

**Perceptions of Graduating Seniors Who Received Rudd Scholarship
Foundation Coaching During Undergraduate College Preparation**

Danielle L. Sutter
B.A., Kansas State University, 2016
M.S., Kansas State University, 2018

Submitted to the Graduate Department and Faculty of the School of Education of
Baker University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Tes Mehring

Tes Mehring, Ph.D.
Major Advisor

Sally Winship

Sally Winship, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Tara Canfield-Weber

Tara Canfield-Weber, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date Defended: August 3, 2022

Copyright 2022 by Danielle Sutter

Abstract

The increase from state and federal policy makers calling for higher education institutions to demonstrate educational effectiveness through student learning outcome assessments and evaluations (Cook & Pullaro, 2010) has led to numerous initiatives being implemented to enhance retention rates, persistence, graduation rates, and student academic success. Initiatives include tutoring (Farlowe, 2022; Robinson, 2015), academic advisors (Higgins, 2017; Robinson, 2015), faculty, staff, and peer mentoring (Collier, 2017; Doane, 2017), counseling services (Clark, 2021; LaFollette, 2009), tracking student engagement (Chambers, 2009; Ericksen, 2020; Steele, 2022), implementing cohort specific advising (Fares, 2020), and developing community belonging (Chambers 2009; Ericksen, 2020). In the early 2000's, higher education institutions started implementing coaching as an effort to enhance retention, graduation rates, academic performance, and holistic development (Allen & Lester, 2012; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Pechac, 2017; Robinson, 2015). Few studies have investigated the impact of coaching on retention, persistence, or degree completion. This qualitative study focused on understanding the perceptions of graduating seniors who participated in coaching throughout their undergraduate studies and the impact of coaching on their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and the ability to graduate within four-years. Ten graduating seniors who participated in coaching by the Rudd Foundation, a scholarship provider based in Kansas, and attended one of the three partnering institutions participated in the current study. Study participants indicated that coaching contributed to their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, return to college each

year, and ability to graduate within four-years. Participants mentioned coaches provided a support system, accountability, motivation, served as a resource, provided advice, and enhanced professionalism. Results from the current study indicated that coaching is an important contributor to student persistence, retention, and graduation. Scholarship programs and higher education institutions may benefit from implementing coaching support for students as a means of improving student performance during the college years.

Dedication

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” (Duncan, 2013, para. 1). This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have a goal to receive a higher education. Your education is an investment in yourself. Working to complete a degree is a commitment that takes dedication, perseverance, and grit. For anyone considering obtaining a degree, do not give up on your dream. Seek out resources to help support you academically, holistically, and financially. Find the courage in yourself to reach for the ultimate career goal, whether you become an educator, doctor, social worker, engineer, artist, or choose any other career not yet discovered. You have the capability to achieve your dreams. I empower you to find the way to make your path.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge everyone who made my journey possible. Thank you to my dissertation committee for your continued support and advice throughout the dissertation process. I want to acknowledge, Dr. Mehring, my major advisor, for all her encouragement, feedback, and mentorship throughout my doctoral journey. Your mentorship helped me find my path to success, even when I felt lost. I want to thank Dr. Waterman for her assistance with the research design and review of my dissertation chapters. Thank you both for your guidance throughout my dissertation process and empowering me to succeed. I want to thank Dr. Winship for her support and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey. Thank you to Dr. Canfield-Weber for her mentorship throughout my doctoral journey and serving as one of my Direct Field Experience mentors and on my dissertation committee. I appreciate every faculty member of the Baker University Leadership in Higher Education degree department, and the knowledge you instilled in me to be a positive and effective leader in our field.

I am grateful for the colleagues who supported me and encouraged me to continue forward, even when times were challenging. I want to thank the Rudd Foundation for supporting my journey to obtain a doctoral degree and allowing me to research the amazing and generous gift you provide to Kansas residents to pursue an education. Thank you to the Rudd Scholars who graciously shared their experiences with me. Your determination and grit to achieve your educational and personal goals are inspiring. I feel motivated to further enhance the educational and coaching experiences for college students, ensuring students can reach their goals.

I want to express my abundant thank you to my family who supported me in my educational goals. This journey started off as a dream, and your continued support and sacrifice made it all happen. I appreciate your patience, encouragement, and belief in my abilities. I accomplished my educational goal and will continue to inspire others to reach for theirs.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	8
Statement of the Problem	13
Purpose of the Study	14
Significance of the Study	15
Delimitations	16
Assumptions	16
Research Questions	17
Definition of Terms	17
Organization of the Study	19
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	20
Retention, Persistence, and Graduation Support Services in Higher Education	20
Retention	21
Persistence	23
Graduation	24
Academic Success During the College Years	27
Personal Growth During the College Years	29

Career Aspiration Development During the College Years	32
Coaching	35
The Rudd Foundation	38
Summary	40
Chapter 3: Methods.....	41
Research Design.....	41
Setting	42
Sampling Procedures	42
Instrument	42
Data Collection Procedures	44
Data Analysis and Synthesis.....	47
Reliability and Trustworthiness	48
Researcher’s Role	48
Limitations	49
Summary	49
Chapter 4: Results.....	51
Demographic Characteristics and Participant Backgrounds.....	51
Perceptions About Academic Success	53
Good grades and high GPA	53
Understanding academic content	54
Graduating within four-years.....	54
Coaching	55
Perceptions About Personal Growth	57

Enhanced confidence	58
Time management skills	59
Development in communication and leadership.....	59
Growth resulting from an event or participation in a group	60
Coaching	61
Perceptions About Factors Contributing to Career Aspirations	63
Perceptions About Returning to College Each Year.....	66
Perceptions About Ability to Graduate Within Four-Years	68
Four-year degree plans.....	68
Support from coaches	69
Summary	70
Chapter 5: Interpretation and Recommendations	71
Study Summary.....	71
Overview of the problem	71
Purpose statement and research questions	72
Review of the methodology	72
Major findings.....	74
Findings Related to the Literature.....	75
Conclusions.....	78
Implications for action	78
Recommendations for future research	80
Concluding remarks	81
References.....	83

Appendices.....	96
Appendix A. Baker University IRB Approval.....	97
Appendix B. Rudd Foundation Permission to Conduct the Study.....	99
Appendix C. Invitation to Participate in the Study.....	101
Appendix A. Consent Form	103

List of Figures

Figure 1. Representation of Rudd Foundation scholars and partnering institution retention rates from year 1 to year 2.....	12
Figure 2. Representation of spring 2021 Rudd Foundation four-year graduation rate compared to partnering institution four-year graduation rates	13

Chapter 1

Introduction

State and federal policy makers have called for stringent student learning outcome assessments and a need for colleges to develop strong evaluation practices in order to demonstrate overall educational effectiveness (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). According to Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2008) and Voigt and Hundrieser (2008), students persisting to completion of their educational goals is a key gauge of student success, and therefore institutional success. Three of the most frequently cited statistics in connection with student success include the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate, persistence, and the cohort graduation rate. Retention, according to the National Student Clearinghouse (2015) is, “the percent of students who return to the same institution for their second year” (para 1). Persistence is the term used to refer to “the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year” (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015, para 1). Graduation rate is a term that describes “the percentage of a school's first-time, first-year undergraduate students who complete their program within 150% of the published time for the program” (Federal Student Aid, 2022, para. 1). For associate degree candidates, graduation rate is determined by the number who complete the degree within three-years. For baccalaureate candidates, the cohort graduation rate is defined as the percentage of an entering class that graduates within six-years (Federal Student Aid, 2022). Since the annual return rate of students as they progress through a program is directly related to their degree/certificate completion, the concept of retention usually includes year-by-year retention or persistence rates as well as graduation rates (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). Together, these statistics represent student success and are regarded as

primary indicators of institutional performance (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2008; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). These indicators have come to reflect the overall quality of student learning and intellectual involvement; how integrated students are in campus life; and how effectively a campus delivers what students expect and need (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). During the past four decades, policymakers at state and federal levels have mandated annual requirements for reporting retention and graduation statistics. Since 1990, higher education institutions annually report data related to retention and graduation to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021).

According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2021) retention rates for four-year public colleges increased by +0.7 percentage points to 76.3% for fall 2019.

According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2021), the retention rate for first-time freshmen from fall 2019 to fall 2020 was “74%, a 2-percentage point drop” (para. 1).

College Tuition Compare (2022) reported the average retention rate for colleges in Kansas, the state in which the current study was conducted, was 66.43% for the 2021-2022 academic year. UNIVSTATS (2022) reported that for the 2021-2022 academic year, “The average retention rate for Kansas Colleges is 67.23% for full-time students” (para. 3).

In the U.S. approximately two thirds of the students who do not persist in higher education leave within the first year of college (Chambers, 2009). The National Student Clearinghouse (2019) reported that 71.2% of all students who started college in fall 2017 returned to the same institution in the fall of 2018. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2021), “The first-year persistence rate in fall 2019 declined by two percentage points to 73.9%, the lowest level since 2012” (para. 2).

Currently, graduation rates are published based on a 6-year graduation rate derived from the Student-Right-To-Know Act which defined the completion rate as “150 percent of the standard time for completion of the program (Student Right-to-Know Act, 1990). The national graduation rate for six-year college completion was 62.2% for the 2015 cohort, an increase of 1.2 percentage points from the 2014 cohort (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022, para 1). Marcus (2021) summarized a national survey conducted by UCLA that found “only 45% of entering students will graduate within four-years” (para. 7). Based on the 150% time of completion rate, the College Tuition Compare (2022) reported the average graduation rate for all colleges in Kansas is 49.55%, including community colleges, private four-year colleges, state four-year colleges, and technical colleges. UNIVSTATS (2022) stated the average graduation rate for all Kansas colleges in 2021 was 55.68% based on a 6-year graduation rate for a 4-year bachelor’s degree. According to UNIVSTATS (2022) only 36.55% of students completed a baccalaureate degree in 4-years or less.

In 1638 the first college, Harvard, was developed in America (Bok, 2013). Throughout the past five centuries, additional higher education institutions have been established. In recent decades, higher education institutions have committed numerous resources and implemented initiatives to bolster student academic success, retention rates, persistence, and graduation rates (Clark, 2021; Ericksen, 2020; Robinson, 2015). Initiatives implemented on college and university campuses include tutoring (Farlowe, 2022; Robinson, 2015), academic advisors (Higgins, 2017; Robinson, 2015), faculty, staff, and peer mentoring (Collier, 2017; Doane, 2017), counseling services (Clark, 2021 & LaFollette, 2009), tracking student engagement (Chambers, 2009; Ericksen, 2020;

Steele, 2022), implementing cohort specific advising (Fares, 2020), and developing community belonging (Chambers 2009; Ericksen, 2020).

Tutoring was one of the first initiatives higher education institutions implemented to support student academic success and increase retention rates (Farlowe, 2022). In the beginning of higher education in America, classrooms were smaller in size, and lectures were provided by professors to small groups of students (Farlowe, 2022). As enrollment grew in higher education, the ability to maintain the lecture style for small groups of students was challenging. Farlowe (2022) stated, “Tutoring is an important component in undergraduate education as it provides students with the opportunity to seek help in a one-on-one basis or small group setting” (para. 9). Institutions are implementing different models of tutoring ranging from peer tutoring, student population tutoring, specialty programs tutoring, and tutoring centers located around campuses (Farlowe, 2022; Robinson, 2015).

Academic advising is another initiative implemented in higher education to promote student success, retention rates, persistence, and graduation rates. Robinson (2015) stated, “Academic advising integrates students’ academic and career goals by providing individualized, accurate information on majors, courses, general education, degree requirements, out-of-class activities, institutional policies/procedures, and appropriate referral to academic and non-academic resources” (p. 11). According to Higgins (2017), “Academic advisors can be the transformational leaders in the learning process by focusing on the individuality of the student, assisting them in thinking independently, motivating them through inspiration, and acting as role models” (para. 2). Higgins (2017) mentioned that academic advising practices continue to support students’

experiences and student retention. According to Fares (2020), academic advising also assists student persistence. Fares (2020) conducted a study to understand the relationship between academic advising and persistence of freshman. Studying 276 freshmen at a public institution in Pennsylvania, Fares found that freshmen who met with academic advisors prior to spring course registration to discuss course schedules, career goals and plans, activities, and course topics, ideas, and concepts had an improved persistence rate.

Faculty and staff mentoring has been used to assist in increasing student success and retention efforts. Doane (2017) conducted a study that sought to examine how mentoring/mentorship experiences impacted the success of first-generation undergraduate college students. According to Doane, mentorship/mentoring is, “a process whereby one is assisted, guided and advocated for by another more experienced person” (p. 6). Doane (2017) found that mentoring experiences can change lives and assist in retention efforts. Peer mentoring was assessed by Collier (2017) through examining characteristics of peer mentoring relationships and their influence to promote retention and graduation rates. One characteristic is the effectiveness of peer mentoring. Collier (2017) stated, “Peer mentors and mentees are more likely to share the same perspective with regard to how they understand and enact the college student role than participants in hierarchical mentoring relationships” (p. 12). Mentoring from faculty, staff, or peers can be effective in promoting student success and retention (Collier, 2017; Doane, 2017; Robinson, 2015).

Counseling was defined by the American Counseling Association (2020) as, “a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals” (para. 2). LaFollette

(2009) provided a historical background of counseling in higher education. University counseling was introduced in the 1930s to assist students with life changes, leaving home, succeeding in school, and obtaining employment (LaFollette, 2009). Counseling at universities transitioned to meet vocational services such as personal and social concerns that stemmed from soldiers returning from war (LaFollette, 2009). According to LaFollette (2009) counseling in the university setting now integrates developmental approaches and person-centered approaches to further recognize the uniqueness of each person and focuses on student self-reflection. Higher education institutions are continuing to enhance counseling services to support retention efforts through employing more licensed counseling staff and focusing on the rising mental health concerns of college students (Abrams, 2020; Carrasco, 2021; Clark, 2021).

Chambers (2009) defined student engagement as, “The frequency with which students are involved in activities that represent good educational practice and are related to positive learning outcomes, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities” (p. viii). Tracking student engagement has been an initiative implemented by institutions to assist in the improvement of persistence of students (Ericksen, 2020). Institutions create roadmaps of students’ curricular and co-curricular activities they participate in to help monitor progress toward goals and step in when students go off track (Steele, 2022). Chambers (2009) conducted a study that looked at the relationship between first-time, full-time freshmen at a higher education institution and student engagement and persistence.

