



SCHOOL of  
GRADUATE STUDIES  
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

East Tennessee State University  
Digital Commons @ East Tennessee  
State University

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

---

5-2020

## Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships

Robert Meier

*East Tennessee State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Meier, Robert, "Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships" (2020). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3761. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3761>

This Dissertation - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact [digilib@etsu.edu](mailto:digilib@etsu.edu).

Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships

---

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

---

by

Rob Meier

May 2020

---

Dr. William Flora, Chair

Dr. Virginia Foley

Dr. Hal Knight

Dr. Renee Moran

Keywords: Informal Mentoring, Relationship, Belonging, Faculty Housing

## ABSTRACT

### Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships

by

Rob Meier

This qualitative study examined the informal mentoring relationships between faculty and students at two small, faith-based, liberal arts campuses. Perceptions of both faculty and students' views of informal mentoring were studied. The research questions further explored the factors that encouraged or discouraged faculty-student informal mentoring as well as the role of on-campus faculty housing. Student participants were selected after completing an online survey regarding their perception of connection with professors at the campus location. Faculty participants were selected after completing an online survey regarding their perception of how much time they spent with students outside the classroom. From these responses, nine students and nine faculty members were selected and agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. Recognizing the power of story to communicate rich biographical moments, a narrative inquiry approach to data collection and data analysis was utilized and triangulated with observation, field notes, and historical document review. Interviews were analyzed using three cycles of coding that generated the resulting themes. Eight themes were identified from the data and include intentionality towards care and concern, the importance of relationship building, investment of time, size of campus, spaces that contribute to informal mentoring, the role of on-campus faculty housing, blurred lines, and hindrances to connection. Additionally, the experience of faith-based student development, student-faculty relationships on faith-based campuses, the notion of vocational calling, and impacts on informal mentoring are explored.

Copyright 2020 by Rob Meier

All Rights Reserved

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my brilliant wife, Dr. Lori T. Meier, who encouraged and supported me during this educational endeavor for the past five years. Her steadiness and patience helped me navigate the process and her expertise helped me think like a scholar.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Bill Flora, Dr. Virginia Foley, Dr. Hal Knight and Dr. Renee Moran, who both formally and informally generously offered their time and expertise in helping me complete my dissertation. I am also appreciative of my parents and sisters who were constant encouragers along the way and have always invested in my educational and professional goals. Further, I am indebted to the administration and staff of ETSU's Office of Student Life and Enrollment, notably Dr. Michelle Byrd, who provided me with numerous opportunities to gain experience and wisdom in the affairs of Student Life. Lastly, I am grateful for the depth of experience and mentorship shared with me by Dave Legg who oversaw my doctoral internship in higher education leadership.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
DEDICATION.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	12
Statement of the Problem.....	16
Research Questions.....	16
Significance of the Study.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	18
Limitations and Delimitations.....	19
Overview of the Study.....	20
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Foundations for Mentoring in Higher Education.....	23
Psychosocial and Student Development Theories.....	25
Faith Development Theories.....	28
The mentors role in faith development.....	33
Formal Mentoring Programs.....	36
Academic development.....	36
Social development.....	37
Formal programs impact on the mentor.....	39
Peer mentoring and service learning.....	39
Additional roles, locations, and benefits of formal mentoring programs.....	41
Challenges and limitations of formal mentoring.....	43
Informal Mentoring.....	45
Academic achievement and retention.....	47
Social development and mental health for college students.....	48
Personality types and availability of professors as mentors.....	49

Cultivating an informal mentoring environment .....	51
Belongingness on Campus .....	52
Faculty care and concern for student’s sense of belongingness .....	53
Cultivating a campus community of belongingness. ....	56
Faculty-In-Residence and the Role of On-Campus Faculty Housing.....	57
Conclusion .....	58
Chapter 3. Methodology .....	60
Statement of the Problem (Purpose) .....	60
Research Questions .....	60
Qualitative Design Tradition.....	61
Narrative inquiry.....	62
Role of Researcher .....	63
Ethics.....	63
Population and Site Setting.....	65
Sample.....	66
Sampling Strategy .....	66
Data Collection Procedures.....	67
Data Management .....	69
Measures of Rigor.....	69
Credibility. ....	69
Triangulation.....	70
Member checks. ....	70
Transferability.....	70
Thick and rich descriptions. ....	71
Purposive sampling strategy. ....	71
Dependability.....	71
Coding strategy. ....	72
Triangulation.....	72
Confirmability.....	73



Reflexivity.....	73
Data Analysis .....	73
Data Presentation .....	74
Chapter 4. Data Analysis .....	75
Introduction.....	75
Chapter 4. Narratives – Part One .....	79
Riverside North.....	79
Riverside South.....	79
Students.....	80
Levi (Riverside North).....	80
Jack (Riverside North).....	81
Jane (Riverside North).....	82
Gretchen (Riverside North).....	83
Cindy (Riverside South).....	85
Carrie (Riverside South).....	86
Jamie (Riverside South).....	87
Linda (Riverside South).....	88
Ben (Riverside South).....	89
Professors.....	91
Professor Brentwood (Riverside North).....	91
Professor Sanders (Riverside North).....	92
Professor Harris (Riverside North).....	93
Professor Wadsworth (Riverside North).....	94
Professor Bryant (Riverside South).....	95
Professor Williamson (Riverside South).....	97
Professor Taylor (Riverside South).....	98
Professor Lawson (Riverside South).....	99
Professor Mills (Riverside South).....	100
Chapter 4. Data Analysis – Part Two.....	103

An intentionality to care and concern. ....	103
Students (Riverside North). ....	103
Students (Riverside South). ....	104
Professors (Riverside North).....	105
Professors (Riverside South).....	106
The strength of who we are is defined by our relationships. ....	108
Students (Riverside North). ....	108
Students (Riverside South). ....	109
Professors (Riverside North).....	110
Professors (Riverside South).....	111
Investment of time and energy are critical to informal mentoring relationships. ....	115
Students (Riverside North). ....	115
Students (Riverside South). ....	116
Professors (Riverside North).....	116
Professors (Riverside South).....	117
Informal mentoring is flourishing at events and in special moments. ....	119
Students (Riverside North). ....	119
Students (Riverside South). ....	120
Professors (Riverside North).....	121
Professors (Riverside South).....	122
Spaces matter to the development of informal mentoring relationships.....	123
Students (Riverside North). ....	124
Students (Riverside South). ....	124
Professors (Riverside North).....	126
Professors (Riverside South).....	126
Students and professors perceived positive benefits of small campus size. ....	127
Faculty housing and its role in informal mentoring relationships. ....	129
Students (Riverside North). ....	129
Students (Riverside South). ....	130
Professors (Riverside North).....	130

Professors (Riverside South).....	133
Negotiating blurred lines and boundaries. ....	134
Students (Riverside North). ....	135
Students (Riverside South). ....	135
Professors (Riverside North).....	136
Professors (Riverside South).....	137
Perceptions on the hindrances to connection. ....	137
Students.....	138
Hindrances and Caution.....	138
Personality Differences Impact Connection. ....	140
Communication.....	140
Professors.....	141
Hindrances and Caution.....	141
Personality Differences Impact Connection. ....	144
Communication.....	146
Summary.....	147
<b>Chapter 5. Discussion and Implications.....</b>	<b>149</b>
Chapter Introduction.....	149
Discussion.....	150
The intersection of faith.....	151
An intentionality to care and concern. ....	152
Implications for future practice.....	154
The strength of who we are is defined by our relationships. ....	155
Implications for future practice.....	159
Investment of time and energy are critical to informal mentoring relationships.....	159
Implications for future practice.....	161
Spaces matter to the development of informal mentoring relationships.....	161
Implications for future practice.....	163
Students and professors perceived positive benefits of small campus size. ....	164

Implications for future practice.....	166
Faculty housing and its role in informal mentoring relationships. ....	166
Implications for future practice.....	169
Negotiating blurred lines and boundaries. ....	170
Implications for future practice.....	172
Perceptions on the hindrances to connection. ....	173
Implications for future practice.....	176
Suggestions for future research.....	177
Summary.....	178
References.....	181
APPENDICES .....	193
Appendix A: Student Online Survey .....	193
Appendix B: Faculty Online Survey.....	194
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	195
VITA.....	196

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Mentoring is a topic of timely relevance in the world of higher education. Over the last 50 years, a substantial body of literature (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1950, 1968, 1980, Evans et al., 2010; Fowler, 1981) has suggested that the college experience can be a significant time of transition and psychosocial development for students. As more and more students enter higher education environments, they are faced with complex academic, social, and emotional milestones. Many students are transitioning from high school to college and are leaving home to live independently for the first times in their lives. Some students are beginning to experience increased anxiety about selecting occupations and considering their future work lives, while still other students are forming their identity and belief systems about the world, a world that they are just now becoming more engaged. A foundational author in student development theory, Chickering (1969) suggested that college students move through seven vectors of development during these pivotal, formative years. They are developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity. As universities and colleges seek to improve academic outcomes for their students, and their institutions as a whole, in regard to recruitment and retention, they are also increasingly tasked with the additional demands of providing appropriate social and emotional supports. As such, understanding the development of students and the developmental stages they travel takes on new meaning. Student affairs departments are tasked with a great deal of these interventions and initiatives.

Administrators, faculty, and staff within universities who proactively recognize the importance of these developmental stages will often employ a variety of methods, including

formal mentoring programs, to nurture the student through these phases in efforts to successfully support young adult college transition (Baterna-Daluz, 2014; Davenport, 2015; Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Zachary, 2005). One of the most important factors in a student's college experience is that of faculty presence. Faculty members, outside of the student's family and friends, are the people that the student will spend most of their time with, in the context of the academic classroom. A faculty member's teaching effectiveness and the impacts of faculty-student relationships are of considerable contribution to the student's academic success and to a more variable extent, the student's social and emotional success during the college years.

Students, transitioning through the vectors of student development, will seek to belong to the campus environment. This sense of belonging further contributes to student academic and psychosocial success. Tinto (2012) suggested, that a student's level of involvement, their feelings of being valued by the community, and their contributions mattering determines whether a student will remain enrolled at a university. Thus, faculty play an integral part to this sense of belonging (Chickering, 1969; Schlossberg et al., 1989; Tinto, 2012).

Chickering (1969) noted that students who move through the vector of autonomy needed peers and other adults to help them navigate emotional independence. Chickering continued that professors and administrators, who allow themselves to be available and accessible, can have significant impact on the life of a college student and help them develop emotional intelligence. Interactions with faculty outside the classroom could also potentially have as much an impact on a student's psychosocial development as time in the classroom (Osterman, 2010; Valdez, 2016).

It is here that the opportunities for formal mentoring programs shift to a more informal approach. Unattached to programmed activities or support initiatives, informal mentoring

typically happens outside of the classroom. In these moments, faculty have robust opportunities to engage students' academic, social, and emotional needs. This might be a casual conversation in the hallway, chatting about the latest entertainment or sporting event, joining students in the dining hall, or in some cases an invitation into a faculty member's residence could be considered opportunities for informal mentoring. Faculty who allow themselves to be available outside of the classroom through their time, energy, and general presence have a great impact on the success of the college student.

Chickering (1969) suggested that student autonomy increases when faculty allow themselves to be open, informal, accessible, and warm. Similarly, Sriram and McLevain (2016) noted that in some living-learning programs, faculty are being placed within dormitories and in on-campus housing to increase the visibility and frequency in which faculty and students interact with one another for these very reasons. The researchers in the above study, indicated that university administrators are recognizing that these increased faculty-student interactions could result in greater student success rates and that opening faculty residences to students on a regular basis could nurture the student to faculty connection.

In this proposed study, one campus utilizes significant on-campus, free-standing, non-dormitory based, faculty housing in efforts to increase faculty-student engagement. Although this was common practice in early higher education settings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this practice is becoming less seen in modern higher education settings outside of the living-learning settings based in residential dormitories. Of further significance to this introduction is the faith-based mission of the university setting. Faculty who elect to teach at the institution outlined in this

research agree to a faith statement and code of conduct. Students, generally, choose to attend the institution because of its faith-based mission and offerings.

In addition to Chickering's vectors (1969) of development, faith development theories are also evident in the literature base. Fowler (1981) identified seven stages of faith development. Daloz-Parks (2011) further noted that faith development required the reliance on forms of community and especially mentoring communities. There are interactions with other members of the faith that guide and direct a person as he or she is attempting to understand the meaning of life (Fowler, 1981; Daloz-Parks, 2011) and this is especially evident in the lives of young adults in college transition. Faith does not exist in a vacuum. Daloz-Parks (2011) challenged the notion that a mentor alone could help move a young person into adulthood and through the next phase of faith development. They may need additional support in the form of a mentoring community that is encouraging, challenging, guiding, and facilitating a transitioning young adult into the next phase of their life. That in essence, this collective group helps create a sense of belonging for this individual and this sense of belonging, in turn, moves them forward on their path (Daloz-Parks, 2011). Potentially then, a student's sense of belonging and emerging adulthood could be determined by their perceptions of the informal mentoring community at the faith-based institution.

As presented in the literature review, informal mentoring potentially has significant impacts on student development (Chickering, 1969; Daloz-Parks, 2011; Fowler, 1981; Tinto, 2012). Through the lens of developing mature relationships, belongingness, and faith development, I examined the informal mentoring relationships between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith-based liberal arts universities. This research also seeks to



understand the ways in which faculty contribute to the sense of belongingness for students at a small liberal arts university. In light of the potential for informal mentoring relationships in both traditional and faith-based campuses, there could be an additional link between spiritual discipleship and informal mentoring.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith-based liberal arts universities. Through a narrative storytelling process, I explored student and faculty perceptions of informal mentoring (Cladinin, 2007). Academic, social, emotion, and the spiritual development of students are critical areas of research as small faith-based campus administrators seek to support, retain, and graduate students. Because of the distinct intersection of academic discipline, residential living, spiritual mission and cultural influences, faith-based campuses are an ideal location to study the role of informal mentoring on student development.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do faculty perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
2. How do students perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
3. What contributing factors encourage or discourage the faculty-student informal mentoring relationship?
4. How do faculty perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?

5. How do students perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?

### **Significance of the Study**

Formal and informal mentoring could be one important way to increase retention and graduation. Administrators and staff in universities across the United States are concerned with retention and graduation rates of students (Jacobi, 1991; Lahman, 1999; McKinsey, 2016; O'Connell, 2015). Increased enrollment and on time matriculation through a four-year program imparts more money for increasingly restricted budgets in outcome measured states. Therefore, the findings from this study may be used to promote ways to increase student retention and graduation rates, and in turn, increasing sustainable revenue. Mentoring has been significantly cited as a method to increase retention rates, graduation rates, as well as provide for the social well-being of college students (Bolster, 2011; Tinto, 2012; Ward et al., 2014; Davenport, 2015).

Legislators are additionally looking at ways mentoring can increase student success. In 2016, legislators in Tennessee created a mentoring program that helped students navigate the initial college application process. The mentors in that program helped the student navigate the program requirements, FAFSA application, college application and initial understanding of the community service requirement (TN Promise, 2018). One item of significance this research might discover is that mentoring initiatives could be expanded to bolster student success rates of increased retention and graduation outcomes once the students are actively on campus. As seen in the literature, a significant amount of data has been collected about formal mentoring programs at universities of all sizes. One way this research will contribute to the existing literature is by examining informal mentoring relationships at small faith-based institutions.

In addition, this research seeks to understand institutions that invest in on-campus faculty housing and its potential relationship to informal mentoring. Sriram and McLevain (2016) noted, there has been little research done about faculty and student relationships for universities that promote faculty living on campus, however they theorize that they suspect these programs significantly impact retention and graduation rates. In a similar study of informal mentoring at a small faith-based campus, Bolster (2011) noted student perceptions of informal mentoring but encouraged further study from the perspectives of faculty. This study will contribute to the limited body of work on the impacts of faculty-in-residence (on-campus faculty housing) programs, but also to the greater conversation of informal mentoring and its impact on academics and sense of belongingness in students.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Mentoring:** The guiding relationship between older or more mature individuals that show the young protégé how to navigate the path already traveled (Daloz, 1999).

**Formal Mentoring:** Formal programs designed and implemented by the educational institution to increase academic successes, social successes, retention, and graduation rates (Ward et al., 2014).

**Informal Mentoring:** Interactions between faculty and student that take place outside the classroom: conversations in the hallway, having lunch together in the dining hall, interactions in the faculty's home (Bolster, 2011).

**Belongingness:** A student's perception of their membership within the community and their value to the people around them (Tinto, 2012).

**Faculty-In-Residence:** Faculty, with their families, live in university provided housing on campus or in the dormitories. Faculty are actively engaged in the lives and development of the students on campus (Sriram & McLevain, 2016).

**Psycho-Social Development:** Identity and psychological development as a person progresses through life (Erikson, 1950; 1980)

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Informal mentoring could be difficult to measure. There might be limitations when studying this phenomena through the lens of developing mature relationships, sense of belongingness, and faith development (Chickering, 1969; Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2000; Tinto, 2012). Another limitation is the ability to understand informal mentoring and its many definitions. For some faculty and students, informal mentoring might mean meeting with a mentor once a week for in-depth conversation. For others, informal mentoring might mean eating together at the dining hall. Another limitation is the qualitative nature of a narrative study may lead to the faculty and students conveying only perceptions of their lived experience (Kim, 2016). Therefore, the phenomena that is reported may or may not be an accurate representation of what is actually taking place. Furthermore, biased responses to the interview questions might be a limitation for this study. The faculty and administrators for one of these universities are currently engaged in a conversation about faculty housing and its role in the lives of the employees of the campus.

The participants for this qualitative study were purposefully selected faculty and students at two, connected faith-based liberal arts universities in the eastern United States. The students and faculty were sampled from a small number of professors and students at a faith-based liberal

arts campus. Additionally, the sample size was limited to those who filled out a survey indicating their perceived connections to the professors or the students respectively. Initially, two students and two professors were intended to be chosen from each side of the spectrum of a Likert scale question. However, students and professors who indicated they were strongly connected to each other were the only participants willing to be interviewed. As a matter of record, of the 184 respondents to the survey only seven participants indicated less than three on the Likert scale question. As a result, the research was limited to only those who perceived themselves strongly connected to either student or professor and does not include anyone who did not perceive themselves as strongly connected.

In order to obtain thick and rich narrative descriptions, participation in this study was delimited to faculty who have taught at the campuses for at least three years and students whom have completed their freshman year. Moreover, participation in this study will be delimited to a small sample size of four students and four faculty members at each university. For one of the universities, the faculty were also delimited to only those who have lived in university provided on-campus housing.

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith based liberal arts universities. Chapter One is a presentation of the psychosocial development theories that explain the foundation for informal mentoring, clarifies the purpose and significance of the study, as well as, addresses the limitations and delimitations. Chapter Two is a review of current literature and on the foundations of mentoring, impacts of formal mentoring on academic development and social

development, informal mentoring and its role in student success, other implications for mentoring and peer mentoring, an overview of student's sense of belonging, and faculty-in-residence programs and their role in student development. Chapter Three is an explanation of narrative methodology and the qualitative tradition and methodology used in this study. Clandinin (2013) argued narrative inquiry gives importance to a person's experience and at the same time helps understand how a person's social life, cultural life, family life, and institutional life, are constructed and communicated. An overview of the research population, context, sample size, procedures, data collection, data analysis methods, measures of rigor, and the role of the researcher is also provided. Chapter Four is a presentation of the data as seen through the lens of narrative stories of participants collected as part of field text (Cladinin, 2013). Chapter Five is a synthesis of the study including implications for practice, connections of the themes to the literature, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Mentoring is an increasingly pertinent topic of interest for administrators of student services in colleges and universities across the world. A multitude of factors contribute to the academic and social success of young adults in the higher education environment. Various theories of student development suggest that the role of psychosocial identity development, moral development, cognitive development, faith, racial and ethnic identity, and transition theories, among others all contribute to the development of the learner (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans et al., 2010; Helms, 1994; Josselson, 1996; Patterson & D'Augelli, 2001; Phinney, 1993). For some students, the college experience is one of turbulent transition while other students appear to progress through four years of academic study with relative ease. This historical, and perhaps re-emerging, area of the literature considers the potential relationship between mentoring and the academic and social successes of college students.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith-based liberal arts universities. This literature review explores the various areas of previous research regarding mentoring at the higher education level. The review of relevant literature on mentoring explores the foundations of mentoring, the psychosocial and student development theories, faith development theories, the importance of relationships and belongingness, formal and informal programs designed to help students succeed academically and socially, as well as faculty-in-residence programs and how the proximity of faculty housing impacts student development and retention.

## **Foundations for Mentoring in Higher Education**

There have been references to mentors or mentor-like characters guiding their protégés along an unfamiliar path for centuries. The word mentor comes from the Greek mythological world, and more specifically is attributed to the character, Mentor, from Homer's epic tale, *The Odyssey*, who is described as the enlightened and dutiful counselor to Odysseus and is later entrusted to oversee his household and son (Daloz, 1999; Peddy, 1998). Although mentors have been seen in Greek mythology, fairytales, and novels, it is only in the past few decades that they are more readily seen at play in businesses and college environments (Daloz, 1999; Peddy 1998).

In our current society, a mentor is understood to be the person who has gone before, understands the pitfalls along the path, and is familiar with the keys to success. Mentors, perhaps above all, seek to share this knowledge with others to help make their protégées personal and professional experiences successful. They are the guides who show us the way and many times accompany us as we travel along the journey giving us advice and sharing wisdom. They encourage our aspirations, our hopes, our dreams, and help us discover the joy in our work or life. Often this person is a colleague, a friend, a professor, a pastor, a teacher, or sometimes even a parent or grandparent with significant life and work experience (Daloz, 1999; Levinson et al., 1978; Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Peddy, 1998).

The formal definition of a mentor is neither definitive nor equally identifiable by all fields of study or work. Definitions and attributes vary for what a mentor is and does. One of the challenges noted in the literature is the lack of consensus regarding a definition, as there is not one overarching characterization. For example, Jacobi (1991) noted 15 different definitions for mentoring between the fields of education, management, and psychology.



Though a common mentoring definition is difficult to clarify, three basic themes emerged from the literature. First, mentoring is about the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of an individual. Mentoring is not simply a one-time meeting between two individuals; instead it is a complex interaction between a more experienced person and an interested mentee (or protégé) that is seeking to be guided. Second, mentoring can occur in numerous forms through different channels. It is defined less in formal interactions and more in character and depth of relationship (Levinson et al., 1978). Third, mentoring involves interpersonal relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Daloz, 1999; Jacobi, 1991; Levinson et al., 1978).

Though mentoring in one form or another has been around for a few thousand years, it is not until the early twentieth century that references for mentors, other than faculty, began appearing at higher education institutions (Hamrick et al., 2002). Mentors, as an official identifier, only started appearing in the early 1970s. Daloz (1999) referenced several works in the seventies and eighties that began to use the term mentor and it has been in the last three decades that formal mentoring programs have become prevalent in the higher education landscape. As such, Schlossberg et al. (1989), were the first researchers to reference Empire State College's formal mentoring program at a higher education institution.

One possible reason that mentoring has become more prevalent in educational institutions is the need for student retention. With prevailing budget cuts, universities are relying more and more on tuition fees for their funding. The more students who attend and stay in school, the better financial security a college will have to keep their doors open.

## **Psychosocial and Student Development Theories**

Moving away from home and entering college can be a great time of transition and psychosocial development for students. In the last 50 years there has been significant progress in understanding human development as it relates to college-aged student development. Erikson (1968) created human development theories where people moved through adulthood in three stages: young, middle and late and that young adulthood is from the age of 18-35. Chickering (1969) further classified seven vectors of student development while Levinson et al. (1978) described the early adult transition period. Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student development include: developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity.

Knefelkamp et al. (1978) identified five areas of student development: psychosocial theory, cognitive developmental theory, maturity models, typology models, and person-environment interaction models. Subsequently, decades of societal changes persuaded Chickering and Reisser (1993) to revisit Chickering's (1969) initial vectors of student development and consider the additional effects of factors like gender and race on students during college.

Students aged 18-22 are at a distinct level of human development during their college years. This is a time of development when young people are emerging into the early stages of adulthood and consequently, experience a significant shift in understanding between their parent's beliefs and their own emerging beliefs. As they begin to distance themselves from their families, the dependency on their parents decrease. There is also a noted disconnect from their

own desires and former parental authority. For those who choose to pursue continued education, a student's entrance into college can be the most significant reason a young person enters into this early adulthood phase (Levinson et al., 1978). Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that here people move through seven vectors of development: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. They further identified the vector of moving through autonomy toward interdependence as the time in which college students start to distance themselves from their parents and start to develop their own thoughts about the world (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). It is during this time that peers and other counselors or mentors emerge as trusted individuals. The student begins to form their own opinions and values with the guidance of trusted non-family members. Chickering and Reisser (1993) added that students eventually move completely through this phase to where they form a code of ethics and value system on their own without the help of trusted individuals. As a last stage, students experience a mature interpersonal relationships phase that pushes them to develop lasting friendships and intimate relationships with other people that reside outside of their family nucleus (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Foubert et al. (2005) set out to validate Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theories of student development and initiated a study specifically looking at Chickering and Reisser's theories of tolerance, mature interpersonal relationships, and concept of developing purpose. Foubert et al., (2005) looked through the lens of gender differences in an effort to refine the seven vectors of Chickering and Reisser (1993). The researchers asked male and female students to take the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Inventory (SDTLI) (Winston et al., 1987).

The researchers confirmed Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theories that students move through the vectors of tolerance, mature interpersonal relationships, and developing purpose.

Additionally, they discovered that female students move through these vectors at a quicker and more thorough pace than male students, specifically in the areas of developing mature relationships and tolerance. They theorized that male students grow up being asked to emulate only the male role models in their lives and female students are asked to emulate the role models of both genders in their lives. Furthermore, the researchers confirmed Chickering and Reisser's findings that college is the time students move through these vectors and specifically primarily during the later parts of their college experience from sophomore year to senior year.

In recent years, student development theories have expanded from broad initial understandings of student development, based largely on the views of developmental psychology, to include more consideration regarding areas of identity development (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Chickering and Reisser (1993) revisited Chickering's original theories of student development and added dimensions of race and gender recognizing that societal influences are constantly shaping and affecting the development of college students. Post Chickering, many researchers added to student development theories and considered racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation development in student body populations (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Helms, 1994; Josselson, 1996; Patterson & D'Augelli, 2001; Phinney, 1993). Cote and Levine (2002) added that student development happened in the context of cultural identity. These new areas of inquiry include student development theory work in the areas of gender (Foubert et al., 2005), ethnicity and race (Kodama et al., 2002; Anderson & Collins, 2007; Cross

& Vandiver, 2001), sexuality (Abes & Jones, 2004), and areas of identity intersectionality (Tanaid & Wright, 2019).

Among the many student development theories present and outlined in the literature (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1968; Helms, 1994; Josselson, 1996; Patterson & D'Augelli, 2001; Phinney, 1993), Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) suggested that there are three significant commonalities amongst them all. First, students advance through a progressive developmental process moving from one vector, stage, or status in succession. The researchers argued that students could also oscillate back and forth between stages and that they are reconciling their new belief systems in an ongoing fashion. Second, students may make sense of certain elements of a developmental stage but not fully comprehend their new belief system entirely. Students may be in a continual task of reconstruction of ideas and beliefs. Third, the environmental context contributes significantly to the processes of moving through the vectors of student development. Students moving away from home and entering a college environment can move through the stages of student development more rapidly due to the environmental shift that is presented to them in the landscape of a college environment. This change can happen more significantly for those who move to a residential campus and are fully immersed in the college environment.

### **Faith Development Theories**

Faith development theories are another area of consideration in the research literature because the institution studied is a faith based liberal arts university. Fowler (1981) identified seven stages of faith development and Baxter-Magolda (2009) confirmed Fowlers theories of meaning-making in her research of college students. Furthermore, Daloz-Parks (2011) also

expanded Fowler's work to develop theories of meaning-making for college students. One of the common threads throughout all of these inquiries is that student development does not happen in isolation. Developmental growth happens in the midst of community with some form of mentor guiding students along the way.

How students move away from their parent's beliefs and start forming their own assessments about faith is critical research in the development of relationships, as well as, understanding the potential importance of mentors and being mentored. Some of the foundational connections between faith and student development are found in the works of Fowler (1981), Love (2001), Daloz-Parks (2011), Astin et al. (2011). All of whom identify faith and spirituality loosely defined as humans making sense of the universe around them.

As stated above, Fowler (1981) identified seven stages of faith from intimacy into late adulthood. These stages include: Infancy faith, Intuitive-Projective faith, Mythic-Literal faith, Synthetic-Conventional faith, Individuative-Reflective faith, Conjunctive faith, and Universalizing faith. According to Fowler, students are at each stage during particular seasons of their life. For example, during the Mythic-Literal faith development stage, early to middle elementary students understand faith with concrete and literal concepts. For children in this stage, God is in control of the entire universe and rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior. Fowler noted the Synthetic-Conventional stage as adolescence into early adulthood, at approximately ages fourteen to thirty. This Synthetic-Conventional stage is one where students start to have their own perspectives on religion, faith, and God but these beliefs are deeply rooted in the beliefs of the people that they are close to such as family or friends. As such, the religious communities in which students are surrounded become a significant influencer. Fowler

acknowledged general age ranges for each of these stages but described his theory in such a way that adolescents could get stuck in the early stages without ever moving on. Fowler further believed that the Synthetic-Conventional stage is one where some people move out of slowly. He argued that one of the reasons adults stay in this stage is because they resist breaking the pattern and comfortability of their life. They have a hard time challenging their own belief systems and creating something new in their psyche. One of the ways Fowler suggested people could break this pattern and move past their parent's faith system is to leave home, go to college, and start making a path for themselves. This in turn can help them move them into the Individuative-Reflective faith stage. At this stage, the student is able to begin critiquing the belief systems of their past and start to formulate their own understandings of religion and spirituality. Students begin to see the world as a much larger place, understanding the world is full of other faiths and traditions and not localized to only their viewpoint. Fowler suggested that once people understand a much larger worldview they begin to move into Conjunctive faith development. In this stage, people begin to see virtue and truth coming from various sources and are more open at engaging people of other faith backgrounds and religions. In Fowler's final faith development stage people begin having a Universalizing Faith. This stage is marked by an understanding that all people are part of the divine's creation and that they are deserving of love and care at the highest level. People in this stage are also usually involved in activism and social justice concerns (Fowler, 1981).

In studying counseling students, Erwin (2001) reaffirmed Fowler's (1981) seven stages of student faith development and noted that students who move into the later stages of Individuative-Reflective faith and Conjunctive faith need guides and counselors to help them

make sense of their new emerging belief system. Erwin posited that students who have moved into the Conjunctive faith stage have started to comprehend that the beliefs of their teachers and mentors can help shape their own ideologies. Additionally, the students are not afraid to allow these beliefs to inform and shape their lives.

