therefore, the level of document analysis that could be conducted was limited to online materials and any printed documents that personnel were willing to provide electronically. In order to conduct a meaningful analysis, I printed each document provided by participants including organizational charts, new student orientation schedules, a pre-university camp schedule, an internship handbook policy, and other documents pertaining to student services programs at UPU. I also spent multiple hours regularly over multiple months reviewing and reading the institution's website to learn more about the types of student services provided and how they are utilized to promote retention. To adequately answer the three research questions, documents were used to validate information from interviews and from the assessment.

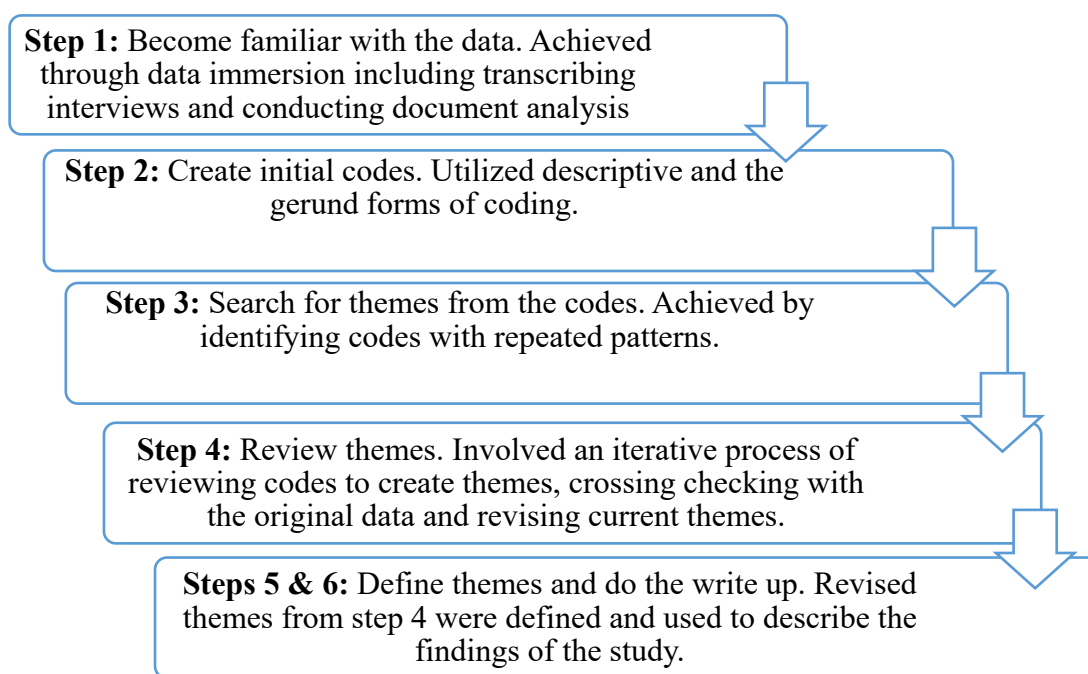
Thematic Analysis of Interviews

To analyze data from interviews, I utilized a thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clark (2006). This method of data analysis involved an iterative process of

identifying, categorizing, creating, and describing themes as they emerged from the data. The analysis was guided by Braun and Clark's (2006) six step process which includes: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) creating preliminary codes, (3) searching for themes from the codes, (4) reviewing the themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) using themes to describe the findings. Figure 1 provides a summary of the interviews' thematic analysis process using Braun and Clark's (2006) six-steps. The detailed explanation of each step can be found in data analysis section of chapter three.

Figure 1

Braun and Clark's Six Steps Thematic Data Analysis



Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps of data analysis allowed themes to emerge from the data. Those themes were used to describe the findings of the study to answer RQ2: How are the student services and student programs provided at private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?

The DEEP Assessment Analysis

The purpose of the assessment was to understand how UPU was using Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) currently known as High Impact Practices (HIP) to promote student retention. The Analysis of responses from the survey was guided by the six characteristics of high performing institutions which include: a living mission, an unshakable focus on student learning, environments adapted for education enrichment, marked pathways to student success, improvement-oriented ethos, and shared responsibility of educational quality and student success. The assessment included several items and requested participants to rate each question on a scale of 1 to 5 from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data from the assessment was analyzed using graphs generated by Google Forms, an online application. Participant responses were used to write descriptive information to explain whether UPU qualified to be considered as a high performing university. The findings were presented in charts and descriptions.

The Findings

The findings of the study were organized into three different sections based on the three research questions. The first section presents the findings for RQ1, followed by the findings for RQ2, and lastly the findings for RQ3. RQ 1: What types of student services and student programs are provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan Private University (UPU)?

According to Long (2012), student services were established to address both the academic and developmental needs of students. The central mission of student affairs is to ensure that “students are safe, cared for, and well treated” (Long, 2012, p. 7). Therefore, student services can be defined as outside of the classroom activities provided by colleges and universities to ensure that students’ general welfare (social, academic, physical, cultural,

spiritual) is maintained. This definition corresponds with Tinto's (2012) claims about colleges and universities providing student services to meet students' needs. The types of student services offered at UPU were grouped into three major categories: pre-enrollment phase, entry phase, and enrollment phase. The pre-enrollment phase begins from the prospective student's first encounter with the institution and ends with admission leading to the entry phase. It includes all services offered to students before they enter the institution. Interventions in this category are utilized to advertise university programs and to help students create initial encounters with the institution. Such encounters are essential in creating a sense of belonging that is key in student retention. Interventions included in the pre-enrollment phase include high school visits, open day events, pre-university camps, and admissions (see Table 2).

Table 2

Major Interventions Provided During the Pre-enrollment Phase

Service	Activity
High school visitations	School officials visit a few high schools to provide academic advising and career guidance to high school seniors. This program is also used as an enrollment and marketing strategy.
Open day events	An open day event is held each academic year. During these events high school students are invited to participate in different activities available on campus. They get a chance to learn more about the university.
Pre-university camp	Pre-university camp is held once a year to help students identify their educational and career goals. The program is open to all students planning to join any university in Uganda. Different speakers are invited to address students
Admissions	Admissions officers guide students during the admissions process. They market the institution, receive applications, and send admission letters to students. They also help students with the registration process.

The second category of interventions comprised of services offered to students at the entry phase. The entry phase begins from the time when a prospective student is admitted to the institution to the time when they enter the classroom. Interventions included in the entry phase engage the newly admitted students with faculty, staff, and peers to acclimatize them with the institution before they start classes. Three specific entry interventions include new student orientation programs, academic advising and course registrations, and financial support services (see Table 3).

Table 3

Major Interventions Provided During the Entry Phase

Service	Activity
New student orientations	Orientation for newly admitted students is held once a year to reiterate university expectations, show student institutional resources, and provide them an opportunity to ask questions.
Academic advising	Academic advising services are offered to both prospective and newly admitted to students.
Financial aid	Different kinds of financial support are available for students from low-income backgrounds. Some students benefit from government funded student loans and receive scholarships from the university and form other private organizations.

The third category of interventions comprised of services offered to students during the enrollment phase. The enrollment phase begins from the time a student enters the classroom to the time when they graduate from the university. Specific during enrollment interventions include, residence life, student unions, counselling services, supplemental instruction/tutoring services, internships and campus ministries, cultural events (see Table 4).

Table 4*Major Interventions Provided During the Enrollment Phase*

Service	Activity
Residence life	Affordable housing is offered on campus to provide safe living environments to students. Staff is responsible for the administration and management of residence halls including room assignments and the general welfare of students.
Student unions	Student unions are available to bridge the gap between the administration and the student body. They organize different activities for social engagements and are actively involved in leadership roles at different levels.
Counseling services	The school has one professional counsellor who works with the staff to meet the students' psychological needs. Administrators who work with students are required to receive basic training in counseling services. Counseling education is also provided on specialized topics such drug abuse and stress management
Supplemental instruction/tutoring	Supplemental instruction is provided to help slow learners improve their grades. Faculty identifies struggling students based on their class grades and arranges tutorials to help them improve their grades.
Internships	The Alumni Relations officer works with faculty to identify students who are ready for internship and connects them with area business owners for placements to gain knowledge related to their majors.
Chaplaincy/campus ministry	A full-time chaplain and church leaders from different denominations are available to attend to students' spiritual needs. Other staff members coordinate spiritual programs and activities across the campus. Within the chaplaincy students pray together and supports each other in various ways.
Cultural events	Each academic year, cultural events are scheduled for a whole week to promote cultural diversity and respect for one another. Organized by the secretary of culture in collaboration with the dean UPU celebrates the cultural heritage of their students. Through intercultural competition students learn to navigate the complexity of common culture on campus which promotes identity formation, unity, and respect for each other.

The following section presents findings from interviews and documents answering RQ2.

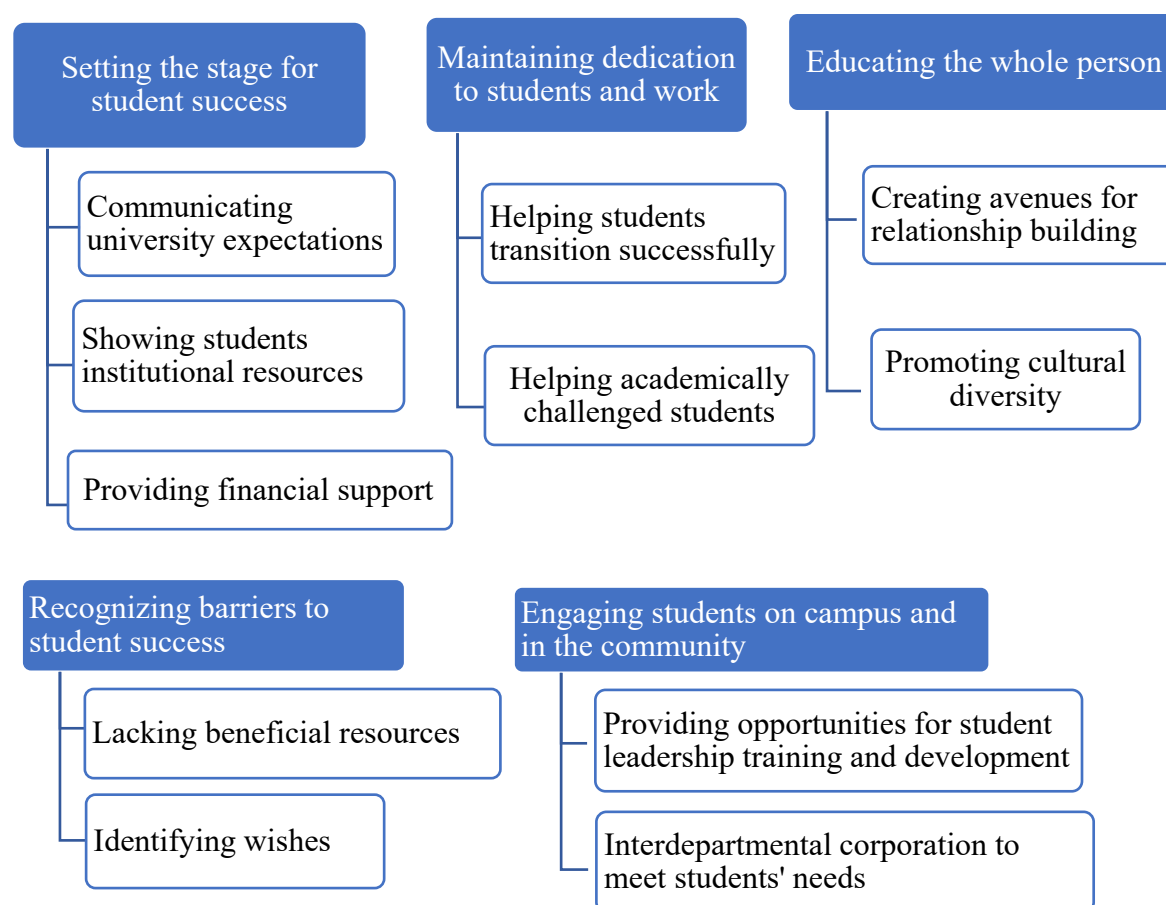
RQ 2: How are the student services and student programs provided at private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?

Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps of data analysis were used to create five themes explaining how UPU used student services to promote student retention. These five themes include: (a) setting a stage for student success, (b) maintaining dedication to students (c) educating the whole person, (d) recognizing barriers to student success, and (e) engaging students on campus and in the larger community. Each of the main themes also possessed two or more subthemes. It was particularly interesting to see how the process of coding which initially produced over 50 codes, concluded with a list of 28 final codes from which five main themes emerged. Figure 2 in the following section summarized the five main themes and subthemes.

The section below presents the interviews' thematic findings organized under the five major themes mentioned above. Each theme is explained separately including participants' direct quotes to provide detailed information about participants assertions, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and suggestions to better understand the research study. Each of the five themes provides answers for RQ2: How are the student services and student programs provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation? To answer this question each of the five themes were explored more deeply starting with theme number one: setting a stage for student success

Figure 2

Main Themes and Subthemes From Individual Interviews



Theme One: Setting the Stage for Student Success

When discussing how UPU utilized student services to promote student retention, nearly all 10 participants highlighted the topic of setting a stage for student success. For purposes of this study, student success in its simplest form refers to the process of “getting students into and through college to a degree or certificate” (Ewell & Wellman, 2007, p. 2). It refers to the institution’s ability to attract and retain students from admission to graduation.