Students who are more highly engaged with the college experience at the end of the freshman year are more likely to persist at the same institution to at least their junior year of study than they are to not persist at all. (p. 116)

Alongside student engagement, developing community belonging has become an initiative on campuses to assist in student persistence through ensuring students feel connected and are fitting in (Chambers, 2009; Ericksen, 2020). Developing community belonging can help students stay engaged in school and reach graduation (Ericksen, 2020). Chambers (2009) found that, “the more students perceive the campus culture to be supportive and the more they feel they are a valued member of that culture, the more likely they are to be long term persisters compared to a non-persister” (p. 117). Ericksen (2020) quoted Jonathan Kinsey who stated, “Students who feel like they are part of a learning community are much more likely to continue on in their education journey” (p. 18).

Coaching is a new phenomenon in higher education that involves providing mentors, tutors, academic advisors, faculty, and counselors for undergraduate students (Robinson, 2015). Coaching differs from mentoring, tutoring, academic advisors, faculty, and counselors as it incorporates aspects of all these services in higher education (Robinson, 2015). Coaching is unique as it has its own formal or informal environment that includes questioning for student reflection and motivation, self-assessments, and strategy sharing (Robinson, 2015). According to Robinson (2015), coaching programs were created to improve retention and academic performance. The majority of coaching programs surfaced after 2005 with 70% of coaching programs being established after 2010 (Robinson, 2015). Several researchers have showcased the effectiveness of

coaching college students in relation to retention, academic performance, graduation, and holistic development (Allen & Lester, 2012; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Pechac, 2017; Robinson, 2015). Coaching has been implemented in numerous ways, focusing on different aspects of student development, including personal growth, study and learning strategies, academic enhancement, and professional development (Allen & Lester, 2012; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Pechac, 2017; Robinson, 2015).

Background

Robinson (2015) described aspects of coaching and offered a descriptive analysis of coaching practices within higher education (2015). A survey was emailed out to over 6,500 coaching program directors, coordinators, or coaches themselves to capture the spectrum of coaching programs across colleges and universities (Robinson, 2015). The 160 survey respondents represented 101 colleges and universities who provided insight into the spectrum of coaching programs across higher education institutions. Robinson reported that higher education institutions use varied coaching practices that include counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and academic advising. According to Robinson (2015), there is no set definition of coaching due to the lack of consistency and framework on coaching across institutions. Robinson (2015) stated:

Roles and responsibilities of coaches vary greatly depending on the nature of the program, interpretation of language, student inputs, designed environments, and intended outcomes. In addition, topics discussed in coaching sessions are dependent on the needs of the student and the institution (p. 124).

Bettinger and Baker (2014) conducted a study to evaluate the InsideTrack coaching program and the impact of coaching by comparing data for persistence and

graduation rates for coached and non-coached students. InsideTrack partners with higher education institutions to provide students with coaches with the goal of leading students to engagement, learning, retention, and increased probability of completing their degree (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). The Bettinger and Baker study reviewed data collected by InsideTrack for students who were coached in the 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 academic years (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). The participant group included 13,555 students across eight individual postsecondary institutions. Bettinger and Baker (2014) found that “Coached students were about 5 percentage points more likely to persist in college. This represents a 9% to 12% increase in retention” (p. 14). Bettinger and Baker (2014) stated, “For the three campuses for which we have degree completion data, we find that coached students had graduation rates 4 percentage points higher than uncoached students after 4 years” (p. 14).

Pechac (2017) examined coaching factors that influenced student outcomes after gathering quantitative data from the Ohio Association of Community Colleges Student Success Center’s AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches Program for the fall 2015 and spring 2016 students who participated in coaching interventions through Ohio community colleges. The population for the study was 5,808 students from various community colleges in Ohio. Pechac investigated the impact of coaching session types, frequency of coaching sessions, and topics reviewed during coaching sessions. According to Pechac (2017), one-on-one coaching had the strongest positive association and was the strongest predictor of credit-hour completion with e-mail and phone being negative predictors for credit-hour completion. The predominate topics discussed during coaching sessions were the degree completion plan, goal setting, career advising, and

registration. Pechac (2017) also reported that frequency of meetings can impact success of student credit-hour completion and coaches should consider meeting students more than three times a semester.

Allen and Lester (2012) conducted a study at a two-year technical college in Georgia and examined the extent to which the College Success Course impacted students enrolled in remedial math classes. The College Success Course was taught by a Success Coach. To gather data, a pre-test/post-test survey was developed for COLL 1001, the College Success Course (Allen & Lester, 2012). The researchers concluded that students who completed the College Success Course had better semester retention, stronger student engagement, and better academic performance than students who did not complete the course. Allen and Lester also reported that students who completed the College Success course reported feeling connected to their program of study.

In 1998, Leslie Rudd, an investment company entrepreneur and philanthropist, established the Rudd Foundation “to honor the Midwestern values that strengthen character and lead to a lifetime of success in business, community, and family” (Rudd Foundation, n.d., para. 2). The foundation is centered on Rudd’s philanthropic endeavors related to education, health, Judaism, and food policies (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). A leading focus within the Rudd Foundation is the Rudd Scholarship Program whose mission is, “We help those who help themselves in making an impact and achieving their goals” (Rudd Foundation, n.d., para. 1).

In 2018, the Rudd Foundation announced the creation of the Rudd Scholarship. Newton (2018) quoted Pete Najera, former Director of the Rudd Foundation, “The scholarship program is firmly rooted in the Midwestern values of humility, grit, hard

work, and integrity that make Kansas and its people great” (para. 3). According to the Rudd Foundation (n.d.), “This scholarship strives to help the brightest Kansas minds stay in Kansas and build new businesses, teach in its schools, lead in its communities and achieve excellence in all that they do right here in Kansas” (para. 1). The Rudd Scholarship provides Kansas residents the opportunity to attend college through a last dollar scholarship. A last dollar scholarship pays the remaining cost associated with a scholar’s account after all grants, scholarship, and financial awards have been contributed (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). The funds from the Rudd Scholarship include tuition and fees, books and supplies, and room and board (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). Kansas residents who are Kansas high school seniors with strong academics, demonstrate financial need through Pell-grant eligibility, and plan to attend one of the three partnering institutions (Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, and Wichita State University) are eligible to apply for the Rudd Scholarship (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). Those selected are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0, stay on track to graduate in four-years, live on-campus, and contribute to college academic and involvement requirements. In addition, scholars are required to participate in developmental activities outside the classroom that include coaching meetings with Rudd Scholarship staff, networking with leaders, developing relationships with peer scholars, mentoring freshmen Rudd scholars, and serving future generations through the Rudd alumni association following graduation (Newton, 2018; Rudd Foundation, n.d.).

The Rudd Scholarship, as of October 2021, had 101 active scholars with six becoming alumni in December 2021 (Rudd Foundation, 2021a). Scholarship recipients had a 98 % retention rate and of those retained, 100 % were on track for graduating in

four-years (Rudd Foundation, 2021a). Figure 1 represents the Rudd Scholar year one to year two retention rate from fall 2020 to fall 2021 compared to its partnering institutions' retention rates during the same period.

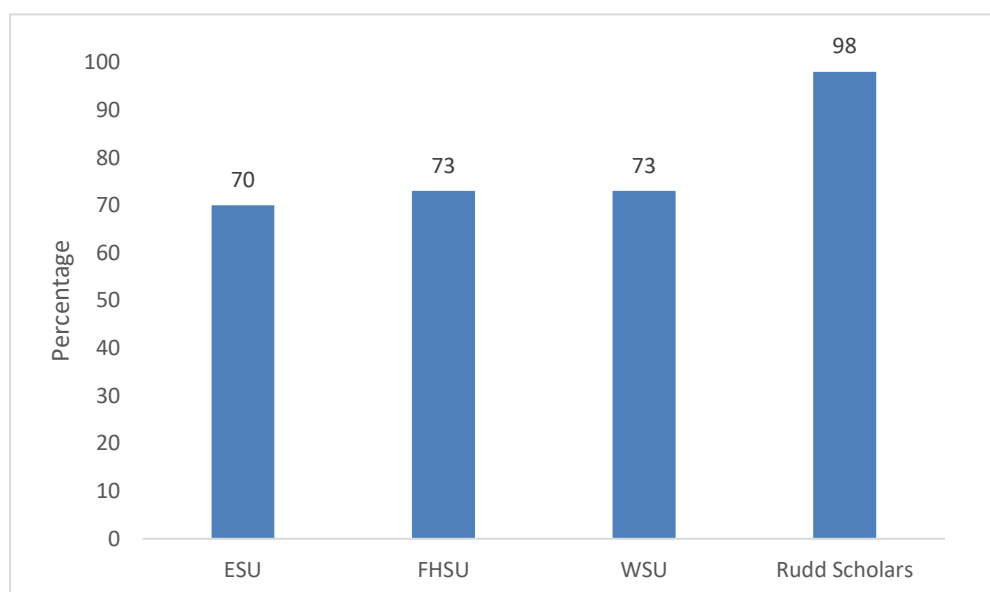


Figure 1. Representation of Rudd Foundation scholars and partnering institution retention rates from year 1 to year 2. ESU = Emporia State University; FHSU = Fort Hays State University; WSU = Wichita State University. Adapted from *Rudd Scholar Fall Summit 2021*, by Rudd Foundation, 2021a. Copyright 2021 by Rudd Foundation.

The Rudd Scholars year one to year two retention rate from fall 2020 to fall 2021 was 98%. The partnering institutions had the following retention rates during the same timeframe: Emporia State University - 70%, Fort Hays State University – 73%, and Wichita State University - 73%. Figure 2 represents the four-year graduation rates of partnering institutions and the Rudd Scholars four-year graduation rate.

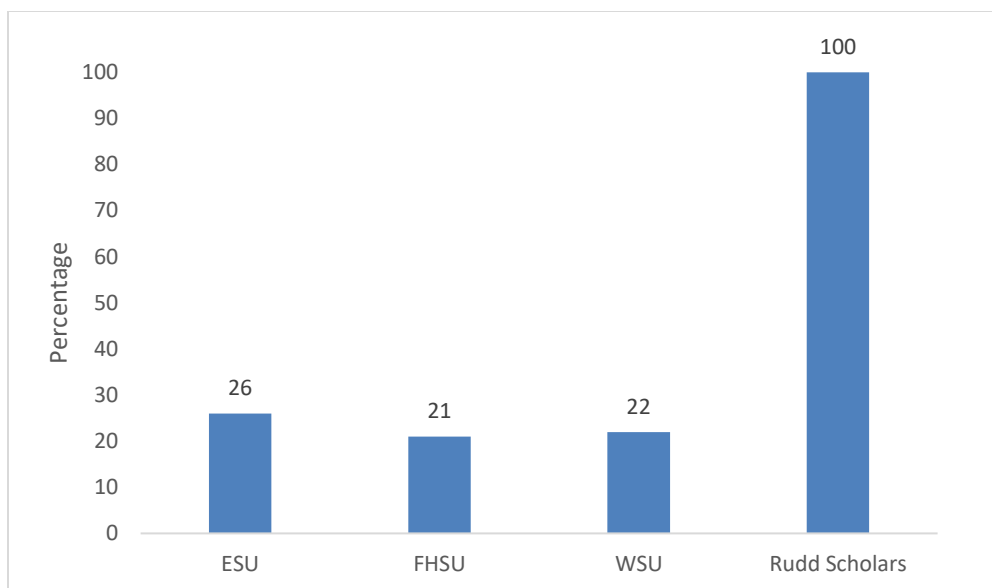


Figure 2. Representation of spring 2021 Rudd Foundation scholars' four-year graduation rate compared to partnering institution four-year graduation rates. ESU = Emporia State University; FHSU = Fort Hays State University; WSU = Wichita State University.

Adapted from *Rudd Scholar Fall Summit 2021*, by Rudd Foundation, 2021a. Copyright 2021 by Rudd Foundation.

The Rudd Scholars who matriculated to college in the fall of 2016 had a 100% four-year graduation rate in 2020. The partnering institutions graduation rates for the same timeframe were lower. Emporia State University had a 26% four-year graduation rate, Fort Hays State University had a 21% four-year graduation rate, and Wichita State University had a 22% four-year graduation rate.

Statement of the Problem

Retention, persistence, and graduation rates have become leading metrics that define college institutions in relation to student and institutional success (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2008; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). Institutions have implemented varied support services to improve college students' retention and degree completion. Support services

include tutoring, academic advising, faculty and staff mentoring, and counseling (Doane, 2017; Farlowe, 2022; LaFollette, 2009; Robinson, 2015). To support students in persisting to their second year of college, institutions have tracked student engagement (Chambers 2009; Ericksen, 2020; Steele, 2022), implemented cohort specific advising (Fares, 2020), and developed activities to promote community belonging for students (Chambers, 2009; Ericksen, 2020). Higher education in the first decade of the 21st century implemented coaching efforts for college students to provide more individualized support services that encompass a holistic growth of individuals to drive retention and persistence efforts (Robinson, 2015). Few studies have researched the impact of coaching on retention, persistence, or degree completion. No research was found while conducting the literature review for the current study that examined the impact of coaching on academic success, personal growth, career aspirations, returning to college each year, or degree completion in four-years. The current study examined the perceptions of college students about the impact of coaching on their academic success (a cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 or higher), personal growth outside the classroom (continual development of self and full potential), career aspirations (the long-term professional goal an individual hopes to achieve), likelihood of returning to college each year, and graduating in four-years.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of coaching on the experiences of undergraduate students who were recipients of coaching throughout a four-year full-ride scholarship program through a non-profit foundation. The Rudd Foundation has been granting full-ride scholarships to undergraduate students attending

Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, and Wichita State University since 2018. However, no studies have been conducted to determine the impact the scholarship has on academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and ability to graduate in four-years. Five purposes guided the current study. The first purpose was to examine the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching impacted academic success. The second purpose was to explore the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching affected personal growth outside the classroom throughout their undergraduate years. The third purpose was to examine the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching guided career aspirations. The fourth purpose was to ascertain the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching aided in returning to college each academic year. The fifth purpose was to investigate the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching influenced remaining on track to graduate in four-years.