Love (2001), identified similar emerging themes when studying faith development theories. His recommendations included: the need to recognize the college student's desire to finding meaning and purpose in life, that student affairs professionals should develop psychosocial developmental experiences that enhance a student's faith development, how creating mentoring communities can help students move through the stages of student development, increasing student development for graduate education, and emphasizing the importance of spiritual development in college settings. In addition, Love (2001) in analyzing Fowler's theories developed a series of implications for student affairs professionals.

Daloz-Parks (2008) noted that being consciously aware of spirituality requires the student to be aware that there is more to life than what is apparent with our five senses and that there is a deeper perplexing meaning and enigmatic element to existence. Nash and Murray (2010) further acknowledged the existence of an in-between stage of student development. Daloz-Parks (2011) built upon this recognition and created another stage in between Fowler's (1981) Synthetic-Conventional and Individuative-Reflective stages. She classified this stage as the emerging adult stage. She found that this is the stage where emerging adults start to make meaning of their world and worldviews, specifically in the areas of faith. Daloz-Parks (2011) subsequently noted that during the emerging adult stage, students begin making sense of the world in their own way, composing patterns within their own mind that create order and



significance. In issues of faith, Daloz-Parks summarized that this is the time in a young adult's life when they begin to reject their parent's faith and start to form their own belief system. They begin to depend on their thoughts and confidences about religion, faith, and spirituality. At the same time, there is a vulnerability to this emerging adult stage. She described this as a fragile moment where students are not confident enough to project with authority their fully formed ideas about faith and need guidance from peers, mentors, and their community.

Astin et al. (2011) built upon Daloz-Parks' theories by developing a set of twelve measures to identify college students' spiritual and religious development. The areas included: spiritual-religious worldview, spiritual well-being, spiritual-religious behavior and practice, self-assessments of faith, compassionate behavior, sense of connectedness to others and the world, spiritual quest, spiritual-mystical experiences, facilitators-inhibitors of spiritual development, theological-metaphysical beliefs, attitudes toward religion-spirituality, and religious affiliation-identity. In their in-depth study, 14,527 students from 136 institutions participated in the research. Supporting Daloz-Parks's (2011) theories, the study found that "spiritual quest or students searching for meaning" was one of the highest scoring scales. 37% of all participants scored high on this category. Astin et al. (2011) further found three areas of their assessment that have implications for student development theories. They suggested student affairs professionals should consider studying these areas: deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one's life (spiritual quest), developing a greater connectedness to self and others (ethic of caring), and the process of continually transcending one's current locus of centrality (ecumenical worldview). The implied inference is that students need guides to help them move through this transition into adulthood and is perhaps, continued evidence that administrators at colleges and

universities, especially those of faith-based origins, might need to consider increasing their efforts in being a mentoring community. For this study, faith and spirituality will be viewed through the lens where spirituality is thought as something deeper and more mystical than the physical world.

**The mentors role in faith development.** It is human nature to seek out someone wiser and more experienced to observe and learn from as they travel through life. This person formally and informally trains the young protégé in the virtues of life as they have come to know and understand it. The young student soaks up these virtues, attempts to live them out, and then as they mature, passes on their own set of virtues to the next generation of protégés and towards a cycle of mentoring that continues for ages to come. Often religious or spiritual leaders are these wiser, more experienced humans passing on layers of virtue. Willimon (1997) noted that one of the purposes of higher education is the betterment of society and to produce people of character. He argued that professors are poised to be the masters of adulthood whom the student learns from and follows during a pivotal time in their development. Willimon continued that professors who have a religious or spiritual element to their life are exceedingly adept at passing on virtues of character to their students. He articulated that people of a religious faith are typically involved in making themselves more like the deity they believe and worship. Most often these deities have exhibited virtues of grace, mercy, kindness, generosity, and love. In turn, the professors who live out these virtues are naturally passing them on to the students they are mentoring and shaping and helping them become human of high integrity and character (Willimon, 1997).

According to Daloz-Parks (2011), mentoring is critical for a student's faith development and understanding of the world. She expressed that mentors are a welcome presence as young protégés are traversing the world and trying to understand their role within it. The newly formed mentoring relationships allow the student to have someone alongside of them as they emerge into adulthood and the discovery of themselves, their neighbors, and their physical and spiritual worlds. She continued that though many see mentoring as the relationship between teacher and student (one-on-one), mentoring many times also includes a mentoring community. A mentor or mentors with a small group of people with common interests. Mentoring communities allow the student to find belonging within society, answer questions larger than themselves, discover an understanding of cultures outside of their own, and uncover their own new self and dreams.

Daloz-Parks (2011) additionally argued that higher education can also be a mentor. Though admittedly controversial, she believes that professors should be considered spiritual guides and "every syllabus a confession of faith" (p. 204). She contended that every educational institution relies on the dynamic of the faculty-student relationship. Some faculty might be good at cultivating relationships and some might not, which could be the defining characteristic of why some students succeed and some do not (Jenkins & Downs, 2001; McKinsey, 2016). Daloz-Parks (2011) continued that the professor, as teacher, is already guiding and directing the emerging adult into new knowledge. She would advocate that this professorial role should be extended to helping the student discover the meaning of self, the physical world, and the spiritual world.

Student affairs practitioners also have a significant role in helping the student move through the vectors or stages of psychosocial faith development. Astin and Astin (2003) found

that college students are actively interested in elements of faith and how they see the world through elements of spirituality, religion, and ethics. Student affairs professionals have the unique position of helping the student be successful in all areas of their life and therefore, matters of faith should also be of interest. Seifert and Homan-Harmon (2009) discovered that student affairs professionals serve the student best when they themselves have unpacked their own deep understanding of the world. When student affairs professionals are willing to ask their own big questions about the universe and deeply explored their own inward development, it is in this place that they are poised to help the student in their own faith development. Seifert and Homan-Harmon are quick to point out that it is not one particular faith tradition or having a faith tradition at all that determines if a student affairs professional will be successful in helping a student uncover their belief system. However, it is the student affairs professional's willingness to have the deep discussions and provide a safe place for the student to have these similar conversations that allow the student to move through the vectors of faith development.

Small (2009) concluded that it is not just the professor or staff mentoring relationship that helps faith development, but also the interaction with peers and the discourse of differing belief systems that help shape the student. Small's research added to Fowler's (1981) and Daloz-Parks' (2008) faith development theories by considering religious affiliation and how the discussion of different viewpoints helped develop the student's stage of faith development. Small (2009) found that during focus group conversations of different religious beliefs, students found themselves adjusting and becoming more open to the ideas and interpretations of others. She suggested that professors from other universities could offer opportunities for students to

engage in such dialogue to help them develop their faith identities and also help create a more open-minded and welcoming cultural environment for their campus.

Existing research also included how specific faith-traditions influenced college student development and identity (Ackerson, 2009; Foote, 2013; Rine, 2012). Miller-Perrin and Thompson (2010) explored areas of vocational calling and how professors at faith-based institutions influence a student's choice in their future career. Additionally, Bailey (2012) argued that faith, critical thinking, and student development should be intertwined with one another and not void of any three elements. They can live in harmony with one another.

### **Formal Mentoring Programs**

**Academic development.** Numerous studies point to the positive effects of mentoring on students. Mentoring has been proven time and again to influence the academic outcomes of college students. Tinto (2012), in his research on several universities, discovered that mentoring programs, summer bridge programs, first year seminars, and living learning communities were all being reported as helping with student retention, academic success, and increased graduation rates. Ward et al. (2014) reported the results of a qualitative study implementing a mentoring program at a mid-sized 4-year institution. Here, the researchers trained 24 juniors and seniors as mentors and selected 75 protégés to be mentored. The protégés were freshman and sophomore students who were struggling with their classes and were recommended by professors for the program. The data collected from the study came from mentor journals and protégé responses. Using grounded theory to analyze their data, the researchers reported six themes found in the protégés experiences. The protégé themes included improved academic skills, career decision-making, connectedness, maturity, physical wellbeing, and aspiration. This study supported the

theory that mentoring programs aid in the academic success of students. Specifically, Ward et al. (2014) discovered that when mentors provided guidance and direction to the protégé's their academic scores improved. Areas such as study habits, time management skills, and generally becoming a better student improved with the help of the mentor. One particular student learned that taking one homework assignment at a time, one quiz at a time, one day at a time was more productive to their success than worrying about the whole semester all at once. The overwhelming nature of a whole semester was paralyzing to this student but when they conquered one task at a time then before they knew it, the whole semester was completed, and their grades ended up as As. This connection and trust to provide guidance aided in the academic improvement of this particular student (Ward et al., 2014).

**Social development.** In many research studies, social support systems and peer-mentoring programs have been suggested to contribute to the academic and social success of college students. Developing a sense of community is a critical aspect of acclimating into the college environment. College students who enter this environment without any connection to other students could come in with a disadvantage. Having pre-established mentoring programs at the higher education level could expedite this connection to community. Astin (1993) shared that the most important and influential group of people in a college student's life specifically in the areas of psychosocial development is their group of friends. When a student is automatically connected to peers through a mentoring program they have an advantage to building this sense of belonging. Those students without this access could suffer academically and socially and therefore not have the persistence to complete their education.

Hale et al. (2005) suggested that social support and the sense of belonging to a social group enhances the physical health of an individual. When speaking about beginning college students the researchers found that social connections in a new environment are crucial for students who are leaving home and joining a new organization such as a college campus. As their old world from adolescence and high school begins to fade away these new relationships help bond them to the new world that awaits them in college. This suggests that if students feel isolated and alone as they enter a new environment, and do not get connected to new relationships quickly, they could suffer both academically and socially. A peer-mentoring program could help these students get connected and attached to other individuals as they enter this new college environment.

Davenport (2015) attempted to answer two questions as to how important first-year minority mentoring programs are in students' decisions to return to the same institution for a second year of study and how first-year minority students' perceptions of their institution are impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship. Through this study, Davenport attempted to connect the mentoring program with student retention and consequently found that a student's social connection through the mentoring program was most important. Davenport found that students perceived themselves to be more connected to the relationships at their college and significantly more engaged to campus activities when they had participated in a mentoring program. Mentoring programs provide a sense of belonging and social connection that aid in student success. As a result, one could theorize that the social connection is the major factor that has the most impact on academic and career related successes.

**Formal programs impact on the mentor.** Much has been written about the benefits to protégés (students) that are paired with a mentor. However, there is the potential for substantial benefits to be available to the mentor as well. Colvin and Ashman (2010) examined the different roles mentors play in the life of college students as well as the associated benefits and risks of being a mentor. Through interviews with the mentors and those being mentored, five types of roles emerged: connecting point to the community, student leader, the wise coach, the kind advocate, and trusted friend. The researchers also discovered three main benefits to mentoring: the ability to help others, creating friendships, and the capacity for growth within the mentor's own lives. Mentors in this particular program found that they grew developmentally just as much as their protégés.

Another way that mentors can grow is through the cultivation of their own leadership ability. Barnes (2014) studied how mentoring programs influenced the leadership capacity of college students. The study focused on the Social Change Model: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, citizenship, and change and compared the results to national averages (Barnes, 2014). The study, though it does not directly relate to the academic and social success of college students who are being mentored, does show positive impacts on the leadership abilities of college students who mentor others.

**Peer mentoring and service learning.** Formal mentoring programs have been designed in numerous ways. Some university administrators designate faculty as mentors. Some companies train their supervisors to be mentors. Other university leaders focus on peer-to-peer mentoring programs (Astin et al., 2011; Davenport, 2015; Hale et al., 2005; Hamrick et al., 2002;



St-Amand et al., 2017; Suciu, 2014; Tinto, 2012; Ward et al. 2014). Traditional peer mentoring programs train junior or senior upperclassmen to mentor or shepherd freshman classmates. Peer interaction can aid significantly in student development and make a significant difference in the life of a struggling student. Astin (1993) believed a college student's group of friends and acquaintances generated more psychological maturation than any other source during their four years at the institution. University administrators who find ways to increase peer interaction and peer mentoring into their college cultures are realizing the strength of peer influence and increased critical thinking (Hamrick et al., 2002). Small (2009) argued that groups of peers with differing belief systems could also act as mentors and developmental challengers. The researcher urged professors and administrators to create discussion groups among classmates that encourage the sharing of differing belief systems. Small suggested that these experiences could help students create more caring, nurturing, and welcoming environments for the campus community and change the culture of some institutions.

Likewise, service learning through volunteerism and mentoring can be another viable way students and adults grow in civic engagement. Newell (2014) reported the results of a quantitative study exploring the differences of civic engagement between associate degree students, those attending community colleges, students in high school, and those who had attained a four-year bachelor's degree. Newell shared that different backgrounds such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and a school's environment plays a part in student's civic engagement. The data collected came from the 2008 Current Population Survey, which included a *Volunteer Supplement and Civic Engagement Supplement* survey. Using descriptive statistics, the results showed that for each level of education, the service-learning initiative and civic

engagement increased. Across three main variables: community-based engagement, volunteerism, and political engagement the percentage of involvement increased at every level of education. Some examples of these variables included: participating in service organizations, attending church or synagogue, volunteering, mentoring youth, helping people in some form, or attending a political meeting. Newell also used data from the Current Population Study to conduct a regression analysis. He discovered that among the three variables, this time controlling for background data, the civic engagement increases remained the same from level to level with some statistical significance.

Mentoring as a service-learning opportunity is becoming more prevalent on college campuses because institutions have seen the benefits to the campus, the mentor, and the protégé. Schmidt et al. (2004) urged administrators to understand that mentoring programs are not only beneficial to the mentee but also to the mentor. They argued that becoming a mentor is an outstanding service-learning opportunity for students and that they could benefit significantly from the experience. The researchers found that the group of mentors in their study not only had significant growth and maturation through the process, but some of their views of society also changed. For example, mentoring has the potential to change a person's view on poverty, homelessness, or their views on same-sex relationships.

**Additional roles, locations, and benefits of formal mentoring programs.** Mentoring programs reach beyond the higher education environment and can be explored in many other venues such as K-12 schools, workplaces, and online environments. Alternative applications of mentoring can positively improve young children's social and academic standing, lead to great career advancements, and in our digital age, be applied in a new technological way.

Johnson (2007) reported the findings of a mentoring program the researcher themselves designed and implemented for at-risk youth in a middle school in northeast Tennessee. In this study, they placed positive adult role models with at-risk students that were not their classroom teachers. They found that students who participated in the program improved in grade point average and school attendance while discipline referrals decreased. Similarly, Sprague (2007) determined the impact of two types of mentoring programs located in New Jersey high schools as compared to traditional schools without mentoring programs in the same state. The researchers found here that mentoring programs had more significant impact on social successes than academic successes. However, they also noted that as students felt a sense of belonging, the dropout and suspension rate decreased. These social successes imply the potential to have subsequent impact on academic success.

Students from all background and abilities could benefit from formal mentoring programs and the resulting feeling that they belong to an institution. Suciu (2014) pointed out that some students, such as those with autism spectrum disorders, might need a little extra assistance in navigating college environments. Students with autism spectrum disorders may need help with the university's various departments, with communication skills, with study skills, dorm life expectations, and other aspects of college life. She found in her study, that both the mentor and protégé noted that they had positive experiences. The mentors gained a better understanding of people with autism spectrum disorders and the protégé improved in navigating the school's systems as well as experienced improved academics. The protégés also developed strong interpersonal connections to their mentors and some continued to be mentored after the conclusion of the study.

Workplace environments can also be positively affected by formal mentoring programs, which work in similar ways to enhance an employee's professionalism and productivity. Allen, Poteet, and Russell (2000) found that managerial employees may seek out employees in need of help to advance their own careers or to be good citizens of the company. The researchers also found that when companies foster mentoring relationships, employees in need of help might seek out mentors who have positive reputations so the protégé themselves can grow in their skill or responsibilities. Though researchers reported workforce findings, the applications towards college students are still relevant. The findings from this study can reinforce how mentors choose protégés and the potential negative effects of designing a mentoring program that only focuses on students that have a predetermined level of potential. The more likely scenario on a college campus is that all students need help and therefore would benefit from a mentor.

In a digital age where most of society has access to computers or a smart device, the mentoring experience potentially could evolve to include more electronic communication opportunities. However, Wilbanks (2014) in a study on e-mentoring concluded that, electronic mentoring would be insignificantly effective, and e-mentoring would only be able to supplement traditional mentoring programs. Though this article is only one example of research into e-mentoring, the progress of technology and electronic communication should be considered when researching the topic of mentoring. With students more prevalently using technology to communicate, e-mentoring and similar constructions of internet-based mentoring seems more and more of a reality of the future and something not to be discarded as irrelevant.

**Challenges and limitations of formal mentoring.** There are some potentially challenging aspects of formal mentoring that universities should consider when developing a

formal mentoring program. Nash and Murray (2010) outlined several ethical dilemmas including breaking confidentiality agreements, poorly trained mentors, overbearing mentoring relationships, reading too much into a student's narrative, or mentors practicing unorthodox mentoring methods. Mentors in authority positions should be cautious in their use of language and physical contact with a student. An innocent hug could be considered an unwanted or unwelcome advance. Additional challenges include the mentor taking advantage of the protégé by bullying, shaming, or even sexual harassment (Hurley, 1996).

For the peer mentor, trying to do too much, clashing personally with the student, being too relied upon by the protégé, and physical risk emerge in the literature (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). In Colvin and Ashman's study, over half of the participants noted that balancing their own academic studies and the requirements of being a mentor were the biggest challenges to the program. Another possible risk was when mentors and protégés did not connect personally or even clashed over personality differences. Colvin and Ashman suggested that this could be due to the power struggles in the mentor and protégé relationship. They argued that administrators and faculty need to understand that there is a hierarchical relationship at play between mentor and mentee. The relationship often flows from the top down and misunderstandings or misuse of power is a common pitfall in mentoring relationships. In contrast, a protégé may rely too much on the mentor and never take initiative to complete course work or advance their academic or social successes. A few students in Colvin and Ashman's study mentioned that students would not look at the syllabus or complete any work on their own and would wait until they were with their mentors. This appeared to be frustrating to the peer mentors in this particular study. Additionally, some mentors were concerned about physical risk if the protégés clashed with

them. For the protégés, the risks did not seem to be as prevalent, however, two emerging themes included, the role the mentor was fulfilling and the relationship that occurred (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). For some students in this study, the protégés were concerned about the lack of interest the mentors took in their lives and others were bothered by how much the mentors interfered in their lives.

### **Informal Mentoring**

There have been numerous studies about formal mentoring and the programs developed at universities to nurture the academic, social, and spiritual life of college students (Astin et al., 2011; Daloz-Parks, 2011; Davenport, 2015; Hale et al., 2005; Hamrick et al., 2002; St-Amand et al., 2017; Suciu, 2014; Tinto, 2012; Ward et al. 2014). However, informal mentoring is a topic much harder to define and quantify. As mentioned before, informal mentoring could be loosely defined as the wisdom gained from a quick conversation with another person who has certain life experiences. In the realm of college and university settings, informal mentoring could be defined as the interactions students have with faculty and staff outside of the classroom or the office space (Pascarella & Ternzini, 1977). Bynum (2015) suggested informal mentoring is unplanned mentoring relationships established by chance. The researcher continued, usually these informal relationships develop spontaneously, are self-directed and do not have any affiliation with a formal program on campus. Informal mentoring could be time spent together in the dining hall, or a quick stop by a faculty office, or a meeting in a commons area, or talking on a park bench (Halawah, 2006, McKinsey, 2016). Colleges have recognized the importance of these informal interactions for many years and are starting to forge pathways to decrease the barrier between faculty and student (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hibel, 1978; Halaway, 2006; Tinto 2012). As noted

in several studies, informal interactions can positively affect the academic, personal, spiritual, and social development for students (Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2013; McKinsey, 2016; Tinto, 2012).

Kerlin (2016) a mentor herself championed the formal mentoring programs she had been a part of during her career but challenged that informal mentors are all around guiding us to a more enlightened path. Kerlin noted that there are several people she can point to that void of a formal program were informally helping her navigate quandaries in school, employment, or life. The researcher challenged that there is always someone in your sphere of influence that can use your wisdom and it is your responsibility to help them navigate the world.

One question to be asked is how professors and students begin the informal mentoring process in the college experience. McKinsey (2016) outlined three stages that professors and students engage in to create these meaningful relationships. McKinsey shared that there is a mentoring in, mentoring through, and mentoring onward process. Mentoring In is the first stage in which professors help students become acclimated to their new environment. This is the expert giving guidance to the novice for a class, a project, or to help them get adjusted to the entirely new college environment. Mentoring Through is the time professors spend with students outside the classroom. This time is spent typically learning a new task and building tenacity. During this time, the professor encourages the student to build self-confidence in their work. Mentoring Onward happens later in the college experience when the professor shares wisdom with the student about the world to come and gives guidance on future employment opportunities or graduate school. McKinsey also uncovered that these mentoring stages correlate with four phases of building relationships. McKinsey remarked that the simplest first step in building a

relationship is having a connection with another person. Second, the mentoring relationship must find a way to collaborate together. Third, the professor and student both need to have a mutual commitment to one another. Fourth, many times the relationship continues well past graduation and students continue to seek the guidance of their most consequential professor. Based on McKinsey's research, intentionally building relationships with students is a significant path in creating meaningful informal mentoring relationships.

**Academic achievement and retention.** As shown in much of the literature, having some form of mentor or community mentoring program can improve the academic success of students. At the same time, interactions outside the classroom, especially with faculty can improve the academic success and social development growth of college students. Tinto (1975), in his foundational work of why students drop out of college, found that social interaction with faculty increased retention rates and improved the academic successes of college students. Additionally, Tinto found that students' interaction with faculty within their own major was more important for continued enrollment and success. Tinto found that if the professor gave time to the student and the professor inspired the student to succeed in their area of interest then the student persisted in their academic goals. In further building on Tinto's work, Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) noted the frequency in which faculty and student engaged with one another outside the classroom and how this affected the student's academic persistence. In a later study, Pascarella et al. (1978) discovered a continued link between the frequency of faculty-student informal interactions and academic performance. Pascarella et al. (1978) suggested that when faculty spend more time with students outside of the classroom in informal settings the students



subsequently are more significantly motivated to do academic work. This increase in academic motivation was noticed most when discussing intellectual and career concerns.

**Social development and mental health for college students.** As discussed earlier, the informal mentoring relationship can also have an effect on the social development of the college student and their overall well-being as they enter the university. Halawah (2006) surveyed 252 students at an international university and asked them to evaluate the importance of informal interactions and mentoring in these six categories: academic integration, faculty concern, informal faculty relations, peer relations, social integration, and student commitment. Her investigation found that the students scored the importance of informal interactions significantly high in all six categories. McKinsey (2016) also found that the unplanned spontaneous informal mentoring moments have significant influence on the students' academic achievement and social development. Again, suggesting that natural or informal mentoring, though hard to define, has a place in the higher education setting.

Freeman et al. (2007) noted that many of the student-faculty relationships decline significantly after junior high school. Fostering these relationships could be significantly important for a college student's social development. Having informal or formal mentoring programs in place for college students could help students connect with other people and in building lasting relationships. In turn, these relationships could help the student stay in college and eventually graduate. Crisp and Cruz (2009) found that mentoring especially increased these connections for low-income and first-generation students. Tinto (2012) suggested that developing relationships outside of family can be a defining moment whether or not students make it through four years of college. Tinto added that if students do not find the social support

from peers, mentors, faculty and staff and students are not afforded an opportunity to develop these relationships some of their academic and social development could be hindered.

Mental health and well-being might also be an area of concern for consideration when student affairs teams are developing informal mentoring opportunities or training. Hurd and Zimmerman (2014) suggested a student's psychological well-being can be connected to the closeness found in interpersonal relationships with faculty members. The implications could mean that student affairs professionals need to understand the importance of faculty-student informal relationships and its impact on mental health. In Hurd & Zimmerman's study, positive responses to psychological well-being correlated with increased persistence in academic goals and overall student development.

**Personality types and availability of professors as mentors.** Another consideration of informal mentoring is the propensity of certain personality types to be perceived as more approachable and assessable. In Pascarella and Terenzini's (1977) limited study of one classroom, they found that students with distinguishable personality types might seek out the help of a professor or mentor more often than others. Likewise, the faculty member might or might not clearly communicate their availability and willingness to have mentoring relationships. McDonald (1984) added that colleges and universities should consider pairing students with similar personality type professors for student academic success and developmental growth. In addition, characteristics of what makes a good teacher should be considered as those characteristics contribute to positive faculty-student relationships. Allen, Day, and Lentz (2005) discovered that gender might also be a significant factor in the student feeling comfortable

having a mentoring relationship with the professor. The researchers found that students generally had a higher comfort level with mentors of the same gender.

Research from Bernier et al. (2005) produced a counter narrative that homogenous relationships were not always the most beneficial in creating mentoring relationships between professors and students. The researchers discovered that though being kind and approachable were important, a professor who challenged a student professionally and personally could also be a profoundly important mentor in the life of a college student. Counterintuitively, the researchers found that the students who did not have the same personality types as their professors were drawn to those professors and had a high respect for what they had to offer for the student's developmental process. Bernier et al. (2005) working off of the research of Nelson and Neufeldt (1996) continued further to say, students who have difficulties becoming self-reliant and independent might profit from having a mentoring professor who challenges their social norms and belief systems. These contrasting personalities of the professor help the student advance through the next developmental stage.

Bolster (2011), in a study of students at a small private faith-based university, suggested several key findings in the study's look at the college environment as a mentoring space. This includes one of the more important aspects of the mentor, that of being available. Bolster also noted that students in his study did not distinguish between formal and informal mentoring opportunities. They saw their mentors as those who allowed the student to seek knowledge at any time during the day, allowed them to be themselves around them, and took an interest in them. Bolster suggested that student affairs professionals need to be aware of student development theories and train their faculty and staff on positive ways that they could nurture the

types of relationships and guidance that is needed by college students. McKinsey (2016) similarly suggested that students viewed good mentors as those who went out of their way to help the student or those who went well beyond the call of duty to nurture and guide the young student. These mentors were not just good at teaching but took time to develop relationships with the student and were available outside of their normal duties to engage the young mentee. The researcher added that a good mentor understands that the interaction with the student is about relationship; therefore, it is personal, concerning the whole person and much more than only academics.

**Cultivating an informal mentoring environment.** With retention a top priority of many universities, student development administrators and staffs could harness the power of the informal mentoring relationship to help students develop in critical ways during their time at the university. Zachary (2005) suggested that leaders must embed mentoring into the culture of the organization. Mentoring cannot just be a program but must be ingrained into the mindset of everything about the organization. Other recommendations included: developing ways for faculty to intentionally engage with students outside the classroom, creating social spaces for interaction, recognizing faculty that are approachable and accessible and recruiting them to help merge students into the school culture, creating curriculum that teaches students the importance of informal faculty to student interactions, and nurtures self-efficacy and validation in all students (Valdez, 2016).

Creating appropriate physical spaces are also critical to cultivating the informal mentoring environment. Dining halls, coffee shops, entry ways, corridors, and office spaces all influence how a student connects to their campus, their professors, and their peers (Lippman,

2010; Wolff; 2003). Wolff (2003) discovered in her study of architectural firms and their interactions with administrators and teachers that the critical places of learning and discussions do not take place in the classroom, in contrast they take place in the informal settings such as the dining halls, the libraries, the lobbies, and the hallways. Furthermore, the researcher argued that when spaces were designed with behaviors in mind rather than just delivering knowledge then the students are engaged in the learning and social integration process at a higher level. The behaviorally designed space creates a sense of warmth and feeling of comfortability to have safe discussions and in turn stronger educational achievements. Wolff also reported that physical space affected how people developed relationships with one another. The researcher remarked that strong relationships create a sense of belonging to each other and the institution in which both parties belong. The sense of belonging is partly a result from the design of the physical spaces these individuals are interacting with each other. Wolff argued therefore that spaces of academia need to be consciously designed to create these integral relationships. Lippman (2010) further argued that when spaces are designed with a recognition of the social needs of a community and at the same time are created to be welcoming spaces, the physical environment can encourage developmental growth in the student and encourage belongingness to the community.

### **Belongingness on Campus**

A student's sense of belonging within a community is another critical area of focus in the literature relevant to this inquiry into informal mentoring relationships. In some way we all belong to something, whether that be our family, the neighborhood we grew up in, our high school, our church, our town, our friend nucleus, or our university (Agbenyega, 2017).

Developing programs to help students connect to the university by increasing their sense of belonging are directly related to how student affairs professionals might increase retention and graduation rates. Hausmann et al. (2007) found in their study of first-year students, those who reported having a higher sense of belonging on college campuses also reported more peer-group interactions, more connection with faculty, more connection with other students, and more help from their parents. St-Amand et al. (2017) discovered four identifiers that increased a student's sense of belonging at school. First, students must feel good about their school and be content in their decision. Second, students must have healthy relationships with their peers, teachers, and professors. Fostering a community of mentors and mentor-like figures could be an avenue to increase these healthy relationships and the sense of belonging among students. Third, students need to interact with a group rather than be isolated. Fourth, students need to learn to live in harmony with other people in order to have that sense of belonging.

The literature also suggests that students who perceived themselves as having a high sense of belonging to campus also had an increased sense of academic motivation (Freeman et al., 2007; St-Amand et al., 2017; Tinto, 2012). The more motivated students were to achieve personal academic success, the more motivated they were to seek out professors and university staff, as well as, be engaged in extracurricular activities and the community as a whole.

**Faculty care and concern for student's sense of belongingness.** What does it mean to be a caring professor? Bosworth (1995) when interviewing elementary and middle school students found that they defined teachers as caring when they were encouraging, fun, valued the student's individuality, showed respect to the students, and ensured the students understood the work in front of them. Thayer-Bacon et al. (1998) when surveying over 400 college students

discovered that professors were considered caring when they were approachable, available, showed empathy, went above and beyond to help or guide the student, took time to build a relationship with the student, and made the student feel important. Thayer-Bacon et al. (1998) concluded that when professors treat the student in a holistic manner and help the student in ways beyond academics and the classroom, then students perceive them as being exceptionally caring, in turn, the student has a strong affinity for the professor and the institution that creates a strong sense of belonging. Miller (2007) confirmed Bosworth (1995) and Thayer-Bacon et al. (1998) theories when looking at college students who persisted in their education and graduated on time. Miller advocated that students who perceived their professors as caring for them were more likely to persist in their education and graduate with their undergraduate degree. Miller highlighted that students perceived care from professors when they were available outside of class, showed empathy, respected the thoughts of the student and were willing to listen, were open-minded, made the student feel comfortable around them, and expressed concern for the student to succeed academically and holistically.