The majority of the participants indicated that UPU uses different programs within student services to prepare students to succeed not only in their studies but also in their future career goals. UPU achieved this goal by teaching students what the university values and what they need to do to succeed. Alex explained it in this way, “After finding how employees were complaining about graduates missing ethical values in the workplace, we made it compulsory that all graduates take three courses of ethics.” According to Alex, the goal of offering three courses of ethics was “to teach students the values of responsibility, transparency, and accountability” as well as “equipping them with needed skills to succeed in the job market.”

Alex, Cairo, and Kristopher confirmed that UPU’s unique values and academic programs made their “graduates attractive in the job market” giving them a competitive advantage over graduates from other universities in the region. Alex explained, “many corporations like to hire our graduates because of the values that we instill in them.” He added, “A good number of employees in the banking sector are graduates of this university.” Such a characterization enabled the university to create a brand name for itself and the ability to attract and retain students.

UPU challenges students to take responsibility for their academic success and expects them to perform at high levels from the very beginning of their academics. In that regard, the institution uses orientation programs to communicate university expectations as explained by Kantu, “We inform them about the university expectations regarding academics, behaviors, being responsible, and following the rules.”

The findings indicated that UPU uses undergraduate research programs to help students clarify their choice for future career goals and plans after graduation. Participants explained how the undergraduate research program at UPU enhances students’ communication skills and critical

thinking, thus setting a stage for student success. Some participants compared the undergraduate research study at UPU to master's degree level work. Kantu, one of the academic advisors, explained in this way, “students conduct their study in the form of a dissertation, they select a topic, write a proposal, and are assigned supervisors who take them through the research process.” He added, “They collect data, complete the analysis, and receive the grade from an external examiner from a different university.”

To balance academic with the non-academic domains of life, Alex stated that UPU “engages students in debates and seminars so that the university is not only an academic hub, but also an avenue of developing the students’ talents in different fields of life.” A balanced life may inspire students to persist in their studies to graduation. In responding to the Uganda Vision 2040 which emphasizes the acquisition of practical skills to produce a human resource that is ready for the workplace, the university requires all undergraduate students to complete an internship before graduation (UPU students’ internship policy, 2017). Apart from getting practical knowledge from internships, some students are offered employment opportunities directly after their internships. That motivates them and their fellow students to persist in their studies to the end. In that regard, Kantu commented:

When students see their fellows getting employment opportunities from their places of internships that motivates them to stay in school. It also motivates them to participate in internships hoping that they too could be absorbed by their respective businesses for job placements after graduation.

As we explored this theme more deeply, it was necessary to analyze documents and interviews to determine emerging themes and subthemes in order to organize the related findings. The analysis and processes were used to determine these themes and subthemes were an outcome of examining initial codes for repeating patterns that were then grouped into similar conceptual connections. These connections were further analyzed for repeating patterns to

determine common subthemes. These common subthemes were analyzed for broader conceptual connections to determine larger themes. The subthemes that framed the ways in which the theme of Setting the Stage for Student Success works includes communicating university expectations, showing students institutional resources, and providing financial aid.

Communicating University Expectations

Results revealed that UPU sets high expectations for their students and begins preparing them to meet those expectations even before they arrive on campus. They utilize high school visitations to provide academic advising and career counseling services to seniors in high school; they host open day events to showcase university programs and activities; and they offer pre-university camp events to introduce high school graduates to campus life. Such programs of student services create avenues for school officials to communicate university expectations and prepare students for rigorous academic programs and campus life in general. Bettina explained it in this way:

We inform them about university life and tell them how they need to attend classes and register for exams. We talk about academic irregularities. We invite different speakers who will speak to them about what they need to do, the importance of college education, and how to succeed in college. This helps them to settle down and work to achieve their educational goal of getting a college degree.

When discussing the need to prepare students for college education, Elijah complained, “Students come to the university unprepared. We have to do that ourselves during high school visits, pre-university camp events and during orientation.” He added: “Pre-university camps help students make informed choices about their majors which reduces the likelihood of choosing a wrong major,” which may cause students to lose interest in their studies or dropout. To address that issue, UPU utilizes student services to help students make informed decisions about their majors and future careers choices which they can only achieve if they continue with their studies

to degree completion. Academic advising and counseling services provided during high school visitation, pre-university camp, and orientations were cited as being central in helping new students understand university expectations which, according to Kristine, “forces them work hard to meet those expectations.” She further explained that such programs prepare students “to tackle their academics effectively which propels them to succeed in their studies.”

UPU employees appreciated the university’s efforts to connect class work with outside the classroom activities through such programs like internships, and service learning. Participants indicated that the purpose of such programs was not only to attract, retain, and graduate students, but also, to produce well-rounded graduates capable of competing favorably in the job market. “We teach and graduate students with skills and knowledge needed in today’s job market,” Alex said. “We engage students in debates and seminars so that the university is not only an academic hub, but also an avenue for talents development,” he added. Thus, communicating university expectations through student services seemed to help prepare students for what was ahead of them and so when enrolled nothing takes them by surprise.

Showing Students Institutional Resources

Results revealed that UPU uses different programs of student services including admissions, new student orientations, and academic advising to inform students about institutional resources and connect students with the institution. According to Kristopher, such services are important in reducing anxiety and fear of the unknown among newly admitted students which, if not handled well, can lead to student dropout. While lack of knowledge about the available institutional resources can lead to resource underutilization contributing to student dropout, exposing students’ institutional resources increases their knowledge and resources utilization which may promote student retention.

Exposing new institutional resources to admitted students helps guard against confusion and anxiety associated with not knowing where to find resources they need. “We are available to help them whenever there is a need, concern, or confusion,” said Bettina. “We prepare them and inform them about the available university resources and encourage them to take advantage of them,” reported Alijah. “We always show them where to find university resources and what they need to do to succeed in their studies,” reported Kantu. “During orientation we show them different staff members including counsellors, deans, faculty, student leaders who are all available to help them,” Sara said.

There was consensus among the participants regarding the importance of orientation programs in relation to showing students institutional resources and aiding them in their persistence to graduation. To that effect, Kristopher noted: “orientation gives students the opportunity to have their issues addressed at an early stage of their university education which boosts their confidence and helps them persist in their studies.” He further stressed that “orientations play a big role in the students’ learning process. It gives them an opportunity to know their school and meet new people.” Kristopher reported that student services provide an opportunity for newly admitted students to “have their issues addressed at an early stage of their university education which boosts their confidence” to persist in their studies to graduation.

Providing Financial Support

Participants perceived financial aid as one of the major contributing factors to student retention at UPU. The results of the study revealed that varied packages of financial support available at UPU attracts students, especially those from low-income backgrounds. Kristopher explained it in this way, “the university has a few programs to support students who are financially challenged.” Several participants explained how multiple programs of financial

support available at UPU played a key role in attracting and retaining students. Bettina explained it in this way: “We have a half tuition bursary which we introduced after celebrating 25 years of existence as a way of giving back to the community.” She continued, “This program has helped us attract and maintain our student population.” Kristine reported that financial aid binds the student with the institution. She stated, “students that are on bursary schemes and loans are less likely to drop out of the university because of legal attachments to those loans.” She added, “They know that if they dropout, they will not be able to pay back student loans without a college degree.”

Financial support available at UPU helps students pay for their educational expenses which encourages them to persist in their studies to degree completion. According to Solomon, “scholarships provide an assurance to students that their educational expenses will be covered including tuition, fees, food, and accommodation.” He added, “that takes away all their worries and allows them to concentrate on their studies to the end.” Some of scholarships are renewable and a high GPA is required for the renewal. Thus, Solomon reported that such a requirement “encourages students to work hard to retain their scholarships.” And a high GPA is associated with high rates of student retention (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Several participants appreciated the university’s efforts to support students from low-income backgrounds by giving them a 50% discount on tuition. Referring to this point, Sara stated, “some of the admitted students from low-income backgrounds receive a 50% tuition subsidy from the university.” Those students not only get the opportunity to have access to higher education which would be difficult if not impossible to attain without a subsidy, but they also are aided in their persistence to graduation.

Theme Two: Maintaining Dedication to Students and to Work

Surprisingly, the majority of the participants expressed their satisfaction with the institution's commitment to meeting students' academic, emotional, spiritual, and personal needs. They confirmed their unique value of commitment to students and work by being role models, instructors, mentors, counselors, and advisors to help students achieve their educational and career goals. When asked about his work, Alex stated, "I have learnt empathy, putting myself in the position of others. I have learnt to put the service of other people above the self." As a high-level administrator, Alex went above and beyond the call of duty by working overtime including weekends, to provide needed information to students and parents to help them make decisions to attend college, communicate university expectations to students, provide financial and academic advising to prospective students, and conduct student reviews to track improvements and respond to results—all of which contribute to student retention.

As part of her commitment to students, Bettina, a high-level administrator, advocates for quality customer care services. She encourages everyone in her department to create a welcoming atmosphere in their offices to make students feel at home. She stated, "the customer is your boss. You need to be somebody who can listen and help your clients as they come." She believes that practicing good customer care when offering student services enabled UPU to attract and retain students to degree completion. She confirmed, "our unique way of handling students encourages them to stay. It helps us to attract new students and, once we get them, we do all we can to keep them to degree completion."

Kristine, Cairo, and Kristopher agreed that university officials at UPU call students on the telephone during the application and admissions' process to answer any question they may have and provide support to prospective students that they may not find elsewhere. Kristine

stated “I call them to find out what their challenges are. Sometimes I use the office line, but every now and again I use my personal line.” She reasoned that finding students where they are and listening to them keeps them on track. She added, “I have learned to listen, follow, and make right judgments based on whom I was working with,” On a similar point Sara stated, “we listen to our students and provide as much support as we possibly can. In comparison with other universities Sara stated. ‘We take care of our students, and they feel at home here. That’s why we don’t have riots like other universities in the country.’ Faculty, administrators, and staff perceived student services as essential in addressing student needs and promoting student retention.

UPU’s practice of handling students in a unique way makes the university attractive to students, thus calling it their second home. Kristine explained it in this way: “we have heard stories from parents who prefer to enroll their students here because it’s like a second home for them.” That is because of “the kind of student services we provide for our students,” she added. Kristine further stated, “this university is famous for successfully educating students who have failed elsewhere but, have admirably thrived here because of the way we handle our students.” The theme of dedication to students was also reflected in the mission of the office of the dean of students at UPU which calls for “commitment to provide campus environments that fosters academic success, personal growth, and student development,” (UPU website, DOS brochure, August 2019).

As in the prior theme, the same analysis and process was used to determine subthemes for this theme. An examination of initial codes for repeating patterns, which were then grouped into similar conceptual connections. These connections were further analyzed for repeating patterns to determine common subthemes. These common subthemes were further analyzed for broader

conceptual connections to determine larger themes. The subthemes that framed the ways in which the theme of Maintaining Dedication to Students and Services includes: (a) helping students transition to campus life and (b) helping academically challenged students.

Helping Students Transition to Campus Life

Participants indicated that UPU used student services to help students adjust to their new environment, socially, academically, intellectually, and physically. They discussed how student services were central in helping students guard against experiencing the feelings of isolation, homesickness, anxiety, and fear of the unknown as students separated from their family members, old friends, and secondary school experience to join their new community at the university. Alex noted that academic advising benefits students by providing them with needed information to navigate institutional processes and overcome anxiety of not knowing where to find institutional resources. Alex reported that by using student services, school officials act as “guides, advisors, counselors, and companions to students during the admissions orientations process.” They help students find answers to their questions on time which reduces frustrations for not knowing what to do or where to find help.

Collectively, participants discussed the ways UPU uses student services for relationships building and relaxation which ease the transition process of the newly admitted students. For Kristine, cultural events help students “create a strong bond of unity among students from the same region.” She elaborated, “those students see each other as a family that has a common goal to achieve, as a result they struggle together and win together.”

Acknowledging the role of orientation programs, Kristopher stated: These “programs give students an opportunity to have their issues addressed at an early stage in their education which boosts their confidence and helps students identify themselves with the university.” He

added, “This confidence reduces their anxiety and fear of the unknown. It gives them the confidence they need to stay in their new environment.” According to Elijah, UPU uses student services to create avenues for relationships between peers, staff, and faculty. Such relationships “help students overcome boredom and get used to campus life.” It also helps students “discover themselves as they interact with faculty, staff, and peers which inspires them to want to learn more from the university and that keeps them in school,” said Elijah.

Helping Academically Challenged Students

Some of the faculty members at UPU are also academic advisors. In their efforts to meet students where they are, faculty and staff create time to socialize with students as their schedules permits by attending social events, like cultural events, research symposiums, sports, and other community engagements programs. Such meetings provide opportunities for students to connect with faculty and staff, thus inviting them to share with them any issue or concern that they may have. Once issues are identified by school officials, they organize meetings with individual students or groups to resolve those issues. As Kantu stated “when we identify students who are weak, we try to help them on an individual basis.” He added: “I usually meet students on weekends because I have my house within the university campus and most of the students live on campus.”