Significance of the Study

Research surrounding coaching is limited. Pechac (2017) recommended additional research should be conducted on how coaching has impacted students' academic success over numerous semesters and how location and size of where coaching was provided impacted students academic success. Sepulveda (2020) recommended more research on the quality and quantity of coaching interactions, how and why students are engaged in success coaching and remain engaged in coaching, and the effects of coaching on students belonging, confidence, belief in capabilities, self-determination, retention, and graduation. The current study contributed to the research related to coaching for college students by reviewing the perceptions of undergraduate Rudd

Scholarship recipients about the impact of coaching on their academic success, personal growth, career aspirations, retention each academic year, and graduation in four-years. Results from this study may be of interest to higher education leaders and student support staff and faculty who work with coaching programs, scholarship foundations, and college student retention. Rudd Foundation staff, Rudd Foundation board members, Rudd Foundation Scholarship recipients, Rudd Foundation scholarship recipients' guardians, and potential Rudd Scholarship applicants may also be interested in results of the current study.

Delimitations

“Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The current study included the following delimitations. Participants in the current study were receiving four-year last-dollar scholarships through a non-profit foundation in the state of Kansas. All study participants were final semester seniors. All participants were on-track to graduate in four-years or less.

Assumptions

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), “Assumptions are postulates, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (p. 135). There were three assumptions for the current study. The first assumption was that participants understood the interview questions and answered them honestly and candidly. The second assumption was that participants had a sincere interest in participating in the study. The third assumption was that the researcher gathered accurate

data related to the participants perceptions about the impact of coaching provided by a Rudd Foundation staff member.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided the current study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their academic success?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their personal growth outside of the classroom?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their career aspirations?

RQ4. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their returning to college each year?

RQ5. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their ability to graduate in four-years?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to create a common understanding of terminology used throughout the study.

Academic success. Bailey (2012) defined academic success as, “a cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 or higher” (p. 15).

Coach. The term coach is defined in many ways depending on how the term is used within a program or in an organization. Goldsmith, Lyons, and Freas (2000) stated,

A coach helps a person move up a level, by expanding a skill, by boosting performances, or even by changing the way a person thinks. Coaches help people

grow. They help people see beyond what they are today to what they can become tomorrow. A great coach helps ordinary folks do extraordinary things. In short, a great coach provides a sturdy shoulder to stand on so one can see further than they might see on their own. (p. 3)

Graduating senior. In this study a graduating senior was categorized as an undergraduate college student who would successfully complete and obtain a college degree in December or May of the award year.

Last dollar scholarship. The National Scholarship Providers Association (n.d.) stated,

Last-dollar scholarships are as their name implies. They are intended to be paid after all other financial aid resources have been awarded; the calculation of the last-dollar amount is based on the gap between what aid has been awarded and what aid is still needed to help a student meet the cost of attendance. (p. 1)

Persistence. The National Student Clearinghouse (2015) defined persistence as, “the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year” (para. 1).

Personal growth. According to Ashiq (n.d), Personal growth is the process by which a person recognizes himself or herself and continually develops himself or herself to reach his or her full potential. Personal growth is an important part of a person’s growth, maturity, success and happiness. (para. 1)

Retention. The National Student Clearinghouse (2015) stated, “Retention is the percent of students who return to the same institution for their second year” (para. 1).

Career Aspirations. According to Eatough (2021), “Career aspirations are your vision for the future. They are what you hope to achieve in your professional life in the years to come” (para. 6). In addition, Eatough (2021) stated, “A career aspiration is a long-term dream that you are pursuing. A career aspiration can even be accompanied by a 5-year plan” (para. 7).

Scholarship. According to Merriam-Webster (2022), the term scholarship refers to “An amount of money that is given by a school, an organization, etc., to a student to help pay for the student’s education.” Scholarships can be renewable based on specified requirements made by the school, organization, foundation, etc.

Organization of the Study

This research study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 provided a background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and its significance, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and the definition of terms. Chapter 2 includes an overview of retention, persistence, and graduation support services in higher education; research on academic success during the college years; personal growth during the college years; career aspiration development during the college years; coaching; and a description of the Rudd Scholarship Foundation. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to conduct the study including the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher’s role, and limitations. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study and provides an interpretation and recommendations for the study including a study summary, findings related to the literature and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Five purposes guided the current study. The first purpose was to examine the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching impacted academic success. The second purpose was to explore the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching affected personal growth outside the classroom throughout their undergraduate years. The third purpose was to examine the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching guided career aspirations. The fourth purpose was to ascertain the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching aided in returning to college each academic year. The fifth purpose was to investigate the perceptions of Rudd Scholars about how coaching influenced remaining on track to graduate in four-years. Chapter 2 provides an overview of retention, persistence, and graduation support services in higher education; research on academic success during the college years; personal growth during the college years; career aspiration development during the college years; coaching; and a description of the Rudd Scholarship Foundation.

Retention, Persistence, and Graduation Support Services in Higher Education

Over the past decade, institutions have placed a stronger emphasis on tracking and analyzing retention and persistence efforts (Holder, Chism, Keuss, & Small, 2016; Steele, 2022). The emphasis comes from the need of institutions to prove student success on their campuses (Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). Higher education institutions document student success through reporting retention and persistence rates to the IPEDS (Holder et. al., 2016; Steele, 2022; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). Numerous definitions surround the

terms retention, persistence, and graduation. To understand each term as used in the current study, the next three sections summarize research on these three topics.

Retention. There are numerous definitions for retention. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2015), “Retention is the percent of students who return to the same institution for their second year” (para 1). Higher Education (2019) stated, “Retention rate is the percentage of a given cohort that enrolled at the institution the following fall (e.g., the percentage of bachelor’s degree seeking students who enrolled in the fall 1998 and returned in fall 1999)” (para 4). Retention is a passive activity that is a broad institutional-level statistic and the core metric of student retention (Higher Education, 2019; Steele, 2022). Retention measures a cohort’s success versus individual student’s success using a top-down approach that views re-enrollment of students in the cohort as all students doing well or succeeding (Higher Education, 2019; Steele, 2022). Retention is influenced by institutional factors that include student support programs to variables that may contribute to an institutions ability to retain students, such as high school GPA, entrance exam scores, Pell eligibility, time of when students declare a major, first-year experience opportunities, and late registration (Holder et al., 2016).

Low retention rates are a warning sign to institutions that students are struggling (Spear, 2019). According to Koenig (2019), the national retention rate for four-year colleges for first-time full-time undergraduates for 2016 to 2017 was 81% and at public institutions who have open admissions there was a 62% retention rate (Koenig, 2019). The National Student Clearinghouse (2019) noted 61.7% of students who enrolled in college at any institution type for the first time were retained at their starting institution from fall 2017 to fall 2018. For students who entered college at a four-year public

institution in fall 2017, 71.2% were retained at the same institution in fall 2018 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2019).

The Rudd Foundation supports scholars at Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, and Wichita State University (Rudd Foundation, 2018). IPEDS (2020a) reported the retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates at Emporia State University for the fall 2019 cohort was 78% for full-time students. Fort Hays State University had a retention rate of 78% for first-time full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students for the fall 2019 cohort (IPEDS, 2020b). The Wichita State University retention rate for first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates for full-time students for the fall 2019 cohort was 71% (IPED, 2020c).

Institutions have implemented strategies to assist in influencing a higher retention rate on their individual campuses. Efforts to retain students include first-year experience programs, academic support programs, on-campus living requirements, faculty support, financial support, community involvement and sense of belonging, and accessible resources (Ericksen, 2020; Holder et al., 2016; Soika, 2022). As a result of these efforts, institutions have reported higher outcomes for retention (Holder et al., 2016). Moving forward, institutions need to follow research on the correlation between student retention and students' connection to college campus environments and student experiences (Hagedorn, 2006; Steele, 2022), and put students first (Spear, 2019). Institutions can further connect their role of retention efforts to their persistence efforts as retention leads to persistence of students (Spear, 2019). The next section reviews persistence and the efforts institutions have implemented to increase student persistence.

Persistence. The National Student Clearinghouse (2015) defined persistence as, “the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year” (para 1). Persistence was described by Higher Education (2019) as, “the act of continuing toward an educational goal (e.g., earning a bachelor’s degree)” (para. 4). Steele (2022) further emphasized that persistence is an individual student metric that tries to quantify the drive, determination, and activities that propel students forward toward degree completion. Persistence differs from retention as it has a bottom-up approach. The individual student persists each year, while students are retained, and institutions take an active approach to improve retention through ensuring individual students in a cohort are continuing toward their goals (Higher Education, 2019; Steele, 2022). Hagedorn (2006) indicated that students who integrate into the campus through academic and social domains have a higher probability of persisting to the next academic year.

From fall 2012 to fall 2013 persistence at all institutional sectors increased by 1.0% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015, para 1). In fall 2018 the National Student Clearinghouse (2019) found that, “of the 3.5 million students who enrolled in college for the first time in fall 2017, 74 percent or 2.6 million students persisted as of fall 2018” (para. 1). According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2019) for students who started college at a four-year public institution in fall 2017 the persistence rate was 82.7%. Those entering full-time at a public four-year institution in fall 2017 had an 88.2% persistence rate, and all students who started in fall 2017, 71.2% returned to the same institution in fall 2018 (National Student Clearinghouse, 2019). The National Student Clearinghouse (2019) reported on students by age at college entry and found that students between the ages of 21 to 24 who entered college in fall 2017 persisted at a rate of 57.6%. Students who were 20

years of age or younger who entered college in fall 2017 persisted at a rate of 76.9% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2019). According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2015), “The overall persistence rate is about 11 percentage points higher than the retention rate. Thus, about one in nine students who start college in any fall term, transfer to a different institution by the following fall” (para. 2).

The persistence rate is based on the percentage of students who return to college each successive year. Higher education has worked to improve persistence rates through implementing engagement tracking programs (Steele, 2022), developing a more consistent student experience (Ericksen, 2020), implementing advising programs for specific cohorts (Spear, 2019; Fares, 2020), providing a sense of community belonging (Ericksen, 2020), and providing effective tools, such as easy to use platforms and learning support services, that are accessible and convenient to students (Ericksen, 2020).

Graduation. In addition to retention and persistence reporting, institutions disclose and review their annual graduation rates. Graduation rates are sometimes referred to as degree completion rates (Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008). The development of graduation rates first started in 1985 with the National Collegiate Athletic Association to compare the academic achievement of athletes to the student body as a whole (IPEDS, 2016). According to IPEDS (2016), policymakers’ wanted data on race/ethnicity achievement levels, which resulted in the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 and the Higher Education Act of 2008. Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) defined degree completion/graduation as:

Degree completion/graduation is the outcome of how many students within a cohort complete and/or graduate from an institution. This is typically measured in

two or three-years for associate level programs and four, five, or six-years for bachelor level programs. (p. 4)

The National Student Clearinghouse (2022) stated,

Degree completion rates account for all students who enter postsecondary education for the first time each year, enrolling full-time or part-time at two-year or four-year institutions, and completing at any U.S. degree-granting institution. The results include those who complete after transfer, not just completions at the starting institution. Thus, the report more fully captures today's students' diverse pathways to success, that increasingly involve mobility across institutions and across state lines, re-entry after stop-out, and changes in enrollment intensities. (para. 5)

Over the past three decades, institutions have gradually extended the four-year degree completion/graduation rate to six-years or even eight years depending on institution type and choice (Marcus, 2021). The National Student Clearinghouse (2022) reports the national six-year college degree completion rates for all higher education institutions. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2022), the fall 2015 cohort reached a 62.2% graduate in six completion rate, a 1.2% increase from the 2014 year.

Institutions are required by IPEDS to report their graduation data annually (IPEDS, 2016). IPEDS determines graduation rates through examining full-time, first-time, degree-/certificate-seeking students who started and finished at the same institution (IPEDS, 2016). The graduation rate calculation equals the number of students who completed their program within a specific percentage of normal time to completion

divided by the number of students in the entering cohort (adjusted) (IPEDS, 2016).

Marcus (2021) noted that for three decades completion rates in institutions that offer baccalaureate degrees have been measured on students taking six-years to graduate not four, the previous time measured for student completion. According to Marcus (2021) two-thirds of students manage to finish within six-years, and fewer than half of students enrolled in four-year colleges will complete their degree within four-years.

IPEDS (n.d.) reported the graduation rates for bachelor's degree graduates of full-time, first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates within four-years, six-years, and eight-years for the 2012 cohort for the institutions partnering with the Rudd Foundation. At Emporia State University there was a 26% graduation rate for four-years, 45% for six-years, and 47% for eight-years. At Fort Hays State University the graduation rate was 21% for four-years, 42% for six-years, and 45% for eight-years. At Wichita State University there was a 21% graduation rate for four-years, 47% for six-years, and 52% for eight-years. Those students who received a Pell grant who were full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion, by Title IV aid status for the 2014 cohort was 41% at Emporia State University, 37% at Fort Hays State University, and 42% at Wichita State University.

Efforts focusing on graduation are less abundant in comparison to strategies that support retention and persistence (Marcus, 2021). Institutions have gradually extended the graduation rate length to six-years or more, and increased eligibility for athletes from four to five-years (Marcus, 2021). Institutions are instead focusing their efforts on retention and persistence efforts to better support students to reach completion of their degree (Marcus, 2021; Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008).

Academic Success During the College Years

Academic success has become an essential focus in higher education and is used as a criterion for assessing the quality of educational institutions (Alyahyan & Dustegor, 2020; American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2011). The AFT (2011) stated academic success is, “the achievement of the student’s own, often developing, education goals” (p. 4). Academic success was identified by Alyahyan and Dustegor (2020) to be, “related to students’ persistence, also called academic resilience” (para. 8). A multi-dimensional definition was developed by Alyahyan and Dustegor (2020) through synthesizing the literature on academic success. According to Alyahyan and Dustegor, “Student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance” (para. 7). Academic success has traditionally been measured through grades, grade point average, or cumulative grade point average (Alyahyan & Dustegor, 2020; Hossler & Bontrager, 2015).

To improve student academic success, higher education institutions have implemented resources and academic support services to aid student development (Alyahyan & Dustegor, 2020; Education Reform, 2013; Hossler & Bontrager, 2015; Koenig, 2019). Education Reform (2013) referred to academic support as strategies that improve the importance of schools, effectiveness of teachers, and learning of students. Campuses have incorporated support services for academic success such as tutoring, supplemental courses, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, and academic advisors (Education Reform, 2013). A study by Koenig (2019) investigated

the increase in retention per academic success initiative. According to Koenig (2019), academic advising meetings increased retention rates by 5.80%, supplemental instruction increased retention by 3.43%, and tutoring increased retention by 3.02%.