Hawk and Lyons (2008) recognized that there is a distinct level and ethic of care that professors have for their students. Hawk building off the work of Tronto (1993) and Noddings (2002) discussed that there are three distinct levels of care for the student. The first level is their family and loved ones. The second level are those the students interact with on a daily basis. This level includes teachers and professors. The third level is everyone else such as their acquaintances and their larger community. Hawk and Lyons (2008) positioned that the professor role is primarily an academic role, however, because of the nature of interacting with the student on a frequent basis this role can develop into a mentoring relationship. A relationship that takes

on a higher level of care than someone who only sees the person once a week. For some universities, the nature of being a small campus, faculty living on campus, and the close proximity could create a more intense version of informal mentoring relationships. Once again, Hawk and Lyons confirmed existing researchers theories that professors who were perceived as caring established safe environments, actively listened to their students, made sure students understood the material, were available outside the classroom, and took a personal interest in students. Hawk and Lyons added to the research by finding that higher levels of care were perceived when professors were prepared for class, recognized learning differences within students, and changed teaching approaches to help individual students.

Osterman (2010) suggested that teacher and professor attitudes and their teaching strategies could affect a student's sense of belonging. Tinto (2012) found that when university professors and staff clearly communicated high expectations for their students, the sense of belonging rose among the participants. Tinto suggested that when faculty communicated the expectations effectively, challenged their students, and were more engaged, the students' perceived sense of belonging rose. This observation could implicate that the commitment of the professor, the personality of the professor, and the rigor of the professor relates to the student's sense of belonging and the ultimate success of a student.

One of the key ideas suggested for administrators to improve this sense of belonging among their students is to provide support and training to their faculty (St-Amand et al., 2017; Tinto, 2012). Tinto (2012) argued that there is a such a strong connection between faculty-student relationships and student success that universities should recognize the importance of faculty development. However, Tinto also realized the restraints on this potential mandate



because of teaching loads, service responsibilities, and publication pressures. Other recommendations included creating positive social environments for student and faculty interactions, as well as, student's interactions with their peers. In addition, helping students get connected with peer groups, extracurricular activities, and providing service-learning opportunities are important (Bogue, 2002; Newell, 2014; St-Amand et al., 2017).

**Cultivating a campus community of belongingness.** Belongingness is also about creating and cultivating an encouraging and supportive campus community. Bogue (2002) described community as a place where the participants are committed to the values, vision, and purpose of the organization, have thriving relationships with each other, and each individual understands their responsibility to the larger community. Community is thus a shared concept that all individuals who are part of the organization are working toward a common goal together. On a typical campus, students are working towards academic and social goals and faculty are working to help them reach that goal. On smaller, faith-based campuses this could be even more pronounced. In describing the ideal collegiate community, Bogue (2002) believed that a community who cares for one another also develops a connection and commitment between student and campus personnel and culture. There is a sense of deep care, concern, duty and servanthood towards one another that is fostered in these types of communities. With this focus a university could turn into a caring community where students are nurtured into belongingness, and in that same process, learn to serve others and bring them along in the journey.

Boyer (1990) argued against the typical retention and graduation focus of administrators in higher education and shared that leaders need to be more focused on the quality of education and communal experience administrators and faculty are providing students than on the amount

of time they spend at the school. In turn, that extra time and energy spent on providing young students a community of belongingness could increase outcomes on retention and graduation rates. With Boyer at the helm, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published a compelling report on campus community entitled *Campus Life: In Search of Community* (Boyer, 1990). In this study, researchers found that college campuses should be purposeful communities, open communities, just communities, disciplined communities, caring communities and celebrative communities. Creating community, though once again hard to define, could be the key to improving academic successes, a sense of belonging, and graduation rates (Bogue, 2002; Boyer, 1990; Tinto, 2012).

### **Faculty-In-Residence and the Role of On-Campus Faculty Housing.**

A final consideration in the study of the literature is the relevant research in the field of faculty-in-residence programs. Though an early practice at liberal arts colleges that is now nearly extinct, some campuses in the United States do still provide housing for their professors and staff in on campus accommodations. Meanwhile, modern budget challenges and policy issues are simultaneously leading university administrators to reconsider the benefits and costs of on-campus faculty housing. Though little research has been done on the implications of faculty living on campus and the relationship to student development, academic success, and retention, there are a few studies that suggest ways administrators could evaluate faculty-in-residence programs to enhance formal and informal mentoring. First, students need to be aware of why faculty members live on campus and the benefits of the faculty and student interaction. Second, faculty living on campus does increase the influential faculty to student interactions outlined previously in this chapter (Mara & Mara, 2011; Sriram & McLevain, 2016). Contrary to their

assumptions, Mara and Mara (2011) discovered that there was little distinction when students described to them the types of formal and informal interactions they had with faculty members.

One campus in the qualitative study about to be undertaken, is one of the few left in the country that offers this on-campus faculty housing provision. At the university, most full-time faculty and some staff live in university provided housing located directly on campus. Students have the ability to walk to a professor's house, see them mowing their lawn, or playing in the yard with their children. The physical proximity of faculty, staff, and student is noticeably closer than most universities even those of similar sized small, liberal arts institutions. Astin (1993) championed the importance of the faculty-student interaction, challenging institutions to find ways to increase connection points between faculty and student. The university in this study does inherently provide multiple faculty-student interactions by nature of faculty living on campus and the heritage of this practice started by its founder.

## **Conclusion**

Informal mentoring and formal mentoring programs have proved to be effective ways of improving the academic and social success of students on college campuses across the country. The protégé who is mentored typically gains confidence in social settings, improves study habits, increases academic scores, and has the persistence to finish their degree. But protégés are not the only ones who gain from a mentoring experience. Their mentors also gain confidence, tend to succeed in the future workplace, experience change in worldview, and generally have a positive experience helping others in society (Lahman, 1999; McDonald, 1984; Pascarella, Terenzini & Hibel, 1978; Ward et al., 2014). At the same time, Crisp and Cruz (2009) recognized there is much research yet to be done in the area of mentoring. They suggested sustained work towards

the precision of the definition of mentoring, continued research on specific mentoring programming for on-campus and off-campus activities, and increased understanding of the mentoring relationship and the amount of time students need to spend with their mentor. Universities across the world are continuing their efforts in providing support for mentoring on their campuses. Baterna-Daluz (2014) reported that at University of New South Wales there were 23 peer-mentoring programs at UNSW and each leader of these programs met with the UNSW coordinator to form a sustainability action plan. After meeting with each leader, the coordinator concluded that the peer-mentoring programs were very much spirited and alive. As more universities understand the positive effects of informal and formal mentoring programs and implement the suggestions found in the research, mentoring could expand exponentially.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **Statement of the Problem (Purpose)**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two Eastern United States faith based liberal arts universities. Through thick and rich description, I explored student and faculty perceptions of informal mentoring. Academic, spiritual, and the social development of students are critical areas of research as small faith-based campuses seek to retain and graduate students. Faith-based campuses are ideal to study this phenomenon as there is a distinct intersection between academic and spiritual mission and vision. A significant amount of data have been collected about formal mentoring programs at universities of all sizes (Astin et al., 2011; Daloz-Parks, 2011; Davenport, 2015; Hale et al., 2005; Hamrick et al., 2002; St-Amand et al., 2017; Suciu, 2014; Tinto, 2012; Ward et al. 2014). This study contributes to the literature by examining informal mentoring relationships at small faith-based institutions.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study helped discover the informal mentoring theory emerging from students and faculty who are situated in two faith-based 4-year liberal arts institution. The following research questions were used in this study:

1. How do faculty perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
2. How do students perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?

3. What contributing factors encourage or discourage the faculty-student informal mentoring relationship?
4. How do faculty perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?
5. How do students perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?

### **Qualitative Design Tradition**

Mills and Birks (2014) suggested that the methodology chosen by the researcher is the way in which they look at and are informed by their study. Methodology is how the research interacts with their participants, their research site, and how they collect their data and subsequently analyze their findings. For this study, a qualitative design was chosen because I recognized the importance of gathering lived stories from the participants. Furthermore, the uniqueness of one faith-based residential campus that provided faculty housing for all full-time faculty is an ideal location to understand the informal mentoring phenomena that is taking place. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) noted qualitative research places the researcher in the time and place of the world in which they want to observe. They continued, when using a qualitative research design, the researcher observes participants in their own settings, their own worlds, and helps the researcher understand more significantly the perceptions and meanings of the participants own words. The essence of this study was to understand the informal mentoring perceptions of students and faculty at two faith-based liberal arts institutions in the Eastern United States. The qualitative design of narrative inquiry with individual interviews is ideal for this setting. This group of people have a collective lived experience in a college setting. Not only do students live

on campus but many faculty at one of the universities are also provided housing as part of their contractual agreement. The close proximity of both students and faculty allow for many opportunities for interaction and informal mentoring.

**Narrative inquiry.** Narratives and storytelling have been long standing traditions in cultures since the beginning of the human race. However, narrative inquiry and its use in education first emerged in Connelly and Clandinin's research noted in the Educational Researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The researchers concluded education and educational research foundationally is a collection of personal, communal, and organizational stories. Therefore, narrative inquiry is the study of the stories of teachers, professors, and students sharing their lives, and their experiences and their educational journey. In doing so, helping inform the people around them of how they understand the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The substance of narrative inquiry is to tell a story. The researcher then in turn becomes the narrator, the one telling the story. Everyone has a story in which they recall their memories, express who they are, and share their wisdom to the world. Those stories of the people and places they have seen in essence inform the world of who they are (Kim, 2016). Kim pointed to three types of narrative inquiry: autobiographical, arts-based, and biographical. I chose biographical narrative inquiry as the lens in which to study the phenomena of informal mentoring between faculty and students. Kim noted biographical narrative research attempts to understand a participants perceptions of their upbringing, their family life, their daily life and what meanings do their stories implicate for the world they live in.

The nature of a residential campus where students and professors are interacting with one another multiple hours a day is the prime location to research thorough narrative inquiry because

there is constant and consistent interaction with one another. The students and professors' lives are intertwined in such a way that they are writing new stories daily with each other and reliving stories from a week ago, last semester or last year.

### **Role of Researcher**

As a reflexivity exercise and to recognize bias, I shared my own connections to the culture and history of the institutions visited for this research. Lichtman (2010) argued reflexivity is a reflection of the researcher and their connection and influence on the participants, research site, and research study. The reflexivity exercise asks the researcher to acknowledge any relationships between themselves and the people or site being studied.

I grew up in the religious denomination affiliated with the institution, worked in the denomination, and have interpersonal relationships with several leaders in the denomination and connected educational institutions. I also participated in a doctoral internship at one of the institutional campuses in this study. I understand the culture of residential colleges and lived on campus in close proximity to many faculty members during my undergraduate education.

Additionally, professors, whom many I would consider mentors, impacted my life and could cause me to bring assumptions into this study. At the same time, I am interested in this study because my experience with peer-to-peer mentoring was minimal and I sense that belongingness through mentors, faculty or peers, could have significant impact on the academic and social success of students.

### **Ethics**

Lichtman (2010) outlined significant ethical considerations when conducting qualitative research. They include a commitment to do no harm, to protect participant privacy, assure



anonymity, and maintain confidentiality. Further, participants must give informed consent, have a reasonable understanding of the research being studied and freely choose whether or not to participate in the study. In addition to the human safety considerations mentioned above, I extended extra explanations and reassurances to the participants due to the current conversations taking place on one of these campuses. One of these campuses is currently engaged in a discussion about the feasibility and future benefit of faculty housing. Participants needed to know that their anonymity was protected in this study and was not purposely shared with any administrator for the purposes of policy decisions. The participants also needed to be aware that no professor, administrator or trustee of the college asked for this study to take place and it was for the sole purpose of this researcher's dissertation inquiry. The motivation was to contribute to the broader conversation in the field of informal mentoring research.

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that their anonymity and confidentiality will be protected. Names and location were changed with all key informants. As McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted all efforts should be made to protect names, places, settings, ranks, and any identifiable information that could link a reader to the research participant. Names should be coded for people and places and nothing in the text should be identifiable. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent agreement and made aware that they may resign from the study at any time. Participants were given assurances that their information will be protected to the fullest extent possible by the researcher. However, I also informed the participants that this study will be searchable in the ETSU dissertation database and someone could possibly find it for further study. As per human subject research, I also sought ETSU IRB approval and the studied institutions' IRB approval.

Additional considerations needed to be made with the nature of narrative inquiry. Because there will be significant time spent with the participants in this study, I needed to be consciously aware that the relationship between the participants and the researcher can become more friend-like in nature and not researcher – participant. Kim (2016) suggested that researchers need to be careful to not unbalance the relationship between friendship and researcher.

### **Population and Site Setting**

The population in this study were faculty and students at two faith based 4-year liberal arts colleges or universities in the Eastern United States. The population was specifically chosen from one university that provided housing for all full-time faculty and one university that does not provide faculty housing.

Riverside University North was founded in the late 1800s with Christian ministry at its core and other vocations in its view. Founded by a husband and wife, the university started on their farm in the eastern United States. The university is committed to the virtues of the Christian faith and has a dual mission of training young men and women for Christian ministry and liberal arts vocations. Over the past 125 years, Riverside University has grown to over 200 faculty and staff and over 1300 students.

Riverside South was founded in the mid 1970s under the same virtues of Christian ministry and vocational training. The school prospered for most of the 1990s adding programs and housing for students. After years of financial stress Riverside North, an affiliated university, stepped in to acquire the college, assumed all the debt, restructured the university and saved it from closing.

## **Sample**

The sample came from nine students and nine professors from two faith-based liberal arts universities in the eastern United States. Four students and four professors were chosen from Riverside North and five students and five professors were chosen from Riverside South. The additional student and professor interview at Riverside South were alternates that I included in the research data. The students were purposely chosen from those who have at least completed their freshman year. The exclusion of freshman students gave credibility to the study by safeguarding data from uninformed participants. The longevity of time on campus could play a significant part in knowledge of faculty-student informal mentoring relationships. The participants were considered key informants who had distinct knowledge about the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship (Patton, 2015). The professors were purposefully chosen from individuals who had been employed full-time by the institution for at least three years. For one institution, professors were chosen specifically from those who have lived in university provided housing for at least three years.

## **Sampling Strategy**

I used a purposeful sampling strategy for the research study. Further, a group characteristics strategy with the use of key informants was used to identify potential participants of professors and students (Patton, 2015). The students were chosen from electronic surveys emailed to all students at both campuses and completed by individual participants. The student survey questions included a concise explanation of the research being conducted, name, email, phone number, class ranking, willingness to participate in a 60 minute one on one interview, and a one through five Likert scale question of how connected they felt to the professors at the

university. One on the Likert scale was considered not very connected and five on the Likert scale was considered significantly connected. For Riverside North, I also attended an all student gathering (chapel) to make an announcement about the survey and recruit volunteers. For Riverside South, I created a video with the same chapel announcement, and it was emailed to the student body and all faculty. The faculty were also chosen from electronic surveys emailed to all full-time faculty. The survey questions included a concise explanation of the research being conducted, name, email, phone number, years employed at the university, willingness to participate in a 60 minute one on one interview, and a one through five Likert scale question of how much time they spent with students outside of the classroom. One on the Likert scale was considered not a significant amount of time and five on the Likert scale was considered a significant amount of time.

Initially, I planned to select two participants from each university who indicated one or two on the Likert scale survey and two participants selected who indicated four or five on the Likert scale survey. However, only participants who indicated three, four, or five on the Likert scale survey were willing to be interviewed.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection for this qualitative study took place at two faith-based liberal arts institution in the eastern United States. The narrative inquiry approach to data collection involves gathering stories from participants in the form of interviews, recordings, institutional documents in the form of notes or memorandum, and observations (Kim, 2016; Patton, 2015). However, Patton (2015) pointed out that the gathering of stories is not the same thing as

developing a narrative. Narrative inquiry involves collecting enough material that the researcher can, not only know the events that took place, but moreover interpret the story.

The first step in ethical data collection is informing the participant of their rights in the interview process. These rights are confirmed by the receipt and understanding of an informed consent document in which participants sign and accept participation in the research study (Kim, 2016). The informed consent document was approved by East Tennessee State University's Internal Review Board. The faculty and students in this qualitative study were informed of their rights and asked to sign the informed consent document confirming their understanding of the study and their rights as participants.

I used a combined interview strategy of informal conversational interviews and the interview guide approach (Patton, 2015). The interview questions built upon one another as one interview informed questions for subsequent interviews. The interviews were 30-75 minutes long and helped inform each participants lived experience on the two campuses.

The interviews were recorded on a personal computer through a video conferencing website called Zoom, as well as, a digital audio recorder for backup in case of technical difficulties. The interviews were automatically transcribed through the Zoom software program and then replayed and edited for clarification and accuracy. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested that flexibility is key to formal semi-structured interviews. Students or faculty may have key insights that lead the researcher down a different path for a moment that support the need for follow-up or additional questions. The interview process for both faculty and students were formal semi-structured questions with room for follow up questions (Olsen, 2011). The participants were asked the scripted interview questions however the follow up questions were

generated on a case by case basis. The professors and students were not necessarily asked the exact same follow up questions. The questions for some participants were partially derived from information gathered during the interviews of other participants. Furthermore, anecdotal observation at informal locations and historical document review were also used to inform the interview questions and triangulate the data.

### **Data Management**

The data for the study was masked by using pseudonyms for all participants, i.e. George became Kevin and Sally became Nina. The two campuses were also given pseudonyms i.e. Riverside University North and Riverside University South. The rank and position of all faculty members were not disclosed to further protect their identities. Removing any identifiers is critical in protecting the identification of the participants in the study. Names, age, class rank, and professor rank are significant identifiers that were removed to protect the participants. Pseudonyms should also be a tool used to protect participants (Kim, 2016). The interviews were recorded on a personal computer through a video conferencing website called Zoom, in addition, the interviews were recorded on a voice and data recorder and then transferred to a computer using encryption coding to backup and protect the files. The computer was password protected and the interviews were deleted from the original recording device. The audio files were automatically transcribed, edited and secured on the same computer using the same encryption and password protections.

### **Measures of Rigor**

**Credibility.** Credibility is ability of the researcher, the participants, or the reader to determine if the research findings are an accurate analysis from the research data (Creswell,

2018). In this research, triangulation and member checks were used in this confirmability process.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is using multiple data collection methods including field notes, interviews, observational data, and document analysis to verify and validate a research study (Creswell, 2018). For the research study, triangulation of data primarily came from students and professors participating in the individual interviews. The information gathered from these interviews partially informed the questions asked during subsequent interviews. Each interview built upon the next as students and professors helped expand the narrative inquiry by sharing unique perspectives which then broadened the line of interview questioning. Additionally, short times of observation were analyzed in dining halls, chapel events, and walks through the hallways. I also explored field notes, historical documents and electronic information to confirm credibility of the research data.

**Member checks.** Member checks offer the ability of the research participant to verify accuracy and credibility to the research data collected during the interview process (Creswell, 2018; Hatch, 2002). Each participant interview was transcribed through a web-based video conferencing and transcription service. The transcriptions were collected and edited for accuracy. Continuing, I emailed each participant their interview transcription and asked them to verify the accuracy of their statements. The participant member-checked the transcriptions and emailed any clarifications. Any discrepancies were addressed and remedied. If no discrepancies were found, I asked the participant to email a simple confirmation back through email.

**Transferability.** Transferability is described as the ability for other researchers to extract information from a particular study that will help them understand and inform their own

research studies (Tierney & Clemens, 2011). This implies the research in this study cannot be generalized to all other university settings however elements of the study may be applied to educate other researchers work. The research in this study has been made transferable through the elements of thick and rich descriptions and a purposive sampling strategy.

***Thick and rich descriptions.*** Thick and rich descriptions are the ability of the researcher to provide thorough and developed narratives of the research participants perceptions (Creswell, 2018). I provided thick and rich descriptions of each participants narratives which were then enhanced by providing rich narrative analysis and participant quotations. I discovered eight themes within the narratives and confirmed those themes through observations and examinations of field notes and historical documents.

***Purposive sampling strategy.*** Creswell (2012) defined purposeful sampling in qualitative research is where the researcher deliberately chooses participants and research locations that specifically help inform the research phenomenon. Participants for the research study were chosen from two faith-based liberal arts institutions in the eastern United States. The participants also included only faculty who had been employed at the institution for three or more years, some of whom lived in faculty-housing and students who had at least completed their freshman year. All interviews for professors and students took place on an individual basis.

***Dependability.*** Dependability relies on the researcher to have sufficient raw data that creates a stability and trustworthiness in the thematic findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I satisfied dependability by interviewing 18 participants, collecting field notes, observing student-faculty interactions in common spaces, and examining historical documents. The 18 interviews



were then coded and compared to each other and the anecdotal observations and historical documents.

**Coding strategy.** I initially took an In Vivo Coding approach and identified specific words or phrases from the participants that continuously appeared in the transcripts (Saldana, 2013). I used a web-based video conferencing and transcription service to record all audio and automatically transcribed the recording. I initially listened to the audio recording of each participant interview, verified the accuracy of each recording transcription and edited any discrepancies. I then listened to the recordings a second time with the printed transcript and began In Vivo Coding each participant interview. I progressed to second and third cycle coding continually narrowing the identified themes. The second and third cycle coding method transformed into a Descriptive Coding method which summarized and condensed the identifiable codes (2013). I continued by identifying significant narrative quotes from the participants and arranging them into descriptive coded themes. As expected the themes were rearranged multiple times and became more concise during the research and analysis process.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation also enhanced dependability by uncovering multiple sources of raw data that validated the research findings. In this study, validity and trustworthiness came from coding the student and professor interviews, researcher observations in locations such as the dining hall, student union building and recreational buildings and from exploring field notes and historical documents. In writing about triangulation, Yin (2011) emphasized the importance of finding three ways to substantiate and authenticate a particular story or event. These three ways support one another in telling the story, corroborating the event, and verifying the accuracy of the stated phenomenon.

**Confirmability.** Creswell (2012) noted that credibility involves the researcher being self-aware of their own bias and influence on the research data. To understand these biases, I performed an exercise in reflexivity.

**Reflexivity.** Hatch (2002) noted that qualitative researchers have a different role than those of a quantitative researcher. Qualitative researchers place themselves within the context of the research environment and therefore potentially influence the data set through their own biases. Reflexivity is an exercise of the researcher to acknowledge how their own emotional responses, their biases, and their connections to the research settings are impacting the data. As previously reported, I had a common connection with the institutions in the research study. I grew up in the same faith tradition and had some personal connections to the personnel of these institutions. I remained consciously aware of these connections and the potential influence on the data.

### **Data Analysis**

The first instrument used in this study was an online survey asking students to rate their perceptions of connection to the professors and for the professors to rate the amount of time they spent with students outside the classroom. The participants were chosen from those who indicated one or two on the survey or from those who indicated four or five on the survey. However, only those who chose three, four, or five were willing to be interviewed. The interviews took place on site at the two campuses of Riverside University. Students and Professors were then interviewed in 30-75-minute interviews. Data from the individual interviews was then analyzed and coded. Saldana (2013) identified coding as using a word or phrase to encapsulate an idea or theme that is prevalent in the research data. I specifically used

In Vivo Coding to identify specific words or phrases from the participants that continued to appear in most or all of the interviews (Saldana, 2013). These words and phrases were transformed in the themes identified in this research. Data were categorized using the constant comparative method to develop categories and labels of similar concepts (Patton, 2015). During the individual interviews, I used memoing to help categorize the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that, memoing is the act of taking notes during the data collection and interview process and then developing a theory or story based on the developing phenomenon. The memoing helps the researcher analyze the phenomenon taking place and helps them recreate the narrative. As themes emerged, data was coded and distinguished into identifiable categories. Once the codes were formulated and the themes identified. Second and third level coding began and quotes from the interview participants were separated and organized into another document.

### **Data Presentation**

Data were presented through narrative retelling and interpretation of the individual professor interview and quotes from the student interviews (Clandinin, 2007; Kim 2016). Through these interviews, data were coded and shared to correlate emerging themes and connections (Saldana, 2013). The themes were created based on the triangulation between the professor and student interviews, field notes, document analysis, and observations in common spaces (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2016)

## Chapter 4. Data Analysis

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two Eastern United States faith based liberal arts universities. The research was examined through the lens of five research questions and studied through a narrative methodology.

1. How do students perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
2. How do faculty perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
3. What contributing factors encourage or discourage the faculty-student informal mentoring relationship?
4. How do students perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?
5. How do faculty perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?

Findings of this narrative study were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 18 participants at two faith-based universities in the Eastern United States. These participants were chosen from students and faculty who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. Participants were then chosen through the research criteria of the online survey and contacted through phone to schedule an interview. Student participants were chosen from only those who had completed their Freshman year and from those who indicated three, four or five on a Likert scale question

of their perceived connection to faculty. Professors were chosen from those who had worked for the university for at least 3 years, lived in faculty housing for 3 years or more, and indicated three, four, or five on a Likert scale question of how much time they spent with students outside the classroom. I originally intended for participants to be chosen from all spectrums of the Likert scale, however only participants choosing three, four, or five on the Likert scale question were willing to be interviewed. I received 184 responses from the survey and 38 were willing to be interviewed. Almost all respondents indicated three or above on the Likert scale question. Only seven indicated below three, and of those seven, none were willing to be interviewed. Face to face interviews were conducted on these two campuses in private settings such as professor offices or dedicated private offices for students. The students and faculty chosen for these interviews were from a university with two campuses several states away from each other. Below are three charts indicating the total number of participants willing to be interviewed, the student's perceptions of connection to their professors, and the professors perceptions of time spent with students outside of class.

Figure 1.

*Willingness to be Interviewed*

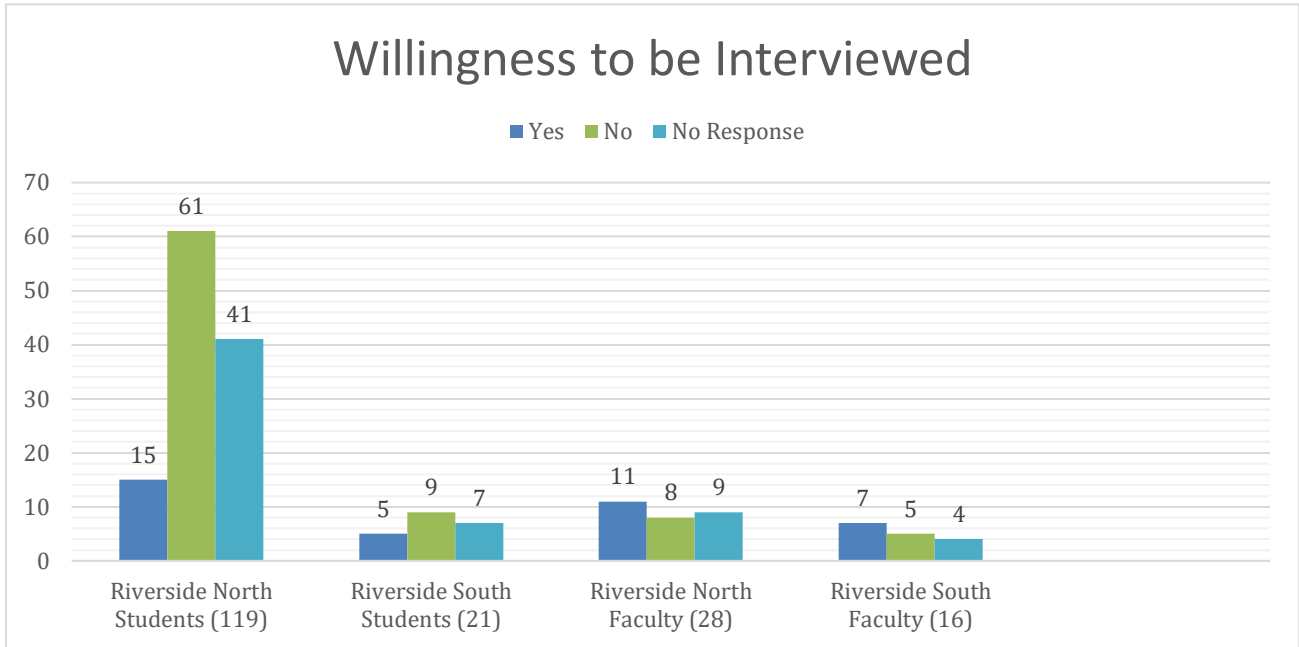


Figure 2.

*Students Perceptions of Connection to Their Professors*

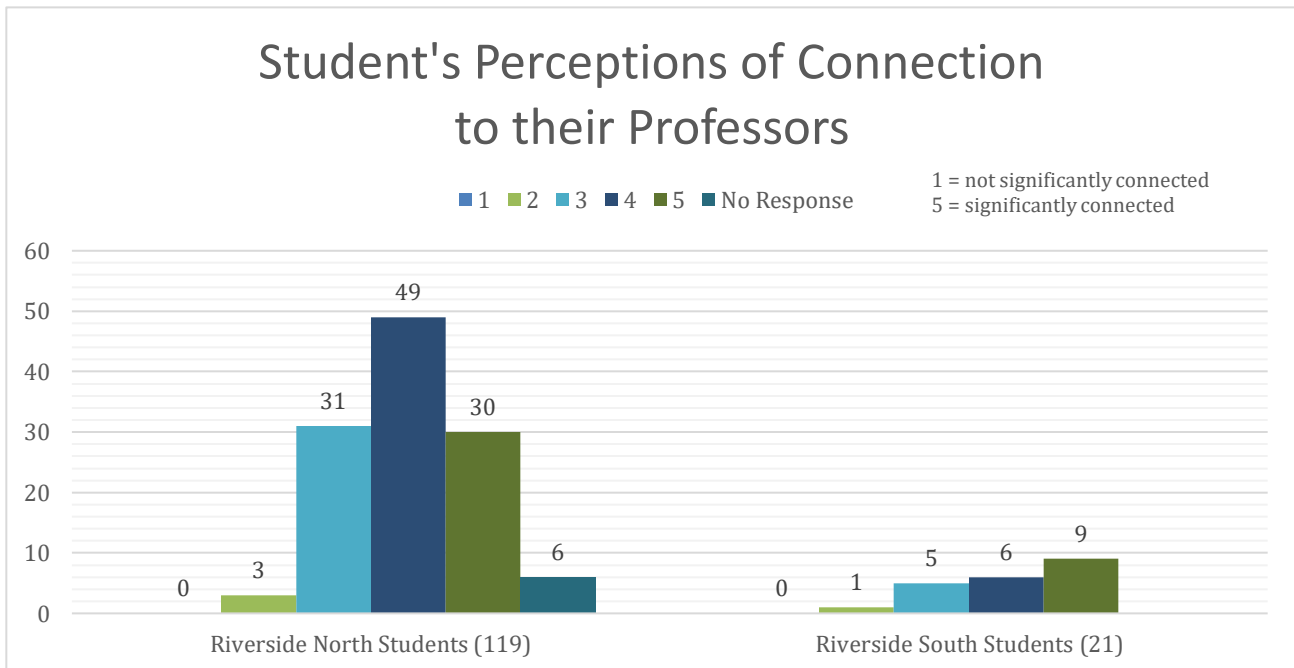
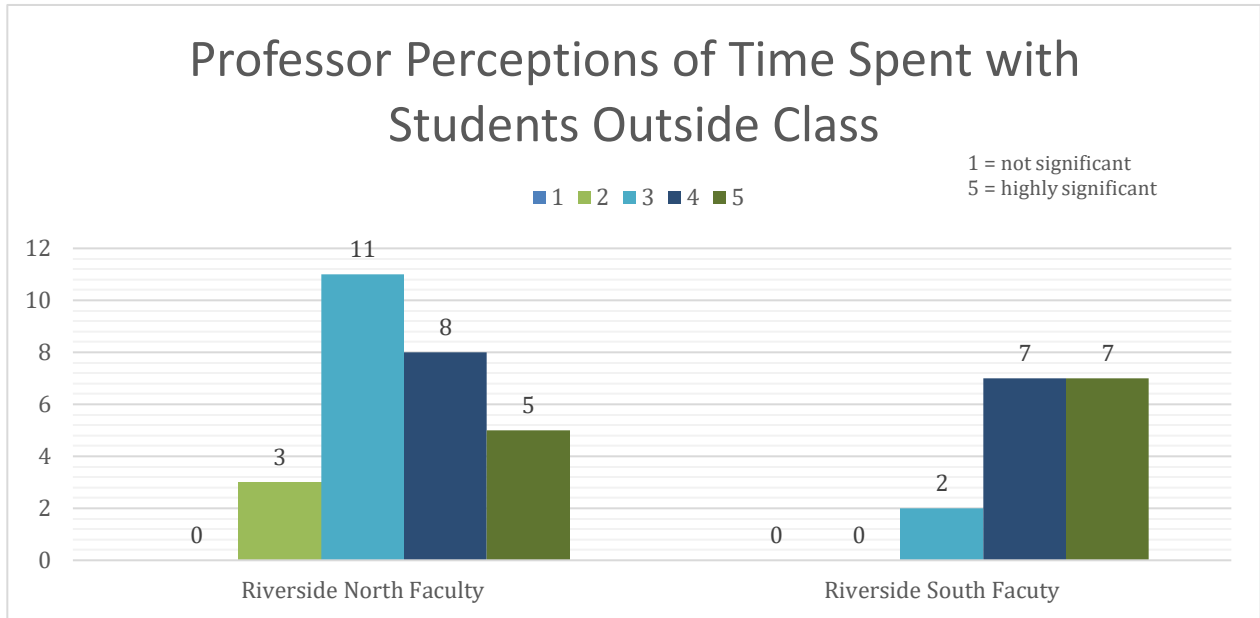


Figure 3.