Theme Three: Educating the Whole Person

For the purposes of this study, the theme educating the whole person refers to addressing students’ needs holistically-body, mind, and spirit (Kuh et al, 2005). Participants reported that UPU provides multiple programs of student services to meet students’ needs. With its focus on academic excellence and community engagement collectively, participants felt that the university educated the whole person by integrating academics with actions, and reason. Largely,

participants appreciated the availability of various social events on campus including entertainments, sports, and cultural events and spiritual programs to address students' needs which if not done may contribute to student dropout. Such conclusions echo Tinto's (1975) theory of student departure and Chickering's (1979) model developmental vectors which emphasized the importance of meeting students' academic, psychosocial, and developmental needs to promoted retention.

Following the same analysis and process used to determine categories used for prior themes in the study, an examination of initial codes for repeating patterns, which were then grouped into similar conceptual connections. These connections were further analyzed for repeating patterns to determine common subthemes. These common subthemes were further analyzed for broader conceptual connections to determine larger themes. The sub-themes that framed the theme of Educating the Whole Person include: (a) creating avenues for relationship building and (b) promoting cultural diversity.

Creating Avenues for Relationship Building and Networking

Many participants expressed their satisfaction regarding how the university uses student services as avenues for students to forge relationships with faculty, staff, and peers to further benefits students. Alex explained it in this way, "every encounter that a student has with a university officials or peer matters." Eight out 10 participants alluded to cultural events as one of the major programs for relationship building and networking.

Promoting Cultural Diversity

According to Kristine, the provision of cultural events and sports "helps break boredom and create avenues for networking which is seriously needed by students." Recognizing the need for physical fitness she stated, "these students are growing up and they need something to keep

them physically, mentally, and socially fit.” Thus, games and sports as well as cultural events and spiritual programs offered at UPU provide opportunities for social, physical, and spiritual engagements. All of which contribute to student retention.

Theme Four: Recognizing Barriers to Student Success

For the purposes of this study, barriers to student success refers to challenges faced by the student affairs professionals at UPU in their work of designing and implementing student services. Resource constraints in terms of funding, trained personnel, and equipment were the main challenges discussed by the participants. Following with the same analysis and process used to determine subthemes for prior themes in the study, there was examination of initial codes for repeating patterns which were then grouped into similar conceptual connections. These connections were further analyzed for repeating patterns to determine common subthemes. These common subthemes were further analyzed for broader conceptual connections to determine larger themes. The sub-themes that framed the ways in which the theme Recognizing Barriers to student success were: (a) lacking beneficial resources and (b) identifying wishes.

Promoting Cultural Diversity

When asked about the challenges faced in offering student services, eight out of 10 participants talked about limited resources in terms of funding, personnel, and technology. Although the lack of these three resources came out as a concern for all participants, their major challenge in offering student services was limited funding. This problem was implicated by the fact that UPU is a private institution whose major source of income was tuition. That implies that any fluctuation in student enrolments and retention rates would negatively affect UPU’s budgets, specifically those of student services. Sara explained it this way: “We have unlimited needs with limited resources. Money is key to what we do, when the budget is short of students’

expectations, they are not happy.” She added, “as much as we want to serve students to the best of our abilities, sometimes our hands are tied.” And yet, “students complain whenever the budget falls short of their needs.”

In terms of technology and computer usage for student learning, Noah expressed feelings of frustration due to outdated computers which were very slow and ineffective. According to Noah, Alex, and Cairo the problem of outdated computers was exacerbated by constant power outages which disrupts the smooth flow of operations and kills computer hardware. Kantu and Cairo complained about limited facilitation in terms of lacking structures such as a tutoring center to provide supplemental instruction for slow learners as well as overtime remunerations to motivate employees. Limited resources were also discussed in terms of lacking diverse programs of games and sports. For example, Kristopher complained, “We don’t have a gym for students who cannot participate in the available programs of games and sports.” He added, “those students are always left out, they get bored by the same routine every day, eat, go to class, and go to sleep. That kind of life is hard for students to adopt.”

One administrator talked about being under pressure to meet community expectations of providing quality education while charging low tuition and providing financial aid to students. He commented, “the community expects us to charge low tuition, but this university run entirely tuition and that’s a big challenge for us.” He added, “we have many students from low-income backgrounds, but we don’t have enough funds to educate them.” He further stated, “we are a private university that heavily depends on tuition which has never been enough.”

Related to limited funding was inadequate personnel. Although 100% of the participants felt lucky to have a job at UPU, one of the best universities in Uganda, 50% of the participants expressed concern about the workload. While Alex and Kantu had to work extra time on

weekends without pay, Kristopher, Cairo, and Bettina had to work late hours in the evening to complete their tasks. Cairo explained it in this way, “sometimes you have to almost sleep in the office to complete tasks.” Bettina said: “Its ok to be busy because you stay out of trouble, but the problem is that you don’t get time for yourself.” While discussing the challenges faced in offering student services, participants also discussed their wishes.

Identifying Wishes

When asked about how they would use a donation to improve student services, the majority of participants expressed the need to buy new and up-to-date computers as well as having a well-equipped computer laboratory. In that regard, Alex, Cairo, Kantu, Kristopher, and Noah said that they would invest in information technology by

- buying new computers both desktops and laptops to help students complete and submit their assignments on time;
- constructing a modern computer laboratory for instructional purposes;
- investing in faculty and staff training and development to meet students’ needs; and
- establishing an efficient online learning system to navigate such unplanned eventualities like COVID-19, whereby if in person classes are cancelled students could use other modalities of learning.

According to Alex, universities in Uganda including UPU “are not equipped with a reliable online learning system for students to take classes online, complete and submit exams online, or be supervised online.” Alex explained that the lack of infrastructure for online learning was highly felt during the COVID-19 period where social distancing procedures and eventual school closures made students lose more than one academic semester of attending classes.

Theme Five: Engaging Students on Campus and in the Community

The results of the study revealed that UPU uses student services to engage students on campus and in the community to enhance overall student learning. To that end, Elijah remarked, “I work with organizations and individuals to search for internship opportunities for our students.” He added, “after finding organizations and individuals who are willing to take our students for internships, we sign a memorandum of understanding with them.” Elijah explained that engaging students in internships was important not only to help students make a link between class work and future career jobs but also, help them find possible future employers. As he stated, “internships are important because some of the students who do internship get absorbed directly for jobs by these organizations.” Kristopher added, “we have day to day activities on campus so that their minds are not idle.” Some of those activities include basketball, football, and hockey—all of which promote physical and social engagements that are important for student retention.

The theme of student engagement was also reflected in the documents which indicated that between 2009 and 2015, UPU collaborated with the University of Notre Dame (United States) to establish a program for research and development in one of the villages in Uganda around UPU. The goals of the program were to improve food security in the region by utilizing innovative methods farming; expand access to clean water for human consumption; and improve sanitation and health care access to the needy. Involving students in such a program enriched students’ learning experience which contributed to student retention.

The results of this study revealed that UPU engages students in various spiritual programs to help them better understand their faith traditions, deepen their prayer life, and minister to each other, all of which contribute to spiritual development. They have a full-time

chaplain and other church leaders as well as spiritual advisors on campuses to help students with their person, spiritual, academic, and psychosocial needs. The different groups that coordinate varied programs of student services within the chaplaincy include the Chairperson of pastoral counsel, patrons of movements, UPU student leaders, liturgical coordinator, and hall representatives.

Following the same analysis and process used to determine subthemes, used to create themes used for prior themes in the study, an examination of initial codes for repeating patterns, were then grouped into similar conceptual connections. These connections were further analyzed for repeating patterns to determine common subthemes. These common subthemes were further analyzed for broader conceptual connections to determine larger themes. The sub-themes that framed the ways in which the theme of Engaging students on Campus and in the Community were: (a) providing opportunities for student leadership training and development and (b) interdepartmental collaboration to meet students' needs.

Providing Opportunities for Student Leadership Training and Development

Results of the study revealed UPU provides opportunities for students to develop leadership skills by leading their fellow students. Sara stated, “student leaders implement various forms of rules and regulations to govern student life in residence and on campus.” She added, “student leaders help us in implementing several programs of student services including orientations, cultural events, community service, and other social events on campus.” The majority of participants reported that student leaders were constantly engaged in uniting students through conflict resolution, prayer, and other social activities. Collaboration among various departments of student affairs programs was another major element discussed under the main theme of engaging students.

Collaborating With Different Offices on Campus to Meet Students' Needs

A few participants explained that collaboration among different university divisions and departments involved in students' affairs programs and activities was central to addressing students' needs outside the classroom. They believed that interdepartmental cooperation between and among diverse administrative units of student services at UPU was seen as key in supporting all students. Such cooperative efforts and support to students has transformed the university to what the students refers to as a second home.

Findings from the Institutional Assessment

The following section presents findings from the Institutional Assessment based on Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) and High Impact Practices (HIP) providing answers (RQ3). RQ 3: How is the private, non-profit Ugandan University utilizing high-impact educational practices to increase retention?

For the purpose of this study, HIPs also include DEEP practices. Those practices uphold a holistic approach of educating the whole person by providing services which help students achieve their personal, academic, social, and developmental needs (Kuh, 2013). The purpose of the assessment was: (1) to determine if UPU uses DEEP practices and high impact practices, and (2) to explore how UPU utilizes Deep and high impact practices to promote retention. In the DEEP model, Kuh et al. (2005) studied 20 American universities that had higher graduation rates than expected based on the student characteristics and called characterized those schools high performing institutions. All the schools that were studied had six features that set them apart from other colleges and universities. Those features included: "a lived mission, an unshakable focus on student learning, environments adapted for education enrichment, marked pathways to student success, improvement-oriented ethos, and shared responsibility of educational quality

and student success” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 24). The six features were used in the survey to determine if UPU qualifies to be called a high performing institution as it relates to student engagement and persistence. The following section presents the findings of the survey divided into parts I and II. Part I discusses participants’ demographic information organized in charts and narratives. Part II discusses participants’ responses based on high impact educational practices.

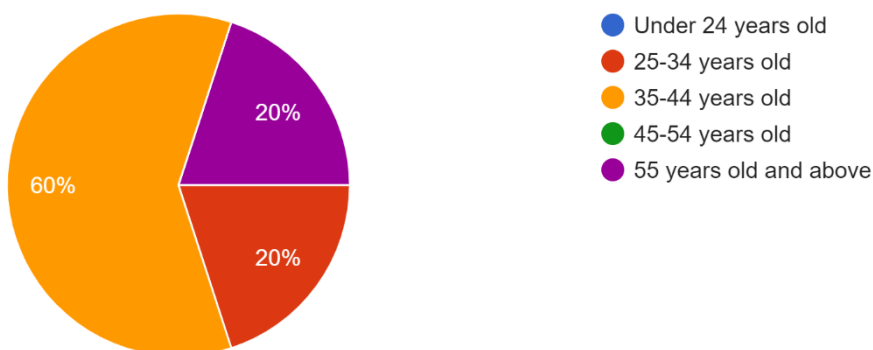
Part I: Demographic Profiles

The following section presents the demographic profile of the participants including age, gender, tribe, years of service, educational level, and departments of student services where they were employed. These results were presented in charts and narratives as seen below.

Age. The figure below presents participants years in age among the 10 participants.

Figure 3

Program Participants’ Age Group in Years



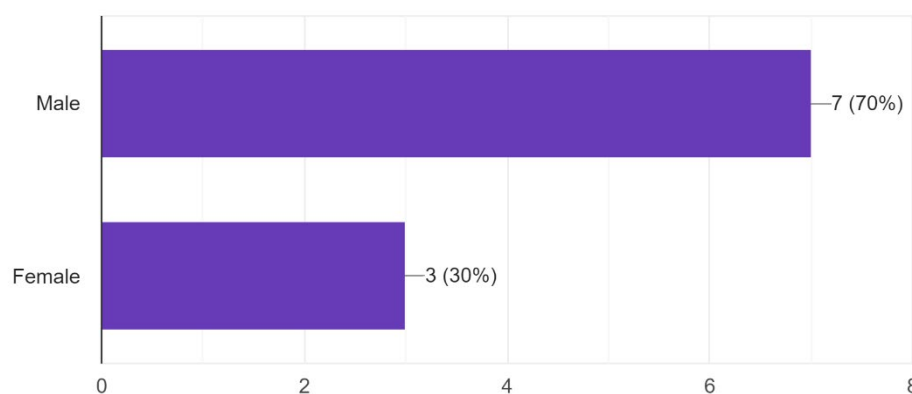
Six out of ten or 60% of the participants were in the age range between 35 to 44 years old. Two or 20% of the participants were in the age range between 25 to 34 years old, and the remaining two or 20% of the participants were in the age range between 55 years old and above. This was a unique finding which seems to suggest that professionals employed in student services at UPU were generally young. The youngest employee was 25 years old and the oldest was 55 years old. To think that all the employees who participated in the study were within a 30-

year range suggests the university's labor force employed in student affairs department is more heavily with generation Xers and Millennials. This finding suggests a significant contrast in the workforce employed in the functional area of student services in the U.S colleges which comprise four or more generations including: (1) the Baby Boomers—born 1946 to 1964, (2) Generation X—born 1965 to 1980, (3) the Millennials—born 1981 to 2000, and (4) Generation Z—born 2001 to 2020. Findings suggests that the workforce employed in the functional area of student services at UPU is generally comprised of two generations: Generation X—born 1965 to 1980 and the Millennials—born 1981 to 2000.