Another support service colleges have implemented is academic coaching. Academic coaching was defined by Hall, Worsham, and Reavis (2021) as, “providing students with one point of contact to coordinate intuitional interventions that might best serve the individual student, such as bridging the divide between students and multiple support services, like writing centers and mental-health counseling” (para. 19). Chapstick, Harrell-Williams, Cockrum, and West (2019) defined academic coaching as, a collaborative relationship between an individual acting as an academic coach and a student who focuses on the student’s personal and professional goals through the development of self-awareness; strength building; academic planning; and definition of student’s purpose, interest, and values in order to aid in completion of degree. (p. 3)

According to Lim (2021), academic coaching encourages learners to achieve their fullest potential by evaluating their performance and assisting them to set goals, create plans and stay accountable. Lim (2021) further noted that academic coaching guides students to discover themselves and improve and generate solutions to present or perceived challenges.

Studies have shown that academic coaching is associated with increased retention and persistence (Howlett et. al., 2021; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014), goal attainment (Howlett et al., 2021), motivational strategies (Howlett et al., 2021), student development (Howlett et al., 2021) and finding teachable moments over providing answers (Lim,

2021). Academic coaching can support students' success through teaching learning techniques (Lim, 2021), time-management (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014), note-taking (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014), and test preparation (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014).

Professors can further assist students through coaching by providing feedback on work (Lim, 2021) and improve teamwork through group projects (Lim, 2021). According to Peterson, O'Connor, and Strawhun (2014), academic coaching supports students through "providing academic support in the form of extra help opportunities to provide an obtainable path toward success" (p. 2).

Personal Growth During the College Years

In the literature, the term personal growth is often referred to as personal development. Vann (2020) provided detailed definitions of personal growth and personal development. Personal development was defined as:

... activities used to improve your awareness and identity. It's the development of your talents and potential. It's learning how to live an enjoyable, grounded, and realized life. Think of it as your tools and systems to get where you want to go. (Vann, 2020, para. 5)

About personal growth Vann (2020) stated:

With personal development being the tools to get you where you want to be, personal growth is the benefit of your action. Personal growth does mean different things to different people, but ultimately, think of it as your end goal. (para. 11)

Personal growth can be viewed as a transformational process where individuals improve their physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, and/or financial standing (Pachamaca Alliance, 2021).

In higher education, personal growth does not have a specified definition, but it has been viewed by many as a way for students to develop themselves into their full potential (Campbell, 2019; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014; Shirakawa, 2019; Whitehall, Hill, Yost, & Kidwell, 2016). Campbell (2019) stated, “The most obvious need for personal development shows itself in the form of improving relationships with both others and yourself” (para. 6). Stanford University became a pioneer in personal growth and personal development in education at higher education institutions when it implemented the Designing Your Life course in 2010 (Shirakawa, 2019). According to Shirakawa, the course at Stanford centered on helping students apply learning in college, specifically about themselves and careers, to the real world. Shirakawa (2019) investigated the effects of personal growth and personal development within the higher education curriculum and stated, “Personal development education in higher education can cultivate students’ autonomy which they need to have in this fast-changing world” (para. 29). To promote personal growth in students, higher education institutions have implemented services and programs that engage students to reach their full potential. These include programs and services that help students become a more rounded individual and assist them to move through the process of identifying and achieving their personal goals (Amanda, 2019; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014). Higher education has focused the services and programs around greater independence (Amanda, 2019), confidence (Amanda, 2019), communication skills (Amanda, 2019), social-emotional

skills (Whitehall et. al., 2016), mental health (Campbell, 2019), personal responsibility (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019), self-awareness (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019), exploring purpose or recognizing value (Campbell, 2019; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019), examining mindset (Campbell, 2019; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019), recognizing weakness (Campbell, 2019), and pursuing meaningful work (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019).

Institutions have implemented opportunities for personal growth through classroom courses specific to personal growth such as Stanford's Designing Your Life course (Shirakawa, 2019). The University of Maryland developed a living-learning program for personal development and other institutions have incorporated personal growth into their curriculums (Shirakawa, 2019). Coaching students in personal growth has been another initiative higher education has incorporated on their campuses. Personal growth coaching, as stated by Johnson and Sepulveda (2019) involves, "increasing levels of self-awareness (strengths, values, motivations, and desires), exploring purpose, examining mindsets, and pursuing meaningful work" (para. 8). Personal growth coaching incorporates both short- and long-term goals for the student (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2019). According to Johnson and Sepulveda (2019), when coaches focus both on performance and growth, institutions will see an increase in GPA and graduation rates. Whitehall et al. (2016) correlated social-emotional skill development through the classroom to positive mental health that led to successful academic performance and higher persistence to degree obtainment. Incorporating personal growth into higher education provides students with a connection between the worth of a college degree and the price of tuition (Shirakawa, 2019). Personal growth also helps students to decide

their path while providing a framework to implement it usefully into the world when incorporated into the education at an institution (Shirakawa, 2019).

Career Aspiration Development During the College Years

A 2005 NBC online news report noted that 80% of enrolled students entered college undecided, and up to 50% changed their major during enrollment (Bullock-Yowell, McConnell, & Schedin 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) conducted a longitudinal study from 2010 to 2014 and reported that 30% of first-time students enrolled in associate and bachelor's degree programs with a declared major from 2011-2012 changed their major within 3 years of initial enrollment. The study also found that one in 10 students changed majors more than once. Selecting a major is a concern for many students (Bullock-Yowell, et al., 2014; Fain, 2020). According to Bullock-Yowell et al. (2014) students attend college with an undecided major for three reasons: they choose to wait and explore degree options their first year of school; they struggle to choose a major due to lack of self, occupation, or decision-making knowledge; or they feel overwhelmed with career possibilities and have many interests and talents. Students may also struggle to choose a major or career path due to lack of self-efficacy (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014), lack of readiness (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996), negative career thoughts (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014), lack of information, current information, or inconsistent information (Fain, 2020; Gati et al., 1996), and lack of advising time from faculty or staff (Fain, 2020). Though research has shown that students are struggling to choose a major, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2021) reported that the class of 2019 had nearly 730,000 graduates. Three-fourths of these graduates (550,000) earned a baccalaureate degree. Of those earning a bachelor's degree,

86% (nearly nine in 10 graduates) were employed or accepted into another educational program within six months post-graduation (NACE, 2021). The NACE also reported that 91.6% of graduates of Midwest higher education institutions had career outcomes in employment, education, or skill seeking (NACE, 2021).

To ensure the success of students throughout undergraduate studies and into career success, colleges and universities have implemented resources and services specific to career development. Traditionally, career services have been connected to student affairs offices at higher education institutions (Helbig & Matkin, 2021). According to Helbig and Matkin, career services units have become independent over the past five-years. Barnes (2022) stated, “The career services office supports the educational mission of a college or university by helping students to develop, evaluate, and pursue career goals” (para. 1). Career services offices provide career development through career exploration, group workshops or classes, reviewing professional resumes and cover letters, mock interviews, career fairs, experiential learning opportunities, career libraries for job searching, networking opportunities, and job search help (Barnes, 2022; Helbig & Matkin, 2021). Fain (2020) mentioned the use of faculty assisting students in career development through correlating classroom work to the job market, bringing in guest speakers in their field, and incorporating coursework or teaching a course on career development. Referred to as career counseling, career service offices also assist students on a one-on-one basis. The NACE (2017) stated that career counseling, “focuses on establishing a therapeutic and confidential alliance with clients using core counseling techniques requiring adherence to all state and federal regulations related to counseling” (para. 3). According to Gati et al. (1996), “One of the central aims of career counseling

is to facilitate the career decision-making process of counselees and, in particular, to help them overcome the difficulties they encounter during this process” (p. 1). Career services are important to higher education as students and parents look to graduation success or accepting a job or gaining admission into another educational program as a reason to pay increasing tuition prices and determining worth of a college degree (Helbig & Matkin, 2021).

The workforce relies on higher education to prepare individuals to meet workforce needs and provide a source of talent to employers (Helbig & Matkin, 2021). Finally, colleges and students want career services to provide support and development to ensure a longitudinal span in the workforce, which can in turn, lead to alumni support and giving and networking for both the campus and students (Helbig & Matkin, 2021). After administering a survey to students, Fain (2020) reported that 35% of respondents felt their college was excellent or very good at connecting education to meaningful careers. Fain suggested higher education institutions need to improve and be more intentional about their initiatives related to career development.

One improvement higher education institutions have incorporated or shifted to within career services units is a career coaching dynamic. According to NACE (2017),

Career coaching focuses on solutions, insights, and action. It is a positive approach that focuses on a client’s capabilities, helping him or her practice and hone skills needed in the job search. Coaching is active, focused, positive, and outcome-oriented. (para. 3)

Career coaching helps students plan for life after college and includes major or career exploration, job and internship search strategies, interview preparation, professional

document development, and experiences to engage in such as volunteering or career assessments (Benjamin et al., 2021).

Coaching

Coaching dates back to the 1980's when it was implemented for executives and life coaching (Sepulveda, 2020). Goldsmith et al. (2020) described characteristics of a coach,

A coach helps a person move up a level, by expanding a skill, by boosting performances, or even by changing the way a person thinks. Coaches help people grow. They help people see beyond what they are today to what they can become tomorrow. A great coach helps ordinary folks do extraordinary things.

In short, a great coach provides a sturdy shoulder to stand on so one can see further than they might see on their own. (p. 12)

Coaching has been viewed on a simpler level as aiding one's ability to move up a level by maximizing their full potential (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020). The use of coaching has spread to other professional areas including career coaching, business coaching, wellness coaching, athletic coaching, leadership coaching, and more (Pechac, 2017; Sepulveda, 2020). It was in the early 2000's that coaching emerged in education. Van Nieuwerburgh and Tong (2013) explained coaching in the education setting as:

A one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates self-directed learning of the coachee

through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate. (p. 17)

Higher education has implemented coaching into areas of academics and success coaching to assist in retention, persistence, and degree completion efforts for students (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Pechac, 2017; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2020). Some higher education institutions refer to coaching as a strategy that promotes academic success, student success, or student mentoring. Robinson (2015) defined academic/success coaching as

The individualized practice of asking reflective, motivation-based questions, providing opportunities for formal self-assessment, sharing effective strategies, and co-creating a tangible plan. The coaching process offers students an opportunity to identify their strengths, actively practice new skills, and effectively navigate appropriate resources that ultimately results in skill development, performance improvement, and increased persistence. (p. 126)

Allen and Lester (2012) stated the role of a success coach is, “to encourage students to be self-motivated, responsible, and self-managed” (p. 10). According to Allen and Lester, the success coach connects and refers students to campus resources, and aids in increasing student GPA’s to influence retention. Two researchers, Bettinger and Baker (2014) and Pechac (2017) compared college mentoring with success coaching. Bettinger and Baker (2014) stated, “[mentorship] has elements of academic preparation, information gathering, and social integration (p. 5). Pechac (2017) referred to coaching as a formal approach and mentoring students as an informal approach. Coaching in higher education has its own definition and was defined by Johnson and Sepulveda

(2014). According to Johnson and Sepulveda (2014), an academic coach in higher education is “someone professionally trained to partner with people by tapping into their full potential helping them move forward through the process of identifying and achieving personal and professional goals that will maximize their potential” (para 2). Coaches have two main goals according to Johnson and Sepulveda (2014), “to increase student performance on tasks associated with academic achievement and to develop students’ level of thinking and skills” (para. 4).

Higher education campuses have implemented numerous coaching strategies to assist college students in successfully persisting to graduation (Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014). Coaches work with students one-on-one in consistent meetings or conversations discussing topics such as confidence and self-efficacy, time-management, academic performance, career goals and exploration, personal growth, and campus involvement (Benjamin et. al., 2021; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Johnson & Sepulveda, 2014; Pechac, 2017; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2021) with more focus on supporting first-year students (Robinson, 2015). It has been found that coaching is used as a metric for assessing progress toward degree completion. Bettinger and Baker (2014) found that first-year coached students were about 5% more likely to persist in college, representing a 9-12% increase in retention. Bettinger and Baker (2014) reported that graduation rates were 4% higher for coached students than uncoached students after four-years in the three campuses they studied. Coached students have shown a higher college-credit accumulation and higher levels of success in full-time enrolled students (Pechac, 2017). Frequency of meetings impacted student success (Allen & Lester, 2012, Pechac, 2017)

and individual meetings vs. classroom meetings had a higher impact on student success (Pechac, 2017).

The Rudd Foundation

The founder of Leslie Rudd Investment Companies wanted to impact the state of Kansas. In 2018, he decided the best way to impact the state was to create a scholarship foundation that would help support the brightest minds and hardest workers in Kansas achieve their education and keep their talents in the state (Wichita State University, 2022). The Rudd Foundation is a last-dollar four-year full-ride scholarship covering tuition and fees, books and supplies, and room and board (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). High school seniors who are Kansas residents, Pell-grant eligible, U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and who have a high school cumulative unweighted GPA of a 3.0 or higher are eligible to apply for the Rudd Foundation Scholarship (Rudd Foundation, n.d.). Applicants are required to attend one of the partnering institutions of the Rudd Foundation: Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, or Wichita State University. For the fall 2021 application cycle, the Rudd Foundation Scholarship application had almost 1,000 applicants. Fifty applicants were selected to interview with the Rudd Foundation staff, and 30 scholarships were provided to high school seniors graduating in 2021 (Wichita State University, 2022). Scholarship recipients are expected to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0, stay on track to graduate in four-years, live on campus all four-years, and participate in academic and involvement requirements specified by the Rudd Foundation. The Rudd Foundation scholarship is known for its beyond the dollar support to the scholars and is built upon four pillars: support, mentorship, professional development, and giving back (Wichita State University, 2022).

Scholars are supported by the Rudd Foundation staff through monthly one-on-one coaching sessions (Rudd Foundation, 2021b). The coaching sessions focus on ensuring the student is thriving and staff discuss student's academic success and academic goals for the semester, current academic year, and future academic needs during coaching sessions. Coaching sessions focus on personal growth both in and outside the classroom, goals for career opportunities and development, campus involvement, relationships with family and friends, and connecting scholars to resources on their campus. Coaching sessions include advice, guidance, and other supportive conversations the scholars may need. Scholars are further supported through peer mentorship by older scholars. The mentors support the mentee during the freshman year (Rudd Foundation, 2021b).

Rudd scholars are provided the opportunity to develop through professional development opportunities. Each semester the Rudd Foundation hosts a summit where all scholars come together to develop as a professional and network with each other and leaders of the summit sessions (Rudd Foundation, 2021b). Rudd Foundation staff further assist scholars through their professional networks and the career services offices at their institution (Wichita State University, 2022). After graduation, Rudd scholars become alumni. The alumni program was established to provide scholar alumni with an opportunity to give back through mentorship, sharing their professional network, presenting at the annual summits, and providing assistance during the selection process (Wichita State University, 2022).