*Professor Perceptions of Time Spent with Students Outside Class*



This chapter is divided into two sections, a narrative vignette of each participant and an analysis of the data collected during the interview process, both of which addressed the research questions. The first section of this chapter will provide a narrative description of each campus community and the participants background, family life, educational and employment journey. Included in this section will be participants initial thoughts on informal mentoring and short narrative anecdotes they shared during our time together. These narratives were organized by university and then separated into student sections and faculty sections. Though very similar in responses, there is value in looking at the responses of the participants at each campus separately to ensure validity of the research and to compare and contrast any differences. The second half of the analysis will be organized by themes that were identified through the interview process and once again broken down by university and then separated into student and faculty sections.

## **Chapter 4. Narratives – Part One**

**Riverside North.** Riverside University North was founded in the late 1800s with Christian ministry at its core and other vocations in its view. Founded by a husband and wife, the university started on their farm in the eastern United States. As the institute grew, students petitioned the founders for a name change in the early 1900s. Therefore, the institute would now be considered a bible college. During the next 80 years, the college became one of the more prominent institutions within its Christian denomination with over 200 faculty and staff and over 1300 students enrolled between all campuses and online degree programs. Riverside North continued its progress into the last decade by changing its name to include university, restructuring the academic programs into their own schools, and acquiring another campus several states away. Over the course of 100 years the university has built numerous buildings that facilitated their learning endeavors. Most recently, a new Athletic and Recreational Complex has been built and is now the life of the university.

**Riverside South.** Riverside South was founded in the mid 1970s under a bible college designation. The school progressed for several years and eventually land was purchased for a relocation. At the time of the relocation, the administrators changed the name to a Christian college. The school prospered for most of the 1990s adding programs and housing for students. However, in the late 2000s, financial trouble began to plague their system and the school was in danger of closing. Riverside North, an affiliated university, stepped in to acquire the college, assumed all the debt, restructured the university and saved it from closing. In this acquisition, several jobs were saved, and the college now had the designation, Riverside University South. The original campus was built with the premise that students would live in campus apartments



with kitchens therefore there was no dining hall. Since the acquisition, Riverside University has built a dining hall and a café where students and faculty alike can meet for meals and spend time together.

### **Students.**

*Levi (Riverside North).* Levi, the second of four siblings, knew the responsibility of being the older brother. His oldest brother was 10 years older and out of the house by the time Levi was finishing fourth or fifth grade. Therefore, being the leader of young minds became a natural part of his DNA. Leadership exudes from Levi and his ambition to excel at every task becomes evident in every sentence. Mom and dad were leaders in their own rite. They owned and operated a family business and instilled in Levi the sense of responsibility of taking care of their customers but more importantly their family. So, it was no surprise to Levi when dad was concerned about Levi's career interest in ministry. Dad was highly concerned that with economic times being what they were, that Levi would end up in a church that could not afford to pay their ministers. Dad was also concerned about a church's reputation of not paying their ministers very well and Levi not being able to take care of his family. However, with many family discussions mom and dad finally came around and supported Levi going to a faith-based institution. Now that mom and dad have seen the joy and passion that Levi has for ministry they are more than enthusiastic about his career choice and whole heartedly support his endeavors. Though, mom and dad came around, the choice of university to pursue this endeavor still needed to be considered. Levi grew up with a very influential children's minister that invested in his life and encouraged him to check out the main campus of this university. With that encouragement and a connection to a professor from the university coming to preach at his church a couple times

a year, Levi decided that this was the place he would begin his education. Levi also knew he wanted to be at a place where the reputation of the faculty and student relationships were unmatched to any other school and he knew this university had such a story. His journey, however, is far from over. Levi, a junior ministry major, has realized that if he is going to be the best at his craft he needs to continue on and pursue a masters or doctorate in ministry. This exploration of his next educational goal has already begun, and Levi is exploring his options for grad school. Just like his undergraduate exploration, this new next path is not being taken alone. Levi has some influential people in his life that are helping him consider his graduate degree options, including a professor at this university. This professor has already cleared his schedule on a couple occasions and has driven him to these graduate schools and toured the schools with him. This guidance is part of Levi's story with the people of this university. For him, they are not there just to teach them something from a book but to help guide their students into the next goal, through the next struggle, and onto the next celebration.

***Jack (Riverside North).*** Family history is a great influencer on the lives of young people and the same could be said of Jack. His great grandfather went to school here, his grandfather went to school here, his grandmother went to school here, and his uncle all attended the university. From a very young age Jack knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life. Being a doctor, a fireman, an astronaut did not pique his interest, nope, Jack declared for all to hear, whether they wanted to listen or not, I am going to be a preacher. In his mind, his destiny was set. Jack did not even need to think long and hard about where to go to school. If he was going to be a preacher there was only one place to go and that was at the main campus of this university. So as elementary school transitioned into junior high, which transitioned into high

school Jack had his eyes laser focused on going to school to be a preacher at this school at the appropriate time and place in his history. What Jack did not know that he does now after his freshman and half of his sophomore year is that maybe preaching was not the exact path his life would take and instead he would become a world missions major. Preaching in the United States alone could not contain this passionate young man and though he does not have a specific location in mind, he believed God will take him where he is needed most based on his talents and abilities. Those talents might be in music or in news publication, activities Jack was heavily involved with during his high school days. However, Jack will most likely be used in some sort of children's ministry and missionary work. The very thing he was most passionate about during high school, so much so, that he quit his other interests to spend more time at church pursuing those activities.

Jack, a youthful but wise soul, regarded the faculty at Riverside North like having ancient teachers who invite you to live with them and learn how to live from the interactions you have with them on a daily basis. Their caring souls guiding young students towards success in life and wisdom in spiritual matters.

***Jane (Riverside North).*** Jane spent her formative years surrounded by educators and professors in the Midwest United States. Her mother, a professor turned children's minister, decided at one point in Jane's childhood that it was time for a change and moved the family over to the next state to pursue employment as a children's minister. One of the catalysts for this move was the separation of her parents and ultimate divorce from her father. This move helped mom provide a stable income to Jane and her brother and kept them in the same state for most of her high school years. However, as short-term employment often goes in the ministry, towards

the end of Jane's high school years, mom took another job at a church in the northern United States. As with many children, the early years of life can have huge impacts on our future endeavors and life-long goals. Jane's influences were no different. With the influence of educators around her, Jane decided early on that she wanted to become an educator herself and decided to pursue a degree in English. Now the question would where to attend. Jane's mother was connected to the denomination that the main campus was affiliated with and therefore it made sense that this university would be the place that Jane landed. Jane also desired to attend a university with a stellar reputation for education and at the same time a place where she could get a bible degree alongside her education degree. Jane an educator in the making had completed most of her training and is poised to graduate in May but her educational story will not end when she walks across the stage. The Masters of Arts in Teaching degree at the Main Campus is calling her name and Jane plans to continue on a get an advanced degree in her program of study. Jane is married and her husband also completed his degree at this university.

Jane, knowing what it was like to have a mom as a professor, described the people of the main campus as being significantly relational. The conversation on her lips were one of community and even referenced the main campus as being an uncommon community. Jane also noted that it was not just professors that made this place feel so connected but the staff were also a critical part of the mentoring community. Jane's second mom, as she described her, was her work study supervisor. Her "second mom" listened to her rant about classes and was always willing to listen. Jane described her experience as everyone always having an open door

*Gretchen (Riverside North)*. The story is a familiar one especially on a campus with the faith traditions like this one. Gretchen is once again that young lady growing up in church,

always there when the door was open, mainly because her father was a minister in that local congregation. The difference in this story is that Gretchen did not grow up in the same denominational tradition as many of her classmates or of the university she eventually chose to attend. Gretchen's story is also similar to many high school graduates in that she just was not sure what she wanted to do when she grew up or where she wanted to pursue her degree. Gretchen's educational path therefore started in community college near her home. The state Gretchen lives in has incentives to attend a state institution and this community college was also close to home, so it just made sense for her to go there. She was not alone either, several friends had made a similar decision and so it was an easy transition from high school to college. However, community college typically ends after 2 years, Gretchen had to make a choice on what was next for her journey. She also had to solidify a little more what she wanted to do in life. Once again, family traditions play that critical role in helping a young person decide how they want to contribute towards society. Gretchen's mother, aunt and uncle were all educators at public schools in her home region and therefore Gretchen decided this would be a good path for her as well. Now that education was decided, she had to determine where would she complete her degree. After her first visit, the main campus of this university just felt right. Gretchen found herself truly enjoying her classes on this campus but at time does feel like her experience is different than those of the typical college student. One of the aspects that contributes to this aspect of Gretchen's story is that she is a commuter. She chose to live at home because she lives so close to the university. It just made more economic sense. Though she has been on this campus for 4 years and is poised to graduate with a degree in education, there are many times that Gretchen just has not felt connected to the faculty or to her fellow classmates. This gives

her a little bit of heartache as she looks back on her time here and what her experience has been like compared to most everyone else. Her experience gave insight into how professors could offer more opportunities for connection and openness towards sharing a meal together or getting coffee or simply just offering to talk more after class. Though she has loved her experience here there are times she just did not feel like she belonged until there was a simple gesture that showed up in her mailbox. Several professors had gotten together and offered to buy a certain amount of meal tickets for several commuter students. This simple act of kindness has made her feel more connected to the university than any other commuter program that has ever been offered to her. Sometimes it is just a meal that can make the difference.

*Cindy (Riverside South).* Imagine the little troublemaker who did not like school realizing that something kept pulling her towards Christian education. This is Cindy, the sophomore intercultural studies major who really did not want to go to college but something, maybe a cosmic force, or divine intervention, or just the common path of her family kept guiding her towards to the southern campus. However, this campus was not the beginning of her educational journey. After Cindy graduated high school she did not know what she wanted to do and therefore took some time off before making the decision to begin her education. First, she must explore, first she must find adventure, first she must go on a mission trip for 6 months to discover the world and figure out for herself part of her destiny. After the mission trip, Cindy took another year to fully understand who she was as a person and to uncover what would drive her into a life-long career. Though she did not enjoy school, everything kept pointing her to college and she eventually decided it was the right path. Now Cindy had to decide where she wanted to go to college. Her childhood was filled with summers at a specific church camp in her

area. Her parents had sent all their children to this camp every year. They spent time in Christian bible lessons, time swimming in the lake, and time playing in the big grassy yards. The camp just so happened to be tightly connected to the southern campus. These connections were great influences in choosing to attend this school. Her brothers also attend the school and encouraged her to attend as well. At one point all three of them were attending during the same semesters.

Once the decision was made and Cindy arrived on campus, she connected quickly to her main intercultural studies professor and leader of the program. Her connection thrived off of similar emotionally minded personalities and also maybe a little bit of that same spirit of being a troublemaker. This relationship created a sense of belonging quickly and often she would find herself sitting in this professor office talking about aspects of her life. When trouble would arise in her life it was like she would go to the doctor. The doctor had an open-door policy and Cindy would stop in and the doctor would prescribe some medicine. In this case, the medicine was a book or article to read about the specific trouble in which she was struggling. Cindy has found comfort in the warmth and kindness found in this doctor and seemed to love her experience so far on this campus.

*Carrie (Riverside South).* Carrie grew up in the southeastern United States in a loving two-parent home with three other siblings. Her weekends were filled with typical teenager activities, but she remembers always going to church. Being the oldest, Carrie was the responsible older sister taking care of her three younger siblings. Many weeks her dad was working long hours in the medical profession and her mom working in childcare. College was not something that was talked about often in her home. Mom and Dad were lucky to find good

jobs without degrees and Carrie did not have many people in her life that engaged her about going to college. However, she did have church. Her family was active in a local congregation and it just so happened that many church members had been alumni of the southern campus. Those alumni were her connection and very influential in encouraging her to attend the university. However, the cost was going to be a hindrance until someone told her about a scholarship program through her church. Carrie inquired about the opportunities of this scholarship and eventually realized that these resources could make college a possibility for her. Though college is expensive, Carrie, with this scholarship in hand, was able to attend the university and become a proud first-generation college graduate of her family. Now it was time to discover what she was passionate about and decided that she was interested in many aspects of life, therefore, she chose humanities as her major. Carrie worked hard and finished her degree this past May. She now has the privilege of working for the university.

*Jamie (Riverside South).* Sing, sing a song, sing it loud, sing it strong might be the motto of Jamie. Jamie was surrounded by music growing up in the church, singing in choirs, and listening to her dad on stage as the music minister of her church. She was at church every time the doors were open. One of five siblings, Jamie was the decisive one of the group making her choice to go to the southern campus very quickly. She visited the university on a campus tour one time and knew immediately that this was her home. Though she grew up in another denomination, Jamie's family started attending a church in the denomination affiliated with this university. Those influences from the new church and her feelings of instant connection to the campus made this school the right choice for her. Now that she made her choice to attend school here, Jamie needed to decide a major. Once again, this was a simple choice due to her father's



influence on her life and her passion for music. Jamie decided to pursue a worship ministry major and is active in the music groups here on campus. One of the exciting aspects of the music program at this school is that one of the choirs is actively involved in the community and the members, including Jamie, get to sing in large scale productions put on by a very famous entertainment company. Jamie loves being a part of this community and is encouraged by the fact that the faculty are extremely relational and notably intentional in caring for their students. The professors are at all the events supporting their students and give of their time to be present with the students in the dining halls or in their offices.

*Linda (Riverside South).* On an island far away from the United States was born a girl with a dream. A dream to grow up and have a college education. Her childhood looked slightly different than her friends who she hangs out with now. Oh, she had the typical education of elementary school, junior high, and high school. However, it just so happened to be in a tropical location halfway across the world with volcanoes and coral reefs where her native language was Pidgin. Once Linda graduated high school there was an allure to further her education in the United States. She found a sponsor through some Christian connections in the United States and moved to the North Midwest to attend a university. These sponsors were not just any hosts, they also happened to be professors at the university where Linda would attend. With apprehension in her soul, Linda packed up her essentials, said goodbye to her parents and siblings, got on a plane, and moved across the world to begin a new journey, in a new school, in an unfamiliar location, to live with a family she had little to no previous connection. Though language could have been an extra barrier, she had learned enough English language from her education and from watching movies to communicate effectively, actually quite well with anyone she

encountered. Once she arrived she fell in love with her host family and bonded with them in such a way that she calls them mom and dad. She bonded with them so much that when they took a job at a new university in the Southeast she moved with them and changed schools to finish her degree. Though it is hard to be away from her family, she feels like her host family treats her like she is their own daughter and are just as generous with their time and resources. Linda's experience with all the professors at this southern campus are just as positive and she described the faculty and student relationships as amazing. To her, the professors are extremely caring and concerned for the well-being of their students, not just academically but also in every aspect of life. Linda's educational journey is already more than halfway over. She is a Junior, Business Administrative major and she is savoring every moment she can be with her host family and with the community on this campus. She hopes to continue her education after this and work towards an MBA.

***Ben (Riverside South).*** Oh, the places you will go. Ben is non-traditional in many aspects of his life and even more so in his college career path. Ben, a sophomore non-traditional student studying missions started his career in food service, retail management, and security before going back to college and getting a degree in ministry. He grew up in the southeastern part of the United States in a divorced home where his strained relationship with his stepfather created a volatile environment. So volatile that one night during his high school career he and his stepfather got into an argument and he ended up leaving home at sixteen and went to live with his aunt. The smart inquisitive and driven kid, excelled in high school academics, but found himself challenged when entering college. Church life was also a part of Ben's story. Though again not a traditional story. Ben's family was not the church going type. However, one day the

church bus took a wrong turn, came down the street they lived on and saw some kids playing outside. It was a different time, the church bus driver picked them up and took them to church, Ben never elaborated if his parents knew where he went that day. After high school, Ben had successful secular careers running restaurants and retail businesses, but he just felt called to be doing something different. At one point he was hired to run a security team for a very large church where he lived. However, he realized at that time that he was being paid to keep people out when the church should be there to welcome all people. This led him to leave the church for a period. During this time Ben married, had children, and then divorced his first wife. He continued to work in secular environments, however, he kept feeling a pull back to the church. After a time away, Ben married his second wife, had a few more kids and started going to a new church. They got involved with the children's ministry and eventually, the pastor at that church told him that he was going to be a minister and he needed to go back to school to get a degree. He did not really believe his pastor and he basically applied to the university's southern campus to appease his pastor. Though failing out of his first college experience, his wife and he both applied and were accepted to the university. Between both marriages, Ben has six children, five daughters and a son. Moving to campus with children is a challenge for anyone but even more so with six children. They originally lived in a two-bedroom and three of the children lived with them. Fortunately, they now live in a 4-bedroom townhouse but one of the daughters moved back in with them and she now has a child. After all his life experiences, Ben believes this is exactly where he is supposed to be and loves his professors on the southern campus. The faculty and student relationships were described by Ben as ideal.

## **Professors.**

*Professor Brentwood (Riverside North).* Professor Brentwood grew up admiring his dad. He watched his dad every week preaching to the masses while he as a little boy sat in the pews beside his mother. Like many preachers of the time, his father moved the family often based on the church he was serving at the time. Unlike so many preachers kids, Professor Brentwood knew early on he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. After all his father had a significant influence on his life and Professor Brentwood thinks he is an amazing man. Even now after 61 years, his dad is still preaching and serving congregations. Professor Brentwood was enthusiastic in his expression of how much he loved and respected his dad. When it came time to get his training in becoming a preacher, Professor Brentwood could not think of any other college than the one he teaches at now. There was never really a question about his career path, and he was at peace in the decision early on in his life. No doubt his respect and admiration for his father played a role in his decision. Around 1991, Professor Brentwood joined the matriculating class of this university and started his college career. Upon graduation, he sought employment in local ministry and served churches in the northern and southern United States. Ten years later Professor Brentwood decided he wanted to be the best he could be at his craft and started working on a degree in a northern seminary. Preaching was still his goal and to be better at your craft you seek more education and experience. His goal was never to become a professor. He loved serving the church but after a while something changed. He realized his scope could be bigger, global even. When the opportunity arose for him to work at this university, Professor Brentwood weighed the amount of influence he would have over the world between staying in full time ministry or influencing and impacting students who were entering

full time ministry. He decided, with his family, that if he took a job here, he would have tremendous impact on hundreds of students who then would graduate and have a lasting impact on the world. The multiplying effect of his influence would be exponential. Therefore, around 15 years ago, he and his family moved to this campus to start his career as a professor. Professor Brentwood is married and has four kids who live with him here on the main campus. His wife also works for the university. Professor Brentwood described this campus' main characteristic as being one of care and concern for the students and for each other.

*Professor Sanders (Riverside North).* Growing up near the Atlantic Ocean, Professor Sanders claimed the eastern United States as her home.. Coming from a long line of preachers from the Christian faith, Sanders created strong connections to churches during her childhood. In her faith tradition both men and women were preachers and sharers of the Gospel of Christ. Her mother and father did not attend college right out of high school but instead got jobs in secular fields such as banking. Her dad, on the look for something more meaningful in his life decided to pursue a career in preaching and ministry. Her dads mentors persuaded him to get a 4-year preaching degree and then continue on to finish a master's degree at a local seminary. After her father was finished with his degrees, her mother also went back to school and completed an undergraduate degree. These experiences shaped how they raised their children and ultimately how they encouraged their children to immediately go to college and complete their degrees before starting in the workforce. Professor Sanders and her siblings were from the generations where you listened to mom and dad. They did exactly what mom and dad said and immediately left high school and completed their degrees. For Professor Sanders, she completed her degrees in the central Midwest of the United States. After graduating with her doctorate,

Professor Sanders started her career in a temporary visiting assistant professor job at another religious institution. During that time, she continued to look for full-time tenure professor positions at universities around the country. She eventually found employment at this main campus institution in the Eastern United States 4 years ago. Professor Sanders was drawn to the university because of how close knit it felt, its small size and the ability to have frequent interactions with students. Though she enjoys this closeness, she also protects her privacy and space since she lives on campus and is constantly in her office or down the street at home. She did not understand this closeness at first and realized that it can sometimes result in blurred lines. It took her some time to realize this aspect of the main campus.

*Professor Harris (Riverside North).* Professor Harris was raised bicoastal and spent time on the west coast as well as the east coast of the United States. At times he was enjoying beautiful beaches on a sunny day and other years he might marvel at the majesty of the mountains. College was definitely a part of his path and after high school graduation headed off to a Christian university in the northern United States. His future wife attended a university closer to his home state but eventually they ended up back together and had four beautiful children. With degree in hand, the first part of their married life was spent as missionaries in a foreign country. Though they thought they would be there for their entire lives, they eventually decided that they were being called back to the United States. Ministry was a part of his soul regardless where he might be employed. He spent the first few years back in the states working on a secular campus in a campus ministry organization. However, something did not feel quite right to him and he realized that it was difficult to have great impact on the students without being in the classroom. With some guidance from a university president at the time, he decided

that he wanted to start teaching in the classroom and be a part of a Christian University. So new steps were taken, changes were made, and Professor Harris started his teaching career in the Northern United States at three different universities and then eventually found himself teaching at this university a few years ago. Professor Harris and his wife have been a part of this community for the past 5 years and live in faculty housing near the university. Professor Harris was insightful in his description of the relationship between faculty and students at this main campus. He indicated they were good but that just like most relationships, faculty tend to gravitate towards students who are like minded or towards the students who are perceived as being academically strong.

*Professor Wadsworth (Riverside North).* Professor Wadsworth is one of the more seasoned faculty members at Riverside University. A military brat, Wadsworth moved significantly during his childhood. His military father moved his family to several locations across the United States but eventually left the military, transitioned into the public workforce and landed in the Eastern South-Central United States. About the time mom and dad finally settled Professor Wadsworth found himself interested in his next steps. So, Wadsworth found a local Christian college close to home and received his undergraduate degree from there many years ago and very quickly also earned a master's degree at a local state school. At a very young age he had completed his undergraduate and master's degree and took a job at Riverside University over 4 decades ago. Professor Wadsworth, ambitious and driven, also spent some time teaching at another local university at the same time he was teaching on this campus. This extra teaching experience, at a secular university, helped shape how he taught at this Christian university. Again, driven to pursue knowledge in his field, Professor Wadsworth also worked on

a PH.D. during this time. He is married with three children and several grandchildren. Professor Wadsworth could be described as like the J.R.R. Tolkien or C.S. Lewis of this university. His grandkids have even come up with literary names for him and his wife instead of the traditional grandma and grandpa. When he began teaching at the university, Professor Wadsworth regrettably discovered students pondering if they could pursue their art and spirituality at the same time. Early on he discovered that students would either abandon their art for the sake of spirituality or vice versa and abandon their spirituality to pursue their art. He turned this conundrum into a passion and is passionate about helping students marrying their artistic potential with their spiritual life. Professor Wadsworth is realistic in his views about mentoring relationships at Riverside North. In commenting about a yearly professor evaluation from the students, He commented some students will connect with certain professors and some students in the same class will not. However, overall most students will find a professor who they trust and are willing to be mentored or guided by them.

***Professor Bryant (Riverside South).*** Professor Bryant is one of the longest serving and highly regarded members of the faculty and staff at the southern campus. She has served here for more than 4 decades through the name changes, the administrative transitions, and most recently with the acquisition from Riverside North. Many years ago, on a fateful day she received a call from the college president with an interesting job proposal. “Would you come work for this new little Christian college in the southeast as our administrative assistant?” He had known her from her days of playing piano for weddings and thought she might enjoy employment at his institution. Accepting the position Professor Bryant started helping out several professors by typing letters, book proofreading, and general organizational tasks. One



day the academic dean came into her office and said, I need you to go over and teach the Comp 1 class. I cannot teach the Comp 1 class, she said, and he replied, “you found the dangling modifier in my last manuscript, if you can find a dangling modifier you can go teach Comp 1.” The teacher for that class was in the hospital and the academic dean needed someone to fill in fast. And there begins her destiny. The students responded to her positively and suggested to the academic dean that she should start teaching Comp 1. From there a Master’s degree was in her future and so Professor Bryant attended the local state university to complete the degree in literature. Eventually, doctoral work too but never finished due to some family health issues and other stresses at the time. Full-time teaching loads and lack of a sabbatical during that period also hindered her progress. In the end, finishing the doctoral degree was not part of her future and she is content with that part of her story. Professor Bryant family has always been focused on serving the church in some capacity. Her husband works as a custodian in a local ministry and her 30-year-old married son works at a Christian camp in a different state.

Professor Bryant, always having a way with words, described the faculty-student relationships at this southern campus as stunningly positive. As she opined, teaching, especially at a faith-based institution, must be relational. On a relational note, there was one student who she could not get to engage with her in any classroom setting. He would have his head down all the time, he would not participate in activities. It just so happened that one day she walked over to the music building and heard this kid playing French horn. This person was playing with perfect pitch and beautiful tones. The sounds that were coming from this French horn were heavenly. Professor Bryant, apprehensive to not disturb the student, pensively knocked on the door and to her surprise it was this kid. She praised the student for how well he was playing and

how much he must be practicing for the French horn to sound that good. “Can I sit down at the piano and play a song with you”, she asked. He agreed. Now, it was Christmas time, so Professor Bryant flipped through the hymnal and came upon, O Holy Night. “This is perfect”, she announced. They sat there and as he belted out the beautiful melody, she accompanied him and filled in the rest. “This is absolutely beautiful” she proclaimed. She was so overwhelmed with how stunning this sounded that she declared, “this would sound lovely in chapel. Would you play this in chapel with me next week?” He agreed. Now with this newfound connection, this student came into class the next week with his head held up high, he engaged with all the activities and he started sitting in the second row of the class. Down deep Professor Bryant knew she learned that day what a difference it makes when a kid can meet her eyes and find connection.

*Professor Williamson (Riverside South).* Professor Williamson hails from the northern United States but spent significant time growing up in the mountains of the eastern United States. Her parents worked at a university in that part of the world until her family moved back to the north due to some health needs of her brothers. Like many of her colleagues, her father was also in ministry during that time. Professor Williamson completed her undergraduate degree from a faith-based institution in Michigan and then eventually completed her doctorate at a liberal arts institution in Kentucky. She is married with one son. Williamson started her career teaching at her undergraduate institution and then moved to this campus in the southern United States where she has taught for 5 years. She described this institution as an all hands-on deck kind of place. Her office has been described as welcoming and warm and many days you will find students doing homework in her office or just talking about their life’s dilemmas.

***Professor Taylor (Riverside South).*** Professor Taylor spent her childhood years growing up in another country and came to the United States on a scholarship to a prestigious arts school in the Northeastern United States. She ended up transferring to another school in the same region and graduated with a performing arts degree. She met her husband, got married, and then went immediately into ministry. She and her husband served in a religiously affiliated organization in the early part of her career and then transitioned to full-time ministry in churches. After she had her two daughters, she was able to pursue a master's degree, and this began her teaching career in universities. For a time, they stayed near the Northeastern United States but eventually a church in the Southeast United States hired her husband and they moved for his job at the time. After a time, an acquaintance knew that she had a master's degree and suggested she connect with the Riverside University South (at that time under a different name). Riverside South administrators hired her to teach part-time and she also received employment at a secular state school part-time. Eventually, the position at the southern campus became a full-time tenure track position. Professor Taylor has withstood many transitions of the university and she is still here after all this time even after the acquisition from Riverside North. Her husband is still in ministry helping lead campus pastor development at seven campuses across the area. Professor Taylor is passionate about supporting students in their artistic development. Part of that development is attending several different churches throughout the area to help encourage her students who lead music for churches. Professor Taylor described the faculty as having an open-door policy with students and their relationship with students take on so many different aspects. Being at such a small campus allows her to interact with students all the time at different events on campus. In addition, the way classes are structured within the main campuses system means

that freshman students are ingrained into this relational culture with professors. She feels blessed that she works at Riverside South and that the professors get to invite themselves into the students' lives.