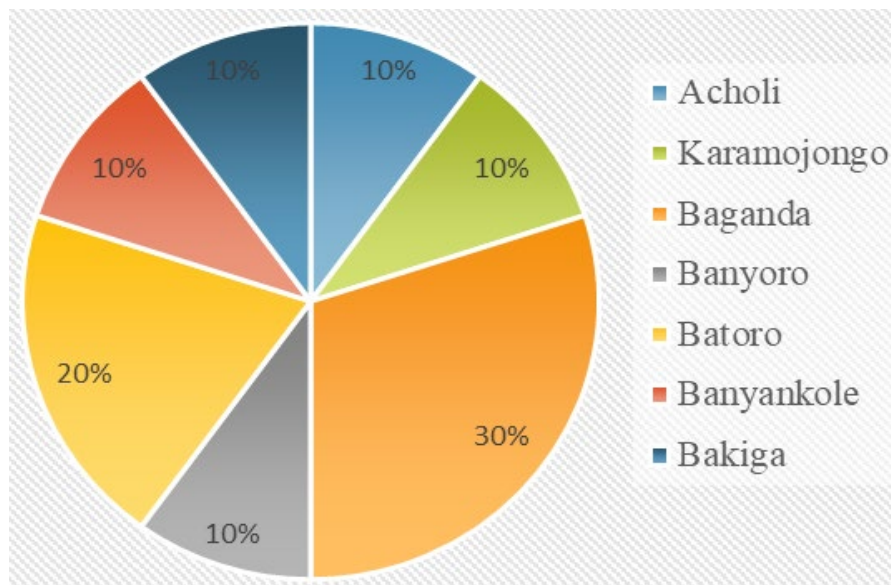
Gender. The gender for participants included eight males making a total of 70%, and three females for the remaining 30% (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

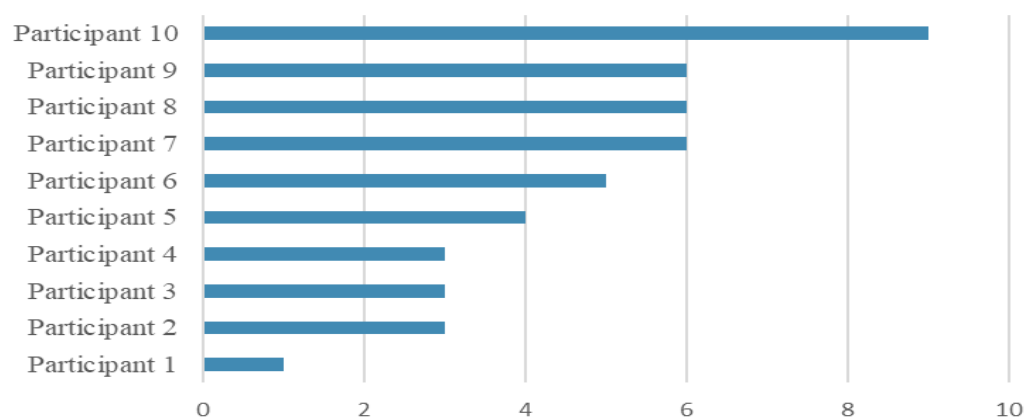
Participants' Gender



Participants' Tribe. Participants represented a variety of Ugandan tribes including the Acholi (10%), Karamojongo (10%), Baganda (30%), Banyoro (10%), Batooro (20%), Banyankole (10%), and the Bakiga (10%). See figure 5. All of the ten participants were born and raised in Uganda from different regions of the country including the western region, the central region, the northern region and the northeastern region.

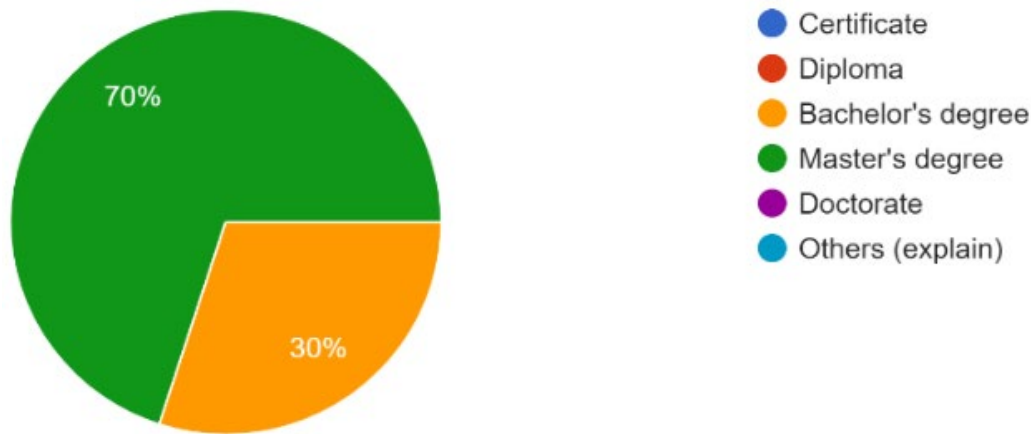
Figure 5*Composition of Participants' Tribes*

Years of service. The average number of years for all employees who participated in the study was 3.7 years. This is important because if the department is conducting assessments and evaluations on the effectiveness of student services, they would have individuals to provide information regarding what has worked and what did not work to benefit students over the years. The same information can be used to redesign or improve some of the programs while dropping other programs that are not beneficial to students. For example, one participant worked in the same position for nine years and three other participants had worked for the same university for six years each. These individuals can be resourceful when planning for student affairs programs and services by allocating more funds to those services that have proved to be most beneficial to students in meeting their needs and supporting them in their persistence to graduation.

Figure 6*Participants' Years of Service*

Level of Education. Seven out of ten or 70% of the participants had a master's degree and the remaining three or 30% of the participants had a bachelor's degree. This was a remarkable finding given the poverty levels in the country and limited government funding for university education. A majority of the participants had a master's degree either in business administration or education. This level of education is vital for strategic planning and implementation of student services to better serve the academic and developmental needs of the students.

Functional Area of Student Services. Participants represented different functional areas of student services including admissions, academic advising, career services, Dean of Students' Office, and housing. While participants from the sections of admissions, orientation programs, career services and academic advising comprised 60% of the sample size, participants from the sections of dean of students' office and housing comprised 20% and the remaining 20% was from the office of financial aid and the library.

Figure 7*Participants' Level of Education****Part II: The DEEP Assessment***

In part II of the assessment, participants were asked to evaluate the University based on the six characteristics of high performing institutions and the five high impact educational practices. The six characteristics high performing institutions used in the assessment include

- a lived mission,
- an unshakable focus on student learning,
- environments adopted for educational enrichment,
- clearly marked pathways to student success,
- improved oriented ethos, and
- shared responsibility for educational quality (Kuh et al., 2005).

Similarly, the five-high impact-practices include service learning, internships, writing intensive courses, undergraduate research, and collaborative assignments (McClellan & Stringer, 2009). The survey questions were based on a 5-level ordinal scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. For each statement participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement by checking the box.

The first question of the assessment was based on the first characteristic of high performing colleges and universities in regard to UPU living its mission. Participants were asked to assess UPU and determine whether the university: (a) lives its mission of providing quality education; (b) allocates adequate resources to support student learning outside the classroom; and (c) adjusts its mission to respond to the changing needs of the student population. In terms of the university living its mission, 70% strongly agreed and 30% agreed. There were no neutral or disagree responses. In regard to the university allocating adequate resources to support student learning outside the classroom, 10% strongly agreed and 70% agreed. There were 10% neutral and 10% disagree responses. In terms of the university adjusting its missions to respond to the changing needs of the student population, 30% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 20% was neutral and 10% disagreed. Although 70% of participants believed that the university adjusts its mission to address the changing needs of the student population, 20% did not want to reveal their position, and 10% disagreed (see Figure 8).

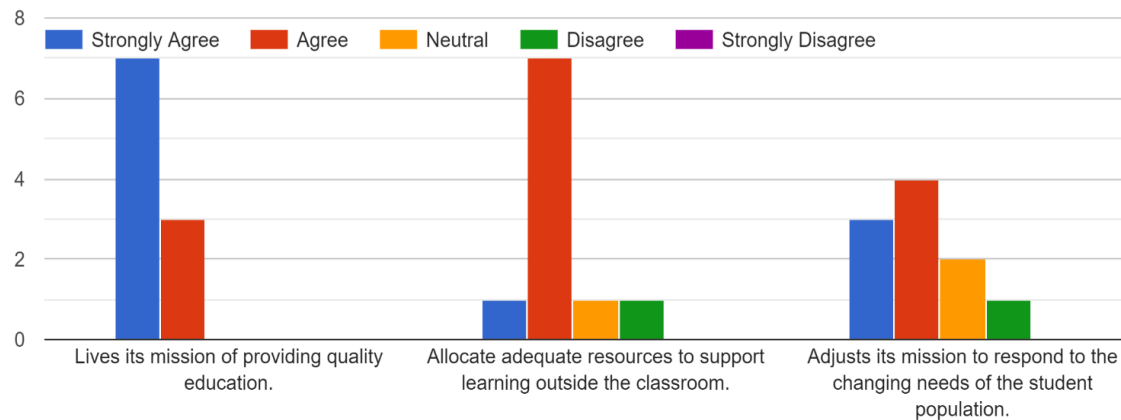
Overall, the results revealed that UPU lives its mission as shown by a 100% score in the university providing quality education, 80% score on the university allocating adequate resources to support student learning outside the classroom, a 70% score on adjusting its mission to respond to the changing needs of the student population. However, 20% did not believe that UPU allocates enough resources to support student learning outside the classroom, and 30% did not agree that UPU adjusts its mission to meet the changing needs of the student population.

The second question of the assessment was based on the second characteristic of high performing colleges and universities in relation to UPU having an unshakable focus on student learning outside the classroom. Participants were asked to evaluate UPU in terms of: (a) having several programs for co-curricular activities, (b) providing multiple opportunities for service

learning, and (c) employees creating time for students outside the classroom. On the question of whether the university has several programs for co-curricular activities, 30% of the participants

Figure 8

A Lived Mission



strongly agreed and 40% agreed. There was a 20% response on neutral and 10% disagreed. On the element of the university providing multiple opportunities for service learning; 20% strongly agreed and 70% agreed, and 10% was neutral. Regarding the employees' ability to create time for students outside the classroom, 30% of participants strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 10% was neutral (see Figure 9).

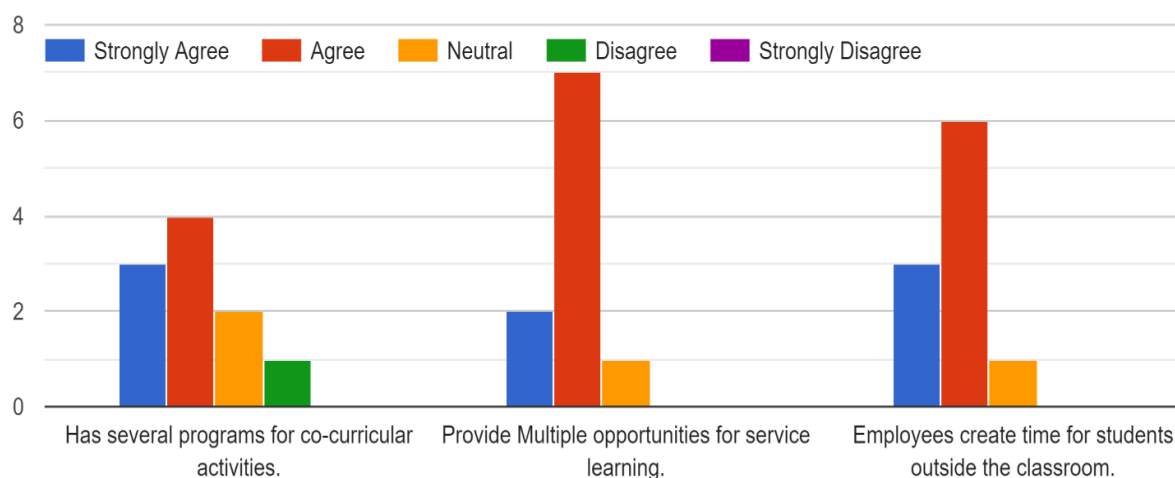
Overall, the results revealed that UPU demonstrated a strong focus on student learning. It received a 70% score on co-curricular activities, 90% on multiple opportunities for service learning, and 90% on employees creating time for students outside the classroom. However, 20% of participants did not believe that UPU provides several programs for co-curricular activities and 20% did not agree that employees create time for students outside the classroom.