The Rudd Foundation Scholarship was first awarded in 2018 (Rudd Foundation, 2018). In the first year of the program, 20 graduating high school seniors were awarded the scholarship, making up the first cohort of the Rudd Scholar Family (Rudd

Foundation, 2018). The 2019 cohort consisted of 25 award recipients (Rudd Foundation, 2019). The Rudd Foundation approved 30 scholarship recipients for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 cohorts (Rudd Foundation, 2020; 2021a, 2022). In the spring of 2022 there were a total of 130 incoming, current, and graduated scholars.

Summary

In recent decades, higher education institutions have increased efforts to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates (Clark, 2021; Erickson, 2020; Robinson, 2015). Chapter 2 provided an overview of retention, persistence, and graduation in higher education. Research on academic success during the college years; personal growth during the college years; career aspiration development during the college years; coaching; and a description of the Rudd Scholarship Foundation were summarized. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the current study, including the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations.

Chapter 3

Methods

This qualitative study involved the review of the perceptions of graduating seniors who received coaching from the Rudd Foundation about how coaching impacted their academic success, personal growth, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and graduation in four-years. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the methods used in the study. A description of the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researchers' role, and limitations of the research study are included in Chapter 3.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design using a constructivist approach was chosen for this study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (p. 4). Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated "Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants" (p. 27). A phenomenological research design allows the researcher to "describe the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). The phenomenon examined in the current study was the learned experiences of those participating in coaching through a scholarship program in Kansas, the state where the study was conducted. Constructivist focused research allows the researcher to identify shared themes, behaviors, and experiences among the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Constructivism further allows the researcher

to capture and understand the knowledge and meaning developed through the experiences of the respondent's through data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Setting

The current study was conducted in three Kansas higher education state institutions: Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, and Wichita State University. These three institutions are partner institutions with the Rudd Scholarship Foundation. Interview participants were required to attend one of the three higher education institutions per the Rudd Foundation scholarship requirements. The three higher education institutions are four-year public institutions.

Sampling Procedures

Purposeful sampling was used in the current study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to hand-pick a particular participant group based on selected criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants for this study met three criteria: all participants were Rudd Foundation scholarship recipients in the class of 2018 or 2019, all interviewees participated in the Rudd Foundation coaching program throughout their four-years of undergraduate study, and all participants were on track to graduate in May 2022. Ten students who met the criteria participated in the study. Both males and females participated in the current study.

Instrument

An interview protocol that included four demographic questions followed by thirteen semi-structured interview questions aligned with five research questions were used in the study. The demographic questions include the following:

IQ1. What is your gender?

IQ2. What is your college major?

IQ3. What is your college cumulative GPA?

IQ4. Why did you decide to attend college?

The research questions (RQ) and structured interview questions (IQ) included the following:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their academic success?

IQ5. What were your academic goals throughout college?

IQ6. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation aid your academic success?

IQ7. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation hinder your academic success?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their personal growth outside of the classroom?

IQ8. In what ways (if any) have you developed as an individual throughout college?

IQ9. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation aid your personal growth outside the classroom?

IQ10. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation hinder your personal growth outside the classroom?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their career aspirations?

IQ11. What factors (if any) have shaped your career goals?

IQ12. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation aid your career aspirations?

IQ 13. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation hinder your career aspirations?

RQ4. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their returning to college each year?

IQ14. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd your returning to college each year?

IQ15. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation hinder your returning to college each year?

RQ5. What are the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching aided or hindered their ability to graduate in four-years?

IQ16. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation aid your ability to graduate in four-years?

IQ17. How did the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation hinder your ability to graduate in four-years?

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to conducting interviews, a request to conduct the research was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 25, 2022. IRB approval was granted to the researcher on April 26, 2022 (see Appendix A). This approval was submitted to the Rudd Foundation Director for approval to conduct interviews with participants on April 26, 2022. The Rudd Foundation Director provided written approval to conduct the study on April 28, 2022 (see Appendix B). Upon receiving approval from

the Baker University IRB and the Rudd Foundation, the researcher contacted potential participants via email with an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix C). In the invitation to participate (see Appendix C), the researcher provided an overview of the study, described the purpose of the study, stated participant requirements, explained how confidentiality would be protected, and indicated there were no risks or benefits associated with participation. The invitation to participate also explained that participation in the study was voluntary, described the amount of time participation would involve, and indicated study participation would involve no discomfort or compensation. Information on how to opt out of specific interview questions or the study was provided. The invitation to participate indicated that study participants would have an opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy. Interview questions were provided in the invitation to participate. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were scheduled for a virtual zoom interview. Prior to conducting interviews, each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix D). The consent form reviewed the information provided in the invitation to participate (see Appendix C) and included information indicating the interview would be digitally recorded. Participants were also informed the interviewer would be taking notes throughout the interview.

Prior to conducting interviews, two external reviewers were asked to review the alignment of the semi-structured interview questions with the research questions. External examiner 1 was a faculty member who teaches research methods at a Midwestern university and has conducted several qualitative research studies. External examiner 2 was a higher education professional and had used a qualitative research design for her dissertation.

The researcher conducted interviews with participants in their final semester of college during the spring semester of 2022. Interviews were conducted with each participant using Zoom. The researcher was in a private room to provide privacy for all participants. Building rapport with the participants prior to asking interview questions was fundamental to the researcher and created an opportunity for interviewees to feel at ease. The researcher established rapport through a discussion on how the participants' final semester was going, their preparation for final exams, plans for celebrating graduation, and their plans following graduation.

To ensure the transcription of the interview was accurate, the researcher digitally recorded and transcribed each interview verbatim. Each digital recording and transcript was assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) to ensure anonymity of the participants. All interview sessions were scheduled for one hour. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to each participant. During the interview sessions the researcher took notes related to non-verbal language like sighs, body language, etc.

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher thanked the participants and waited for them to exit the zoom interview meeting. The researcher then captured notes regarding observations about the participant and ended the zoom meeting. These notes allowed the researcher to further analyze data during the data analysis and synthesis process. Interviews were conducted between April 30 and May 5, 2022. Digital recordings and interview transcripts were stored on a secure drive in a locked file for five- years and then destroyed.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended using a qualitative data analysis process that includes five sequential steps. The five steps included: (1) organize and prepare the data for analysis, (2) read or look at all the data, (3) conduct coding, (4) generate a description and themes, and (5) represent the description and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To implement Creswell and Creswell's (2018) first step, the researcher prepared a transcript for each interview through utilizing a transcription software, NVivo transcription, listened to each digital recording multiple times and transcribed each interview verbatim. Each audio recording and transcript was assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) to ensure anonymity of the participants. The transcript was then sent via email to the study participant for review of accuracy, additions, or omissions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) referred to this process as member checking. Once study participants returned the transcripts, the researcher read through all of the transcripts multiple times to gain an overview of the responses and to fulfill Creswell and Creswell's (2018) step 2 of the data analysis process. Step 3 of the data analysis process was accomplished by uploading transcripts into Quirkos, a qualitative analysis software, to aid in determining key words and phrases that focused on a research question. The key words and phrases were then organized in Quirkos allowing the researcher to identify common codes or similarities for each research question. Themes (step 4 of the data analysis process) were identified by reviewing commonalities within the coding for each research question. A phrase or sentence was then developed to capture the essence of the common themes found across all interview questions that

related to each research question. By using these five data analysis steps the researcher was able to determine and understand the individualized experiences of each participant, check for errors, and clearly identify themes within the data.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Member checking, and peer debriefing were used in the current study to ensure trustworthiness. Participants reviewed their interview transcript to ensure the researcher had accurately reported responses to interview questions. Member checking ensured the reliability of the information collected throughout the study. Peer debriefing involving two external reviewers was used to ensure the alignment of semi-structured interview questions with research questions. Peer debriefing was also used to confirm the context of the study was truthful to the perceptions of the participants and data analysis.

Researcher's Role

In the current study, the researcher was used as the main instrument to collect and analyze data. The element of using a human instrument requires the researcher to acknowledge any bias and prejudice he or she may have. While conducting the study and analyzing data the researcher needs to maintain integrity. The current study was conducted at the Rudd Scholarship Foundation where the researcher was employed. The atmosphere of the scholarship foundation is close-knit, and the researcher knew or encountered participants regularly. The researcher was a staff member and had access to student records that included demographic, academic, and personal information about each participant. The researcher acknowledged all personal bias and prejudices related to knowing student information to ensure it did not influence participant responses or the interpretation of data. To avoid bias and prejudice in the current study the researcher

conducted detailed notetaking, careful observation, and engaged in personal reflection about potential bias throughout the data collection and data analysis process.

Limitations

“Limitations are factors out of the control of the researcher” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 133). Limitations can affect the interpretations of findings or the generalizability of results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The current study noted the following limitations:

1. The sample of participants was drawn from individuals who were receiving a scholarship from the Rudd Foundation based in Kansas. Results identified in the current study may not be generalizable to scholarship recipients from other foundations in Kansas or other states.
2. It is unknown how study participants’ pre-college preparation, the level of social and academic engagement in the campus community, and coaching meeting attendance may have impacted study participants’ responses to interview questions.
3. Data in the current study consisted of self-reported perceptions of the participants. Accuracy of data provided to the researcher was dependent on interview participants and their understanding of the questions and truthfulness in articulating a response.

Summary

Chapter 3 focused on the use of a qualitative research design that investigated the perceptions of graduating seniors and how coaching impacted their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, returning to campus each successive year, and graduating in four-years. An interview protocol that included

demographic and semi-structured interview questions was used in the current study. Five research questions guided the study. Chapter 3 described the methodology of the study including the research design, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researchers' role, and limitations of research study. The results of the data analysis and synthesis are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of graduating seniors who received funding from the Rudd Scholarship Foundation about academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, the return to college each year, and ability to graduate in four-years. The study had a total of 10 participants. Chapter 4 includes a summary of demographic characteristics of study participants and the results of the data analysis.

Demographic Characteristics and Participant Backgrounds

The current study included a total of 10 participants. Nine identified as female and one identified as male. All participants attended one of the partnering campuses with the Rudd Foundation: Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, or Wichita State University. Participants were classified as graduating seniors in May 2022. Nine of the study's participants were graduating within four-years, and one participant was graduating in three-years. Participants pursued a range of majors and minors. Majors included business administration, dental hygiene, biology, secondary English education, organizational leadership, secondary math education, exercise science, social work, and nursing. One participant double majored in psychology and dance. Six participants pursued minors in English, creative writing, music, psychology, Spanish, and public health. Participants in the study reported their cumulative GPA at the time of interview. Six participants had earned a cumulative GPA of 3.8 – 4.0, three participants had earned a cumulative GPA of 3.6 – 3.8, and one participant had earned a cumulative GPA of 3.4 – 3.6.

Participants in the study described numerous reasons for pursuing a higher education degree. Three participants indicated attending college and receiving a degree would increase their chances of obtaining a good job. Two participants indicated they had always wanted to attend college, while seven participants chose to attend college as a result of family encouragement, or they were first-generation and wanted to attend college for themselves and their families. Participant 1 stated: “I am first gen, so I really wanted to be the first person in my family to be able to do that, knowing that I had the opportunity to do so.” Participant 5 stated:

Growing up, college and education in general was really pushed on me by my dad and mom, but mainly my dad. So, as I got older, college was just always something that I wanted to pursue. I always wanted to get a bachelors [degree] and attend a university because it was important to me, and it was important to my family that I continue on and get an education and get a degree.

Five participants mentioned they attended college because the career choice they were pursuing required a college degree. One participant identified as a student-athlete and mentioned attending college for sports was a factor in the pursuit of higher education.

The remainder of this chapter describes the five themes that were derived from the data analysis: perceptions about academic experience, perceptions about personal growth outside the classroom, perceptions about factors contributing to career aspirations, perceptions about returning to college each year, and perceptions about ability to graduate within four-years. To further understand and demonstrate the perceptions of participants about coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation related to academic experience, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to

college each year, and ability to graduate within four-years, direct quotes are used to illustrate responses.

Perceptions About Academic Success

All 10 participants in the study shared one or more academic goals that motivated their academic performance throughout the undergraduate years of study and described how coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided or hindered their ability to achieve their academic goals. While reasons for putting forth effort in the classroom were varied, the most common academic goals were maintaining strong grades and a high GPA, understanding academic content, and graduating within four-years. Responses from participants related to academic goals and the coaching from the Rudd Foundation are presented in the next four sections.

Good grades and high GPA. Eight study participants mentioned that attaining good grades and achieving a high GPA was a main academic goal throughout their undergraduate years of study. Five of those who were pursuing a strong academic performance in college indicated this goal was a carry-over from high school. One participant described the challenge of attaining high grades or achieving a high GPA when entering the degree program. Participant 8 stated:

I had the goal of keeping my 4.0. That was my main one, but definitely higher than a 3.0. Once I got into my degree program, I didn't really care about my GPA because I knew it was going to be a challenging academic program.

Participant 1 described her academic goal:

I was very stubborn and in high school I always wanted to get all A's. So, I really kept a kind of head strong focus starting college. [The] Rudd [Foundation] gave

me the time to really just put all of my focus and effort in school. So, all A's was definitely still the goal all through college. Not that that always indicates as much, but that was just something I definitely had at the top of my list.

Understanding academic content. Three participants summarized that their academic goal throughout the undergraduate years was wanting to better understand the content in their courses and program. Participants noted that understanding the content in courses would be utilized in their career fields moving forward, setting them up for enhanced success. Participant 4 indicated: "My goals were mainly to do as much as I could to learn as much as I could and get as many opportunities as I could in these four-years." Participant 1 summarized her academic goals with the following statement:

I am going into health care and everything I was taking I was going to need access to at some point in my life. So, I was just really hoping to work on retaining my knowledge as I was going through. That was just a big goal for me - not just taking the class to get by, but truly taking the time to invest in the course.

Utilizing content from courses in participants' careers was mentioned by three respondents during interviews. Participant 5 commented:

I always wanted to do well. I wanted each semester to get a 4.0 if I could. I really wanted to learn the material as well as I could, and keep it in my head because I knew this is what I'm going to use for my career.

Graduating within four-years. Two participants indicated graduating within four-years was one of their main academic goals heading into college and throughout their undergraduate years. One participant expressed what actions she had to take to achieve her goal. Participant 6 commented her goal was to: "Stay on track to graduate in

four-years. Take 30 credits a year. Some summers, I think every summer, I took at least one summer class to stay on track.” Participant 4 expressed her goal with the following statement:

First off, graduate. It’s really hard, I feel like my goals obviously changed before and after the scholarship in a way, because beforehand it was 100% like I want to graduate. I was actually talking about this the other day. I said, I don’t know if I would have [graduated] without the scholarship.