***Professor Lawson (Riverside South).*** A similar story told once again, Professor Lawson followed in his father's footsteps and attended Riverside South just 25 years later. However, the story does not stop there. Professor Lawson also now teaches at Riverside South 25 years later. The story that has changed in the name of the school. Since his dad attended here, the school has changed names three times and as previously mentioned acquired by Riverside North. His dad was a minister and moved the family a couple times during his childhood eventually bringing the family to the area where the southern campus is located. Professor Lawson finished his undergraduate degree at Riverside South and immediately started working for the university in the admissions department, eventually becoming one of the leaders. Following his first tenure at the university, Professor Lawson felt called into church ministry and became a discipleship minister in the area. While there, he pursued a master's degree at a school in the Midwest, while maintaining his residence in the southeast. After the master's degree, for approximately ten years, Professor Lawson started teaching at community colleges, serving as a youth minister and preaching minister at a local church, and started his Ph.D. program at a state school. Once graduating with his doctorate, he left the preaching ministry and started teaching adjunct online for this university. During that time, he pursued a tenure track job at another public institution in the area and worked there for a couple years. He continued to teach adjunct for the Riverside South as well and eventually they asked if he would consider teaching here full-time. This request was not to be taken lightly. There were many considerations to take into account if he

wanted to pursue a job change. He was in a tenure-track position at the university he was currently teaching, the pay was significantly better, and the opportunity for administrative promotions were on the horizon. None of these options were a possibility at Riverside South. However, his history and affinity with the campus, his belief in their mission, and his desire to be in the classroom after 20 years overcame the other benefits of staying at his current employment. Therefore, Professor Lawson accepted the position to teach at the southern campus and has been here full-time since the fall of 2018. He recognized that it was riskier in stability and pay scale but in the long run working at the southern campus was much more attractive for him and his wife. Professor Lawson is married with two children and lives off campus with a moderate commute to campus. For Professor Lawson, one of the defining differences between all the state schools he has worked for and this campus is community. He said at the state schools you might find some professors who really care about their students but at Riverside South there is a real intentionality about creating community and relationship.

***Professor Mills (Riverside South).*** Professor Mills started his college career in the colder climates of the northern Midwest. While attending a bible college he took the traditional path of meeting the love of his life and marrying her before they were both finished with school. He began his career like many ministry majors before him and started as a youth minister in his denomination at a church in the same area as his college. A life-long learner at heart, Professor Mills pursued two master's degrees from this same institution. From there, the hills of a distant land were calling, and Professor Mills moved his family to a church working for a preacher that was a family friend. After three years in that ministry, the dreaded cold winters drew him back to the Northern United States where lake effect snow was a part of their daily lives during the

winter. In this ministry, Professor Mills led the music and educational goals of the church. With an attendance of more than 500, the educational and musical responsibilities of this ministry were tremendous and eventually Professor Mills decided he needed to transition into another role. A doctoral degree was also in the works during this time, and Professor Mills after some soul searching landed on a degree in spiritual formation from a seminary also in the Northern Midwest. Professor Mill's educational journey was one with great conviction and at the same time filled with consternation. He knew that he must complete his doctoral degree for the betterment of his family and also for his own personal attainment. However, his family commitments and convictions to be a dependable husband and father for his wife and kids made him think long and hard about what path to choose. He could pursue a degree in New Testament theology at a certain institution but that would mean he would need to quit his full-time job and his wife would need to go work somewhere. He knew his wife and kids would suffer from the added constraints to their budget and the amount of time he would be away from them. In his mind, God kept saying to him do the best you can do, be faithful, and I will take care of the rest. In the end, the doctoral degree from the more local seminary made more sense for his family and he finished the degree in spiritual formation. Now that the degree was done, he was on the job hunt. Once again, he felt that if he was just faithful and trusted, God would take care of the rest. On a day that he remembers specifically he got a call from the president of this southern institution inquiring if he would come teach for them. Now Professor Mills had never put in his resume at this location and was hesitant to even apply here because an old friend had shared some erroneous information about the college with him. However, on this day that he remembers so clear, he was talking to the president of this university and they want to hire him.

Professor Mills, being ever so in tune with his spiritual side, calls a few trusted mentors and in his mind verifies that this is where he is supposed to be. Therefore, 16 years ago, he packed up his family from the cold Northern Midwest and moved them to a much sunnier location in the Southeast. The place that his friend cautioned, the place where he did not send a resume, the place where his wife had said, I do not want to move there, the place where the president who he had never known who called out of the blue and offered him a job, yes that place, and he responded with a resounding yes!

Professor Mills convictions for thorough and driven teaching practices permeate throughout his psyche and are ever being professed from his lips. In fact, conviction might be the word considered to be at the center of Professor Mills life and language. Another passion of Professor Mills is to engage students in extra-curricular activities, specifically sporting events. On any given afternoon you might find Professor Mills riding his bike or playing racquetball with students. He particularly considered these activities as informal mentoring opportunities and decried anyone who thought otherwise. Engaging students in these activities created an excitement in his voice as he shared several stories of mentoring students and building relationships with them. On one day after many days of playing racquetball Professor Mills remembered a student just stopping the game suddenly and asking him about how he knew that his wife was the one he should marry. For the next 30 minutes they sat there and discussed the relationship between this student and his girlfriend and now wife. On a different day, in the car on the way to a sporting event another student engaged Professor Mills about his home life. Clearly to Professor Mills, these moments did not happen spontaneously that day, however, they emerged because of intentional mentoring over the course of weeks and months with these

students. In addition to this intentionality, Professor Mills developed a mentoring and spiritual guidance plan for the entire campus. For approximately the last ten years Professor Mills trained and mentored young men to then become mentors themselves. He mentored three students at a time and his wife also did the same with female students on campus.

#### **Chapter 4. Data Analysis – Part Two**

The second half of this chapter will be focused on the themes identified in the interview data. Eight themes were identified in the data: care and concern, relationship building, investment of time, size of campus, spaces, faculty housing, blurred lines, and hindrances to connection. In this section, I discussed each theme and organize the responses of the participants by university and then separated by student and faculty.

**An intentionality to care and concern.** One of the first themes that was uncovered from the participant interviews is that the professors truly care and have genuine concern for the students. Care and concern in this research translated into physical manifestations, thoughtfulness, and hospitality. For instance, when students were sick, professors would send them cards or check up on them to see if they were feeling better. Likewise, if a student did not think a professor seemed like themselves, the student would stop by their office and directly ask the professor if they were doing okay that day.

*Students (Riverside North).* Levi a northern student shared, “I mean they pour into us. There is no doubt they love us.” This theme of care and concern seemed to transcend academics and go deeper into more vulnerable places. Levi continued, “Our faculty has been more than amazing to talk to us, about like mental health and stuff like that. Professors are very vulnerable about that, about their experiences.” Jack confirmed this sense of care when he had a family



emergency one week during school. He shared that the professors reached out and said, “I am praying for you.” Jack continued, “I had one professor who even went to, like checked up on me later on. And I had another who wrote me like a letter and said she was praying for me. They asked me what is going on, not because they want to make sure it is legit, but because they want to make sure I’m okay.” Jane had a similar experience and shared that she feels comfortable sharing with the professors, “You know, I’m just struggling today. And so, you talk to somebody.” Likewise, Gretchen confirmed, “Professors really care about students, as far as like their well-being and definitely about their academics.”

*Students (Riverside South).* This sentiment of care and concern was just as prominent in the discussion from the students at Riverside South. Jamie confirmed this by saying, “They care about them. They pray about them or pray for them; they will ask how their week is going and they’re very open to being a mentor for students and encouraging them and building them up in their walk with Christ.” She went further when discussing someone or a family member being sick. “Specifically, they’ll ask you about like how’s this going or, you know, how’s your grandma. They’re very intentional and they remember things.” Linda further verified these acts of care by stating, “The professors here are so concerned with their students that they are willing to participate in the lives of their students outside of classroom. They care about their personal lives, their families.” Linda also mentioned professors show care through monetary actions, such as financial help, or offering rides to school, and giving them food.

Furthermore, these actions of care and concern move beyond physical and financial well-being into mental health and spiritual direction. Cindy spoke to these aspects by saying, “I think they care even more about them on an emotional and spiritual level. We just sit and talk about

maybe something I'm going through spiritually or in my life or direction if I need it." Cindy also shared a story about someone understanding their sexuality. She recounted,

I know someone on campus who came out as bisexual and was struggling with how they wanted to deal with this in their faith and they went to several professors and talked with them and asked for mentorship and help in this and some counseling.

The willingness of professors to talk about mental health was common among the students.

Carrie relayed that she thinks there is a reason care and concern is more prevalent on this campus than other campuses. She stated, "They just really care. I feel it is more of a community because it is a Christian community, more faith based and that is what we emphasize." She said that the professors might say, "If you have something happening in your life. That is like preventing you from doing schoolwork just let me know and we can work something out."

*Professors (Riverside North).* In confirmation of the student sentiments, professors at both the northern and southern campus expressed their conscientious efforts to care for their students. These levels of care varied from checking in on students when they were sick to being concerned for their spiritual and mental health as well as nurturing their creative spirits. Professor Brentwood stated, "There is an unusual amount of care from the faculty toward the students. We care about their growth, their education, their spiritual health." When a student is sick, Professor Brentwood acknowledged, "You can't be in class on Tuesday because he is sick. Well, you know because I care about that student I'm going to check in with him and ask, how are you feeling. Can my wife bring you some chicken soup?" When speaking about how the students perceive this level of care, Brentwood shared, "I think they're strengthened when faculty takes the initiative to show care because they're not necessarily expecting that. And so,

when we go out of the way to say, hey, how are things going on at home. It kind of catches them off guard.”

Professor Sanders spoke to care moving past the typical physical and mental well-being and manifesting into just being a well-balanced person. She commented, “What we need faculty members to do, you know, these are students who are in transition. You need to be there for them. Be like maybe an aunt or uncle, so to speak and help them, not just academics, but help them with just being a good human being.”

Professor Wadsworth alluded that care goes even further and moves into the creative aspects of the soul. He talked about how he wants to help students understand that faith and art can go together. Professor Wadsworth also shared that now that he has been at the university for over 40 years that his level of care is also extended to faculty. He likes to take the younger faculty under his wing and help guide them as well.

*Professors (Riverside South).* Likewise, to the northern faculty, the faculty on the southern campus see taking care of students as a strategic mission while at the same time recognizing that some personalities are better at it than others. Professor Bryant stated, “You see faculty strategically kind of going after the student who is kind of out there and a little bit separate and a little bit alone appearing and you, you see people looking out for that too.” She continued,

There is a development thing, a recognition that Jesus was a physical being, emotional being, a social being, mental being and a spiritual being as are we. And so, I think that 100% the professors here, I know I do. I think everybody does. We have a student in class, and we see, yeah, there’s an academic thing going on here, there’s a mental thing,

but oh my goodness, if you're not also recognizing all those other components of the human being. And so, I think that is key.

Professor Bryant also spoke to how she deals with the spiritual life of the students in her classroom, specifically how she prays for them at the end of each class period. She stated, "I came to realize students honestly feel cared for in that moment." She also suggested that this level of care goes along with the level of respect they have for the professor as well. She added, "They don't care what you know until they know how much you care."

Professor Mills added that the level of care shown to students translates into who they will call in a crisis. He shared a story of a young man who he invited to become part of a three-person discipleship group. This group met weekly for a year. One night this young man called him out of the blue in crisis and needed to talk to someone about how his 3-month marriage was already falling apart. Professor Mills relayed that this young man did not call his pastor or his parents or his best friend, he called Professor Mills.

Intentionality is also a common phrase that emerged from conversations about care. When discussing professors at different universities he had been employed, Professor Lawson stated, "You'll get professors who don't, but you'll get professors who care very deeply about students. But here, there's, an intentionality about creating community."

Professor Taylor added a new element to the discussion of care and concern. She emphasized that care is also about holding students accountable. She said, "It's not all hunky dory. Right, so I've had to confront several of them and that is really getting to the core of the problem. Waking up the spirit and saying, hey, you can do more, you can do more, you're so talented."

**The strength of who we are is defined by our relationships.** One might argue that care and concern could be synonymous with building relationships. However, the difference evident in the interviews was that care dealt with tangible mental, physical, and spiritual concern for the student. For instance, the student who was ill and the professor offering for his wife to bring him chicken soup. Though relationship building shared some of these attributes, there was a cognizant effort by students and faculty alike to develop these relationships and convey the importance of them in the interview setting. The participants talked about spending time together and consciously making efforts to connect and talk with one another. There was a purposeful attitude in developing relationships.

*Students (Riverside North).* Jane, when asked to describe faculty and student relationships replied, “They’re probably one of the best I’ve seen. Some of the faculty are like second moms or dads. It really helps define the community here.” She continued in regard to a staff member who she had become close, “She is like my second mom here, you know, anything I need she, you know, makes sure that I can get it. And anytime I need to rant about a class, I can just come to our office.”

Jack added an insightful analogy to the conversation by saying a mentor is, “Somebody that knows more than you, just invites you to live life with them almost like an ancient teacher, student role or like you just live life with them and like hang out with them all the time just to learn how they live.” He also confirmed the importance of other faculty or staff relationships by saying, “Sometimes they’re not even my teachers, like there’s the Spanish teacher, me and her have a very good relationship and also in the intercultural studies office and we’ll just talk, and she does that, with a lot of people.”

Levi brought the faith element into the topic of relationship building and how chapel helps build these relationships. He stated, “So faculty are encouraged to be a part of our faith here. I worship with my professors. We get to talk about spiritual things, relational things.” In regard to chapel he continued, “Relationships are automatically strengthened because you’re in a group setting.” Levi perceived the professors as, “We want to have a relationship with you, and I mean they take that into every little thing. They take that and they run with it every conversation we have its intentional.”

*Students (Riverside South).* Cindy alluded to the level of student retention because of the relationships that are built between faculty and students. She shared,

And one of the most positive aspects of it and what makes you want to stay here is that I think that there’s a really good healthy relationships between the student and the faculty.

As much as they, you know, work hard in the classroom. I think they see their work outside of the classroom, working with students and having these one on one conversations is just as important as their professorial work in the classroom.

Like the northern campus, students who had other educational experiences expressed the differences between professors at those campuses and compared them to this campus. Linda stated, “Well, the faculty relationship on this campus. It’s amazing. I don’t think I’ve experienced that in any other school that I’ve been to or gone to visit.” Linda elaborated, “It’s not just school I’m able to talk about personal life, and he’s giving me advice or making suggestions on how I can improve or give me a different perspective of seeing what I saw differently. And that has really helped me figure out, navigate.” Carrie confirmed this difference by stating, “I also went to a community college in Jacksonville. So, it’s more informal because

the faculty know the students on a more personal level.” Carrie further shared a personal conversation she had with a faculty member about adultery and expressed how that faculty member helped her work through her thoughts and feelings about this family situation.

Generally, the students perceived faculty as being very relational and purposeful in their relationship building. Ben, when asked about faculty and student relationships responded, “In a nutshell, ideal. The number one thing is just the one on one, the listening and investing time. You know it’s discipleship making on an academic level.” Jamie also affirmed this by saying, “I would definitely say all of the faculty and all the staff are very relational and they are intentional with students.”

*Professors (Riverside North).* Faculty had some of same sentiments about relationships between faculty and students and emphasized that relationships were the backbone of this campus. Professor Brentwood exclaimed that relationships were, “One of the strongest characteristics, strongest aspects of this university.” Professor Harris verified this phenomenon by saying, “Far and away the best faculty and staff, faculty to students relationship I have ever seen; best faculty to faculty relationships I have ever seen.” He continued, “It’s a priority within the culture to be engaged with students. There’s a culture, just informal, you eat in the dining hall. That’s just normal to go eat lunch in the dining hall; this has not been the case in schools I’ve been.”

Both Harris and Brentwood also observed that these relationships start somewhere else and then move to an office or some space more private. Harris shared, “Mentoring students is often started in a relationship that started in the classroom and then led to an office conversation or a coffee conversation or lunch time.” Brentwood added that these mentoring relationships are

often student initiated. He said a student will approach him and say, “Hey, can we get lunch together once a month.” Harris also expounded on this idea by sharing that when he has tried to initiate a mentoring relationship and he chooses the 3-4 students that do not have much in common, the group does not come together very well. However, if he engages a group of friends who already have a connection, the mentoring group “becomes explosive” and the relationships get built very fast and deep.

Professor Sanders also finds that the mentoring relationship often starts in the classroom and then after one-on-one meetings becomes more of a buddy, buddy, mentoring relationship. She shared, “The one-on-one interaction is also mentoring” She alluded that it becomes a place where she can guide them on deeper life lessons like how to approach other professors and doing their work on time before the due date. She pondered, “Almost, Rob, maybe some people think I’m taking it too far. It’s almost like helping them spiritually, not necessarily a religious spirituality, but spiritually in terms of this is for your well-being, your soul.”

*Professors (Riverside South).* Central to the philosophy in all the professors across campuses is that relationships matter. It appeared to be at the core of their personalities and teaching styles. Professor Bryant so clearly stated, “Teaching is a very relational thing.” Professor Bryant filled the conversation with how relationship building is critical to teaching and how it is the core of her methods in the classroom. Professor Bryant’s understanding of teaching reaches deep into the realm of spirituality. She stated, “Kind of came to grips with the fact that what we’re doing in a classroom is, with your background in worship you understand this. I think there’s a worship element to it into what we’re doing here has really transcendent importance.” In talking about the importance of one-on-one time Professor Bryant continued,



I feel like, especially now when students are so attached to their technology and a lot of them don't have good soft skills, about how to connect with people in life that you really have to spend the time with them one on one, in order to, in order to kind of earn the right to be with them in the classroom where they really hear you and really respond and really do the work. But they don't care what you know until they know how much you care.

Bryant also talked about how she builds relationships with students by giving them a job in the classroom, specifically through jobs with technology. "I'm giving this person a chance to succeed. I think it's an element of feeling trusted."

As mentioned in the previous narrative section above, Professor Bryant shared several stories how she learned to engage with students in the classroom by informally engaging with them outside of the classroom. To her the relationship started in the classroom but they would not listen to her or respect what she had to say until she built this relationship in informal settings. For instance, the student mentioned in the narrative who would not engage with her in class and would have his head down all the time until the fateful day when she found him playing French horn in the practice room and asked if she could sit down and play piano with him. From that point forward, the student moved sits closer to the front in her class and improved his grade significantly over the course of the semester. She also shared about the students who were from another country and had a reputation of being disrespectful to the female professors. When she met with these students one-on-one their attitudes changed. The personal relationship that she built with them changed how they viewed her, and they did not want to be seen as disrespectful to her any longer.

Professor Taylor elaborated on this same theme and spoke about how building relationships with students are critical to help them shine in their educational journey. She told a story about one student who she did not know very well. This student came to her and told her he could play drums and he would like to find opportunities to play on campus. At first, she was skeptical about his skill level but kept him in mind for future opportunities. After some time, an event came along where she needed a drummer. After searching for a couple weeks, she could not find one and decided to give this student a chance. This was an out of state event to the northern campus and this student ended up shining at the event. She stated that several other leaders and professors came up to her and shared how good this student was and how respectful he had been during their time there. Professor Taylor said that now this student has become like a family member and he has built a strong relationship with her in a very short time.

Several professors alluded that the informal mentoring moments and relationship building are natural occurrences for either campus. Professor Lawson shared that this is just part of the community. "I've taught at three or four community colleges and I've taught at a large state university and I think the things that makes us distinctive is community. You'll get professors who don't, but you'll get professors who care very deeply about students. But here, there is, an intentionality about creating community." He believed that there is also an intentionality from the administrators as well, "Professors want to have those deeper more meaningful relationships and the structure of the university allows it." He went even further to say that, "I don't think the primary thing about student relationships here is formal. I think it's informal. I think it's culture."

Professor Williamson spoke to how these relationships do not stop when the student graduates but continues on for years to come. She said, “The students that I’ve poured into over 20 years. I’m like, I’m still in contact with them, you know. They still ask me for advice.” Additionally, she mentioned that these relationships are reciprocal. Students from long ago will email her and encourage her. She told of one situation where she plans a trip to a large missions conference every year. This trip is a large undertaking and she shared that it is stressful because she takes numerous students to a convention several states away. She has one previous student who emails her every year and reminds her that this was the trip where she made a decision to go into full time missions and that all the work she is putting into the trip is worth it. Professor Mills also confirmed this reciprocal importance of relationship building by sharing a story of a day he cut class short just because he finished his material faster than he thought. Some students were concerned that this was unlike him and that something was wrong. They showed up at his office immediately after class just to check in with him. Professor Bryant also added to this phenomenon by telling a story about one student who she had to work extra hard at building a relationship. There was a moment when Professor Bryant had a family crisis and she was sharing to the class what was going on and she would need to be gone for the next couple of class periods. This particular student came up to her during this conversation and just stood right beside her shoulder to shoulder. She asked what he was doing, and he shared that he wanted to pray for her during class.

Though he believes that relationship building is taking place, Professor Mills shared some slight concern that things have changed in the last couple of years. Professor Mills is concerned that the merger with the northern campus has adjusted the culture of the southern

campus. He shared that before the merger the classes were structured in a way that, “It meant that we had a serious vested interest in how students were doing. And we’ve all kind of understood that our job is to disciple students.” However, he shared that now classes are structured in a way that the professors do not have a connection with all the students like they did before. He said that, “There are pockets where it’s very, very intense. Like it’s still working.” However, he is concerned that relationship building has been hampered slightly due to organizational restructuring.

**Investment of time and energy are critical to informal mentoring relationships.** As an extension of care, concern, and relationship building, students were eager to talk about how much time the professors and staff were willing to give to them. One of the expressions mentioned often by students and faculty was how everyone has an open-door policy.

*Students (Riverside North).* Jane shared, “They very much put that out there, if you need to talk to like, come to us, like our door is always open.” Levi, along with others, confirmed this by saying that the professors extended this generosity often, “Come in and out of our office, whenever you want to. If we walk in, they stop what they’re doing, and they talk. Those open office hours are for us and they do that for the benefit of us.” When speaking about just stopping by a professors office unannounced, Gretchen added, “Really builds relationship, the fact that they would take time out of their day to do that. I don’t think there’s any professor that would say no.”

Levi shared that the time professors are willing to invest in students goes beyond their office hours and even goes beyond the walls of the university. When discussing graduate school with one professor Levi shared that this professor wanted to extend a significant amount of time

to the discussion. He shared that the professor expressed, “I want to have a conversation about this, but I don’t want this to be our only conversation about this. I want to have more meals together; I want to get coffee multiple times.” This professor has also extended an offer to go on graduate school tours with Levi.

***Students (Riverside South).*** The students at the southern campus perceive how their professors are always around and extend generous amounts of time in the same way as the northern campus. Cindy stated, “From the bottom of their hearts and they work tirelessly to try to help the students in any way they can.” Carrie added, “They’re always here.” Ben supported this idea of investment when he said,

I’ve never had a professor telling me no if I asked for a meeting or some one-on-one help.

The level of investment is much higher. The ability to take time out of your day to make sure that I’m progressing and I’m getting what you’re saying is just, amazing.

Again, this level of investment is not limited to faculty but also staff. Jamie commented about her work-study boss saying, “She’s a friend and she is always there with like open doors and some of the professors too.”

One of the reoccurring themes among students of this campus is how often the student would see their professors at sporting events or at recitals. There was a common sentiment that most of the professors were at every event held on campus. Carrie said, “They are always there cheering on and everyone is always around.”

***Professors (Riverside North).*** Professors of both campuses recognize the amount of time and commitment it takes to work at a small university. Teaching loads are higher, the expectations for service to the students are higher, and the responsibilities to the community at

large are higher. The professors at the northern campus shared numerous stories about the amount of time they are spending with students in their offices, on trips, or at events.

Wadsworth specifically spoke to what those time commitments meant to students over the years. He theorized, “But I look back and I remember the people who took the time to just talk me through whatever it was. Yeah, you just needed to talk out loud and work through it. That’s all you need. It was a void. It was an ear to hear what you were saying.” Wadsworth suggested that professors should consider coming to class earlier or staying late and making yourself available more often for these conversations to take place. Professor Sanders also spoke to this idea of staying late many nights to accommodate students. She said, “The benefit of living in faculty housing is that you can extend your time after hours and do things like that.”

Throughout the interview process several professors spoke about the joy they have when students who graduated years ago will stay in contact with them year after year. Professor Brentwood acknowledged that when professors do not make that long-term investment we never hear from students again. When speaking about going on trips with students he stated,

they know, they say that’s a big deal to them and say, hey, you know, you remember when we went to that conference together, you know, back in 2009. And it seems to make them feel attached to the university. And then, the contrast, is this true to the students who haven’t made those investments in those relationships often we don’t hear from them anymore, you know, after they graduate. They’re gone.

***Professors (Riverside South).*** The southern campus faculty emphasized multiple times the amount of time and level of investment the faculty of this campus give to the students. Some of them even believe it is an expectation from the students. Williamson elaborated, “So this

campus is an all hands-on deck kind of situation for faculty, meaning that whenever there is an event faculty are present showing their support to the students.” She continued, “Here it is a very high commitment, kind of deal. And the students expect it. And they gravitate toward the faculty who are making the effort to do this.” In speaking about the numerous times students are contacting her she said, “very close relationship with our students on this campus. It is a small student faculty ratio...they text me; they email me; they facetime me. I get a text message a day from students, lots of days, several messages.”

Supporting this theme Taylor responded, “You know, most of the time, I have an open-door policy. Especially with this universities culture. It’s established early on among freshman that faculty are crazy involved.” Bryant agreed and shared,

There’s just availability. The phrase, that’s part of the DNA that I think anybody who comes to teach here just expects that’s going to be the case and that’s part of the gig.

That’s part of the beauty of being here. There’s an open-door policy and that’s always been the case.

Bryant continued by telling a story about a fellow professor who has students in his office all the time. She shared, “So, you know, some people are very open to, you know, students sitting in the room when they’re out teaching class and just, you know, maybe they need some ‘in loco parentis’”. Professor Mills confirmed this story by talking about the same professor and saying that they have a code system worked out between them. When Professor Mills has heard the students in the office for a long time, he will walk by and check to see if the mentioned professor needs a break. The professor might give a nod and Professor Mills will interrupt and get the students moving out of the office.

Though the previous story included a group of students, the professors spoke often of the individual time and investment spent with the students one-on-one. Professor Bryant stated, I have meetings with every student for every writing assignment that we do. That's a lot of contact hours, but it's absolutely necessary because it's not until they get to know me a little bit as a person. What happens is once they have set with me as an individual, especially as a white female okay and I did some background research on this. So, I know I have a lot to overcome so I found immediately that the only way to do that was if they had some kind of relationship with me outside of class and then it was embarrassing to them, then to come into class and treat me with disrespect.

Like many professors at this university, Professor Bryant also attempts to attend every sporting event or recital. She cautioned, "And it wears you out doing it as a teacher to get to everybody's games and I go to every recital." Professor Bryant added, "To really be heard and understood by them I have found that what happens in class is almost totally affected by what has happened or not happened outside of class."

**Informal mentoring is flourishing at events and in special moments.** Moments and events could also be seen as an extension of the amount of time the faculty and students choose to spend with each other. Moments could be seen as conversations at a coffee shop or lunch with a professor. Events manifested as sporting events and conference trips.

*Students (Riverside North).* Jane noted that an informal mentoring relationship started for her and was developed on a conference trip. She stated,

I presented a paper at a sample conference. And so, a group of us, there was five students. And then our mentor professor drove us to Atlanta and we just had a great weekend of



her you know sharing with us. It was just a really great experience to just help strengthen that relationship.

Though a semi-formal program, Jane also mentioned a women's discipleship group that was significantly active on campus and how her relationships with professors were strengthened during those meetings.

Several students mentioned getting coffee with professors or sitting at lunch with professors in the cafeteria as informal mentoring opportunities. Also noted were other organized social events such as dessert nights or student government association events that helped build informal mentoring relationships. Levi added that he worked out with professors and sometimes in-depth conversations would begin in those moments.

Gretchen, on the other hand, did not have the same experience as her classmates. Gretchen is a commuter student and commented that many times because of her circumstances does not attend any kind of events with professors. She said, "There's some of those opportunities that I don't feel a part of. So, there's a part of the community that I'm not, I don't feel plugged in to." She commented that it felt strange to say that because she loves the university but just at times does not feel connected.

*Students (Riverside South).* Once again the students mentioned basketball games, soccer games, eating lunch together, going to concerts together, and trips such as a large missions conference several states away. Jamie, in discovering her first moments on campus shared, "I was very surprised to see so much of like, so many of the professors and the staff at those events and like mingling with the students and getting to know them." Linda continued to verify these events as informal mentoring moments and shared, "And just seeing them being part of it and

showing the maturity even engage some of us are really competitive students. Having the professors, they show a different example.” To Linda, the professors were setting an example in how to have a healthy competitive spirit.

Like Gretchen from the northern campus, Cindy did not have the same experiences as her classmates. She stated, “I’m not sure I’ve had a lot of experience with that.” Cindy did not elaborate on why she did not feel connected or informally mentored through events or special moments. Compared to the professors responses below, the students were not as cognizant as to where informal mentoring moments might be taking place.

*Professors (Riverside North).* The professors acknowledged numerous times that informal mentoring seemed to be taking place in moments and events on and off campus. They appeared to notice that these moments typically led to more in-depth conversations that moved to their offices or more private space. Professor Sanders believed that little events like an ice cream and dessert social was a great way for her to start connecting with students. She told of getting Chick-Fil-A with students or getting a cup of coffee. She expressed the idea that these moments helps create belonging and connection to the campus. Harris added, “I do think there’s a lot that happens around the lunchroom, lunchtime.”

Extended trips to conventions were also prevalent during the interview conversations with the professors. Some of the professor see these trips as significant ways to develop informal mentoring relationships with the students. Brentwood confirmed this thought by saying, “I went to Phoenix with two students from here. I went along with them and just the conversations you will have sitting in the airport, in the hotel room.” When asked about how it

affects belonging he responded, “I would hope it affects it a great deal in a positive way.”

Brentwood also shared that shorter trips sometimes have just as much impact. He shared,

Sometimes even if I’ve just have speaking engagements. Sometimes I’ll grab a couple students to go with me and I’m speaking wherever in Indianapolis this weekend. Would you like to ride along? Some of those students who still keep in touch with me are the students that went to those workshops with me.

Professor Wadsworth agreed that informal mentoring happened often at conventions and short trips with students. The sharing of an experience seemed to be the key in these interactions.

Professor Wadsworth added that he sees these informal relationships get built at sporting events, hockey games, football games, basketball games and for him specifically he took students to the Lord of the Rings movies when they were released.

*Professors (Riverside South).* Professors at the southern campus confirmed that several unassuming events created environments for informal mentoring to take place. Williamson described it this way, “A sporting event, a student will come sit beside me and say, can you, I need to talk to you about something and you know it happens like that.” Taylor added “sporting events really help.” Lawson also mentioned basketball games and soccer games and shared, “There’s an attempt by many of us to be very present.”

Again, conventions and retreats are important to the professors in creating informal mentoring moments. Lawson explained that one leadership conference is him and students in a van 15 hours together to their destination. He shared, “As for community development, I’ve been on those events and I’ve seen the dividends that they pay, in regard to that.” Williamson

described the missions convention trip that she leads every year in this same way as being impactful for the faculty and student relationship.

Professor Taylor and Mills added that community events are an important part of the informal mentoring relationship. They see benefit in promoting or sometimes organizing extracurricular events for the students. Professor Taylor spends many weekends attending church in multiple locations with her students. She finds this as a critical way to connect with students. Professor Mills organizes an extracurricular sporting event every year and recruits students to join him. He also sees these events as a way to connect and mentor students.