The third question was based on the third characteristic of high performing universities in terms of UPU having environments adopted for educational enrichment. Participants were asked to assess whether university's location was: (a) conducive for student learning, (b) provided easy

access to the community for practical training, and (c) the ability of university's physical facilities to provide opportunities for student engagement. On the question of university's

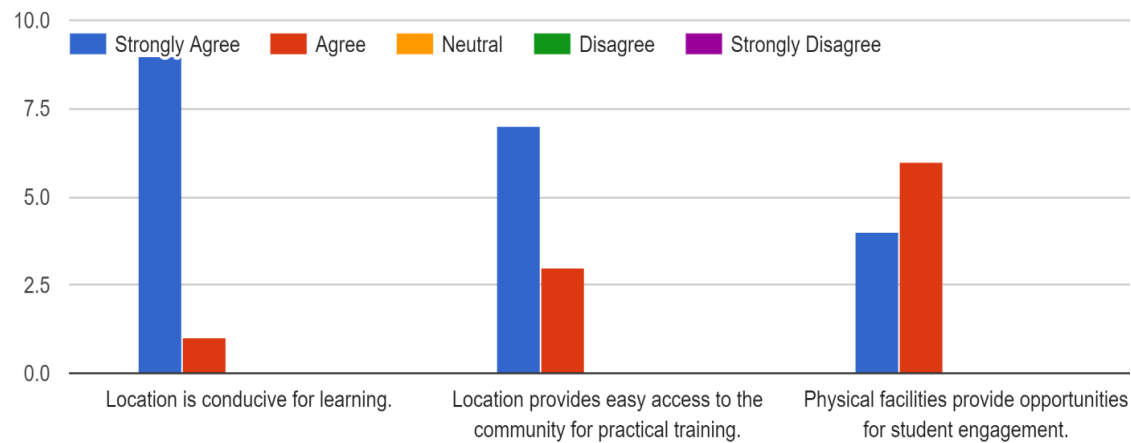
Figure 9

An Unshakable Focus on Student Learning



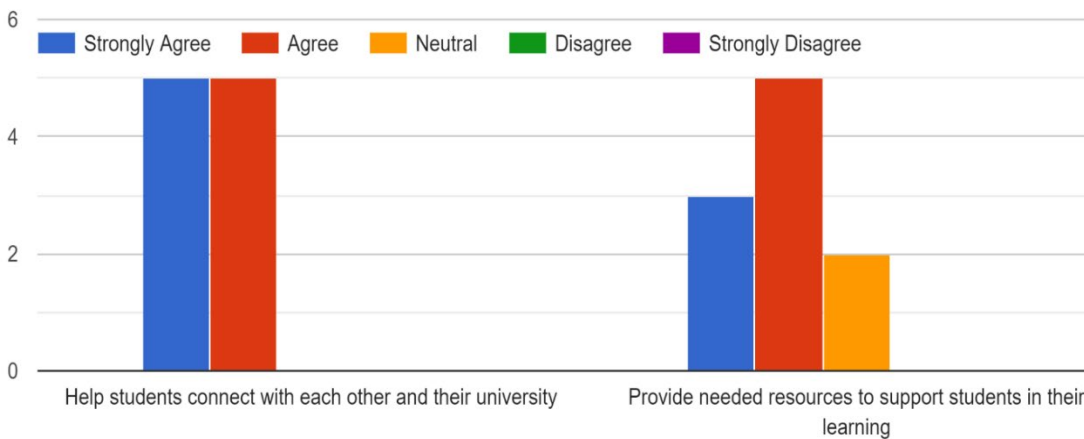
location being conducive for student learning, 90% strongly agreed and 10% agreed. On the component of providing multiple opportunities for service learning, 70% strongly agreed and 30% agreed. On the component regarding UPU physical facilities' ability to provide opportunities for student engagement, 40% responded strongly agree, and 60% agreed. There was no response for neutral or disagreed for all three questions (see Figure 10).

Overall, the results revealed that UPU had environments adopted for educational enrichment. The university received 100% rating on the location being conducive for student learning, 100% rating on easy access to the community for service learning, and 100 % on physical facilities being able to provide opportunities for student engagement. These findings correspond with the interviews' thematic findings where Alex, Sara, and Bettina described UPU as "the best university in the region," and "a second home for students."

Figure 10*Environments Adopted for Education Enrichment*

The fourth question was based on the fourth characteristic of high performing universities in terms of the institution's having clearly marked pathways for student success. Participants were asked to assess UPU regarding its ability to: (a) help students connect with peers and their university and (b) provide needed resources to support student learning. Regarding the institution's ability to help students connect with peers and their university, 50% strongly agreed, and 50% agreed. On the element of the university's ability to provide needed resources to support students learning, 30% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 20% was neutral.

Overall, the results revealed that UPU had clearly marked pathways for student success. The university received 100% score on helping students connect with peers and the university, and 80% score on providing needed resources to support students learning. However, 20% of the sample size did not agree that UPU provides needed resources to support students learning. This 20% corresponds with the interviews' thematic finding theme four where participants discussed limited resources as a barrier to student success.

Figure 11*Clearly Marked Pathways for Student Success*

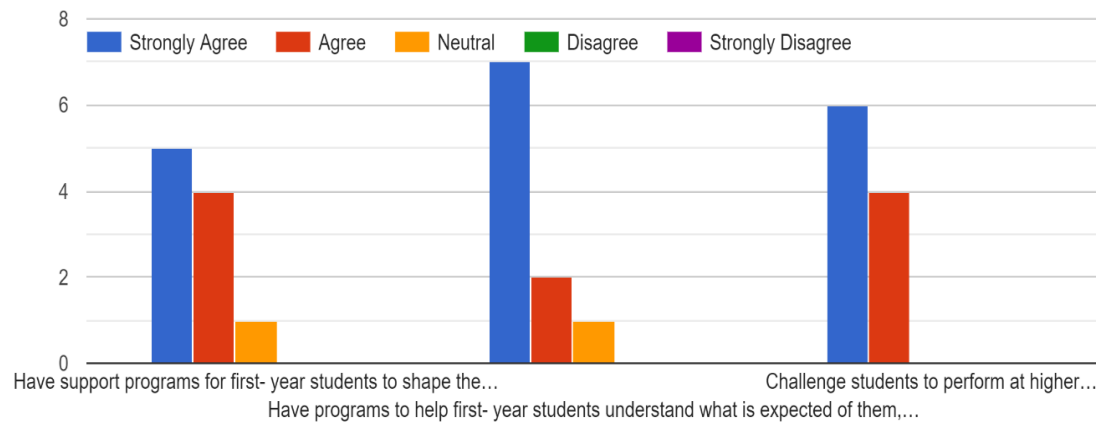
The fifth question was based on the fifth characteristic of high performing universities in relation to having Improved-Oriented Ethos. Participants were asked to assess the institution regarding its ability to provide support programs for: (a) first-year students to shape their educational experience, (b) first-year students transition successfully and persist in their studies to degree completion, and (c) challenge students to perform at higher levels while providing needed support. In terms of having support programs for first-year students to shape their educational experiences, 50% strongly agreed and 40% agreed, and 10% were neutral. In relation to the university providing programs to help first-year students transition successfully 70% strongly agreed, 20% agreed, and 10% were neutral. On challenging students to perform at the highest levels, 60% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed.

Overall, the results revealed that UPU had Improved-Oriented Ethos (a system of values and beliefs that reflect the institutions' commitment to student success). UPU received a 90% score on providing support programs to shape first year students' educational experience; 90% for helping students transition successfully, and 100% on challenging students to perform at their highest levels. These findings were consistent with the interviews' thematic findings where both

the parents and students regarded the university as “the second home for students and the best university in the region” (Alex, Bettina, and Sara).

Figure 12

Improved-Oriented Ethos



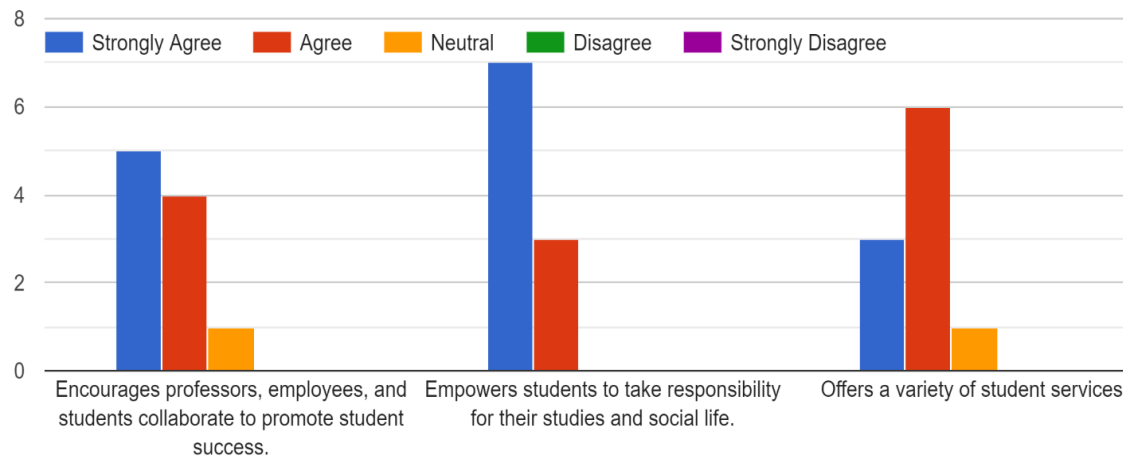
The sixth question was based on the sixth characteristic of high performing universities in relation to shared responsibility for educational quality. Participants were asked to assess the institution to determine whether the university: (a) encourages collaboration among professors, employees, and students to promote student success, (b) empowers students to take responsibility for their studies and social life, and (c) offers a variety of programs of student services. In terms of encouraging collaboration among professors, employees, and students to promote student success; 50% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 10% was neutral. In relation to the university empowering students to take responsibility for their studies and social life, 70% strongly agreed and 30% agreed. On the element of offering a variety of student services, 30% strongly agreed and 60% agreed, and 10% were neutral.

Overall, the results revealed that UPU had a strong focus on shared responsibility for - educational quality. The university received a 90% rating on collaboration among professors and

employees, 100% on empowering students to take responsibility for their studies, and 90% on offering a varied programs of student services.

Figure 13

Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality



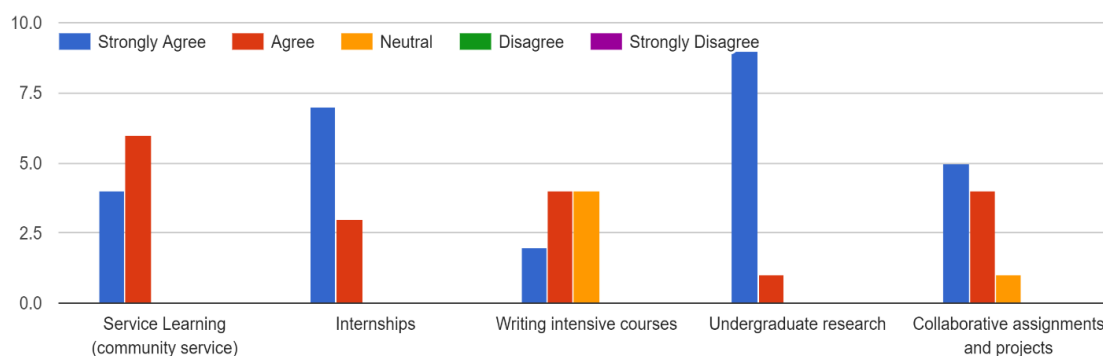
The last question was based on five high impact educational practice focusing on student development research. Those practices include: (1) service learning, (2) internships, (3) writing intensive courses, (4) undergraduate research, and (5) collaborative assignments. Participants were asked to assess the university regarding its ability to engage students in the five high impact practices mentioned above. In relation to service-learning, 40% strongly agreed, and 60% agreed. In terms of engaging students in internships, 70% strongly agreed, and 30% agreed. In regard to writing intensive courses, 20% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 40% were neutral. In relation to undergraduate research, 90% strongly agreed, and 10% agreed. On the practice of collaborative assignments, 50% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 10% were neutral.

Overall, the results of the study revealed that UPU engaged its students in high impact educational practices. The university received a 100% score on engaging students in community service, 100% score involving students in internships, 60% score on intensive writing courses,

100% score on engaging students in undergraduate research, and 90% score on collaborative assignments (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

Five High-Impact Practices on Student Development Research



Overall Summary

The results of the survey revealed that UPU qualifies to be classified as a high performing university as demonstrated by the university receiving 80% score or more on the majority of the questions. The various ways in which UPU utilizes high impact practices to promote student retention include living its mission; maintaining a strong focus on student learning; having environments adopted for educational enrichment; defined marked pathways for student success; improved oriented ethos; and a strong emphasis on shared responsibility for educational quality (Kuh et al., 2005).

Additionally, the results indicated that it used high impact practices to promote student retention. Those high impact practices include service learning, internships, writing intensive courses, undergraduate research, and collaborative assignments. Utilizing three different data points (interviews, documents, and the survey) allowed I to compare the survey results with the interviews' thematic findings to increase the strength and legitimacy of the findings.

Unique to UPU

It was interesting to learn that UPU, a private university in Uganda, qualifies as a high performing institution based on Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) model by a retention expert Kuh et al. (2005). The DEEP model explains the characteristics of high performing colleges and universities and how such institutions use high impact practices to facilitate student retention. The fact that UPU was classified as a high performing institution based on the results of this study suggests that the university performs better than it is expected to, given their student population. In addition to other things, such performance can be attributed to the institution's efforts and dedication to students in meeting their learning needs by engaging them different learning activities such as internship, undergraduate, and service learning among others. Such results could also be a result of involving students in different social, cultural, physical, and spiritual activities as discussed by the participants of this study. Moreover, the institutional characteristics such as a lived mission, a strong focus on student learning, and having environments adopted for educational quality sets it apart from other universities without such characteristics.

Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the role of student services in student retention. To achieve this goal, I interviewed and surveyed student affairs professionals who design and implement student services. I explored several programs of student services that are currently available at a private, non-profit Ugandan university in order to understand how such services are utilized both to solve the problem of student dropout and to support students in their persistence towards graduation.

Student dropout can be a serious issue for private universities since their major source of funding is tuition. Even a small percentage of student dropouts may have adverse effects on private universities because of their dependence on tuition for their operating budgets (Upcraft et al., 2005). Solving the problem of student dropout and increasing retention can significantly help private universities maintain a positive brand name, create a stable financial base, and sustain their academic programs. Research shows that effective utilization of student services reduces the problem of student dropout and increases student retention (Bettinger et al., 2013; Gansemer-Topf et al., 2014). According to Passarella and Terenzini (2005), student retention refers to “progressive reenrollment in college, whether continuous from one term to the next or temporarily interrupted and then resumed” (p. 374). Similarly, Hagedorn (2005) defines student retention as staying in school until graduation; and student drop out as departure from school without achieving the initial goal of obtaining a college degree. In this study I sought to understand how a private university in Uganda was utilizing student services to promote student retention. The three research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What types of student services and student programs are provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan Private University (UPU)?

2. How are the student services and student programs provided at a private, non-profit Ugandan University aiding students in their persistence to graduation?
3. How is the private, non-profit Ugandan University utilizing high impact educational practices to increase retention?

In this chapter, I first provides a summary of the study. Second, I reviews Tinto's (1975, 1999) model of student departure and Chickering's (1969, 1993) model of developmental vectors which are relevant to this study. Third, I discusses the findings and connects them with the theoretical framework and the literature as discussed in chapter two. Fourth, I makes recommendations for practice and for future study on student services focusing on the specific needs of Ugandan or African students. Lastly, the chapter ends by considering both the implications and conclusion of the study.

Summary of the Research Study

For this study, I used Tinto's theory of student departure along with Chickering's model of developmental vectors which is discussed later in this chapter. A qualitative research approach was used to allow I to investigate the phenomena in its natural setting where human behaviors and interactions occur (Lichtman, 2013). This approach allowed I to collect data directly from university administrators who design and implement student services. Since student affairs administrators have direct contact with students and experience the research problem on a daily basis, they are seen as experts on the topic of student affairs. They shared their expert knowledge with I which was key in obtaining answers for three research questions. A case study design was used to explore the research topic in detail (Merriam, 2009). According to Parry et al., (2012), "a case study approach is especially appropriate when conducting exploratory research in a previously under-investigated area" (p. 715). Since the role of student services in student

retention is an under-investigated topic in Ugandan private universities, it was appropriate to use a case study design to understand this issue through a detailed investigation of a single university as representative of other private universities in Uganda. Findings of the study can provide lessons “assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average institution” (Yin, 2003, p. 41). In this case, the average institutions a non-profit private university in Uganda with characteristics similar to the institution in this study.

Data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews, documents, and the DEEP institution assessment. Ten participants were interviewed and surveyed. More than half of the participants were males and less than half were females. All of the participants worked at the same institution in the division of student services for more than one year. An interview protocol guided the semi-structured individual interviews which were designed to explore the available types of student services and how such services were utilized to aid students in their persistence to graduation. Questions for the institutional assessment were designed to determine if UPU qualifies to be called a high performing institution, and how it was using high impact educational practices to promote student retention.

Data for this study was analyzed through an iterative process and the results were then connected to the research questions. I used thematic data analysis guided by Braun and Clark’s (2006) six step process:

1. becoming familiar with the data,
2. creating preliminary codes,
3. searching for themes from the codes,
4. reviewing the themes,
5. defining and naming themes, and

6. using themes to organize and develop the document.

Those six steps were used to create five themes explaining how UPU used student services to promote student retention. The five themes are: (a) setting a stage for student success, (b) maintaining dedication to students and work institution, (c) educating the whole person, (d) recognizing barriers to student success, and (e) engaging students both on campus and in the community. The findings were organized based on themes and presented in descriptions and graphs. The following section connects the study's findings with the theoretical framework and with the literature presented in chapter two of this study.

Student Development Theories and the Findings

To better understand how student services may be utilized to support students in their persistence to graduation, one must understand Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student departure, also known as student integrational model, and Chickering's (1969, 1993) theory of developmental vectors. Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student departure presents his early research regarding rates of college. The model explains how students' interactions within the campus environment (faculty, staff, and peers) via social or academic systems, impacts a student's decision to stay at the institution. The model asserts that when students become integrated into the academic and social systems of the university, they identify with the institution and that identification influences their decision to stay. Conversely, when students fail to integrate into the social and academic systems of the university, they feel left out, and this influences their decision to leave the institution.

Integrating students into the academic systems of the university includes engaging students in programs such as tutoring, academic advising, and proper utilization of library services to help them maintain satisfactory academic progress because low grades are associated

with university dropout (Lotkowski et al., 2004). In addition, integrating students in the social systems of the university includes engaging students in social events such as student clubs, leisure activities, and cultural programs which provide avenues for healthy relationship building with peers, staff, and faculty (Keup, 2005). According to Tinto (2012), the institution's commitment to maintain students' welfare plays an important role in student integration and guards against student departure. Tinto (2012) noted that although many institutions are willing to enroll students into their systems, not all of them are committed to maintaining students' welfare. This point reinforces the need to understand how universities are utilizing student services to support students in their persistence to graduation which was the focus of this study. Tinto (1993) acknowledged that while other factors such as family background, pre-university academic experience, and individual attributes may contribute to student departure, student integration into the university systems plays a very significant role in student retention. His work shows that higher levels of student engagement are correlated with higher levels of student retention.

Tinto's (1975, 1993) work of student retention in higher education was built on van Gennep's (1960) work on the rites of passage in tribal societies. van Gennep (1960) saw life as a "series of passages leading individuals from birth to death and from membership of one group to another" (p. 92). His work shows that the transmission of life from one stage to another or from one group to another is marked by three distinct stages including separation, transition, and incorporation.

In higher education van Gennep's (1960) concepts of separation, transition, and incorporation have been used to study student retention. The first phase of separation happens when students graduate from high school and are admitted to college. They are separated from

their family and the high school community as they join their new community at the university. Colleges and universities can facilitate student retention by providing the needed support to help students complete the stage of separation successfully. The second phase of transition occurs when students begin to interact in new ways with members of the new group. Those new members include peers, faculty, and staff. During the transition phase, some students may experience feelings of isolation and homesickness. This happens to be a crucial time to help students connect with peers, faculty, and staff in order for them to transition smoothly into the new community that is unfamiliar to them. Failure to do so may contribute to student dropout. The third phase of incorporation occurs when a student creates new patterns of integration by interacting with members of the new group. At this stage students start to identify with the institution. Tinto describes this identification as developing a sense of belonging so that students start seeing themselves as members of the community as they engage with others in ways that enhance their persistence to graduation.

Tinto's (1975, 1993) model of student departure focusing on student integration in the social and academic systems of the university was reflected in the five themes of this study. Those themes are: (a) setting a stage for student success, (b) maintaining dedication to students, (c) educating the whole person, (d) recognizing barriers to student success, and (e) engaging students on campus and in the larger community. Similarly, Chickering's (1993) theory of developmental vectors was reflected in the five themes of this study. The vectors focus on physical, intellectual, and interpersonal aspects of student development as described by Patton et al. (2016). They include: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships,

(e) establishing identity; (f) developing purpose; and (g) developing integrity (Patton et al., 2016).

The first vector of developing competency includes developing the physical, intellectual, and interpersonal abilities of a student. Students' growth in cognitive abilities, such as increased analytical skills, is part of developing intellectual competence. Similarly, student's growth in self-discipline, physical fitness, and athletic abilities is part of developing physical competency. Different programs of student services such as tutoring, sports, and social events help students develop their intellectual, physical, and social skills. This, in turn, helps them to achieve the vector of developing competency.

The second vector is developing emotions where students learn to recognize emotions and express them in constructive rather than destructive ways. This is key in navigating the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation when students join universities. Developing this vector allows students to express their feelings in a mature way and guard against the danger of becoming extremely disappointed with themselves or with others when dealing with feelings of anxiety, anger, depression, guilt, or shame. Different programs within student services such as new student orientations, student unions, residence life, campus ministry, and counseling services can help students achieve the vector of developing emotions.

The third vector is moving through autonomy towards interdependence. In this vector one develops emotional independence and interdependence. With emotional independence, one acquires the ability to rely on oneself for support and live a self-directed life as discussed by Chickering and Reisser (1993). Since it is the first time for the majority of first-year college students to leave their families and parents, this is an important step for them as they establish autonomy or exercise their freedom for the first time. They also learn to depend on others for

support and interdependence. Developing this vector is key to helping students learn how to use their freedom constructively while recognizing the need to belong.

The fourth vector focuses on developing mature interpersonal relationships. This vector has two major elements: “tolerance and appreciation and capacity for intimacy” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 48). This vector calls for increased interpersonal relationships including respect for people with different beliefs, values, and cultural backgrounds. Different programs of student services including campus life, cultural events, and student unions can help students achieve the vector of developing mature interpersonal relationships.

The fifth vector is establishing identity. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), some of the major aspects of this vector are (1) comfort with the body and appearance, (2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation, (3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, and (4) clarification of self-concept through roles and lifestyle, and (5) personal identity and integration. A better understanding of oneself and one’s attitude is key in moving through the vector of establishing identity. Programs within student services like cultural events, student unions, counseling services, and campus ministry can facilitate the process of establishing and clarifying identity.

The sixth vector is developing purpose. It is important for college students to have a purpose while in college. Whether that purpose is educational, career opportunities, individual aspirations, students need to have a purpose for being in college in order for them to persist in their studies. Different student services programs such as orientations, academic advising, career services, and internships may help a student move through the vector of developing purpose.

The seventh vector is developing integrity. According to Patton et al. (2016), this vector covers those actions taken by a student while in college to identify, define, and set guiding

values. The three stages involved in this vector include: (1) progressing from rigid beliefs to a more human-centered value system, (2) establishing a personal value system while respecting that of others, and (3) establishing harmony between one's beliefs and one's behaviors.

Chickering's (1993) theory of development vectors highlight the need for universities to provide student services that match students' developmental needs while in college. Thus, colleges and universities which have developed programs of student services to engage students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically may be in a better position to retain students, while those without such programs may lose students. Chickering's (1993) development vectors and Tinto's (1993) model of student departure overlap with the findings of this study as discussed in the following section.

Thematic Findings and Literature

Tinto's (1993) model of student departure and Chickering's (1993) development vectors reminded I to reflect on the way student services were utilized to address the problem of student dropout and to increase student retention at a private university in Uganda. In the following section, I further discusses how Tinto's model of student departure and Chickering's model of developmental vectors address the five themes of this study that are directly related to the two models (Figure 2). Those themes include: (a) setting a stage for student success, (b) maintaining dedication to students, (c) educating the whole person, (d) recognizing barriers to student success, and (e) engaging students on campus and in the larger community.

Setting a Stage for Student Success

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of documents and interviews was setting a stage for student success. It includes various interventions put in place by the university to support students from the time they are admitted to the time they graduate. Results of this study

revealed that UPU understands the challenges faced by students before and during enrollment. The university has various interventions to address such challenges. Those interventions include high school visits and pre-university camps. Such programs provide significant information to students on ways to prepare and apply for college. Selected topics on goal setting, university expectations, the importance of getting a college degree, and appropriate utilization of university resources are covered. This point supports Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration. Engaging students in pre-university camp activities can help students make informed choices about their majors and future career goals. This in turn makes them feel comfortable in their role as students. Participating in social events and meetings with faculty, staff and peers promotes social integration so that students start to identify themselves with the university. This may in turn influence their decision to stay at the university until degree completion.

The issue of undecided major threatens the idea of student retention and student success. Research (Kuh et al., 2005; Tinto, 2012; & Upcraft et al., 2005) show that many students enter college when they are still undecided about their majors. According to Cuseo (2003), 75% of new college students are undecided about their majors and career plans while others change their majors several times. Results of this study revealed that there was a problem of undeclared majors and there was a need to support students when changing their majors. If not guided properly through the process students may select majors that do not match their future career goals and interests. This may lead to frustrations that may force them to drop out of school. Universities have interventions where services such as academic advising, career counseling, and tutoring services are used to address the problem of undecided majors. This point supports Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration, particularly academic integration. When students are not happy in their majors, that affects their ability to enjoy their studies which may result in a

low grade which is often associated with student dropout. To facilitate retention universities, need to have strong academic advising programs that help students with undeclared majors find appropriate majors and enable them to transition successfully.

Another issue that may interfere with student success in college is the fact that some students believe class attendance is voluntary, and that university life is about enjoying their freedom. Results of this study confirmed this point as the participants expressed concerns about college students misusing their freedom by not attending classes, joining peer groups that negatively influence them and losing the benefits of a college degree because they dropout. Integration is necessary to prepare students during pre-college admission and to help them learn how to use their freedom properly and take advantage of college education. The idea of students misusing their freedom when on college campus is reflected in Chickering's (1993) third developmental vector of moving through autonomy towards interdependence. Universities need to design and implement interventions that help students learn to solve their problems independently, live self-directed lives, and use their freedom constructively.