Coaching. All 10 participants provided responses on how the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation staff aided their academic success. All 10 participants indicated that coaching did not hinder their academic success. Study respondents described how the coaching provided consistent care and support. Participants indicated the coaches held them accountable, provided motivation and encouragement, served as a resource, and provided a safe space to work through academic struggles and complaints. Four participants described the Rudd Foundation coach as someone who cared and was a consistent supporter. Participant 10 stated:

Knowing that somebody cared throughout college was really helpful just because I didn’t really have that growing up. Knowing that if I were to slack off or not necessarily fail, but just get to a hard spot, I knew that once a month somebody was going to check up on me. That was what really kept me going in the beginning before I grasped really what college was like.

Participant 7 described the role of the Rudd Foundation coach with the following statement:

Very much the coaches held us accountable. I think that was the biggest part in that even though I was having fun and going to school, there was always in the back of my brain, I got to keep it in line.

Participant 5 emphasized her experience with a coach with the following response:

I think [the coach] kept me accountable for my academic goals because we would talk about it and stuff. It was a form of accountability for me to make sure I was succeeding and doing everything that I could possibly do to do well.

Participant 6 stated coaching aided her ability due to the support and encouragement provided. She remarked: “[The Rudd Foundation coach] was a supporter who was there to actually help us. So, I feel like [the] Rudd [Foundation] has high expectations for us, but also supported us through motivating us, or encouraging me to succeed.”

Participant 1 stated:

[Coaching] was a great resource when it came to problem solving, or even if it just came to talking through things. I was still meeting my goals, but maybe not where I exactly wanted to be. The coaching really allowed me to give myself grace through that process. Just be very honest with myself. Here’s what is attainable, here’s what I need to do. [The coach provided] very realistic reflection.

Participant 2 indicated:

There were times where, especially freshman year, I didn’t know how to go about asking questions and who to ask. So, I would just rely on the coaching, and of course, [the coach] was there for me quite a bit. If [the coaches] didn’t know the

answer, [they] would at least put me in the direction of where I could find the answer.

About the coaching process, Participant 6 said:

I felt like I could talk openly. I could talk about complaints I have with classes versus like if you go to a professor, you can't really complain about their class. Being able to do that, I was able to bounce off ideas of what I can do and find strategies to help if I ever had something come up.

Two participants developed academic goals not mentioned by other participants.

Participant 10 set goals to further enhance her soft skills. Participant 10 stated:

I've always loved school and it kind of just came easy to me. So, in order to challenge myself, I set like crazy goals and most of the time they're based on grades, but sometimes depending on the courses I'm in, if I know that maybe the grade won't be too hard to get, I'll set goals to better understand the content or to gain more soft skills like communication and working with others or something that will help me later.

Participant 2 set academic goals that challenged his academic abilities. According to Participant 2: "The curriculum [in high school] wasn't the hardest, so, I got a pretty decent GPA and just wanted to kind of challenge myself a little more by taking the higher-level [college] classes while also maintaining the highest GPA possible."

Perceptions About Personal Growth

Participants were asked to provide insight into how they developed as an individual throughout college. Responses from participants varied, but common responses included enhanced confidence, time management skills, development in

communication and leadership, and growth resulting from an event or involvement with a group. Participants were also asked to explain how coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided or hindered their growth as an individual throughout college. All 10 study respondents provided examples of how coaching from the Rudd Foundation promoted personal growth outside the classroom. One participant indicated coaching had also hindered personal growth outside the classroom.

Enhanced confidence. Five participants indicated that throughout their undergraduate years of study their confidence in themselves had increased. One participant mentioned that she realized her potential. Participant 10 stated: “I think first and foremost, I really just realized my potential and how far I can push myself.” Participant 2 summarized his experience with the following statement: “I think just being here the last four-years has helped me develop as a person, being comfortable with myself and challenging myself, and knowing what I can accomplish if I set my mind to it.” Participant 3 stated: “I’m just much more confident in who I am as a person and more comfortable going after what I want to go after. I’m more grounded and strong in my beliefs and just confident in who I am.”

Participant 2 responded:

One big thing for me was there was representation. I remember walking into my very first class of undergrad. There were a lot of people that didn’t look like me. I felt like I was in the wrong place. It’s kind of like the feeling you’re a new kid and you walked into the wrong classroom. It totally felt like that and the imposter syndrome hit. So, there are a lot of people that didn’t look like me, and I was just like I’m not to be here or I am in the wrong place. There was a lot of self-doubt

my first year. Then going into the second year due to the coaching and due to the extracurricular activities that I had gotten involved in, the support systems that I had sought out, I kind of embraced it. I embraced that imposter syndrome. There might not be people that look like me in this classroom. I might stand out a little bit more, but I kind of embraced it and said why not be that person that makes it. It's possible for people like me to get in those classes to get into PT school and stuff like that. So, that was the biggest thing for me was just developing the self-confidence and getting rid of the imposter syndrome.

Time management skills. Two participants referenced developing their time management skills throughout their undergraduate studies. Participant 1 indicated:

I feel like in college, you really learn how to be flexible with your schedule with school, like so many things are set out for you. Then outside of that, it's like you just got to make time for it. So, I really just learned how to kind of go with the flow, how to really prioritize and just learn more about myself in the process and what I valued outside of my education.

Participant 10 stated: "I also learned other things like how to manage my time and be productive with a social life or work life, school, and all that stuff."

Development in communication and leadership. Four participants mentioned their development of communication and leadership skills grew throughout their undergraduate studies. Participant 2 indicated:

I found myself developing more as a person, as a leader, being a little more outspoken, asking questions, not being afraid to be the person to be the first one in the classroom, being the only one in the classroom to raise my hand.

Participant 10 said, “also just communicating with others and gaining leadership skills that will help me later in my career.”

Participant 5 summarized her experience with leadership and commented:

Leadership is just like a process of the leader and the follower and like inspiring and influencing one another. So really my idea of leadership changed throughout college. So, I think that was a big thing that I developed in my idea of leadership, which I’m really thankful that it changed.

Growth resulting from an event or participation in a group. Four participants referenced growing as an individual due to an event or a group with which they were associated. Participant 9 mentioned the experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it influenced her development. Participant 9 stated:

I think that I became more introverted, which is weird because I would have thought that it would be the opposite. But again, I think that’s also partly due to the pandemic, because right when I was about to start going out and seeing people and trying to connect, I was getting out there, and then we all had to go home for the rest of the semester. Then we spent the next semester home and then the semester after that we had stuff online and some stuff was in person, and then it was in person but you had to keep distance from people and all that. So, I don’t know. I think I’ve subdued a little bit. I used to be a lot more out there when I was a kid, but I think that’s part of maturing and growing up.

Participant 5 referenced her program of study by stating: “Through my program of study, I’ve been able to develop in my leadership skills.” Participant 6 shared her growth as a leader from being part of an athletic team. She responded:

I give credit mostly to being on the cross country and track team. Just growing as a leader, even my coach says I've totally changed. He told me, "You have no hesitation to speak in front of a group to lead the team through workouts and team building and stuff."

Coaching. All participants were asked to provide their perspective on how coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided and/or hindered their personal growth outside of the classroom. All 10 participants felt the coaching aided in their growth outside the classroom, and one expressed how the coaching also hindered her growth. Participant 6 summarized her experience with coaching from the Rudd Foundation by stating:

Rudd encourages us to be as active as we can on campus. I mean, it's not really in the classrooms like joining different clubs and groups and pushing that on us definitely helps...but just being involved in a lot of different stuff that's helped me grow, develop individually and just being involved and encouraged to join other things that I might not necessarily have done before.

Participant 7 indicated:

I think it's just that supportive dynamic that we have. I always had someone there, and it was someone that wasn't my age, first and foremost. And it just kind of allowed me to have a confidant whenever I needed it. So, in terms of school, yes, but also on a personal level.

Participant 9 summarized her experience by commenting:

Having that opportunity to have someone who knows a little bit about my background so I can tell [them] all the stuff and all the drama going on with my family is really nice and keeping [them] updated on my love life, how it's just

really having the opportunity to have someone to listen and offer advice. You can have someone in your own peer group that does that, but we have someone who's a little bit older who has more life experience. It means a little bit more when they validate your feelings and then when they also offer advice.

Participant 10 stated: "Well, I think the coaching the Rudd Foundation has really inspired me to push myself even further." Participant 5 said: "It was just the trust that I had through the coaching experience and the relationship I formed and the coaching experience that allowed me to feel comfortable in that space." Participant 3 indicated:

I always felt like it was a comfortable space, even from like the very beginning. I never felt uncomfortable talking about anything just because of the structure of it. And it was casual. But it was also very clear that this was a place where we could talk about school, and anything else in life. And so, I think that college opened with a lot of challenges like personal life for a lot of people. And I think that that was always a place where I could find a way to navigate them because sometimes it's not necessarily you need someone to fix your problems, you just need to figure out where do I go from here? And so, some reassurance, I guess in a sense, I feel like that's really important to me. Just like being reassured enough, I feel like it's OK that you're doing things or that you're going to figure it out. And so I think that's really what the key part was - the reassurance that I got from [the coaching].

Participant 6 provided insight into how coaching hindered her personal growth outside of the classroom. She stated:

On hindering my personal growth, there was one point freshman year when [REDACTED] was here. [The Rudd Foundation Coach was] was very academic oriented. It was

all about academics. But I mean, I agree that's the main point of college. But I was also focused on athletics. And [the coach] had made multiple comments to me about taking a year off from sports like focus on academics or take a semester off from running, so that way I was only doing school and that kind of upset me because I thought [the coach] was only seeing me as a number. I get the stats basically. And so, I need to have a high GPA and I'm not going to do that if I'm running. But that being said, the first few years, it was manageable, and then this year I actually did take a step back from the track team just because it is way too much with student teaching. So, I guess that would be the only way I would say that my personal growth was hindered, maybe because I wasn't being seen as more than just academic.

Perceptions About Factors Contributing to Career Aspirations

The 10 participants were asked how coaching from the Rudd Foundation shaped their career goals. Nine participants expressed no hindrances from the coaching in relation to career aspirations. One participant indicated coaching limited his career aspirations.

Coaching. All 10 participants described how coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided and/or hindered their career aspirations included growth in mentorship skills and confidence, communication and networking abilities, and professionalism. Participant 10 referenced mentoring, stating:

Getting the opportunity to mentor other scholars through the [Rudd] foundation has really kind of made me realize how important that is, and it's honestly fun for me. So, I think in my career, it's really important for me at some point to mentor

others or gain leadership roles that allow me to do that. When I get to my career, I want to be able to just help others because the Rudd Foundation has shown me how much that can impact people.

Participant 6 stated:

I could have easily changed majors and switched to something easy, but I wasn't really interested. [The Rudd Foundation coach] knew that I wanted to be a teacher, and kept pushing me to it and reminding me, when times are tough, this is what you're working for, there's a light at the end of the tunnel kind of thing.

Participant 4 emphasized:

My final grade in a class was a C minus or C plus, and I was like, wow. I reached out, I called, I emailed, I did everything, and this professor never responded to me. I remember I went to [the Rudd Foundation coach] about it, and I was like, if this is a sign of how the rest of the nursing projects are going to go, I don't know. [The Rudd Foundation coach] kind of was like, well, you can continue to reach out or you could not, this still keeps you at a good GPA. You don't need to panic, brush it off and focus on your other classes and do well in your other classes. You still have three-years or three and a half years left, and you need to keep on track and just kind of do it. So, I felt like that advice I stuck with throughout the last three and a half years.

Participant 5 stated her experience with coaching:

It's actually really helped me with interview skills, networking skills, knowing my resources on campus, like the Career Center. This helped me build those connections on campus, and that was all done through the Rudd Foundation.

Participant 5 added:

She [the Rudd Foundation coach] made me feel confident in my decision and helped me tremendously during my process of getting in [to my degree program], because my confidence has only increased from my sophomore year and I wasn't confident in asserting myself, so, I just thought getting into the program was doomed, even though I had a great GPA. [The Rudd Foundation coach helped in] setting up an interview and meeting with, I don't know the lady's name, but we had a whole interview type meeting just giving me tips on how to do well was huge and kind of shows the time outside of what [the coach's] already doing. I think I really developed in terms of networking. I've expanded my network a lot and that was through the [Rudd] Foundation where they had us go on LinkedIn, and I've had some really neat opportunities and made some really neat connections and professional connections that way.

One participant expressed that they did not have any hinderances but a limitation from the coaching in relation to career aspirations. Participant 2 explained:

It was a little bit tougher because my major, not a lot of people have my major and [the Rudd Foundation coach] did [their] best to help me out. I know [the coach] would try to put me in contact with friends that [they] knew in the PT [Physical Therapy] field or they knew themselves. I think it was a lot tougher on [the coach] because I was one of the only people majoring in exercise science and there was only one cohort at the time. So, it was obvious, I know [the coach] did [their] best. Then throughout the years, more and more people started getting added on, more people started majoring in exercise science and wanting to be a

PT. [The coach] would put me in contact with those people. So, we kind of started a little cluster and I know the scholars that are getting into the program, so I reach out to them and see how they're doing and vice versa.

Perceptions About Returning to College Each Year

All 10 participants responded to two questions regarding how the coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided and/or hindered their ability to return to college each year. All 10 participants mentioned the support they had from the Rudd Foundation coach impacted their return to college each year. None of the 10 participants stated that the coaching from the Rudd Foundation had hindered their ability to return to college each year.

Coaching support. Participant 5 stated:

If it wasn't for the Rudd Foundation, I don't know if I would have made it through college. There was a time in the beginning I cried for the first two weeks of college, like every single day because I was really questioning if college was for me and I was questioning if I could do it. I was a first-generation college student, I was questioning whether the statistics were true and I was just not going to make it, and I wasn't built for it. A lot of stuff was going through my head, but the Rudd Foundation, the values that it stands for and everything that they go through in the selection process, it kind of gave me the confidence to keep going and keep trying, even when it got very difficult for me in college, whether it be academically or socially or mentally or whatever it was.

Participant 10 noted:

Knowing that someone always has your back or that if you fail or end up going down a road of failure, someone will always be there to pick you up or just make sure you're doing well. Then also just making sure every scholar is connected or on progress, and that has really just helped me, I guess, to stay motivated to continue through college.