Professor Taylor and Professor Bryant perceived the dining hall to be a great place for these informal mentoring moments to begin. Professor Taylor verified this point by saying, “Every Monday, before her class, I’m teaching until 5:30pm, so I have 1-hour dinner time, so my husband comes and has dinner with me. And then we would invite one of them (students) to sit with us and have dinner with us.”

**Spaces matter to the development of informal mentoring relationships.** When asked specifically where informal mentoring took place on these two campuses. The participants mentioned the campus coffee shop, the cafeteria, the gymnasium, and restaurants or coffee shops off campus. Overwhelmingly they all also mentioned spending time with each other in the professor offices. Professor and student alike alluded that some of these mentoring relationships would start in the larger spaces like the cafeteria but would eventually move to the professor offices where conversations would become deeper and more personal. As an observation, both of these campuses have recent facility additions. These new spaces were mentioned often by the professors and students as to new opportunities for informal mentoring.

*Students (Riverside North).* Levi spoke to having significant conversations with his professors in their offices. He is specifically interested in grad school and meets with a professor in many spaces on and off campus to have these discussions. Jane, in a discussion about faculty housing and then other places where faculty connections are made, stated, “I think other spaces would be like offices and that kind of thing, maybe even more than houses.” Gretchen, when discussing ways faculty could offer more opportunities for connection stated,

It goes a long way. If a professor says if you have any other questions if there’s something you’d like to discuss and I’m all, then I’d be more than happy to do that in my office or if you want to go grab a bite to eat or you want to get coffee.

Gretchen, however, is the commuter student who expressed that she sees other students making these connections but has not made the connections herself or gone to many professors offices to make these connections.

Jack, a happy and funny soul, mentioned connections he was making with the Spanish professor and specifically in her departments community lounge. Jack stated, “The intercultural studies office has a great couch, make sure you include the couch.”

*Students (Riverside South).* Carrie believed that the cafeteria was a significant place to spend time with professors. She shared, “The [cafeteria] is one of the most used spaces because having a meal, you know, the professor gives us extended amount of time with them.” Cindy in a reference to the cafeteria and café reiterated, “and now everyone kind of has this communal space where they are not doing schoolwork and where they’re communicating and socializing.”

Both of these ladies also expressed certain places on campus were critical to developing deeper relationships. When asked where these relationships developed, Cindy stated, “the offices” Carrie added, “offices are always open.”

What the offices looked like also mattered to some of the students. Cindy verified this sentiment by sharing that professors need to have welcoming environments for their office space. This is one thing that drew Cindy into her favorite professors office. “I feel very comfortable in [her professors] office. If you look in her office, she has like a very comfy couch and like a little waterfall and warm colors and everything about it. It’s just very welcoming.” Jamie added to the conversation in sharing, “They create an environment where students can come to their office whenever they need or whether it’s helping their homework or just to talk about their week or something they’re going through.” One of the unique stories came from Linda where she told of a professor who has activities in her office for the students to work through while they are visiting her. Linda said,

my professor laid out a huge puzzle on a table and students will just drop by to fix that puzzle. And as soon as you finish this puzzle, should get to take us out to dinner because they’ve done this puzzle. She doesn’t let the students just do the puzzle. She started talking and then that’s how she mentors.

Once again, talking to staff members is just as critical to student well-being as talking to a faculty member. Ben expressed gratitude toward a staff member and the willingness of her to open her office to have these sacred conversations. Ben shared, “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve sat right here in this office with [Kelly]. [Kelly] has been amazing for my mental health as

well as my physical health.” Ben also added that when he approaches a faculty member in their office he is never turned away.

*Professors (Riverside North).* One of the biggest additions to this campus was the addition of a new athletic and recreation center. This has opened up spaces on the northern campus for informal mentoring and the professors noted this addition. Harris exclaimed, “I think, honestly, the biggest cultural change for us right this instance is the ARC, not as an athletic building but as the front part of the building as a student gathering space.” Within that conversation, Harris also opined we should be thinking about how we design spaces. He suggested filling new spaces with high backed booths for more private conversations. Sanders and Brentwood also mentioned the ARC, the cafeteria, the underground café, and the offices as space for mentoring opportunities. All of these professors also talked about having open door policies for their students which is also reflected in the student interviews on this subject. Wadsworth commented that “much happens in the office. However, the most important meetings that ever happen on any, in any institution are the ones that take place in the hall.”

*Professors (Riverside South).* The southern campus also had the addition of a new dining hall and café and this resonated with the faculty as places to have informal mentoring relationships. Taylor enthusiastically stated, “With the addition of the dining hall, [interactions with students] through the roof. Because now we’re eating together. And the café, we can hang out with one another and just drink coffee. We can invite ourselves into their circles.” Lawson added, “It’s why I go and eat in the cafeteria. That’s where you get to have informal relationships and just be on campus.” Bryant continued when speaking about the new spaces, “For one thing, it opens up a whole new meeting space and a whole extra place to be. And I

think there's something about food in sharing food around a table." Bryant also mentioned that she is currently on sabbatical but still eats in the new cafeteria 3 to 4 times a week.

Mills and Williamson offered new ideas to where to make meaningful connections with students. Mills shared that his office was a significant place to have important conversations but added, "If I want a serious conversation with a student, okay, the best place to do that, is the [local diner] or at Five Guys." Williamson thought a quieter place was appropriate to make connections with students. She shared that the chancellor of the college taught her that some students do not hang out in the cafeteria or the café and some students may not attend the sporting events. He told her that the library is where you will find that connection with some students. She offered that she now makes a point a couple times a week to walk in the library and check on students.

The common theme throughout all the interview data, with all the participants was that the office space was critical to creating lasting in-depth meaningful relationships. There were numerous intimate stories about connections made, informal mentoring, and spiritual guidance taking place in the private offices of the professors.

**Students and professors perceived positive benefits of small campus size.** A theme that appeared less frequently, though still notable, was the idea that these two campuses are relatively small and that affects how the students and faculty view informal mentoring relationships and interact within them. Most generally the size of the campus was seen as a strength for both students and faculty. This section will be organized slightly different due to lack of responses and will not include separate sections for students and professors.



Ben (Riverside South) happily claimed, “Being at a small university like this where the faculty is actually invested in the students is amazing. It’s everything my first college experience wasn’t.” Jane (Riverside North) added, “also, just obviously the small campus helps a lot too.” Gretchen (Riverside North), a commuter student in discussing the ability to find connection, though as a commuter she had a more difficult time finding those connections said, “I think that is because it is such a small campus to and there are so many people who live here.”

Likewise, the several professors at both campuses saw the small size of the community as positive. Sanders (Riverside North) declared, “I think that small college campus community is an advantage because faculty and students can do things, can be closer knit as opposed to being at a research one university.” Williamson (Riverside South) expounded, “I think our campus, because of how small it is, I think we tend to be closer.” It must be noted that the southern campus is much smaller than the northern campus by about 800 students. With that in mind, Bryant (Riverside South) said, “Here we are a small institution and one of the basic things that small institutional private instruction ought to offer is really good faculty student rapport.” Taylor (Riverside South) also confirmed this statement on rapport by adding, “I think is driven by how small we are, yet you know we’re not a very large campus. And so, the ratio is fairly decent. And I think this has really improved the faculty student relationship.”

Though mostly positive there was some slight disagreement that it was all good. Wadsworth (Riverside North) lamented, “You can get on each other’s nerves. I mean you see each other every day. You’re eating in the cafeteria; you pass each other in the hall. There is fatigue that eventually sets in.” Another negative might be the limited number of professors.

Lawson (Riverside South) cautioned, “We are a smaller campus, Like I will have the same student you know multiple times over their course, not just as a freshman.”

**Faculty housing and its role in informal mentoring relationships.** One of the unique aspects of this university is that the northern campus offers on-campus housing for their faculty as part of their benefit package and the southern campus does not offer this benefit. The students and faculty were not asked specifically about the aspects of this benefit but were asked about their perceptions of being invited into the homes of faculty. Often without even hearing this question, the student and faculty perceptions on faculty housing or having students into their homes would rise to the surface. Interestingly, the administrators at this university have been having discussions about how best to utilize faculty housing and if this benefit still fits within their mission and financial model.

*Students (Riverside North).* Distinctively, the students at the northern campus overwhelming were in favor of campus housing for faculty. This is most likely due to the fact that this is what they have known for their entire educational career at this university. The students at the southern campus did not have this experience. Levi, the driven yet fun-loving student said it like this, “I love having my professors on campus, I walk by my professors house and screaming their name at the top of my lungs, all the time. I might annoy the snot out of them, but I don’t care.” Levi shared that he is in a faculty members home at least once a month. Jack without hesitation proclaimed, “I love it, I love it...I think the best thing that can happen with this campus is that the teachers live on the campus.” Jack described being in a faculty members homes 3 times a semester and would love for it to happen more often. When asked if he has ever shown up on a professors doorstep unannounced, Jack proclaimed, “I think that is

very rude” indicating he would never think of doing this. Jane suggested, “And so one of the benefits of them living on campus is that they can have students over for dinner or and just have that relationship. We have a lot of faculty living on campus and so that makes them available more.” When asked where they perceived informal mentoring taking place most on campus, Jane and Gretchen both declared primarily in faculty homes and commented that they are in faculty homes 2 to 3 times a semester.

***Students (Riverside South).*** For the students at the northern campus, most of their faculty live within shouting distance of the main dormitories. They walk by their homes on a daily basis. They see the professors kids playing in the yard. This is not the case for the southern campus. All the professors on the southern campus live 10, 20, and 40 minutes away. This creates a very different communal environment. That being said, the student’s still perceive being invited into faculty’s homes as part of the culture and shared how often they might enjoy that privilege. Cindy recounted, “The professors themselves, take the initiative to like invite students over to their houses sometimes, probably once or twice a year.” Jamie reported that she has been invited probably once a semester. Ben disclosed he had been invited by at least 50% of his professors into their home. Ben highlighted though that several of them live far away and so it is sometimes difficult to get over to their homes. Jamie estimated she had been to a professor house once a semester.

***Professors (Riverside North).*** Though an undeniable aspect of the northern campus, the faculty recognized the mentoring benefits at a more remarkable rate than the northern students. For these professors, the housing benefit is very much a part of the culture and possibly an expectation. An expectation of the benefit for working for this university but also a cultural or

even administrative expectation that they will be more engaged with students because they live on campus. Faculty were ready to talk about living on campus and what that meant for them and for the students.

Professor Brentwood who has lived in campus housing for several years shared a story of having a formal mentoring group of students in his home the very morning of the interview. He recounted,

We had 12 students in our home today. The beginning of the semester we had them in our home for dessert. This was before we ever even met for class. It was kind of awkward. They didn't know each other yet. And the contrast of the atmosphere of the first time and today, it was unreal. I mean, today it was just laughing and stories, joking. It almost brought a tear to my eye. You know it was 3 months ago right, yeah and the relationships we're able to build with them in this short amount of time.

There was genuine joy in the informal mentoring relationships him and his wife were able to build over the course of 3 months. Later when talking about belonging Brentwood insisted, "I want this to come out in your dissertation but being in our home is a piece of it. There's nothing like sitting down over a cup of coffee at home and talking with the student"

Professor Harris illustrated a story about Thomas Jefferson and his design of the University of Virginia. He said Jefferson painstakingly designed his university around the quadrangle and common living quarters for professors and students. Every building and home had a front porch to facilitate these mentoring relationships. He also recounted that, "All American colleges into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was just a fact that you lived on campus. It was just normal. And it's kind of refreshing that this university kept that value."

When asked about strengths of the faculty and student relationship, Professor Wadsworth declared, “One way is faculty live on campus, which you would think would be quite an imposition, but students tend to be very respectful of faculty space. They don’t just go knocking on doors and you know.” Professor Sanders affirmed this sentiment saying, “I think that’s the reason why they’re doing that, to foster a sense of connectedness and belongingness that goes with our mission, and that goes with the fact that we’re a Christian University.”

With faculty in such close proximity, there might be a fear that students would be knocking on your door all the time. However, this does not seem to be the case. As Wadsworth stated above, “Students tend to be very respectful of faculty space.” Sanders reported that she was warned that students might take advantage of her time because she lived on campus but that this has not translated into them showing up at her door unannounced. Brentwood also concluded, “It’s really not been a problem at all for us.”

Though these professors have never experienced this intrusion, the university has been in existence for over 150 years and there are probably untold stories of students showing up late at night waking up a professor or knocking on the door unexpectedly. Professor Harris had this happen only one time. He explained it was a snowy day and classes had been cancelled. He lives in campus housing; however, his house is farther away through a patch of woods on the other side of a field. He said there was a group of students who trailed through the woods that day covered in snow and did knock on the door unannounced. He and his wife scrambled and got out of her pajamas, they made some hot chocolate, and sat by the fire with the students. He said that it is the only time in more than 5 years that this happened and also suggested that this group of students are a little embarrassed that they imposed on them.

*Professors (Riverside South).* The difference in the housing benefit package is not lost on the southern campus professors. The northern campus assumed the southern campus several years ago and within the agreement for this acquisition, housing would not be provided. There is also not enough land on the southern campus to build adequate faculty housing and to purchase housing within the community would be too cost prohibitive. With that said, the professors of the southern campus still desire to have students into their homes to build these informal mentoring relationships.

Professor Bryant believed, “On the northern campus faculty live mostly, you know on site. But here, at least you know a lot of us live close enough where students can come to homes and whatever. And I noticed that faculty across the board are very generous and open and invite students to have events that happen at home.” She also thought that 90% of faculty are inviting students into their home.

When asked how often he is inviting students to his home, Professor Mills said, “Good grief, it’s so frequent I don’t know that I could quantify for you.” Mills suggested that he believes only 20% are inviting students into their homes. However, he admits he may be out of touch with that number because he does not feel as connected to the campus as much as in years past. Professor Mills has been very active in the past about creating mentoring moments in his home. He created a TED talk like leadership forum where he would invite students to his back porch to hear listen to leaders in the area. In the past, has invited students over for Thanksgiving and for other meals during the year.

Professor Taylor thought her desire to have students over is born out of two professors who model that for her. She recalled,

I really like having them over for at the house. I know this was driven by my two of my previous professors in college. Once every two months, I would be invited into the home. But it's such a different feel, you know, when the wife is there and she's making you hot tea with biscuits and all that, you know, I get to know the family. And I think I model my mentoring in that way to have them over at the house. I have them over no less than three times a semester

Taylor often invites her entire school over to her home for Christmas parties or for general social events.

Williamson and Lawson shared that not living on campus and living in a metropolitan area does have its challenges. Williamson verbalized, "Finding time to have everyone over is difficult with student and family schedules." Lawson spoke to the cost of living close to campus and then the toll road costs for students. He articulated,

You know, I wouldn't mind having students in my home for a meal or something like that. But they have to drive 30 minutes and may, you know, pay four bucks for tolls.

And for students, that's a little more difficult, especially as many of them, not all of them have cars. So, the distance creates a barrier.

Lawson also expressed that he would not mind if the main campus knew about these difficulties when considering the benefits for professors of the southern campus.

**Negotiating blurred lines and boundaries.** There is an evidentiary closeness between the professors and the students on these faith-based campuses. This closeness and intentionality of building meaningful long-lasting relationships has benefits and also disadvantages. One of those disadvantages is that the line between professor and friend sometimes gets blurred.

*Students (Riverside North).* Levi finds that these blurred lines have both healthy and unhealthy aspects to the university experience. He advocated that,

Let the social aspect of our relationship not in the classroom kind of merge a little bit. I think it creates for better classroom experience. The ARC. I mean it lets boundaries down, it lets guards down and it lets us interact in a way that's healthy in the classroom. He countered his own thought by saying, "Those boundaries are let down; possibly can lead me to, not inappropriate but informal relationships, you know, making sure I'm not treating them as just one of my buddies, but they also might, they're an authority figure in my life."

Jack affirmed this thought,

"I think sometimes it can be a little too relaxed. Like between teachers and students just because they do live with us and they we eat in the same dining hall and we go to the same places on campus. You can get tired of each other. And the closer we get, the line of respect sort of blurs a little bit."

*Students (Riverside South).* The students on the southern campus spoke often how there is a balancing act between wanting professors to be their friend, at the same time, understanding that they are to be highly respected as professor.

Jamie verbalized, "I struggle to see like the difference between you're just a professor. But, and then like you're my friend and someone that I can, I can go to." For Cindy she shared that she is mentored often by her favorite professor but is concerned that she is imposing on her. She confirmed this dichotomy by saying,



I feel like worried sometimes like that you know that's not her job. So, I don't want to impose, and you know she doesn't. She and she's my professor, she shouldn't have to help me with my emotional, you know, spiritual struggles.

Ben and Carrie viewed this conundrum as something that could cause animosity between faculty and student. Ben expressed his concern like this,

Sometimes the lines are blurred between students and the teacher. The informal relationship and especially friendships that are built between students and teachers and sometimes cause friction. So just sometimes just the blurred lines between friend and teacher can be a hassle.

Carrie agreed with this friction in sharing, "The line between being a friend and also being a professor, because, like, for example, a student might have animosity toward a professor for giving them a bad grade or something."

*Professors (Riverside North).* The blurred lines varied for the professors from thoughts on grading papers, to faculty living on campus, to maintain the respect as professor. Brentwood articulated, "I think one of the biggest challenges, then becomes the line between. But yes, I am still your professor...I am still going to grade your paper. I am still going to mark things wrong." Brentwood confirmed an earlier comment from one of his colleagues and said, "Because I care about you. I'm going to hold you to a standard" Brentwood shared that some students respond well to this challenge and some shut down. He suggested the students are more likely respond well when he has built a relationship with them. Wadsworth, when speaking about personality types, believed what lines professors allow to become blurred might be based on personality. Sanders shared that because students see the professors several times a week and they live in

such close proximity that the expectations of students become too demanding. Students forget that professors need their space too and cannot be available 24/7.

*Professors (Riverside South).* Williamson also spoke to the expectation from the student that the professors are always available. She expressed, “Sometimes it’s ridiculous when they’re texting me to ask for like extensions...I’ll be like, well, you know, 10 points for trying but no.” However, when asked if this was a challenge, her response was No. Williamson shared another side to this blurred lines theme when it comes to students being frustrated with other faculty. She said, “It’s hard in such a small school to have student’s complain about other faculty or other classes.” She was adamant that she does not allow students to sit in her office and criticize other professors. To her this is crossing the line between professor and friend.

Taylor looked at this from a different angle. Her hard line is she does not allow students to call her by her first name. She perceived this as a violation of the respect she deserves as their professor first. She said she doesn’t allow this buddy relationship until after they graduate. She thought it was humorous that there are specific students who after they graduate will walk right up to her and yell out her first name.

**Perceptions on the hindrances to connection.** The majority of informal mentoring themes that were identified by the participants were positive aspects of living, working, and attending this university. However, the participants were also asked what might hinder informal mentoring on this campus. The responses from the professors and students varied but could be categorized into three areas: hindrances and caution, personality differences, and communication. In light of these three categories, this final section will be organized slightly differently into just student and faculty sections, however each person labeled accordingly.

***Students.***

*Hindrances and Caution.* Gretchen (Riverside North), the commuter student, expressed a general hindrance to connection due to the fact that she is a commuter and does not spend much time on campus. She articulated that she does not eat meals in the cafeteria and suggested that people who do find the connections with faculty more available. She stated, “I think that I probably maybe haven’t done that as much as other people have just because I don’t; a lot of people here eat, they have, they have their meal plan.” Mentioned in an earlier section, Gretchen was identified by faculty as someone who could benefit from finding connection on campus and was given several meal tickets (25 or more) to have lunch in the cafeteria. She stated, “That gesture really made me feel connected.” Gretchen also mentioned that her other hindrance to connection is that she often has different viewpoints than her professors and stated, “I’m a little, little, not afraid but I get a little nervous about going and expressing a different viewpoint.”

Jack (Riverside North) recommended that students get invited into faculty homes more often. He stated that he was in a faculty members home 3 times a semester. However, he commented that he did not feel like he was ever invited over. He would like to have invitations more often.

Levi (Riverside North) did not see any hindrances to creating relationships. He remarked, “I don’t think there has ever been a single barrier.” However, he did have one suggestion, he thought it, “Would be good for faculty to build relationships outside of spiritual things. Sometimes I just want to talk about I mean, I don’t know, a restaurant that I went and ate at the other night.”

Linda’s (Riverside South) concerns were more about cultural differences. Linda, an international student thought that cultural diversity, religious background, ethnicity, way of life,

and socio-economic backgrounds impact whether students and faculty can connect. She described, “And so, there are students who can’t approach a certain professor because they don’t know how to, okay, again, because of cultural diversity.” Linda also recognized that family responsibilities and busy schedules can hinder the time required for informal mentoring relationships to be built.

Cindy and Jamie (Southern Students) both recognized that our current cautious culture might impact the ability for professors to feel comfortable making personal connections with students. Cindy cautioned,

I think part of it is maybe just like a modern kind of stigma of, you know, you want to be very careful these days about how you’re perceived and inviting you know people younger than you into your homes. Just being very careful about how they’re perceived, especially in a Christian community. Being alone with the student, you have to be very careful with it and how it’s perceived and especially if it was like, you know, different genders.

Jamie confirmed this cautiousness by saying,

Definitely, just the world we live in. There’s so much you have to be cautious about and boundaries set in place. And so, I think that you have to be very careful that it’s groups of people and making sure that there will be a lot of people there so that nothing can be like nothing can happen or it’s just a safe environment with boundaries and protection all around.

Though a cautiousness about safety and proper perceptions were mentioned by only two participants, the students recognized a valid concern in our society. Professors and students do

not want to place themselves in situations where they could be seen as having an inappropriate relationship or interaction. This seems significantly relevant at a Christian liberal arts institution.

*Personality Differences Impact Connection.* Personality of the professor also appeared to be a hindrance into making connections or at least students were more cautious about invading the space of some professors. Levi (Riverside North) mentioned this aspect of connection, “My introverted professors. I want to give them more space. I want to only go knock on their doors when I know if they’re open office hours when they’re expecting students.” Gretchen (Riverside North) added, “There’s some professors that I feel much more comfortable talking, talking with than others.” Jamie (Riverside South) disclosed she does not always feel comfortable to approach professors to talk about things. Cindy (Riverside South) confirmed this sentiment by sharing that personality differences impact her feeling of connection to some professors more than others.

*Communication.* Lack of communication also seemed to be a concern. Two students from the southern campus thought that professors should be more proactive in communicating with the students that these informal relationships and connections are available to them. Jamie (Riverside South) in her concern of not feeling comfortable approaching professors also said, “There needs to be more communication from them and invitations from them to stop by the office or go get coffee.” Ben (Riverside South) thinks that this type of communication needs to happen more often because some students do not reach out of their own and need to be prompted. He concluded,

Communication is an issue on campus. They’re not advertised that these relationships are possible. Just the simple fact that some students especially the younger students who

aren't willing to go out of their way. They sit down, shut up, and try not to make eye contact; students especially just don't seek that out, they don't look for that relationship and they don't know what's possible.

Ben suggested sometimes it might be good to make a common announcement about relationships and let the students know that professors are willing to make connections with them or that their offices are always open.

*Professors.* The professors of both campuses recognized that there were several hindrances to making relationship connections to students. These ranged from work overload, to fatigue with being around each other all the time, to family situations, to hiring professors who are mission fit, to restructuring of core classes, in addition to the organizational differences when the northern campus acquired the southern campus. This section will again be broken into three sections: hindrances and caution, personality, and communication.

*Hindrances and Caution.* One of the common thoughts that permeated the northern campus professors conversation was that they are always with the students. Contrary to some of the themes highlighted before the professors might be more guarded with their personal space and discourage students from getting to know them on a deeper level. Sanders (Riverside North) articulated,

I live on campus; I work on campus and I would like to still have some kind of privacy. If you know everything about me as involved in the university and everybody knows every little thing about me. That puts me at a disadvantage. Maybe I should say maybe they just make assumptions, because everything is so close knit here.

A fellow colleague advised her one day, “Sometimes because we’re so close: students can just, you know make assumptions and they’re you know they don’t respect boundaries.” She clarified that they do not show up to her house, however, they take advantage of her office time or stopping her when she walks across campus. She added, “Sometimes it is not enough, they don’t think it is enough, you know.” Wadsworth (Riverside North) in referencing the closeness affirmed this demand by saying, “There is a fatigue that eventually sets in.”

Harris (Riverside North) brought up an interesting point that professors and students typically connect because of shared academic interest. When asked to describe mentoring relationships on campus he articulated this by saying,

They’re good but like all schools faculty tend to gravitate spend the majority of the time with students who are really good academically. So, the danger that end up with a lot of the mentoring being sucked up by the same upper echelon students.

The result, the students who may not fare well academically might be left behind in developing meaningful mentoring relationships.

The southern campus professors spoke often to the amount of time they were spending with the students. The southern students also confirmed this aspect of the campus culture in their interviews. However, the southern professors did not relay this as a hindrance to making connections to students nor did they talk about having fatigue from being with the students all the time.

Another common hindrance the professors noted was the demands placed on them in service to the university and the amount of time they can devote to developing relationships. Harris (Riverside North) expressed, “Over the last three years, been trying to press into all of our

margins everywhere we can. I'm doing without an administrative assistant this semester. It's taking 10 hour, adding 10 hours to my workload." He added, "This has been my worst mentoring year in five years here." Taylor (Riverside South), in speaking about joining students more often in the communal spaces. She remarked that a lack of time is a hindrance. She elaborated, "We're so busy and we do multiple tasks here. I wish I had more time to invite them, even more to my home." For one professor, finding time to sit with students is problematic because class time seems to interfere. Mills stated, "I don't go to the cafeteria that often. It's just a function that I have class during the lunch hour."

Simple things also get in the way of creating informal mentoring moments. Several professors discussed figuring out schedules and family life obligations. For the southern campus professors recognized that transportation, travel, and tolls are an issue in fostering good relationships for students and faculty alike. Williamson (Riverside South) even suggested that how they arrange tables in the dining hall can be a hindrance to making connections. The tables were originally all round tables which to her created clichés and silos. Several faculty and some students encouraged the cafeteria leaders to set up long tables and create more opportunities for faculty and students to sit together. Other professors suggested that, like students, the professors all sit together during chapel or cluster in the cafeteria together and they need to break that habit. They need to sit among the students more often.

Harris (Riverside North) and Bryant (Riverside South) also shared some insight into cultural changes that are hindering relationship building. Harris pondered, "I think today's students are probably more broken. Smartphones. Rapid changes in our culture, you know, off the chart anxiety." Bryant added, "Once upon a time, as a Christian institution, was the students



reason for being here. We're a lot more pinpointed. Okay with greater diversity and offerings. Changing economy, so many factors involved." She added, "Maybe admissions, maybe they can get in here where they can't get into community college or another school. We're an institution where they can play sports. An increasing number of athletes."

Mills (Riverside South) perceived one hindrance is the acquisition by the northern campus and the subsequent restructuring of how classes are organized now. Mills mentioned a silo-ing effect taking place among faculty and students. He explained, before the merger all faculty at the southern campus interacted and disciplined most students. He believes now that "students are not mentored across the board like they used to be." Even himself is not sure what happens across campus anymore. He used to see professors taking students to lunch 3 to 4 times a week but does not seem to see that anymore. He admits he may be out of touch with what is going on, but he does not see things like they used to be. He commented, "We don't have professors leading discipleship groups anymore. I don't see professors regularly attending chapel like we used to."

*Personality Differences Impact Connection.* The professors suggested that personality played a key role in building relationships with students. These conversations about personalities moved beyond even being an introverted or extroverted person and carried into certain professors might be more mission fit for the university than others. At the very least, they suggested, the administrators should take into account future hiring of mission fit personalities for professor and staff jobs.

Brentwood (Riverside North) when speaking about the culture of the university advocated,

It will continue if we continue to hire faculty who are here because their love for students. We're not a research university. If we hire faculty who do research, students then become an annoyance. Informal mentoring can continue is when we hire faculty who are here because of their love for students.

Lawson (Riverside South) thinks often about how he is, "intentionally creating space for these relationships to develop, that sort of thing. He added to Brentwood's sentiment that, "You have to hire people who have a desire to do this work and not everyone does." Mills (Riverside South) was a little more forthcoming and shared, "I don't understand how you sign up to teach here and to disciple students and they refuse to lead discipleship groups. I don't get that." He continued, "I don't understand what you think you're doing here, as professor, unless your belief is, I just show up and teach classes and go home to collect a paycheck."

Williamson (Riverside South) and Harris (Riverside North) acknowledged that some professors are just naturally better relationship builders. Williamson disclosed,

I'm one of the lucky ones that this comes really naturally to me. So, I have students that come in here and do their homework that they just get comfortable enough that this set up so that when you're sitting in that chair, there's a space, a desk, do creative work.

She suggested that administrators might want to consider creating more programmatic mentoring programs specifically for those professors who relationship building doesn't come naturally.

Harris tended to think that introverts make better relationship builders. When talking about his wife he commented, "My experience is that introverts tend to be better mentors than extroverts. They are much more focused on the other person than they are in their own responses." He recommended, "We need to be well-diggers, we need deep well relationships." In reflecting on

his own personality Harris responded, “I think, for whatever reason, I tend to be a safe person, I think I have, I have some sort of, a you’re safe if you’re gay and Dr. Harris is safe to talk to thing going on.”

*Communication.* Better communication among administrators, faculty and students rose out of the discussions with what hinders informal mentoring relationships on this campus. Some of the professors also suggested formal programmatic communication would help with creating these types of relationships. Harris (Riverside North) suggested,

First, I think just administratively, we just need to always be talking about it always be providing training always providing incentive. Even structuring some of our smaller classes in a way that are not requiring and paying you to mentor, but we’re kind of helping set it up where it's possible to do

Sanders (Riverside North) shared that the president is encouraging faculty to be aware of their surroundings. She reported the president is, “Encouraging us, if you see a student, you notice who is constantly by himself or herself eating along in the dining hall, go up to them.” One conversation led to a discussion about commuter students and how Gretchen a previous interviewee perceived herself as not having much connection to the campus. Brentwood (Riverside North) observed that, “It may take more intentionality. And even honestly just an awareness of who the commuters are.” There currently did not seem to be any communication where professors know who a commuter student, a non-traditional student, or a traditional student is.

Lawson (Riverside South) believed administrators needed to communicate better on what is most important at the university. Traditionally, teaching, research, and service are the central

responsibilities of faculty members. Professor Lawson suggested this might need to shift if we want to be an institution who really values these faculty and student relationships. He described an alternative view,

As institutions, you have to decide what you're going to reward, because one of my concerns is I'm really interested in teaching and I'm really interested in mentoring students. That's what I want to do but that takes an inordinate amount of time. And so, if you are a standout professor who spends time developing community and making the campus, the type of places that retains students that, but also that helps grow students in all the ways that we think mentoring can do that. They need to make sure that there's ways to monitor that and recognize that otherwise we will all do the work that gets us rewarded.