Universities must develop outreach strategies to ensure students are aware of and utilize university support mechanisms. Lack of knowledge about the availability of student services leads to underutilization of such resources as library, tutoring, financial aid, and study groups. Research (Canty, 2016; Kuh, 2016, Tinto, 2012) shows that proper utilization of different types of student services including orientations, academic advising, financial assistance, student unions, and internship can help create opportunities for students to succeed. According to Tinto (2012) "nothing is more important to student retention than academic support, especially during the first year of college when students are still very responsive to institutional intervention" (p. 25). Private universities in Uganda need to design and implement academic support programs

such as first-year seminars, tutoring centers, quality library services, and experimenting with peer tutoring. Such programs have been proven to positively impact student grades and fulfillment, which increases students' confidence to persist in their studies to graduation (Upcraft et al., 2005). Research shows that students who are fully engaged in campus activities tend to have higher levels of persistence (Kuh, 2008; Tinto, 2012). Thus, students will benefit from the utilization of student services if they are made aware of them and guided properly into the utilization of such services.

While students may have different reasons for attending college ranging from educational to career goals, lack of funds can become a barrier to achieving those goals. The findings of this study revealed that financial support given to students at UPU helps mitigate the problem of student dropouts. It relieves anxiety of not having their basic needs met and their educational costs covered. It also gives them a sense of purpose in their studies. This point supports Chickering's (1993) sixth developmental vector of developing purpose. Providing financial aid to needy students who would otherwise have not been able to attend college helps students achieve the vector of developing purpose. It also motivates students to persist in their studies and achieve their educational and career goals. Since financial aid is central for the initial and continuing enrollment of students and especially those from low-income backgrounds, private universities should find ways to increase financial support. The findings of this study revealed that UPU has limited financial aid programs. Thus, it is vital for the university to widen its funding base, to increase financial support for needy students. This will not only increase access to higher education for students from low-income backgrounds. It will also increase persistence to degree completion.

Maintaining Dedication to Students

The second theme that emerged from the analysis of documents and interviews was maintaining dedication. Participants discussed the unique value of employees' dedication to students by serving as role models, mentor, instructors, and advisors and counselors. Staff and faculty's commitment to supporting students reinforces student integration. Engaging students in academic activities such as tutoring contributes to improved academic performance which in turn encourages students to persist in their studies. Similarly, involving students in social events, including student unions and cultural events, facilitates the process of relationships building and establishing the sense of belonging. When students feel that they are valued by the university they identify themselves with the university and that influences their decision to persist in their studies. This point supports Tinto's (1993) model of student integration which asserts that when students become integrated in the academic and social systems of the university, they identify themselves with the institution and that identification influences their decision to stay. Conversely, when students fail to integrate into the social and academic systems of the university, they feel left out which often influences their decision to leave the institution.

Research (Tinto, 2012; Pascarella & Terrezini, 2005) related to this study shows that integration is needed to help undergraduate students navigate the stages of separation, transitions, and incorporation when they join the campus community. As they move through those stages, students experience the feeling of isolation, homesickness, and anxiety as they are separated from their old friends, family members, and environments that are familiar to them. To help students successfully transition to their new campus environments, colleges and universities need to utilize student services such as pre-university camps, new student orientation programs, and academic advising to support students. Research shows that such support programs assist

students in lowering anxiety, helping them understand university expectations, facilitating transition, and enhance student retention (Canty, 2016; Hollinger & Hogan, 2014; Tinto, 2012).

Educating the Whole Person

The third theme that emerged from the analysis of documents and interviews was educating the whole person. In this theme, participants discussed how UPU provides different programs of student services to address students' needs holistically-body, mind, and soul. The university provides games and sports to help students develop physical strength. There is campus ministry for spiritual support, and academic programs for intellectual development. Because learning is intertwined throughout one's university experience, the university provides student services that incorporate both classroom work and cocurricular activities. This implies that whenever students are on the university campus and engaged with faculty, staff, and peers, they are in constant learning and developing physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The theme of educating the whole person supports the literature related to this study (McClellan et al., 2016; Kuh et al., 2005; Long, 2012; Tinto, 2012) emphasizing the need to educate the whole person. According to McClellan et al. (2016), engaging students in varied programs of student services increases their opportunities for learning: (1) by sharing living spaces in residence halls student learn conflict management skills, (2) by leading student organizations, student acquire leadership skills, (3) by completing challenging academic tasks students improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and (4) by working on group projects, students learn teamwork. Such engagements promote a sense of belonging and student development. This theme supports Chickering's (1993) developmental vectors of developing competence, managing emotions, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, and developing purpose. To enhance student learning, colleges and universities need to

revisit their programs within student services and evaluate them through the lens of educating the whole student and provide services that address the academic, social, physical, and spiritual needs of students.

Recognizing Barriers to Student Success

The fourth theme that emerged from the analysis of documents and interviews was recognizing barriers to student success. For the purpose of this study, the term “barriers” refers to the challenges faced by student affairs personnel at UPU when offering student services. They discussed problems of outdated technology, lack of funding, and limited programs of student services. These findings are in line with literature related to this study as discussed in chapter two. For example, Barbatis (2014) contends that technological advances can promote student retention when used effectively. Barbatis (2014) further states that proper utilization of advanced technologies such as Smart phones, laptops, iPad, and others helps facilitate communication among faculty, staff, and peers especially during the admissions and orientation processes. These communications are important in helping students navigate collegiate environments reducing stress and anxiety which, if not handled well can lead to student departure.

According to Kuh et al., (2005), the use of electronic technologies facilitates faculty-student interactions and enhances learning. While some students may be reluctant to meet with their faculty and staff when they have academic or social issues, they can easily express themselves through email or other forms of communication using electronic technologies. Students can use emails to send their drafts to faculty and receive instant feed. They can also use blackboard to submit assignments, complete group projects, take quizzes, and conduct online group discussions. Advanced technologies help students connect with peers via social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Snap Chart to socialize and relax. Interactions facilitated by

the use of advanced technologies are important for academic and social integration which, according to Tinto (1993), promotes student retention.

The challenge of limited funding discussed by the participants aligns with literature related to this study. According to Upcraft et. al. (2005), private universities largely depend on tuition for their daily operations and a small percentage of student dropout could lead to serious problems. The findings of this study confirmed that tuition was the main source of funding for the university and that shortage of funding limits the university's ability to offer varied programs of student services. Private universities ought to find other sources of funding to supplement tuition and provide varied programs of student services to enhance students' learning experience and promote retention.

Engaging Students on Campus and in the Community

The fifth theme that emerged from the analysis of documents and interviews was engaging students on campus and in the community. Participants of this study explained that using different programs of student services enabled them to connect and engage students with the institution (faculty, staff, and peers) and in the larger community for internships and service learning. Such engagements allowed students to have all their questions answered and their concerns addressed. Eight out of ten participants appreciated the importance of student engagements and viewed them as vital in keeping students happy and satisfied with the institution. Such satisfaction facilitates the process of creating a sense of belonging among students where they feel that their lives matter and that they are part of the university and that influences their decisions to stay. Some of the services used to connect students with peers, staff, and faculty include pre-university camps, new student orientations, academic advising, supplemental instructions, student organizations, internships, and undergraduate research. Such

programs provided opportunities for academic and social integration which according, to Tinto's (1993) research, influences the students' decision to stay or leave the university. Private universities in Uganda ought to find ways to engage students and help students achieve their educational and career goals.

Survey Findings and Literature

The findings of this study revealed that UPU used deep practices by: (a) living its mission; (b) having a strong focus on student learning; (c) having exceptional environments adopted for educational enrichment; (d) having defined programs for student success; and (e) a shared responsibility for educational quality. According to the participants' ratings, the university received a score of 100% on living its missions with an 80% score on the university allocating adequate resources to support student learning outside the classroom. The university had similar ratings on other deep practices as discussed in chapter four. This implies that UPU qualifies to be classified as a high performing institution as described by Kuh et al., (2005). Such a characterization suggests that UPU performs better than expected in student engagement, student success, and student retention given the nature of the student population and characteristics of the university. This is good news for students as their personal, academic, and social needs will be addressed effectively through the utilization of deep practices. These findings align with literature (Kuh, 2008, Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013; Kuh et al., 2005) which shows that deep practices benefit students by improving their learning experiences encouraging them to persist in their studies to degree completion.

In order to understand how UPU uses high impact practices, I asked the participants to assess the university regarding its ability to engage students in the five high impact educational practices. The findings of the study revealed that the UPU engages students in service learning,

internships, intensive writing courses, undergraduate research, and collaborative assignments. According to the participants' ratings, the university received a score of 100% on engaging students in community service, 100% on involving students in internships, 60% on engaging students in intensive writing courses, 100% on engaging students in undergraduate research, and 90% on engaging students in collaborative assignments (see Figure 5). These findings were significant and good news for students since the literature (Kuh, 2008; McClellan & Stringer, 2016) shows that such practices have been beneficial for students. According to Kuh (2008) and Kilgo et al., (2014), high impact practices of undergraduate research, writing intensive courses, and collaborative assignments increase students' writing skills, analytical skills, and intercultural competency leading to students' growth and developments academically, socially, and personally. Such findings align with Chickering's (1993) theory of developmental vectors, which confirms that colleges and universities that are better positioned to meet students' developmental needs are more likely to retain their students than those which have failed to do so.

The findings of this study confirm the utilization of high impact practices of undergraduate research, collaborative assignments, intensive writing courses, internships, and service-learning significantly overlap with the seven principles of good practice discussed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). The principles of good practice include "contact between students and faculty," "cooperation among students," "active learning," "time on task," "high expectations," and "respect diverse talents and ways of learning" (p .2). Several of these principles are demonstrated in high impact practices. For example, undergraduate research and collaborative assignments are associated with increased opportunities for faculty and student interactions, active learning, and diverse ways of learning. This is good news for students because when students realize that their academic and social needs are met through the

utilization of high impact practices, they are happy. They identify with the university which influences their decision to persist in their studies to degree completion. This point supports Kuh's (2016) claims that "when students sense their campus is meeting their academic needs through study and academic skills programs and opportunities for social interaction, they are more satisfied" (p. 3). Such satisfaction encourages them to persist in their studies to degree completion. If private universities in Uganda want to follow the seven principles of good practice and increase student satisfaction and retention, they need to implement these high impact educational practices.

Contribution to the Gap in Literature

Literature related to this study revealed that there was limited scholarly literature discussing the role of student services in student retention at a private Ugandan university. I believe that the findings of this study will expand on the existing body of literature in regard to the role of student services in student retention. The findings of this study will provide general information to all stake holders of higher education including students, parents, faculty, administrators, and donors regarding: (1) the programs of student services available at a Ugandan private university, (2) how the available programs are utilized to meet students' needs and encourage them to persist in their studies, and (3) how UPU utilizes high impact educational practices to promote student retention. Such information is important for students and parents to select the university that has the best programs of student services that match students' personal, career, and educational needs. Similarly, results of this study will help university administrators understand which existing student services are more beneficial to students, and which additional student services they need to implement. Such information is useful in selecting programs which need more funding to combat the problem of student dropout and to increase retention. Increased

retention will in turn lead to high graduation rates, sustained enrollments, and the university's ability to graduate a pool of skilled workers highly needed by the country.

In addition, the findings will provide basic information for further research on the topic of student services in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, the findings of this study will help future researchers to study the topic of student services focusing on Uganda and develop Ugandan or African theories of retention in higher education.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for theory and practice. For theory, the results of this study revealed that regardless of the differences in culture, student, and institutional characteristics as well as educational policies and practices in Ugandan higher education, Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of student integration and Chickering's (1993) theory of developmental vectors could be applicable in Uganda higher education. Results of this study supported Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory confirming that students who are integrated in the social and the academic systems of the university develop a sense of belonging and are likely to be retained while those who fail to be integrated feel left and are most likely to dropout. The results of the study also confirmed Chickering's (1993) theory of developmental vectors emphasizing the needs to address students' developmental needs while in college to promote retention.

On the practical side, the result of the study has implications for private universities in Uganda to recruit trained personnel in student services administration for proper management and delivery of such services. There is a need to create the division of student affairs in private universities.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of student services in student retention. Specifically, I sought to explore (a) the types of student services available at a private Ugandan

university and (b) how such services are utilized aid students in their persistence to degree completion. The recommendations presented in the following section are derived from the findings of this study and tied to the purpose of the study and research questions.

Recommendation 1: Recruit Trained Personnel and Create a Division of Student Services

There is a need for private universities in Uganda to recruit trained personnel in student services administration for proper management and delivery of such services. We know from Long (2012) that student services professionals help students develop “cognitive and interpersonal skills, foster leadership, ethics, and cultural understanding. They help students create their “identities and spark exploration of careers and of service to society” (p. 1). Thus, lack of trained personnel in student services administration may limit the university’s ability to help students develop the above-mentioned skills and abilities which is a disservice not only to students but to the institution as well. This is because if students are not satisfied with the school, they can drop out of school which implies that they will lose the future benefits of getting a college degree such as career development and better wages. When students drop out, universities lose revenues in terms of tuition and fees. I recommend that individuals employed in the functional areas of student services be required to have certifications or a degree in student services administration to better serve their students.