Participant 5 indicated:

I don't know if I could have done it without the Rudd Foundation. You know, just encouraging me and pushing me because we can contact our coaches any time. It wasn't just those one on one [meetings], it was just any time that you needed support you had that support to get you through your day. Those days that you needed the support the foundation was always there.

Participant 3 said: "I think it gave me a lot of comfort in life, a safe place to be, and just like a place to fall back on those first few years when I was still kind of trying to figure everything out."

Participant 1 remarked:

I know I had this awesome opportunity financially as well to be in school. So, of course, that was very comforting and knowing I wasn't going to struggle paying for classes and what not. I feel like the coaching let somebody be on my side and in my corner to say, hey, you can make it through another semester, you're going to graduate on time was definitely a huge drive.

Perceptions About Ability to Graduate Within Four-Years

All 10 participants shared insights into how coaching from the Rudd Foundation contributed to their ability to graduate within four-years. None of the 10 participants indicated they had experienced hindrances from the coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation in their ability to graduate in four-years. Participants described four-year degree plans and support from coaches that helped keep a focus on graduating in four-years.

Four-year degree plans. Three participants referenced the four-year degree plan they created on their own and provided to their coach for review. Participant 10 stated,

We have to have a four-year degree plan. That was really important for me to see because I was undecided, how far off the path I could get before I had to do this in four-years. So, I think without that, I might not have realized how much or how little I should have been doing at one time.

Participant 5 mentioned:

I guess one way that they [the Rudd Foundation coach] helped me is that they had a template for us and encouraged us to talk to our advisers and to make sure we were on that four-year track. So, it really just kept us accountable.

Participant 1 said:

The biggest aspect being the motivating and then also one thing that I really love that we did was a four-year map of our [academic degree] plan. We kind of became our own advisers with the help of each of you [the Rudd Foundation coaches] keeping us accountable and on track by looking at all of our classes and

knowing who and how and what we need to do in order to graduate on time. So, really just the organization it provided was awesome.

Support from coaches. Eight of the participants stated that support from the Rudd Foundation coaches was a factor in their ability to graduate in four-years.

Participant 7 entered college with enough credits to assist in graduating in three-years.

She stated:

It was just that accountability. You're required to graduate in four-years, so you always have that in the back of your brain. But here I am in three-years and I think that's just from being pushed and I never took 12 hours. I think it was a consistent 15 because I knew I could take it on and I had the support system behind me to do so.

Participant 8 responded:

I definitely love the coaching and checking in on us and seeing where we were at academically because I don't love the university advisors. I don't think that they're great. So, having monthly coaching is a lot more than you have with an academic advisor. I think [the Rudd Foundation coach] was really good about making sure we were succeeding in our classes and taking the courses that we really needed. If the coach ever heard something that was like, no, not really, then she would direct this to the advising people. It just helped me stay on top of everything that I needed. She helped me be better prepared for my program.

Participant 6 stated: "If it wasn't for [the Rudd Foundation coach] pushing me and for knowing that I wanted to graduate with my Rudd class, I definitely wouldn't have tried as hard as I did to make this semester work." Participant 3 expressed,

I think that I did have enough credit coming in and I probably could have graduated in four-years either way, but because of the coaching and conversations we had, I ended up getting two degrees just because we kind of would plan out, oh, if I take this one class in the summer, it'll be totally fine and it works out. So, it's like it's great to have university resources, advisors, and various things, but sometimes it's really nice to have an outside perspective.

Summary

Chapter 4 included a summary of the results of the data analysis from the interviews conducted with 10 graduating seniors who received coaching by Rudd Foundation staff throughout their undergraduate years. All participants were classified as graduating seniors and attended one of the three partnering universities with the Rudd Foundation. Interview questions focused on factors related to how coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation impacted the academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and ability to graduate in four-years. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

The current study investigated perceptions of graduating seniors who participated in coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation, and how it impacted their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and ability to graduate within four-years. Three sections are included within this chapter. The first section provides a summary of the current study, and includes an overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, methodology, and major findings. The second section of Chapter 5 summarizes findings related to the literature. The final section provides implications and recommendations.

Study Summary

In this section there is a summary of the study, including an overview of the problem. The purpose statement and research questions utilized in the study are stated. This section concludes with a review of the methodology and major findings from the study.

Overview of the problem. Higher education institutions over recent decades have implemented numerous resources to aid in bolstering student academic success, retention rates, persistence, and graduation rates (Clark, 2021; Ericksen, 2020; Robinson, 2015). The initiatives implemented include tutoring (Farlowe, 2022; Robinson, 2015), academic advising (Higgins, 2017; Robinson, 2015), faculty, staff, and peer mentoring (Collier; 2017; Doane, 2017), counseling services (Clark, 2021; LaFollette, 2009), tracking student engagement (Chambers, 2009; Ericksen, 2020; Steele, 2022), implementing cohort specific advising (Fares, 2020), developing community belonging

(Chambers 2009, Erickson, 2020), and coaching (Robinson, 2015). Coaching is a new phenomenon in higher education designed to improve retention and academic performance (Robinson, 2015). There is limited research on the impact of coaching on retention, persistence, or degree completion. The review of literature for the current study found no research on the impact of coaching on academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and graduating in four-years. With the implementation of coaching in higher education, additional research is needed to understand the impact coaching has for students throughout their undergraduate studies.

Purpose statement and research questions. The study was guided by five purposes and five research questions. The study explored the perceptions of graduating seniors about how coaching by a scholarship foundation aided and/or hindered their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college, and ability to graduate in four-years. Interview questions were aligned with the study purposes and research questions.

Review of the methodology. This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design with a constructivist approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a phenomenological research design allows the researcher to “describe the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (p. 13). A constructivist focused approach provides the researcher the ability to identify shared themes, behaviors, and experiences among participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher developed purposes and research questions that investigated the perceptions of graduating seniors who participated in coaching from the Rudd

Scholarship Foundation based in Kansas. The purposes and research questions were centered on students' academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, returning to college each year, and graduating within four-years. The researcher received approval to conduct the study from the Baker Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) and the Rudd Foundation Director (Appendix B). Through an email invitation to participate in the study, the researcher contacted 13 scholars who had received Rudd Foundation Scholarships and participated in coaching sessions during their undergraduate years of study (Appendix C). Ten students agreed to participate in the study. The researcher had two external examiners review the interview questions for alignment of the interview questions to the research questions. Prior to interviews, participants signed a consent form (Appendix D) and were provided the research questions for review. A semi-structured interview with four demographic questions and 13 structured interview questions that aligned with the five research questions were used with each participant.

Interviews were conducted through Zoom during the final semester of the participants' undergraduate studies, during the spring semester of 2022. All interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes and were recorded to ensure accuracy of transcription. The researcher utilized NVivo to transcribe the recordings of the interviews. Each transcript was assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) to preserve confidentiality. Member checking provided study respondents with the opportunity to check their interview transcript for accuracy. Following the transcription of interviews and member checking, the researcher implemented Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five steps for data analysis.

Major findings. All 10 participants in the current study indicated that the coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided in their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and ability to graduate within four-years. The participants indicated that the coaching from the Rudd Foundation aided in their academic success because the coach was a supporter, motivator, held the student accountable, was a resource, and provided a space to work through struggles.

All participants provided insight into how they grew as an individual throughout their undergraduate studies. All 10 participants expressed that the coaching they participated in aided their personal growth outside the classroom. Participants mentioned the coaching included having a supporter who pushed them to feel confident in themselves, encouraged them to reach for their goals, and provided advice on how to continue forward. One participant mentioned that at one point the Rudd Foundation coach challenged her to be more mindful of time management. That participant further expressed that as time continued the coaching remained an aid in her ability to understand time management, resulting in increased success in juggling many activities and due dates for assignments.

Participants' responses about the impact of coaching on their career aspirations were varied. Nine of the participants said that the coaching by the Rudd Foundation aided in their career aspirations through building mentorship skills and confidence, enhancing communication and networking abilities, and developing participants' professionalism. One participant felt that the coaching was limited in relation to career

aspirations as he was the only scholar at the time pursuing a particular degree field, and the coach was only able to provide limited advice and support.

All 10 participants described how coaching contributed to their ability to return to college each year. The 10 participants stated that the Rudd Foundation coach provided support throughout their undergraduate studies. None of the participants referred to any hindrances from the Rudd Foundation coach in their ability to return to college each year.

All 10 participants indicated that Rudd Foundation coaching aided their ability to graduate within four-years. One participant was able to graduate within three-years. Two participants referred to the four-year degree plan they created with their coach. Study participants indicated the degree plan helped ensure they were staying on track to graduate in four-years.

Findings Related to the Literature

Numerous efforts have been implemented in higher education institutions to aid in retaining students. Efforts have included first-year experience programs, academic support programs, on-campus living requirements, faculty support, financial support, community involvement and sense of belonging, and accessible resources (Ericksen, 2020; Holder et al., 2016; Soika, 2022). Coaching was initiated in higher education settings in 2000 (Robinson, 2015). The current study provided additional research adding to the work of Robinson (2015) who investigated coaching practices within higher education. Robinson reported that coaching practices included counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and academic advising. The current study supported Robinson's (2015) research. Coaching provided by Rudd Foundation staff incorporated advising on

academics, personal growth, and career aspirations. Coaches were sometimes seen by participants as counselors whom they could speak to about challenges they were facing.

Lim (2021) studied academic coaching and reported that academic coaching guides students to discover themselves and improve their ability to generate solutions for challenges. In addition, Lim (2021) stated that academic coaching can encourage students to achieve their fullest potential through setting goals, creating plans and staying accountable. Respondents in the current study indicated that coaching assisted them to set academic goals and pursue them in an accountable fashion. Study participants indicated that coaching aided their academic success through support, accountability, recommended resources, and a space to work through academic challenges.

Personal growth coaching has also been used in higher education to support retention and persistence efforts. Johnson and Sepulveda (2019) encouraged higher education staff to consider personal growth coaching by focusing on performance and growth through incorporating both short- and long-term goal setting. According to Johnson and Sepulveda an increase in GPA and graduation rates would be attained by institutions that incorporated personal growth coaching. The current study did not support or contradict the findings of Johnson and Sepulveda (2019) but added to the understanding of how coaching can aid students in personal growth outside the classroom throughout their undergraduate studies. Participants in the current study set their own academic and personal goals and the coaching they received aided in their academic experience and growing their self-confidence.

Benjamin et al. (2021) researched career coaching and found that it assists students in planning for life after college. Career coaching focuses on major or career

exploration, job and internship search strategies, interview preparation, professional development, and experiences (Benjamin et al., 2021). In the current study all participants indicated the coaching they received aided in their career aspirations through mentorship skills, confidence building, communication, networking abilities, and professionalism. One participant, however, indicated that a coach with more insight and connections within his field of study would have provided increased success related to his career aspirations.

Allen and Lester (2012) reported that students who completed a college success course had better retention, stronger student engagement, and better academic performance for the semester they were enrolled in the course. Students in the course also reported feeling connected to their program. While the current study focused on those who participated in coaching throughout their undergraduate studies, participants indicated coaching aided in their academic success, personal growth outside the classroom including being pushed to get involved on campus, and their ability to return to the university each year.

Pechac (2017) researched coaching session types, frequency of coaching sessions, and topics reviewed during coaching sessions. One-on-one coaching sessions that discussed the degree completion plan, goal setting, advising, and registration more than three times a semester had a successful impact on students' credit-hour completion. In the current study, respondents indicated that coaching aided in their ability to remain on track to graduate within four-years. Participants referenced completing four-year degree plans to ensure on time graduation and meeting with their coach for accountability and support were leading factors in their success.

Bettinger and Baker (2014) examined InsideTrack data and compared coached and non-coached students on graduation rates. The researchers reported that coached students persisted at a higher rate in college and had a higher rate for graduation than non-coached students. The results from the current study support Bettinger and Baker's (2014) findings. Study respondents who participated in coaching throughout their four-years of undergraduate study referred to the support received from the Rudd Foundation coach. Participants further expressed that coaching and financial support provided by the Rudd Scholarship Foundation assisted them to successfully graduate within four-years.

Conclusions

The current study investigated perceptions of graduating seniors who participated in coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation, and how it impacted their academic experience, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return to college each year, and their ability to graduate within four-years. The 10 participants in the study responded to 17 interview questions. The following section includes implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Implications for action. The results from the current study may be of interest to higher education institutions considering implementation of coaching on their campus or enhancing existing coaching efforts. Higher education institutions would need to consider the student population (e.g., students showing financial need, first-generation college students, international students, or underrepresented students) when implementing coaching efforts and evaluating how coaching can specifically aid college success. Coaching at a higher education institution could support students' academic experiences, personal growth outside the classroom, and career aspirations leading to

increased retention and graduation within four-years or less. Coaches could provide students with additional support and be a resource for them throughout their undergraduate studies. The current study supports coaching efforts in developing students' abilities to set goals, develop soft skills, work through challenges both in and outside the classroom, enhance professional experience, and referral to additional support services available on campus when necessary. Results of the current study could be shared as a benefit to scholarship programs, scholarship foundations, or similar programs at higher education institutions seeking to implement coaching efforts.

The Rudd Foundation should be encouraged to use the data from the current study to improve the existing coaching experience for undergraduate students participating in coaching. The current study is the first study conducted on the coaching efforts at the Rudd Foundation. The findings of the current study only provide a preliminary evaluation, and a formal assessment on the effectiveness of the coaching program and its impact on academic experiences, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability for students to return each year, and ability for students to graduate within four-years. Additional research is needed for a more in-depth understanding of the coaching program. Additional examination of the coaching program could provide new aspects of coaching that should be integrated into the coaching program. For instance, students who may be on the verge of not meeting the scholarship requirements could be integrated into a more structured coaching program. Additional examination of the coaching program and its structure could provide insight regarding effective coaching skills, format, goals and frequency of meetings and topics, and geographical location to partnering institutions for coaching meetings.

Recommendations for future research. Four recommendations for future research are based on results from the current study. First, all of the participants in the current study received coaching provided by the Rudd Foundation in Kansas. Participants had to meet specific requirements to receive a Rudd Foundation Scholarship and had to attend one of the three partnering institutions. Future studies could examine coaching provided by other scholarship foundations. The impact of coaching provided by higher education institutions on the variables included in the current study could also be examined in future studies. The current study was conducted at three Rudd Foundation partner institutions located in Kansas. Future research on coaching could be conducted at higher education institutions in other geographic regions throughout the US.