Mills verbalized a similar concern in a comparison to how things used to be before the acquisition by the northern campus. In describing how classes were structured before and how professors were heavily engaged with all students Mills said, "It meant that we had a serious vested interest in how students were doing. And we've all kind of understood that our job is to disciple students." He continued, "There's not as much student faculty engagement, I think, as there used to be, just my impression." Mills also shared some frustration that the original southern campus used to recruit students who wanted to be in ministry that also happened to be athletes. Now it appeared to him that the admissions team recruited athletes to be athletes.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the findings of interviews with nine students and nine faculty at two faith-based universities in the eastern United States. As a narrative inquiry, the

first section of this chapter included 18 narratives of each individual interview. I gave the reader a snapshot of the background of these participants along with their current status as student or professor and a short vignette on their perceptions of informal mentoring relationships at this campus. In the second section, I presented the themes discovered during the interview process and organized them into eight sections. Those sections included the general discovery of the theme and quotes from the participants that supported those discoveries. These themes and discoveries helped answer the research questions.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion and Implications**

### **Chapter Introduction**

In this research study, I examined the perceptions of nine students and nine faculty members at two eastern United States faith-based liberal arts universities. Through in-depth interviews and communal space observations, I discovered eight commonalities among the participant conversations. Those commonalities or themes have also been discussed in previous literature and are supported by these findings. Additionally, these commonalities could be used to support program creation, building space design, and future conversation among administration in how best to approach informal mentoring between faculty and student. Included in this chapter, I also indicated further areas of research to build upon what was discovered during this research project.

Riverside University North was founded in the late 1800s with Christian ministry at its core and other vocations in its view. Founded by a husband and wife, the university started on their farm in the eastern United States. The university is committed to the virtues of the Christian faith and has a dual mission of training young men and women for Christian ministry and liberal arts vocations. Over the past 125 years, Riverside University has grown to over 200 faculty and staff and over 1300 students.

Riverside South was founded in the mid 1970s under the same virtues of Christian ministry and vocational training. The school prospered for most of the 1990s adding programs and housing for students. After years of financial stress Riverside North, an affiliated university, stepped in to acquire the college, assumed all the debt, restructured the university and saved it from closing.

## **Discussion**

In this section, I examined the alignment between the previous research on faculty-student informal mentoring and the data gathered through in-depth interviews with 18 participants at two faith-based liberal arts universities. The themes identified through these interviews collectively answered all five of the research questions which included:

1. How do students perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
2. How do faculty perceive the informal faculty-student mentoring relationship at a small faith-based liberal arts university?
3. What contributing factors encourage or discourage the faculty-student informal mentoring relationship?
4. How do students perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?
5. How do faculty perceive on-campus faculty housing in relationship to informal mentoring?

Not one theme definitively answered each research question, instead, they all cohabitated together to create a narrative that intertwined together and satisfied each inquiry. Therefore, this section is organized in such a way where each theme informed a piece of the puzzle, contributed to answering the research questions and discussed accordingly. Additionally, each themed section includes suggestions for future practice. However, we must start with faith. For all aspects of Riverside University must be understood within that framework.

**The intersection of faith.** The culture of Riverside University must be looked at within the framework of faith development. Faith and spirituality were weaved into the fabric of every aspect of daily life, education, care, concern, investment of time, and relationship building. As the mission of Riverside University was one rooted in Christian mission, a sense of calling, and values, it was not surprising that a majority of the participants in this research noted the profound influence of faith on their selection of Riverside University as their university of choice for employment or attendance. As Daloz-Parks (2011) mentioned we all need a group of people where we belong and for these professors and students the community at Riverside University was the tribe in which they belonged.

Many participants spoke to the professors being involved in their spiritual life, specifically praying for them, attending chapel together, or giving them space to ask significant questions about spirituality or moral issues. A faith community, especially a university faith community, is one where students are allowed to explore, ask questions, and question their early thoughts of faith, spirituality, religion, and life. It is also a place where there are boundaries to remain safe physically, mentally, and spiritually (Daloz-Parks, 2011).

Both professors and students incorporated the language of faith in their narratives as it related to why they do what they do or why they appreciated the actions of their mentors. The commitment to faith and calling was central to the DNA of Riverside University and was evident in the relationships they sought to form and develop. It may have perhaps even transcended the academic goals and mission of the various departments at the institution, instead relationships and mentoring took center stage in the professor-student relationship. Informal mentoring was seen throughout the interview narratives as an act of spirituality guiding young proteges towards



a deeper meaning of faith and the divine. The caring, nurturing, relationship building culture of Riverside University would be significantly altered without the intermingling of faith, spirituality, and educational training and must be the lens in which the following themes are seen and explored.

**An intentionality to care and concern.** One perception of the informal faculty-student mentoring relationships at Riverside University is that simple acts of kindness, care, and concern translated into senses of belonging for the professors and students alike and fostered positive perceptions of informal mentoring relationships. This sense of belonging shared by both professors and students, and communicated in this research, portrayed a deep sense of shared mutual affection and affinity for their respective campus spaces and for each other. Professor Bryant shared a common sentiment, “They don’t care what you know until they know how much you care.”

Simple acts were mentioned often as a sign of caring for one another. Writing cards to encourage or to wish someone better health, taking someone chicken soup when a student was feeling ill, or faculty asking how they could pray for students that week were all signs to the professors and students that they cared for one another. The students in this study perceived their professors as supportive friends and leaders in their educational environment and the professors appeared to the students as never giving up on them. Supporting this evidence, Hawk and Lyons (2008) found the opposite was also true that students who perceived their professors as giving up on them was a direct result from a perceived lack of care. In Hawk and Lyon’s research they found that a perception of care was understood when professors took personal interest in the student by understanding and knowing them, encouraging them through verbal

exchanges, being consistent and continual in those exchanges, and creating safe environments to speak freely with one another. Likewise, the students and professors at Riverside University all supported these attributes throughout the interview process, some also mentioning financial help, or car rides to employment opportunities, and sometimes meeting the food needs of students. Also supported in the literature, higher-level positive perceptions of care and concern towards students were generally associated with increased student-faculty interactions outside of the classroom environment (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Milem & Berger, 1997).

Care and concern moved beyond simple acts of kindness and into areas of mental health and spiritual guidance. Levi (Riverside North) commented on how professors allow themselves to be vulnerable and are more than willing to talk about mental health, spiritual concerns and their own experiences. Cindy (Riverside North) also spoke of professors being concerned for the emotional health of the students. She recounted a story of someone navigating their sexuality and a professors willingness to help the student process their understanding. Hurd and Zimmerman (2014) found that when professors showed signs of care and developed close relationships with their students this had a direct impact on the students mental health.

The participants, especially the professors, identified significant intentionality in their efforts towards creating a community of care. Some of the interviews included conversations about specifically looking out for students who were disengaged or going out of their way to ask students how their day was going. Hawk and Lyons (2008) suggested that intentionality to creating a community of care involved being available often especially outside of the classroom, communicating that availability, and responding quickly to emails and communication. At

Riverside University these intentional acts were present and yet so much more like bringing chicken soup to an ill student.

There also appeared to be a built-in cultural aspect to care and concern which could be the result of students being invited into the professors homes, the small size of the campus, the investment of time from professors and intentionality of building relationships all of which will be discussed later. However, the other cultural aspect is that Riverside University is a faith-based campus and this attribute was mentioned often in the interview discussions. Professors mentioned praying for their students and being concerned for their spiritual well-being. There was mention of students calling professors in crisis instead of their own family members. Daloz-Parks (2011) argued that students need these professors and mentors in their life to navigate these troubling times in their faith. Daloz-Parks believed that college students are in a delicate faith development phase where they are venturing out on their own faith journey but need guidance from wiser individuals especially during times of crisis. Professor Bryant (Riverside South) added that Jesus was a physical human being with the same physical, mental, and spiritual concerns as her students. For her, the very nature of being in a Christian community and Christian college meant that it was her responsibility to look after these students not just mentally and physically but also spiritually. Among others, Carrie (Riverside North) specifically confirmed that her perception of care increased due to living in a Christian community. This connects back to the central theme discovered in the research that the actions taken by professors and students are a result of their convictions and virtues defined by faith.

*Implications for future practice.* Intentionality towards showing concern for one another is part personality and part an acute awareness of the needs of another person. The personality of

students and professors most likely will not change over the course of four years. However, an understanding of awareness can be adjusted with conversations and trainings. Administrators would do well to have reoccurring conversations with professors on the benefits of caring for their students. Providing training on the intentionality of care might also improve the students perceptions of care and concern. As seen in this research, the students' sense of belonging and affinity for the school and professor was substantial. Professors cared and the students noticed. Additionally, Hurd and Zimmerman (2014) advocated, professors need to be conscious of the effect caring relationships have on mental health for their students. Training and ongoing conversations would help with this awareness.

**The strength of who we are is defined by our relationships.** Relationships at Riverside University are built through the continual genuine care of professors, staff and administration, the willingness of them to give significant amounts of time to the students, and the intentionality of creating relationships with the students. Likewise, students act reciprocally towards the professors. Professor Brentwood exclaimed that relationships were, "One of the strongest characteristics, strongest aspects of this university." Informal mentoring relationships mattered deeply between professors and students at Riverside University. These relationships developed over several interactions at sporting events, dinner engagements, educational trips, conversations in the professor offices and in many cases noted as long-lasting friendships. A 2014 Gallup-Purdue index report indicated that graduates who perceived their professors cared about them as a person, developed relationships and mentored them in pursuing their goals and dreams, and made them excited about learning, felt the greatest sense of purpose in their current work (Ray & Kafka, 2014). A more recent Gallup-Purdue index report indicated that 64% of

graduates who had a mentor during college indicated that this person was a professor (Marken & Auter, 2018). Tinto (2012) building off the work of Chickering (1993) suggested that developing intimate interpersonal relationships and lasting friendships are a critical element of students finishing all four years of college and making it to graduation. My data confirmed existing research in that students at Riverside University perceived themselves to have intimate interpersonal relationships with their professors. Their connection to the professors and sense of belonging to the campus culture permeated every conversation.

What did it mean to have an informal mentoring relationship for the students and faculty at Riverside University? Levinson et al. (1978) proposed that mentoring is the depth of relationship and character of two people in a relationship. Professors and students at Riverside University intentionally and continually were developing these informal mentoring relationships. This correlated to McKinsey's (2016) research where the researcher found for informal mentoring to take place, the relationship between professor and student must be a continued effort by participants. The responses from the participants continued to indicate that these relationships were not created out of a formal program but instead a natural part of the culture of the university. Jack (Riverside North Student) described these relationships as "somebody that knows more than you, just invites you to live life with them almost like an ancient teacher, student role or like you just live life with them and like hang out with them all the time just to learn how they live." Jack's insight was not too far removed from several researchers who found that mentors were those who have traveled the path before and warned the young protégé' about the dangers ahead. Those dangers are avoided by the informal mentoring relationship built by teachers, pastors, professors, and friends who share life experience and gave guidance to the

student (Daloz, 1999; Levinson et al., 1978; Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Peddy, 1998). Richly evident throughout the two campuses of Riverside University were these deep interpersonal relationships built between professors and students. Levi (Riverside North Student) observed that the professors desired to have a relationship with students and this sentiment was at the heart of everything they did. Ben (Riverside South Student) commented “It’s discipleship making on the academic level.” Professor Williamson (Riverside South) commented that the students she has poured into over the past 20 years still come to her for advice. Again, confirmation of McKinsey’s (2016) research that mentoring relationships are taking place when there is a continuing relationship past graduation. Through anecdotal conversations, I can also confirm graduates of Riverside University speaking often of the impact the professors had on their lives.

Research in the areas of mentoring identified some of these same aspects of this study’s findings in that mentoring is about personal, professional, and spiritual growth. Mentoring looks different depending on the individuals involved and mentoring always involves interpersonal relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Daloz, 1999; Jacobi, 1991; Levinson et al., 1978).

Developing a culture of relationship building is critical to helping students navigate their academic, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002) when researching educational relationships, discovered three themes perceived by faculty and students as effective in informal mentoring relationships. 1. Students and Faculty desired environments that were open, supportive, comfortable, respectful, safe and an enjoyable interpersonal environment. 2. Students desired to interact and work with each other. 3. Students desired to develop networks and have a mentoring friendship with their professor. In the second and third theme, the researchers found that the professors did not have the same desires as the students and

were more focused on teaching methods. Students at Riverside University confirmed these three themes presented by Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002). Many of the student participants shared how they believed they could talk to their professors about anything and how professors have open door policies. However, contrary to Anderson and Carta-Falsa's research, professors at Riverside University lauded the culture of relationship building and found it to be one of the greatest strengths of the university. Professor Harris (Riverside North) commented, "It's a priority within the culture to be engaged with students." Professor Lawson (Riverside South) affirmed, "There's an intentionality to creating community. Professors want to have those deeper more meaningful relationships." Several professors noted that they have taught at other universities and the relationships faculty to students, faculty to staff, and faculty to faculty are richer at Riverside University than anywhere else they have taught. The participants at Riverside University maintained informal mentoring relationships were a natural occurrence for the culture of both campuses. Professor Lawson (Riverside South) also highlighted that administrators at Riverside University understand the importance of this culture and the structure of the university allowed for it.

Where did these informal mentoring relationships start for the professors and students at Riverside University? A common sentiment is that the relationship always starts in the classroom but then quickly moves into more personal spaces such as an office or faculty home. Professor Brentwood (Riverside North) commented a student will typically approach him after class and ask if they can get lunch together once a month. Professor Sanders (Riverside North) mentioned that she meets with her students one-on-one for individualized academic support and some of those turn into "buddy-buddy" mentoring moments. Hawk (2017), in discussing an

educational ethic of care, suggested that when students understand the professor cares for them in the classroom then they are more likely to engage the professor outside the classroom. The question then becomes can the professor express the same level of care outside the classroom in the informal settings.

*Implications for future practice.* Administrators need to understand the importance of these informal mentoring relationships and create physical and mental spaces for them to occur. Professors need to be approachable and open to developing these relationships with students. These relationships improve the sense of belonging to the university and help increase retention rates for the university. Tinto (2012) argued that well-developed and healthy faculty – student relationships have a strong correlation to student success. In turn, administrators should provide faculty development opportunities to enhance these relationships. Students also need to be aware that these relationships are available to them. A suggestion from one participant of this study is that professors should frequently talk about their willingness to meet with students outside of class time and develop these informal mentoring relationships.

**Investment of time and energy are critical to informal mentoring relationships.** The very act of simply being present at events and the willingness of professors to be available numerous times during the week for formal meetings and informal encounters affect how the students perceive the university, the professors, and their sense of belonging. The students and professors at both campuses of Riverside University repeatedly commented on the amount of time the professors were spending on campus and with the students. Professors were reported going to basketball games, soccer games, music concerts and recitals. Students commented that they saw their professors in the dining hall and cafés often and would invite them to eat with



them. Professors offered to drive students to graduate school interviews, job opportunities, and medical visits. Additionally, students reported being invited to conferences and speaking engagements with the professors. The availability of the professors influenced the perception of the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and student. Bolster (2011) similarly found that being available was a key factor in students considering their faculty as mentors. Bolster also suggested that when professors had open-door policies allowing students to drop in at any time, when they participated in school events, ate meals with students, and when they took a personal interest in the student, they were seen as mentors by the students. The students in this research study confirmed these four aspects of the mentor many times in their conversations during the interview process. My research built upon Bolster's work in that it also provided data from the professor's perceptions. Professors at Riverside University recognized the importance of allowing themselves to be available as important factors in helping students progress through the stages of student development and faith development. My research also added to Bolster's work by discovering that time spent off campus having meals together or on conference trips were valuable avenues for relationship building and informal mentoring moments.

The informal time given to students also potentially affects the student's academic success and ultimate completion of the degree. This connects to existing research that found one of the reasons students drop out of college is because the students have not received enough time and attention from their professor to feel connection and belonging to the university (Bogue, 2002; Boyer, 1990; St Amand et al., 2017; Tinto, 1975, 2012). Furthermore, Tinto argued that students who spent significant time with the professors in their degree program had greater success in persisting in their academic goals. Overwhelmingly, student participants in this

research study consistently mentioned high levels of connection and affinity with and for the professors within their degree program.

*Implications for future practice.* If there is an emphasis on building community and creating informal mentoring relationships in higher education, then administrators need to consider the amount of time needed to develop these relationships. The participants of Riverside University indicated that they perceived their connections to each other due in part to the amount of time they were spending with each other. Administrators should consider this time commitment when considering how to evaluate a professors teaching, research, and service commitments to the university. For instance, Professor Lawson recommended that if administrators at Riverside University wanted to value mentoring above all else then they should allow for that time commitment in the tenure and promotion evaluation process.

**Spaces matter to the development of informal mentoring relationships.** Riverside University administrators recently had new buildings built on both campuses. Riverside North built a new athletic and recreation complex (ARC) and Riverside South built a new dining hall and café. The participants mentioned these buildings as transformative spaces for the culture of these campuses. Participants at Riverside North mentioned that the athletic complex was actually used more often as a connection space and hang out location for students and faculty than an athletic building. Participants at Riverside South mentioned that now professors and students have two new spaces to make connection, enjoy a meal together, and have a genuine conversation. The Riverside South campus did not have a dining hall until the creation of this space just two years ago. Before this, students cooked in their own rooms and rarely dined with professors unless off campus. One professor commented that the new dining hall has

transformed the culture of the campus overnight. For the participants of this study, these new buildings have created new opportunities for relationship building and opportunities for connection. Padjen (2002) argued that university administrators are smart to consider creating new spaces, designed with excellence, in order to create community for the students and faculty alike. Padjen summarized these spaces not only create great learning environments but a sense of belonging to the academic community. In addition, students shop for and almost demand universities to create these spaces when deciding on which institution they will attend. Confirming part of this research, the administrators for the very institution this dissertation is being written are currently building two new state of the art buildings for what I surmise is the same educational and community building reasons. At the same time, creating a sense of excitement for future recruitment and enrollment goals.

Educational and academic goals are another reason to consider the types of spaces professors and staff interact with students. However, Lippman (2010) theorized that spaces should be designed not only with academic goals in mind but also on social patterns among students and their interactions with potential faculty mentors. The participants in this research commented that they perceived informal mentoring taking place in many non-academic spaces including the dining hall, on-campus coffee shops, at the gym, and mentioned more than any other space the faculty offices. The recognition of these non-classroom spaces as potential informal mentoring locations is important when faculty and administrators discuss ways to engage, encounter, and mentor students at their universities. Schwartz (2011) expressed concern that classroom spaces and offices could connote formal and serious environments. Therefore, the informal spaces of dining halls or coffee shops might be better suited to create more personal

relationships between professor and student. Likewise, Wolff (2003) observed, the more important conversations are not articulated in the classroom but instead in the dining halls, the cafés, the hallways, and when encountering each other in more informal settings. In contrast, Schwartz (2011) conceded that this does not mean important informal relationship building cannot take place in the classroom or the office. Meaning that if students and professors develop deep meaningful relationships, these informal mentoring moments could take place in any setting. Affirmingly, students and professors at Riverside University found the faculty office space and sometimes more formal settings as the central place to have personal intimate conversations and to build stronger relationships with the each other. The existing research noted numerous examples of common spaces where informal mentoring were taking place (Lippman, 2010; Padjen, 2002; Schwartz, 2011). My research added to this this data by specifically highlighting office spaces as a crucial location for informal and intimate conversations and how important they were to belongingness, faith development, and student development.

*Implications for future practice.* Administrators should consider building spaces with exceptional design to foster a sense of community and relationship building. As seen at Riverside University, a smaller liberal arts university, office spaces were central to developing personal informal mentoring relationships. Administrators at small or large universities might want to consider providing adequate private offices for their faculty and staff. Though physical space is often limited on university campuses administrators might be wise to channel larger resources to this cause. These more private non cubicle office spaces might provide a more intimate gathering place for relationships to develop and in the case of Riverside University

students, created a sense of belonging towards the campus community. In turn, potentially increasing retention and graduation rates.

Another important area of concern in physical space design is the consideration of the commuter student. As relayed by one of the research participants, Gretchen often did not feel connected to her professors or her peers. This disconnect was mostly because Gretchen was a commuter student who admittedly did not attend any extra-curricular activities outside of class. However, Gretchen also mentioned that often she was intimidated to approach a professor in their office or in the dining hall because she was unfamiliar with the space or did not feel comfortable talking to them outside of class. Wolff (2003) confirmed Gretchen's experience and encouraged administrators to take into account the commuter student when designing physical spaces for their campus. New spaces should be built with warmth, comfortability, and a welcoming environment in mind. The researcher argued that commuters have a harder time finding belonging and administrators who design or refurbish these spaces with the commuter in mind will significantly improve their educational and societal outcomes.

**Students and professors perceived positive benefits of small campus size.** Clear in the interview data is that the small size of these universities positively contributed to and encouraged the development of informal mentoring relationships between faculty and student. Often this observation was a comparison by the students to other universities they had attended. The students expressed that they rarely had personal relationships with professors of the other universities they attended and at Riverside University this closeness was the norm. Some of the professors observed that the smaller size of the campus created a close-knit culture and good faculty and student rapport should be a result of the size of the campuses.

Though one university with two campuses, enrollment size at the two Riverside University locations should be noted as being distinctly different. Riverside North has approximately 1000 students and Riverside South has approximately 200 students. As one might conclude, due to enrollment size, I perceived Riverside South as being a more connected and close-knit community than Riverside North. Reichard (1971) building upon Chickering (1969) articulated that professors and administrators at smaller universities, particularly those with enrollments less than 1000 students, are more adept at helping students move through progressive levels of personal development. Correspondingly, when discussing elementary and high school settings, Carnie (2002) found that students at smaller institutions formed stronger bonds with their teachers, perceived a more enduring sense of belonging to their school, and were more engaged academically and socially.

I would also argue that the small size of these campuses heavily influenced the positive responses shared by professors and students in most of the other themes. The small size provided more personal attention and opportunities for relationship building. The size allowed time for the professors to show care and concern on a more frequent level. The size meant that not too many students were competing for space to see their professors. The small nature of the campus attributed to some faculty living on campus and students having more access to those professors. Ellis et al. (2005) discovered similar traits from a small branch campus of the University of South Australia. Due to the small size, they reported students perceiving professors as more caring, understanding and approachable. Students perceived professors as a respected friend in some cases. Students also sensed more attention from their professors and believed professors were more attentive to the needs of their students.

*Implications for future practice.* A perceived goal of any institution should be to provide a quality education for an affordable price and contribute to the global academia through the students of their community. However, enrollment and tuition dollars matter if the institution is going to survive and thrive in today's economic condition. At the same time, as institutions expand, they risk losing connections with their students and becoming cold institutional locations of just brick and mortar. The balance is growing and expanding their programs while maintaining a personal connection with faculty and staff. One possible solution to this dilemma is becoming one institution with multiple campus locations. Instead of having one campus of 10,000 students, university administrators might consider creating five locations with 2,000 students at each campus. Class size and professor – student ratios might be another consideration to maintain those close connections between faculty and student.

**Faculty housing and its role in informal mentoring relationships.** American universities were founded on the principle that campuses were designed with faculty housing on site to facilitate stronger relational bonds between professor and student at each institution. In many cases, faculty lived, dined, worshipped and taught students all in the same building (Rudolph & Thelin 1990; Thelin, 2011). Riverside University North was founded with these same principles and upholds that tradition to this day. The spirit behind this practice is that the proximity to students allows for a more personal connection between faculty and student and provides opportunities for mentoring to take place on a more frequent basis. The practice is also seen as a financial benefit to employee and service benefit for the employer.

Students at Riverside North hailed this practice as great for the community and proclaimed how they loved the practice. Professors at Riverside North also shared these same

sentiments and added that it is one of the strengths of the faculty and student relationship. One assumption made before this research project commenced is that for those who lived at Riverside North, students would be knocking on professors doors and showing up unannounced all the time. However, the participants noted otherwise. The professors commented that this was rarely a problem and most students acknowledged that they respected the boundary that this was their private home space. When studying boundaries between professors and students, Schwartz (2011) uncovered this same level of respect among student research participants. She discovered students typically had a clear understanding of what interactions were appropriate with their professors and an acute awareness of the professors respected place in the relationship. Some of those research participants in Swartz's study would not even consider having a cook-out with the professor. At Riverside University, the close-knit nature and historically ingrained culture made the invitation to professors homes a natural and sometimes almost expected part of the environment.

Professors living on campus is one attribute of developing faculty and student relationships at Riverside University. However, only professors and students at Riverside North benefit from this practice. Riverside South was not originally designed to provide faculty housing and students do not benefit from this proximity. Nevertheless, students at both campuses regarded being in professor's homes as important opportunities to build informal mentoring relationships and connections. Professor Brentwood (Riverside North) believed that being in a professors home was a critical part of students having a sense of belonging for the campus community. St-Amand et al. (2017), proposed that for students to have a sense of belonging they needed to feel good about their school, have strong connections to their



professors and peers, needed group interaction, and needed to learn how to live among other people. The frequent invitations to and accessibility of professors homes at Riverside University fostered these four attributes. My research went beyond St-Amand et al. (2017) by adding that having faculty living in close proximity to their students contributed positively to their feelings of belongingness towards the campus, their connections to professors, and their ability to live closely among other people. Students at Riverside North had easy access to attend gatherings at professors homes and be invited as groups with their peers. Students at Riverside South also had these opportunities, but their access was limited by distance and transportation. Professors and Students at Riverside South perceived the number of invitations the same as Riverside North but recognized the limitations placed on them versus the northern campus.

Professor Mills (Riverside South) exclaimed that he could not say how many times a semester he invites students into his home because it is so frequent. The students at Riverside South and North confirmed Professor Mills proclamation and shared they had been in professors homes numerous times over the course of a semester and year. Even though there are two different housing practices at these distinct campuses, the number of times students were invited into the professors homes were perceived as equal by both groups. However, the students noted that they hoped they would be invited in the professors home more frequently. Faculty and students at both campuses valued these interactions and shared the impact these invitations into homes had on their mentoring relationships. Mara & Mara (2011) and Sriram & McLevain (2016) discovered these findings in their own research that students need to understand the value and reasons faculty live on campus or invite students into their home and that the student-faculty

interactions increases and becomes more meaningful when students are in the homes of professors.

*Implications for future practice.* At a small faith-based liberal arts institution, faculty living on campus and students being invited into professors homes had positive effects on the development of faculty and student informal mentoring relationships. Astin (1993) supported this outcome when he found increased opportunities for faculty and student engagement correlate positively to all aspects of a student's college life. Additionally, the students and professors sense of belonging to the community increased and their affinity for the college was evident through the narrative conversations. Although this research project did not explore retention and graduation rates for Riverside University, the body of literature suggested that when students connect to the campus and have a sense of belonging, their motivation to succeed academically and their determination to graduate improved (Freeman et al., 2007; St-Amand et al., 2017; Tinto, 2012).

Therefore, administrators at smaller liberal arts institutions and possibly at larger regional universities might want to consider housing options for faculty. Though an expensive endeavor, the benefits to student retention and sense of belonging could possibly outweigh the cost of building and maintaining these homes. In turn, higher retention rates create more tuition dollars and more resources for administrators to grow and build the university and offer scholarships for more students.

For some administrators, the university might be in an economically burdened location where they cannot compensate their professors enough in order for them to purchase a home. Mertens and Beaudoin (1993) noted 26 years ago that housing costs were so high near Santa

Clara University in California that administrators were offering housing incentives to come and work there. The administrators at Santa Clara were offering low interest down payment loans, rental stipend programs, and mortgage loans in order to hire and retain faculty. Housing costs have only increased since 1993 and will continue to rise. Not only does providing housing improve the academic and social lives of the student it also benefits the faculty by providing affordable housing for the professor and their families. Though the model to provide housing for faculty originated hundreds of years ago, colleges and some school districts are revitalizing this tradition due to rising housing costs and administrators seeing the benefit to school or university. Davis (2017) in a recent study, described 22 educational boards in the United States attempting to provide some form of housing incentive for their teachers and professors.

University administrators may see the value in having faculty housing for all full-time professors but in reality cannot afford to build the homes or in some cases may not have adequate land to accommodate such residences like the case with Riverside South. Therefore, at a minimum administrators should also consider educating their professors on the importance of these faculty – student interactions and provide incentives for them to have them over to their homes. A simple suggestion might be to provide a stipend once a semester to provide food for the professor to have their class over to their home.

**Negotiating blurred lines and boundaries.** Professors and Students commented that the informal mentoring relationships at Riverside University were often regarded as friend-like in nature. These friendships that developed over time sometimes presented themselves as blurred lines between the faculty and student. For instance, if a student saw the professor as buddy but then the professor assigned a failing grade to the student there might be animosity between them.

Other examples included professors who needed to hold students accountable in their actions on trips or in other personal relationships. At other times, students might vent to a favorite professor in a negative way about another professor on campus. Some professors interviewed in this study commented that they would not engage in conversations regarding negative comments about other professors as they considered this a blurred line they would not cross. Students also reported that they liked to push the boundary by calling professors by their first name which to some professors was also crossing a line.

The participants at Riverside University appeared to be navigating the boundaries of faculty and student relationships, sometimes discovering and verbalizing them for the first time in our interview process. In her own work, Schwartz (2011) discovered four areas students and professors navigate boundaries: professors' awareness of positionality; professors' establishment of boundaries; students' awareness of positionality; and students and professors working close to the boundaries. This research supported Schwartz's findings in that professors acknowledged their place in the classroom and their role as mentor in informal settings. Though friendships were made, professors recognized the moments in which they had to remind students that they still graded their papers and needed to hold them accountable on academic work. The professors enjoyed inviting students to their home, out for coffee, at the same time Riverside University professors made it known that showing up to their house unexpected was out of the norm of the professional boundary or calling them by their first name was unacceptable. Students likewise acknowledged that professors needed their personal space. None of the students interviewed admitted to showing up to a professors house unannounced. Jack (Riverside North) adamantly stated how rude it would be for students to knock on the door without an invitation. Student

participants also acknowledged that professors held a place of honor and although they felt close to many professors there was also a level of respect that needed to be maintained. Schwartz's (2011) fourth discovery of students and professors coming very close to the boundary edge also played out in the lives of professor and student at Riverside University. The students and faculty reported several instances of taking trips together to conferences or speaking engagements and having deep personal conversations during those moments. The participants also recalled countless hours spent together in offices or at sporting events and during these moments the students trusting the professor enough to share sometimes private and confidential information with them. These relationships support Schwartz's theory in that the boundaries are pushed to the edge but in most cases never cross the line.

Professor Brentwood (Riverside North Professor) verbalized that though there are friendships between faculty and student, the boundaries that exist are there because the professors care about their students. Professor Brentwood also interestingly noted, the students who he had built deeper friendships were the students who responded well when challenged. The students he had not had as much opportunity to develop informal mentoring relationships tended shut down when confronted over an accountability issue.