Similarly, there is a need for private universities in Uganda to create the division of student services for effective administration and delivery of student services. Although the participants of this study indicated that UPU offers multiple programs of student services, they also revealed that the university does not have a division of Student Services which is directly responsible for all students’ needs outside of the classroom. Instead, various offices of student services report either to the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Finance &

Administration, or to the Vice-Chancellor. The three major departments charged with the administration and management of student services include the Office of the Registrar, the Office of the Dean of Students, and the Chaplaincy. I recommend that private universities in Uganda create the division of student services for proper administration and quality assurance of student services on university campuses.

Recommendation 2: Understand How Student Services May Be Utilized to Promote Student Retention

Leaders of private universities in Uganda should make efforts to understand the role of student services in student retention. They need to explore possible ways in which student services may be utilized to address students' needs in time to guard against the negative impacts of student dropout. According to Canty's (2016) study and Tinto's (2012) work, we know that offering different packages of financial aid to students from low-income backgrounds will not only increase access to higher education, but also promotes student retention. We also know that the private university in this study had limited packages of financial aid for needy students. I would recommend that private universities in Uganda implement different strategies of soliciting funds to diversify their financial aid packages. The university can put pressure on the government to increase financial aid for students whom the government is unable to enroll in public universities because of limited space. If private universities are willing to take the responsibility of educating the citizens of Uganda. The Ugandan government should increase financial aid to students attending private universities. Other possible recommendations on how to increase financial aid for students would include increasing the number of donors domestically and internationally, increasing the rate of grant proposals and alumni giving.

Additionally, leaders of private universities in Uganda should make efforts to increase the availability and utilization of academic support programs such as tutoring and academic

advising. According to several leading scholars (Bartis, 2014; Nitecki, 2011; Tinto, 2012; Zhanda & Chikohora 2016), we know that increased utilization of academic support services such as tutoring centers, library services, student success centers, and academic advising increase students' involvement in their learning. Increased involvement have proven to have positive impacts on students' grades and fulfilment which in turn increase their confidence to persist in their studies to degree completion.

According to Love and Maxam (2011), we know that academic advising helps students understand their educational and career goals by relating their interests, skills, and abilities to careers, the world of work, and purpose of higher education. I recommend that private universities in Uganda recruit trained academic advisors to help students in selecting their majors, registering for classes, understanding themselves better, and utilizing campus resources effectively to maximize learning opportunities. Results of this study revealed that UPU did not have trained academic advisors and other academic support services like the tutoring center. Implementing such services is vital in meeting students' academic, social, and developmental needs which improves student learning experiences and facilitates retention.

Recommendation for Future Research

The first recommendation is to conduct a research study that compares public and private universities in Uganda in terms of: (a) the types of student services offered and (b) how such services are utilized to meet students' needs and to support them in their persistence to degree completion. Such a study will reveal whether there is a difference in the availability and utilization of student services between public and private universities and their impact on retention. The second recommendation is to conduct a qualitative study on the role of student services focusing on several private universities both urban and rural and compare the findings.

Study participants should include faculty, staff, and students. The findings will reveal if there is a difference between employees' and students' perceptions of the role of student services in student retention. The findings will also show if there is a difference between the availability of such services based on the location (rural versus urban). The third recommendation is to conduct a quantitative research study to determine which student services are most beneficial to students and whether there is a correlation between student services and student retention focusing on Ugandan universities.

Personal Reflection and Closing Remarks

I can identify with college students from Uganda, and I know firsthand the importance of student services. For example, it would have been impossible for me to complete my graduate studies without financial aid which is one of the programs within student services. When I was admitted at UIW, I got a grant to pay half of my tuition. The office of graduate research supported me with additional funds for tuition as for my work as a graduate research assistant. Work study provided allowed me to earn additional income for food and living expenses while in college. As a student, I have worked in different departments of student affairs including the library, the admissions' office, the office of student leadership and development, the office of international students, and career services. Working in such positions provided me the opportunity to experience firsthand the importance of student services and how they impact students' life in college. The goal of this study was to provide information about the role of student services in student retention to all stakeholders in higher education including students, parents, donors, and administrators.

Conclusion

The problem of student dropout at a private, non-profit Ugandan university can be reduced or eliminated through the provisions and utilization of student services. However, this may take time, resources, and combined efforts from all university stake holders. It will require a deep commitment from an institutional level to provide needed resources to support students in their learning from admission to graduation. According to Tinto (2006), although many institutions accept the existence of the problem of university student dropout, they have not done much to address it, “too few are willing to commit needed resources” (p.9). Yet, the provision and utilization of student services and student programs, especially high impact educational practices described as pathways to student success can mitigate or even eliminate the problem of university student dropout.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Protocols



June 1, 2021

PI: Sr. Olive Kajoina

Protocol title: The Role of Student Services in Student Retention at a Private University in Uganda

Olive:

Your request for continued review of expedited protocol 20-06-012 led "The Role of Student Services in Student Retention at a Private University in Uganda" was approved. This approval will expire **one year** from 06/01/2021.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

- Request for continuing review must be completed for projects extending past one year. Use the **IRB Continuing Review Request** form.
- Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the **IRB Amendment Request** form.
- Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol. Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Bilicek
Research Compliance Coordinator
University of the Incarnate Word
(210) 805-3565
bilicek@uiwtx.edu

Appendix B: Permission to Conduct the Research Study

22nd June 2020

Office of the Vice Chancellor

Email: [REDACTED]

Sr. Olive Kajoina DST
PhD Candidate
University of the Incarnate Word
San Antonio, Texas
USA

Dear Sr. Olive Kajoina,

Re: Permission to Conduct a Research Study at [REDACTED]

Greetings from [REDACTED]

This is to acknowledge with thanks your letter dated 8th June 2020 requesting for permission to conduct a research study at [REDACTED] University on the 'Role of student services in student retention'. You also indicated that participants will be drawn from [REDACTED] staff involved in the functional areas of student affairs.

I am pleased to inform you that you are granted permission to conduct this study at our institution. I wish you the best in your academic endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Vice Chancellor

Cc. Dr. Danielle Alsandor, Research Supervisor, UIW
Academic Registrar, [REDACTED] University

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in The Study

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are invited to participate in a research study at your institution. I am a doctoral student at the University of the Incarnate Word and this research study is a requirement for a Doctorate in Education. The research study is titled, The Role of Student Services in Student Retention: A Case Study of a Ugandan Private Non-Profit University. The purpose of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the types of student services available and how they can be utilized to promote retention. Because of your position and experience, I think you can provide substantial information on how student services can impact student retention. Results of the study will help university administrators understand which existing student services can successfully increase retention, and which additional student services may be implemented.

If you would like to assist me, your participation will involve taking part in interviews and completing a questionnaire. Interviews will be recorded and will last no more than one hour and a half. There are no foreseeable risks to you and no direct benefit to you. The results of the study will be published but your identity will remain confidential, and your name will never be disclosed to any outside party. I will use a coding process to assure your anonymity. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team. Electronic data records will be stored on a secure server in a password-protected folder and password-protected computer for two years after the study is complete. At the end of that time, all recordings, electronic files, and written documents will be destroyed.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so by contacting me by phone or email.

If you agree to participate in the study, please contact me so we can arrange a convenient time to meet. I can be reached by telephone at +1-915-730-1666, +256-770-640-083 or by email at kajoina@student.uiwtx.edu.

Please complete, sign, and email me the attached informed consent form agreeing to participate in the study.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or offer input, contact the UIW Institutional Review Board (IRB) at +1-210-805-3036 or +1-800-749-9673. This research has been approved by the UIW IRB (IRB #XX-XX-XXX).

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Olive Kajoina, PhD Candidate.



Appendix D: Informed Consent

Key Information: Your consent is being sought for a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore and to understand the role of student services and student programs in student retention. The study will explore different programs of student services available at a private, non-profit Ugandan university in order to understand how such services are utilized to promote retention. Since student services are relatively new in Ugandan universities, it is important to understand how these services are utilized to support students and encourage them to persist in their studies to graduation.

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will consist of the following:

- Procedures will include interviews, document analysis, and an online questionnaire (assessment).
- Two interview visits are required.
- You will be requested to participate in two interviews and one questionnaire.
- The first interview will be one hour; It will be followed by a questionnaire which will take 15-20 minutes.
- The second interview will be an hour and a half. Only half of the subjects will be asked to participate in the second interview and there will be no questionnaire.
- There are no anticipated risks associated with this study, since all research participants are adults. No minors or vulnerable populations will be enrolled in this study.
- You will not be paid for your participation. Your participation is voluntary and appreciated, and you may decide not to participate at any time.

Invitation: You are invited to volunteer to be one of the 10 subjects in the research project detailed above. The information in this form is meant to help you make an informed decision regarding your participation. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study? You are being asked to participate in this study because of your current leadership position in the division of student affairs at the university. Your position of leadership, along with your expert knowledge, and your experience interacting with students makes you a valuable individual to participate in this study which seeks to understand and perhaps “envision anew” the role of student services in student retention.

What is the reason for doing this research study? The purpose of this study is to understand the most effective ways student services and other student programs are being utilized to support student success. The study will explore various student services available at a private, non-profit Ugandan university in order to understand how such services are utilized to promote retention. In this study I want to understand the types of student services that are available and the ways they are utilized to meet students’ needs and encourage them to persist in their studies to graduation.

What will be done during this research study? Procedures for this study will include interviews, document analysis, and an online questionnaire. Two interview visits are required. You will be requested to participate in two interviews and one online questionnaire. The first interview will be one hour; it will be followed by a questionnaire which will take 15-20 minutes. The second interview will be an hour and a half. Only half of the subjects will be asked to participate in the

second interview and there will be no questionnaire. I will ask you about your involvement with students and your perceptions of how student services can be utilized to both meet specific needs of students and promote retention. I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. An alternative participant will be sought if you wish not to be audio recorded. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study for two years after the study is complete. Electronic records will be stored on a secure server in a password-protected folder and password-protected computer, of which I own, and I am the sole user.

I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

Your specific data will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed. Your data will be destroyed within two years after the completion of this study.

What are the possible risks of being in this study?

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond those that may be present in your everyday life. There are no known risks to you by participating in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to receive any personal benefit from being in this study. However, results of the study will help administrators understand which existing student services can successfully increase retention and which additional student services may be beneficial for them to implement. Such information is useful in selecting programs which need more funding to combat the problem of student dropout and to increase student retention. Increased retention will in turn lead to higher graduation rates which are associated with a positive school image, sustained enrollments, and the ability to graduate a pool of skilled labor for the country's future workers and leaders. Also, the findings of the study will benefit future researchers by providing background information essential to the study of student services and retention in Ugandan colleges and universities.

What will being in this research study cost you? There is no financial cost to participants in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study? You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be protected? Everything we learn about the research participants will be considered confidential. The only persons who will have access to the research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. I will not be using the research participant's name or the name of the university in any document in order to protect them. If the results of the study are published, research participants will not be identified in any way.

Data collected from documents or paper records will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for two years after the study is complete. Electronic data records will be stored on a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for two years after the study is complete.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start? You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study at any time, for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of the Incarnate Word and the university in the study. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will ask you if the information already collected from you may be used as we complete the study. If you encounter any difficulty as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

If you have any questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board office at +12108053036 or Uganda Martyrs University +256382410611

Consent

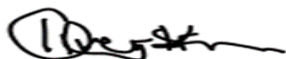
Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study, (2) that you have read and understood the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you, and you have been given the chance to discuss it and ask questions. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Olive Kajoina
Name of Principal Investigator/Designee



Signature of Principal Investigator/Designee

June 23, 2020
Date

Appendix E: UPU DEEP Institutional Assessment

In the model, Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP), authors identified six characteristics exhibited by high performing universities in terms of student engagement and graduation rates. They include: a living mission, an unshakable focus on student learning, environments for education enrichment, marked pathways to student success, improvement-oriented ethos, and shared responsibility of educational quality and student success. Focusing on your institution, please select an answer that best represents your view of UPU.

Section One: Background Information.

For questions one and two please circle the answer that applies to you each item.

1. Name

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. Age group

Under 24 years old

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55 years old and above

For questions 3-6 please type the answer that applies to you.

4. What is your Tribe?

5. What is your current Job title/position?

6. Highest level of education

Certificate

Diploma

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate

Others (explain)

Section Two: Questionnaire

In Terms of A living Mission UPU:

1. Lives its mission of providing high-quality education.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
2. Allocates adequate resources to support student learning outside the classroom.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
3. Adjusts its mission to respond to the changing needs of students.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

In Terms of the Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning UPU:

4. Has several opportunities for co-curricular activities.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
5. Provide multiple opportunities for service learning.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
6. Employees create time for students outside the classroom.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

In Regard to Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment UPU's:

7. Location is conducive for student learning.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
8. Location provides easy access to the community for practical training.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
9. Physical facilities provide opportunities for student engagement.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

In Terms of Clear Pathways to Student Success UPU:

10. Provides several types and programs of student services.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
11. Helps students connect with each other and their university.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

In Regard to Improvement-Oriented Ethos UPU:

12. Has support programs for first-year students to shape their educational experiences.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. Has programs to help first-year students transition successfully and stay in school.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Challenge students to perform at a higher level while providing them the needed support.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

In Terms of Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality UPU:

15. Encourages faculty, staff, and students to collaborate and promote student success.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Empowers students to take responsibility for their studies and social life.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Offers a variety of student services.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. The following services are offered at UPU:

- Service learning
- Internships
- Intensive writing courses
- Undergraduate research
- Collaborative assignments