*Implications for future practice.* Though these examples provide evidence of possible blurred lines between faculty and student, none of the professors or students ever indicated anything harmful taking place between them. This is not to say that lines do not get crossed between faculty and students. Chory and Offstein (2017) noted, in our current culture and with Title IX interpretations as they are, professors need to be careful in how personal their relationships develop with students. They suggested professors leave their doors open when

talking to students, never invite individual students to their homes instead invite groups of students, and never travel alone with a student. They argue that these friendships are never benign and can turn into uncomfortable situations or escalate. Though a very unlikely situation at Riverside University, a faith-based institution, Chory and Offstein also revealed in their research the surprising amount of times professors and students ended up consuming alcohol together. McKinsey (2016) added, in some cases students may misread friendliness from faculty and believe a more intimate relationship might be wanted or is developing.

The faculty – student relationships at Riverside University was reported as genuine care for one another and mutually desired. However, professors and students also need to have a mutual understanding of the boundaries and appropriate respectfulness for the faculty – student relationship. As one final recommendation, faculty may be wise to clearly outline those boundaries at the beginning of each semester and reinstate them periodically throughout the year recognizing some faculty may be more comfortable with certain blurred lines than others.

**Perceptions on the hindrances to connection.** Students at Riverside University identified barriers that hindered connection such as cultural differences for international students, being a commuter, and having little in common with their professors. Professors observed hindrances of work overload and fatigue with being around the students all the time. However, two areas were highlighted above the rest for both professors and students: personality and communication.

Personality mattered in the perceived approachability of professors and students. Students at Riverside University noted that they were more comfortable talking to some professors rather than others. Levi (Riverside North) articulated that he found himself more

respectful of office hours to those professors who he perceived as being introverted. This sense of approachability is not limited to professors. Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) found that students and professors were more or less likely to reach out to each other based on personality. Bernier et al. (2005) discovered a counter narrative where students were most connected to professors who were approachable but also challenged the student's pre-held beliefs. The professors at Riverside University also recognized that personality made a difference, however, their views were not necessarily defined by being introverted or extroverted. Professor Wadsworth (Riverside North) learned early on in his career that in evaluations some students would mark him down in certain criteria and other students would find this criteria the very reason they made a connection with him. Professor Harris (Riverside North) expressed that he thought introverts were actually better relationship builders because they were "well-diggers" and strived to create deep well relationships. Again, Williamson argued that some professors are just better relationship builders but did not correlate this with extroverted or introverted personalities. My research did not look into personality profiles to determine if people of certain personality types had a stronger propensity to develop mentoring relationships. However, this could be a consideration for future research. My findings, however, did correlate with the work of Chory and Offstein (2017) who discovered that faculty who were willing to emotionally engage with the student often created stronger informal mentoring relationships than those who were not willing to engage. My research continued and proposed that availability and willingness to spend considerable time with the student was significant in professors ability to create informal mentoring relationships with the student.

Professors Mills, Lawson (Riverside South) and Brentwood (Riverside North) further argued that professors needed to be mission fit for the university. Professors being hired needed to understand that there was a standard level of care, relationship building and time commitment to serving and working at Riverside University.

Communication was also an area of hindrance to connection for the students and professors at Riverside University. Students noted that a simple invitation from the professor to stop by their office or go get coffee could enhance the feelings of connection on campus. Ben (Riverside South) thought that students do not know that profound impactful relationships can be discovered between professors and students and they need to be communicated more often. Professors at Riverside University articulated that administratively everyone needed to be always communicating ways to engage the students and providing training in fostering informal mentoring relationships. Lawson added that the university administrators needed to communicate what was most important for the university in regard to how professors spend their time. If developing informal mentoring relationships and creating community were valued as more critically significant than other responsibilities. Then professors should be evaluated on those standards instead of teaching, research, and service. Going out of their way or going above and beyond are part of McKinsey's (2016) research on what it meant to be a good teacher or good mentor. Good communication is one possible aspect of her research. Sometimes the simple act of professors repeating themselves could communicate to students that this information is important to me and important for them. Communicating to the students that they are approachable and are willing to have informal mentoring relationships.



One additional noteworthy hindrance that two of the students mentioned was the need for caution. Cindy and Jamie (Riverside South Students) recognized that students and professors need to be cautious when approaching informal mentoring relationships. Our current societal norms and standards have created more cautious and boundary driven interpersonal relationships. Cindy and Jamie mentioned never being alone with professors or riding somewhere without other people in the car. McKinsey (2016) argued even innocent conversations and acts of kindness can sometimes be misunderstood and interpreted as wanting a more intimate and possibly sexual relationship. Chory and Offstein (2017) noted that in our current environment interpersonal relationships that become too intimate or even sexual can create a host of complications for professor or student. Title IX investigations, lawsuits, employment status, let alone the emotional damage allegations of misconduct can take on the two parties. Important to note that Cindy and Jamie never implied any misconduct was taking place at Riverside University and only offered their own cultural observations.

*Implications for future practice.* Administrators might consider creating programmatic mentoring programs for professors who relationship building does not come naturally. Small faith-based liberal arts universities have distinct cultures. Riverside North had a distinct culture of relationship building and community building. Administrators need to consider hiring professors who have a clear understanding of the relational culture of the university, are mission fit, and understand the demands of their time to develop these informal mentoring relationships. Professors need to have clear established boundaries between themselves and the students and communicate them effectively.

## **Suggestions for future research**

This research study was conducted at a small faith-based liberal arts university in the eastern United States. The sample were nine students and nine professors from two locations of this university. Riverside North provided on-campus housing for the professors and Riverside South did not provide housing. To provide a larger gathering of data, further research should be considered in three areas: Non faith-based institutions, research from multiple universities, and a more diverse sample size.

There is a distinct culture of care, concern, relationship building, compelling amounts of time and energy devoted to students, and the fact that some faculty live on campus in this faith-based institution. Faith played a significant role in the culture and it manifested in how the students and faculty interacted with each other, cared for each other, and built relationships with each other. Further research should be conducted in secular institutions to understand the differences in informal mentoring relationships outside of the culture of faith development.

This research was limited to one university with two campuses. Though the culture between the two campuses was slightly different further research should be conducted at institutions that are unrelated and have zero affiliation. Possible other locations could be similar sized regional universities from different coasts of the United States or similar sized liberal arts colleges that provide faculty housing but have no affiliation.

The research sample in this study originally intended to come from nine students and nine faculty who completed an online survey and indicated 1 or 2 on a specific Likert scale survey question or 4 or 5 on the same survey question. The survey question involved perceptions of connectedness towards the professor or amount time spent with the student; student survey and

professor survey respectively. 1 indicated low connection or time and 5 indicated high connection or time. However, the surveys were returned with either a 1 or 2 marked and an unwillingness to be interviewed or 3-5 marked and a willingness to be interviewed. The survey window was open for more than two months. I recognized this influenced the data collected during the interview processes. Further research should be conducted where interviewees have experiences on both sides of the spectrum. A possible solution to this would be to have professors recommend students for the interview process in what is considered a snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 2015).

Additionally, there was limited research in architectural design for educational spaces and faculty-in-residence programs. These two areas of interest need significant research to provide to the educational body of work on student – faculty informal mentoring relationships.

## **Summary**

The narratives presented here tell the lived experiences of professors and students at a small faith-based liberal arts university in the eastern United States with two distinct campus locations. The university has a strong religious and academic mission which informed their identities as members of the community. Additionally, participants for this research study were sincere and enthusiastic about their time, their experiences and their commitment in these spaces. This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue about informal mentoring relationships and students perceptions of belonging.

This research added to the existing literature in three distinct ways. First, the participants in this research suggested that faith is a defining factor in how they show care and concern for each other and why they intentionally develop deep interpersonal relationships. This is not to

say that professors and students who do not have a faith tradition cannot develop meaningful informal mentoring relationships with their students. However, faith was the overarching reason participants were intentional about the process at Riverside University. Second, I discovered that professors were willing to spend significant time outside of the classroom with their students developing informal mentoring relationships. Bolster (2011) acknowledged availability as a defining factor in students perceptions of belongingness but my research suggested that significant amounts of informal mentoring time created a love and affinity for the professor and institution. Third, there is negligible research on faculty-in-residence programs in existing literature. My research added to this data by suggesting that when professors willingly invite students into their homes, whether they live on campus or not, the student has a strong perception of belonging.

Indications from this research suggested that informal mentoring relationships matter and must be cultivated by faculty and administrators. Significant findings are built upon a central premise that intentional actions for care and concern, seen through a lens of a faith tradition, go above and beyond conventional care for students well-being. This study also found that thoughtful relationship building was a central part of the community culture. Similarly, investment of time outside of the classroom and outside the scope of typical work hours contributed to students perception of professors being caring and approachable.

Additionally, on-campus faculty housing and students being invited into homes of professors positively influenced student's perceptions and feelings of belongingness. Other contributing factors to student's sense of belonging included many moments students spent with professors i.e. road trips, lunches, and sporting events. Office space conversations were also a

significant finding in developing informal mentoring relationships. Finally, the most far reaching principle in the stories that were shared is the element of faith and purpose that faculty and students bring to these relationships. For all participants, faith gave them the reason to work at and attend Riverside University.

## References

- Abes, E. S., & Jones, S. R. (2004). Meaning-making capacity and the dynamics of lesbian college students' multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(6), 612-632. Retrieved March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62077525?accountid=10771>
- Abes, E. S., & Kasch, D. (2007). Using queer theory to explore lesbian college students' multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(6), 619-636. Retrieved March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/195185447?accountid=10771>
- Ackerson, B. V. (2009). *Catholic culture and student spiritual development in catholic higher education: The student perspective* Available from ERIC. (854554179; ED515293). Retrieved February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/854554179?accountid=10771>
- Agbenyega, J. S. (2017). When belonging becomes belonging: A bourdieuan theorization. *International Journal of Whole Schooling. Special Issue, 5-16*. Retrieved July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1142312.pdf>
- Allen, T. D., Day, R., & Lentz, E. (2005). The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships. *Journal of Career Development, 31*(3), 155-169. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10871-004-2224-3>
- Allen, T. D., Poteet, A., & Russell, J. E. A. (2000). Protégé selection by mentors: what makes the difference? *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 21*(3), 271-282. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379
- Anderson, L. E., & Carta-Falsa, J. (2002). Factors that make faculty and student relationships effective. *College Teaching, 50*(4), 134-138. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/61993670?accountid=10771>
- Anderson, M. L., & Collins, P. H. (2007). Systems of power and inequality. In M. L. Anderson & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, & gender: An anthology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.; pp. 61-90). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W., & Astin, H. S. (2003). *Spirituality in college students: Preliminary findings from a national study*. Higher Education Research Institute, 3005 Moore Hall, Box 951521, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521. Retrieved March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62173447?accountid=10771>

- Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., Lindholm, J. A. (2011). Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities. *Journal of College of Student Development* 52(1). 39-61. Retrieved July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from Project MUSE database.
- Bailey, K. G. D. (2012). Faith-learning integration, critical thinking skills, and student development in christian education. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 21(2), 153-173. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2012.698831>
- Barnes, S. R. (2014). Exploring the socially responsible leadership capacity of college student leaders who mentor. *Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research*, Paper 194. Retrieved June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/194>
- Baterna-Daluz, R. (2014) Where to from here? The future of peer mentoring at UNSW: Working towards sustainability and enrichment. *Journal of the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*. 44, 27-35. Retrieved April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from [www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)
- Baxter-Magolda, Marcia B. (2009). The Activity of Meaning Making: A Holistic Perspective on College Student Development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6), 621-639. Retrieved July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <https://muse-jhu-edu.iris.etsu.edu:3443/article/364957>
- Bernier, A., Larose, S., & Soucy, N. (2005). Academic mentoring in college: The interactive role of student's and mentor's interpersonal dispositions. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(1), 29-51. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-6288-5>
- Bogue, E. G. (2002). An agenda of common caring: The call for community in higher education. In McDonald, W. M. (Ed.) *Creating Campus Community: In search of Ernest Boyer's legacy*. (1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bolster, J. A. (2011). *What do they say? Students from a private, faith-based, four-year university share their perspectives on college as a mentoring environment* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (892758414). <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.iris.etsu.edu:3443/docview/892758414?accountid=10771>
- Bosworth, K. (1995). *Caring for others and being cared for: Students talk caring in school*. (). Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62743302?accountid=10771>
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Campus life: In search of community*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bynum, Y. P. (2015). The power of informal mentoring. *Education*, 136(1), 69-73. Retrieved

March 1st, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1826534412?accountid=10771>

- Carnie, F. (2002). Small is beautiful: Lessons from america. *Education Revolution*, (36), 36-39. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62215839?accountid=10771>
- Chickering, A. (1969). *Education and identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *American Association of Higher Education Bulletin*, 39(7), 3-7, Retrieved July 18th, 2018 from <http://www.lonestar.edu/multimedia/sevenprinciples.pdf>
- Chickering, A. W. & Reisser L., (1993). *Education and identity (2nd ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Chory, R. M., & Offstein, E. H. (2017). "Your professor will know you as a person": Evaluating and rethinking the relational boundaries between faculty and students. *Journal of Management Education*, 41(1), 9-38. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1052562916647986>
- Clandinin, D. J. (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks, and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 18(2), 121-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611261003678879>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*. 19(5), 2-14. doi: 10.2307/1176100.
- Cote, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2002). *Identity formation, agency, and culture: A social psychological synthesis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.)*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.



- Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525-545. doi: 10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2
- Cross, W. E., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the cross racial identity scale (CRIS). In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 371-393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Daloz, L. A. (1999). *Mentor: Guiding the journey of adult learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Daloz-Parks, S. (2008). Leadership, spirituality, and the college as a mentoring environment. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(2), 1-9. doi:10.2202/1940-1639.1065
- Daloz-Parks, S. (2011). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davenport, D. (2015). *First-year minority student mentoring programs: an ethnographic study on the impact of first-year mentoring on second-year retention* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved February 15th, 2015 from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Davis, P. (2017). *Affordable housing solutions for educators*. ().Donnell-Kay Foundation, 730 17th Street Suite 950, Denver, CO 80202. Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/2228668433?accountid=10771>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *The landscape of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ellis, B., Sawyer, J., Gill, R., Medlin, J., & Wilson, D. (2005). Influences of the learning environment of a regional university campus on its international graduates. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 32(2), 65-85. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62091586?accountid=10771>
- Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: Faber & Faber.
- Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Erwin, T. M. (2001). Encouraging the spiritual development of counseling students and

- supervisees using fowler's stages of faith development., 1-27. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62257514?accountid=10771>
- Evans, N.J., Forney, D.S., Guido, F.M., Patton, L.D., & Renn, K.A. (2010). *Student development in the college environment: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Foote, L. S. (2013). *Assessing christian-faith and cognitive development in college students: CFCDs instrument development* Available from ERIC. (1697491806; ED556023). Retrieved February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1697491806?accountid=10771>
- Foubert, J., Nixon, M., Sisson, V. S., & Barnes, A. C. (2005). A longitudinal study of chickering and reisser's vectors: Exploring gender differences and implications for refining the theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(5), 461-471. Retrieved March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62080953?accountid=10771>
- Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(3), 203-220. Retrieved July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=6f5bed0c-cf10-4953-aed3-4859e1430682%40sessionmgr4007>
- Halawah, I. (2006). The impact of student-faculty informal interpersonal relationships on intellectual and personal development. *College Student Journal*, 40(3), 670-678. Retrieved July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=f3b26bed-2798-48f5-914e-a51326de9f26%40pdc-v-sessmgr05>
- Hale, C. J., Hannum, J. W., & Espelage, D. L. (2005). Social support and physical health: The importance of belonging. *Journal of American College Health*, 53(6), 276-284. Retrieved May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=9fc24791-a90e-4f82-bb74-f7f0eb4bf818%40sessionmgr4006>
- Hamrick, H. A., Evans, N. J., & Schuh, J. H. (2002). *Foundations of student affairs practice: How philosophy, theory, and research strengthen educational outcomes*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Albany, NY: State University of New York

Press.

- Hawk, T. F. (2017). Getting to know your students and an educational ethic of care. *Journal of Management Education*, 41(5), 669-686.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1052562917716488>
- Hawk, T. F., & Lyons, P. R. (2008). Please don't give up on me: When faculty fail to care. *Journal of Management Education*, 32(3), 316-338.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1052562908314194>
- Hausmann, L. R. M., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and white first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(7), 803-839. doi:10.1007/s11162-007-9052-9
- Helms, J. E., (1994). The conceptualization of racial identity and other racial constructs. In F.J. Rickett, R.J. Watts & Briman, D. (Eds.). *Human diversity perspectives on people in context* (pp. 285-311). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hurley, A. E. (1996). Challenges in cross gender mentoring relationships: Psychological intimacy, myths, rumours, innuendos, and sexual harassment. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 17(3), 42-49. doi:10.1108/01437739610116993
- Hurd, N. M., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2014). An analysis of natural mentoring relationship profiles and associations with mentees' mental health: Considering links via support from important others. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(1/2), 25-36. doi: 10.1007/s10464-013-9598-y
- Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research* 64(4), 505-532. Retrieved July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.iris.etsu.edu:3443/docview/214118132?accountid=10771>
- Jenkins, S. J., & Downs, E. (2001). Relationship between faculty personality and student evaluation of courses. *College Student Journal*, 35(4), 636. Retrieved July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from [http://link.galegroup.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/apps/doc/A84017200/AONE?u=tel\\_a\\_etsul&sid=AONE&xid=73d8828a](http://link.galegroup.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/apps/doc/A84017200/AONE?u=tel_a_etsul&sid=AONE&xid=73d8828a)
- Johnson, K. C. (2007). Mentoring at-risk youth: A case study of an intervention for academic achievement with middle school aged children (Doctoral dissertations). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 2070. Retrieved June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2070>
- Josselson, R. E. (1996). *Revising herself: The story of women's identity from college to midlife*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Kerlin, C. (2016). The mentor inside you. *College and University*, 91(4), 33-34. Retrieved March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1969018690?accountid=10771>
- Kim, J. H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Knefelkamp, L., Widick, C., & Parker, C. A. (Eds.). (1978). *Applying new developmental findings. New Directions for Student Services (Vol 4)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kodama, C. M., McEwen, M. K., Liang, C. T. H., & Lee, S. (2002). An Asian American perspective on psychosocial development theory. In M. K. McEwen, C. M. Kodama, A. N. Alvarez, S. Lee, & C. T. H. Liang (Eds.), *Working with Asian American college students: New directions for student services*, 97, 45-60. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lahman, M. P. (1999). *To what extent does a peer mentoring program aid in student retention*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference in Chicago, IL.
- Levinson, D. J., Darrow, C. N., Klein, E. B., Levinson, M. H., McKee, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lichtman, M. (2010). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lippman, P. C. (2010). Can the physical environment have an impact on the learning environment? *CELE Exchange*, 1-6. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5km4g21wpwr1-en>
- Love, P. (2001). Spirituality and student development: Theoretical connections. *New Directions for Student Services*, 95, 7-15. Retrieved July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.iris.etsu.edu:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=0012c617-4058-44df-a632-a1352c4a2669%40sessionmgr102>
- Mara, M., Mara, A. (2011). Interaction within faculty-in-residence programs. *Innovative Higher Education*, 36(2), 71-82. doi:10.1007/s10755-010-9162-8
- Marken, S., & Auter, Z. (2018). Recent college grads say professors most frequent mentors. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/244019/recent-college-grads-say-professors-frequent-mentors.aspx>
- McDonald, E. R., (1984). The relationship of student and faculty field dependence/independence congruence to student academic achievement. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 44(3), 725-731. Retrieved July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/sss>
- McKinsey, E. (2016). Faculty mentoring undergraduates: The nature, development, and benefits

of mentoring relationships. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 4(1).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.20343/teachlearningu.4.1.5>

- McMillan, J. H., Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence based inquiry* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Mertens, C. A., & Beaudoin, R. H. (1993). *Faculty housing assistance: A model for success*. ().National Association of College and University Business Officers, 1110 Vermont Avenue NW Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005. Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/61811924?accountid=10771>
- Milem, J. F., & Berger, J. B. (1997). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between astin's theory of involvement and tinto's theory of student departure. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38(4), 387-400. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62537208?accountid=10771>
- Miller, A. S. (2007). *Students that persist: Caring relationships that make a difference in higher education*. (). Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62044417?accountid=10771>
- Miller-Perrin, C., & Thompson, D. (2010). The development of vocational calling, identity, and faith in college students: A preliminary study of the impact of study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 19, 87-103. Retrieved February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/898324806?accountid=10771>
- Mills, J., & Birks, M. (2014). *Qualitative methodology: A practical guide*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Nakamura, J., & Shernoff, D. J. (2009). *Good mentoring: Fostering excellent practice in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nash, R. J., Murray, M. C. (2010) *Helping college students find purpose: The campus guide to meaning-making*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nelson, M. L., & Neufeldt, S. A. (1996). *Building on an empirical foundation: Strategies to enhance good practice*. (). Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62569103?accountid=10771>
- Newell, M. A. (2014). What's a degree got to do with it? The civic engagement of associate's

- and bachelor's degree holders. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18(2), 67-89. Retrieved April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1029882.pdf>
- Noddings, N. (2002). *Starting at home: Caring and social policy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- O'Connell, R. (2015). Incorporating Peer Mentors into Student Success Programs. Beacon Help Center. Retrieved from May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 <http://beaconsupport.campuslabs.com/hc/en-us/articles/203979238-Webinar-Incorporating-Peer-Mentors-into-Student-Success-Programs>
- Olsen, K. (2011). *Essentials of qualitative interviewing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Osterman, K. F. (2010). Teacher practice and students' sense of belonging. In T. Lovat, R. Toomey, & N. Clement (Eds.). *International Research Handbook on Values Educations and Student Wellbeing* (p. 239-260). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8675-4\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8675-4_15)
- Padjen, E. S. (2002). Campus architecture is campus marketing. *Connection: The Journal of the New England Board of Higher Education*, 17(1), 19-20. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/61923005?accountid=10771>
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1977). Patterns of student-faculty informal interaction beyond the classroom and voluntary freshman attrition. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 48(5), 540-552. doi:10.2307/1981596
- Pascarella, E. T., Terenzini, P. T., & Hibel, J. (1978). Student-faculty interactional settings and their relationship to predicted academic performance. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 49(5), 450-463. doi:10.2307/1980509
- Patterson, C., & D'Augelli, A. R. (2001). *Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities and Youth : Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Peddy, S. (1998). *The art of mentoring: Lead, follow, and get out of the way*. Houston, TX: Bullion Books.
- Phinney, J. S. (1993). A three-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescence. In M.

- F. Bernal & G. P. Knight (Eds.). *Ethnic identity formation and transmission among Hispanic and other minorities* (pp. 61-79). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Ray, J., & Kafka, S. (2014). Life in college matters for life after college. Retrieved February 22, 2020 from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx>.
- Reichard, D. J. (1971). Campus size; A selective review., 1-41. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/64308285?accountid=10771>
- Rine, P. J. (2012). Committed to faith yet open to difference: Validating a model for fallibilist christian spirituality among college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 53(6), 827-839. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0073>
- Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rudolph, F., & Thelin, J. (1990). *The American College and University: A History*. University of Georgia Press. Retrieved February 21, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46nf7n](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46nf7n)
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schlossberg, N., Lynch, A., & Chickering, A. (1989). *Improving Higher Education Environments for Adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schmidt, M. E., Marks, J. L., & Derrico, L. (2004). What a difference mentoring makes: Service learning and engagement for college students. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in learning*, 12(2), 205-217, doi:10.1080/1361126042000239947
- Seifert, T. A., & Holman-Harmon, N. (2009). Practical implications for student affairs professionals' work in facilitating students' inner development. *New Directions for Student Services*, (125), 1-9. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ss.303>
- Small, J. L. (2009). Faith dialogues foster identity development. *About Campus*, 13(6), 12-18. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/abc.272>
- Sprague, C. K. (2007). *The impact of peer mentoring on the academic and nonacademic performance of high school students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved April 10th, 2015 from *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. Paper 1595.
- Sriram, R., & McLevain, M. (2016). Developing an instrument to examine student-faculty

- interaction in faculty-in-residence programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(5), 604-609. Retrieved May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.iris.etsu.edu:3443/docview/1809163502?accountid=10771>
- St-Amand, J., Girard, S., & Smith, J. (2017). Sense of belonging at school: Defining attributes, determinants, and sustaining strategies. *IAFOR Journal of Education* 5(2), 105-119. Retrieved July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1156289.pdf>
- Suciu, M. (2014). UNE mentoring program for students living with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). *Journal of Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 44, 55-59. Retrieved March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from [www.ebscohost.com](http://www.ebscohost.com)
- Schwartz, H. L. (2011). From the classroom to the coffee shop: Graduate students and professors effectively navigate interpersonal boundaries. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 23(3), 363-372. Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/964178718?accountid=10771>
- Tanaid, K. A., & Wright, K. L. (2019). The intersection between chickering's theory and generation z student of color activism. *The Vermont Connection*, 40(15), 105-114.
- Thayer-Bacon, B., Arnold, S., & Stoots, J. (1998). *Identification of caring professors in teacher education programs*. (). Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62555401?accountid=10771>
- Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of american higher education* Second edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tierney, W., & Clemens, R. (2011). *Qualitative Research and Public Policy: The Challenges of Relevance and Trustworthiness*. 10.1007/978-94-007-0702-3\_2.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125. Retrieved July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00346543045001089>
- Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- TN Promise, (2018). Retrieved June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from: <http://tnpromise.gov/students.shtml>
- Torres, V., Jones, S., & Renn, K. (2009). Identity development theories in student



- affairs: Origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development*. 50. 577-596. 10.1353/csd.0.0102.
- Tronto, J. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall.
- Valdez, R. (2016). *Relationships between first generation college students and faculty: A case study of a small rural private university* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1804421410). <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.iris.etsu.edu:3443/docview/1804421410?accountid=10771>
- Ward, E. G., Thomas, E. E., & Disch, W. B. (2014). Mentor service themes emergent in a holistic, undergraduate peer-mentoring experience. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(6), 563-579. doi:10.1353/csd.2014.0058
- Wilbanks, J. E. (2014). E-mentoring: Examining the feasibility of electronic, online, or distance mentoring. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 14(5), 24-28. Retrieved March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from [http://swdsi.org/swdsi2012/proceedings\\_2012/papers/Papers/PA164.pdf](http://swdsi.org/swdsi2012/proceedings_2012/papers/Papers/PA164.pdf)
- Willimon, W. H. (1997). Religious faith and the development of character on campus. *Educational Record*, 78(3-4), 73-79. Retrieved March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/62525188?accountid=10771>
- Winston, R. B., Miller, T.K., & Prince, J. (1987). *Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory*. Athens, GA: Student Development Associates.
- Wolff, S. J. (2003). *Design features of the physical learning environment for collaborative, project-based learning at the community college level*. National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, Available from: The National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education. 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090. Retrieved from ERIC Retrieved from <https://login.iris.etsu.edu:3443/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/742864757?accountid=10771>
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Zachary, L. J. (2005). *Creating a mentoring culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Student Online Survey

#### Title of Research Study:

Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships

#### Principal Investigator's Contact Information:

Rob Meier

meierr@etsu.edu

321.506.8057

East Tennessee State University

#### STUDY DETAILS

The purpose of this study is to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith based liberal arts universities. The researcher seeks to explore student and faculty perceptions of informal mentoring, for example, the interactions that take place outside the classroom. This research is being used as partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree at East Tennessee State University.

- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not very connected and 5 being significantly connected. How connected do you feel to the faculty here at your university? (Circle One):

1	2	3	4	5
Not Connected				Significantly Connected

- Class Ranking (Circle One):

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate
----------	-----------	--------	--------	----------

---

**\*Only complete the following if you are interested in learning more about this research study\***

- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:
- Are you willing to participate in a 60-minute one-on-one interview with the researcher?

Yes No

## Appendix B: Faculty Online Survey

### Title of Research Study:

Perceptions of Faculty-Student Informal Mentoring Relationships

### Principal Investigator's Contact Information:

Rob Meier

meierr@etsu.edu

321.506.8057

East Tennessee State University

### STUDY DETAILS

The purpose of this study is to examine the informal mentoring relationship between faculty and students at two eastern United States faith based liberal arts universities. The researcher seeks to explore student and faculty perceptions of informal mentoring, for example, the interactions that take place outside the classroom. This research is being used as partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree at East Tennessee State University.

- **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not significant and 5 being highly significant. How much time do you spend with students outside the classroom here at your university? Circle One:**

1

2

3

4

5

---

**\*Only complete the following if you are interested in learning more about this research study\***

- Name:
- Email:
- Phone:
- Years employed by the University:
- Have you lived in faculty housing for at least three years: Yes No
- Are you willing to participate in a 60-minute one-on-one interview with the researcher?  
Yes No

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Student: Would you share a brief history of your upbringing and how you chose this university to pursue your higher education? Where you grew up? Your family life? Parents? Siblings? What other factors outside of your family influenced you coming to this university?
2. Faculty: Would you share a brief history of your family life, your education, job history, and how you came to be employed at this university?
3. How would you define faculty and student relationships on this campus?
4. In what ways are faculty and student relationships strengthened on this campus?
5. What are some of the challenges to faculty and student relationships on this campus?
6. Have you been mentored by a faculty member on this campus?
  - a. What examples could you recall of how this faculty member mentored you?
7. Have you mentored a student on this campus?
  - a. In what ways do you foster these mentoring relationships?
8. What do you think faculty members could do differently to encourage mentoring between faculty and students?
9. Are there informal moments where you would consider mentoring is taking place on this campus? Could you describe some of those moments?
10. Where do you perceive informal mentoring taking place on this campus? Where are those spaces?
11. In what ways do you see faculty engaging with students on a more personal level?
12. What are your perceptions of faculty inviting students into their home?

VITA  
ROB MEIER

- Education:
- EdD Educational Leadership, concentration in Higher Education  
May 2020  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
  - MA Masters of Arts, Educational Leadership, Student Personnel  
August 2016  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
  - BA Bachelor of Arts, Music Ministry & Youth Ministry  
May 2001  
Milligan College; Johnson City, Tennessee
- Professional Experience:
- Doctoral Fellow and Interim Student Life Case Manager  
August 2018 to current  
East Tennessee State University  
Department of Student Life and Enrollment  
Johnson City, Tennessee
  - Graduate Assistant  
January 2015 to July 2018  
East Tennessee State University  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Johnson City, Tennessee
  - Adjunct Assistant Professor  
August 2002 to May 2008  
Florida Christian College  
Kissimmee, Florida
  - Minister of Children and Families  
January 2016 to current  
First Christian Church  
Erwin, Tennessee
- Honors and Awards:
- Outstanding Graduate Assistant  
May 2017  
East Tennessee State University, CUI