The current study used a qualitative research design. Mixed methods and quantitative studies should be considered as future research on the impact of coaching with undergraduate students is conducted. The current study investigated undergraduate student perceptions about the impact of coaching on academic experience, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return each year, and ability to graduate within four-years. Future research could focus on additional variables including cumulative GPA at the end of each semester and academic year, changes in major, changes in financial eligibility, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Interview questions in the current study were purposefully broad and provided a generalized picture of perspectives from graduating seniors on how coaching aided or hindered their academic experience, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return each year, and ability to graduate in four-years. A recommendation for future studies is to explore each area more in-depth, developing

more specific and targeted questions regarding academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return each year, and ability to graduate in four-years.

Robinson (2015) reported that coaching practices in higher education are varied and that there is no framework on coaching across institutions. Pechac (2017) studied coaching session types, frequency of coaching sessions, and topics reviewed during coaching sessions. Future research could examine the impact of types of coaching, coaching credentials, or coaching skills that are effective and successful provided by a scholarship program or higher education institution. Examining frequency, goals of sessions and how evaluated, length of sessions, consistency of coaching meetings, topics discussed, and coaches' outlook on their work could expand the knowledge about coaching of undergraduate students. Future research could also investigate the perspectives of coaches about their coaching experiences with undergraduate students to provide additional insights into how to make coaching more effective.

Concluding remarks. Efforts to bolster academic success, retention, persistence, and graduation rates have continued to evolve within higher education (Clark, 2021; Ericksen, 2020; Robinson, 2015). Previous research focused on coaching practices or impact of coaching on college students' retention and graduation rates. There is limited research on the perspectives of graduating seniors who have participated in coaching throughout their undergraduate years of study. The current study investigated perceptions of students who received coaching throughout their undergraduate study years. As higher education institutions continue to implement initiatives to support retention and graduation rates, coaching students can provide a unique opportunity in

working with targeted student populations. Results from the current study may guide higher education administrators, scholarship foundations, student support staff, faculty who work with coaching programs, and the Rudd Foundation in implementing or enhancing current coaching efforts to support student success, retention, persistence, and graduation within four-years.

References

- Abrams, Z. (2020). *A crunch at college counseling centers*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/09/crunch-college-counseling>
- Allen, I. H., & Lester, S. M., Jr. (2012). The impact of a college survival skills course and a success coach on retention and academic performance. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 27(1), 8-14.
- Alyahyan, E., & Dustegor, D. (2020). *Predicting academic success in higher education: Literature review and best practices*. Retrieved from
<https://educationaltechnologyjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41239-020-0177-7>
- Amanda. (2019). How higher education can help you grow (Blog post). Retrieved from
<https://www.sdgyoungleaders.org/personal-growth/how-higher-education-can-help-you-grow/>
- American Counseling Association. (2020). *20/20 consensus definition of counseling*. Retrieved from <https://www.counseling.org/about-us/about-aca/20-20-a-vision-for-the-future-of-counseling/consensus-definition-of-counseling>
- American Federation of Teachers. (2011). *Student success in higher education*. Retrieved from
<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/studentssuccess0311.pdf>
- Ashiq, F. (n.d.). *Personal growth: A definite guide to self-growth*. Retrieved from:
<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/personal-growth-a-definite-guide-to-self-growth/>

- Bailey, C. (2012). *The relationship between student readiness inventory scores and first-time, first-year student retention and academic success at Baker University Baldwin City campus* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from https://www.bakeru.edu/images/pdf/SOE/EdD_Theses/bailey_cassy.pdf
- Barnes, M. K. (2022). *Career counseling in higher education*. Retrieved from <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1813/Career-Counseling-in-Higher-Education.html>
- Benjamin, C. E., Cavanaugh, C., Hendrickson, K., Kale, A., Layton, R. L., Mohaghegh, M., Maxson, P., & Ross, E. (2021). *How the role of coaching is impacting higher education*. Retrieved from [https://icfraleigh.org/resources/Documents/Coaching%20In%20Higher%20%20Education%20\(2\).pdf](https://icfraleigh.org/resources/Documents/Coaching%20In%20Higher%20%20Education%20(2).pdf)
- Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(1), 3–19. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43773449>
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. F. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Bok, D. (2013). *Higher education in America* (Rev. ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bullock-Yowell, E., McConnell, A. E., & Schedin, E. A. (2014). Decided and undecided students: Career self-efficacy, negative thinking, and decision-making difficulties. *NACADA Journal*, 34(1), 22-34.

- Campbell, R. (2019, November, 13). Self-growth is a key to students' success. *The Antelope Valley Times*. Retrieved from <https://theavtimes.com/2019/11/13/self-growth-is-a-key-to-students-success/>
- Carrasco, M. (2021). *Colleges seek virtual mental health services*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/09/20/colleges-expand-mental-health-services-students>
- Chambers, S. R. (2009). *Student engagement: Using the NSSE benchmarks to investigate longterm persistence* (Doctoral dissertation, Montana State University). Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.montana.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1/1057/ChambersS0509.pdf?sequence=1>
- Chapstick, K. M., Harrell-Williams, L. M., Cockrum, C. D., & West, S. L. (2019). Exploring the effectiveness of academic coaching for academically at-risk college students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 44(3), 219-231. Doi: 10.1007/s10755-019-9459-1
- Clark, C. (2021). *Importance of mental health services on college campuses*. Retrieved from <https://timely.md/blog/mental-health-services-on-college-campuses/>
- College Tuition Compare. (2022) *Colleges in Kansas 2022 graduation rate comparison*. Retrieved from <https://www.collegetuitioncompare.com/compare/tables/?state=KS&factor=graduation-rate#:~:text=The%20average%20graduation%20rate%20for,and%20retention%20rate%20is%2066.43%25>
- Collier, P. J. (2017). Why peer mentoring is an effective approach for promoting college student success. *Metropolitan Universities*, 28(3), 9-19.

- Cook, B., & Pullaro, N. (2010). *College graduation rates: Behind the numbers*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/College-Graduation-Rates-Behindthe-Numbers.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Doane, N. M. (2017). *Mentorship programs and the achievement of first-generation undergraduate college students: Creating and implementing a successful and sustainable mentorship program* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (ProQuest No. 10281056)
- Eatough, E. (2021). *3 ways to answer "What are your career aspirations?"* Retrieved from: <https://www.betterup.com/blog/career-aspirations#:~:text=Your%20career%20aspirations%20are%20your,by%20a%205%2Dyear%20plan.>
- Education Reform (2013). *Academic support*. Retrieved from: <https://www.edglossary.org/academic-support/>
- Ericksen, K. (2020). *8 overlooked factors affecting college persistence and retention*. Retrieved from: <https://collegiseducation.com/news/programs-and-course-content/college-persistence-and-retention/>
- Fain, P. (2020). *Career exploration in college*. Retrieved from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/11/11/more-urgency-about-creating-career-exploration-options-college-students>

Fares, M. N. (2020). *The relationship between academic advising and student motivation on the persistence of freshman exploratory studies students* (Doctoral dissertation]. Retrieved

from

<https://research.library.kutztown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=edddissertations>

Farlowe, A. (2022). *Tutoring*. Retrieved from:

<https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2514/Tutoring-HIGHER-EDUCATION.html>

Federal Student Aid. (2022). *What are graduation, retention, and transfer rates?* Retrieved from

<https://studentaid.gov/help/graduation-retention-transfer-rates>

Gati, I., Krausz, M., & Osipow, S. H. (1996). A taxonomy of difficulties in career decision making. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*(4), 510-526. doi:10.1037/0022-

0167.43.4.510

Goldsmith, M., Lyons, L., & Freas, A. (2000). *Coaching for leadership*. Columbia, MD: Pfeiffer.

Hagedorn, L. S. (2006). *How to define retention: A new look at an old problem*. Retrieved from

ERIC database. (ED493674)

Hall, M. M., Worsham, R. E., & Reavis, G. (2021). The effects of offering proactive student-

success coaching on community college students' academic performance and persistence.

Community College Review, 49(2), 202-237. doi:10.1177/0091552120982030

Helbig, S. & Matkin, G. W. (2021). College career services on the move: Why – and what does it

mean? Retrieved from [https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/trends-and-](https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/trends-and-predictions/college-career-services-on-the-move-why-and-what-does-it-mean/)

[predictions/college-career-services-on-the-move-why-and-what-does-it-mean/](https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/trends-and-predictions/college-career-services-on-the-move-why-and-what-does-it-mean/)

Higgins, E. M. (2017). The advising relationship is at the core of academic advising. *NACADA*.

40(2). Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/The-Advising-Relationship-is-at-the-Core-of-Academic-Advising.aspx>

Higher Education. (2019, May 2). Why “retention” and “persistence” aren’t synonyms. *Vita*

Navis. <https://blog.vitanavis.com/why-retention-and-persistence-arent-synonyms/>

Higher Education Opportunity Act, 20 U.S.C. 1001, 2008.

Holder, T. R., Chism, S. J., Keuss, T., & Small, N. S. (2016). *Retention and persistence in higher*

education: An exploratory study of risk factors and milestones impacting second semester retention of freshmen students (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from:

<https://irl.umsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1076&context=dissertation>

Hossler, D., & Bontranger, B. (2015). *Handbook of strategic enrollment management*. San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Howlett, M. A., McWilliams, M. A., Rademacher, K., O’Neill, J. C., Maitland, T. L., Abels, K.,

Demetriou, C., & Panter, A. T. (2021). Investigating the effects of academic coaching on college students’ metacognition. *Innovative Higher Education*, 46(2), 189-204.

doi:10.1007/s10755-020-09533-7

InsideTrack. (2022). *Educational management & student services*. Retrieved from

<https://www.insidetrack.org>

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (n.d.). *Look up an institution*. Retrieved from:

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=155025&goToReportId=6>

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2020-a). *Emporia State University*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=155025>

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2020-b). *Fort Hays State University*.

Retrieved from

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=155061>

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2020-c). *Wichita State University*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=156125>

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2016). *Graduation rates*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017046.pdf>

Johnson, W., & Sepulveda, A. (2014). *Coaching practices in higher education: Coaching for performance and coaching for growth*. Retrieved from

<https://evollution.com/programming/personal-development/coaching-practices-in-higher-education-coaching-for-performance-and-coaching-for-growth/>

Koenig, R. (2019). To retain college students, look to academic support and campus activities, new report finds. *EdSurge*. Retrieved from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-09-12-to-retain-college-students-look-to-academic-support-and-campus-activities-new-report-finds>

LaFollette, A. M. (2009.) *The evolution of university counseling: from educational guidance to multicultural competence, severe mental illness and crisis planning*. Retrieved from

<https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=gjcp>

Lim, M. (2021). *The answer is not always the solution: Using coaching in higher education*.

Retrieved from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/answer-not-always-solution-using-coaching-higher-education>

Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Marcus, J. (2021). *Most college students don't graduate in four years, so college and the government count six years as "success"*. Retrieved from <https://hechingerreport.org/how-the-college-lobby-got-the-government-to-measure-graduation-rates-over-six-years-instead-of-four/>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2017). *Primary focus: Career coaching vs. career counseling*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/organizational-structure/primary-focus-career-coaching-vs-career-counseling/>

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2021). *First destinations for the college class of 2019: Findings and analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacweb.org/uploadedfiles/files/2021/publication/free-report/first-destinations-for-the-class-of-2019.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Beginning college students who change their majors within 3 years of enrollment*. Retrieved from:

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018434>

National Scholarship Providers Association. (n.d.) *Last-dollar or first-dollar scholarship programs*. Retrieved from https://cdn.ymaws.com/sites/scholarshipproviders.site-ym.com/resource/collection/3CB3FEDA-BBD4-4380-A6DA-607E8C89CACB/Last-dollar_or_First-dollar_Scholarship_Programs.pdf

- National Student Clearinghouse. (2015). *Persistence & retention*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistenceandretention18/>
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2019). *Persistence & retention*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport35-first-year-persistence-and-retention/>
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2021). *Persistence and retention*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2022). *Completing college national and state records*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>
- Newton, R. (2018). *Rudd foundation announces new Kansas college scholarship program*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksn.com/news/local/rudd-foundation-announces-new-kansas-college-scholarship-program/>
- Pachamaca Alliance. (2021). *Personal growth and development – a transformational journey*. Retrieved from <https://www.pachamama.org/personal-growth-and-development#:~:text=What%20Exactly%20is%20Personal%20Growth,%2C%20and%2F0r%20financial%20state>
- Pechac, S. (2017). *Coaching toward completion: Academic/success coaching factors influencing student outcomes in 15 Ohio community colleges* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (ProQuest No. 11011263)
- Peterson, R. L., O'Connor, A., & Strawhun J. (2014). *Academic supports & tutoring*. Retrieved from <https://k12engagement.unl.edu/strategy-briefs/Academic%20Supports%209-11-14.pdf>

Robinson, C. E. (2015). *Academic/success coaching: A description of an emerging field in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from:

<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4156&context=etd>

Rudd Foundation. (n.d.). *The Rudd Scholarship Program*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ruddfoundation.org/college-scholarships>

Rudd Foundation. (2018). *Rudd Foundation commits \$1.1 million in college scholarships*.

Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-commits-million-in-college-scholarships>

Rudd Foundation. (2019). *Rudd Foundation awards \$1.4mil in scholarships to 25 Kansas high school seniors*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/news/2019/3/19/rudd-foundation-awards-14mil-in-scholarships-to-25-kansas-high-school-seniors>

Rudd Foundation. (2019). *Rudd Foundation awards \$1.4mil in scholarships to 25 Kansas high school seniors*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/news/2019/3/19/rudd-foundation-awards-14mil-in-scholarships-to-25-kansas-high-school-seniors>

Rudd Foundation (2020). *Rudd Foundation commits \$1.1 million to 30 winners of the 2020 Rudd scholarship*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-commits-11-million-to-30-winners-of-the-2020-rudd-scholarship>

Rudd Foundation (2020). *Rudd Foundation commits \$1.1 million to 30 winners of the 2020 Rudd scholarship*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-commits-11-million-to-30-winners-of-the-2020-rudd-scholarship>

Rudd Foundation. (2021a). *Rudd Foundation selects thirty 2021 Rudd scholars; Program will be over 100 the fall Wichita, KS*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-selects-thirty-2021-rudd-scholars>

<https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-selects-thirty-2021-rudd-scholars>

Rudd Foundation. (2021b, October 13). *Rudd scholarship award overview*. Retrieved from

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CU-WfKSDVgo/>

Rudd Foundation. (2022). *Rudd Foundation selects their fifth cohort of Rudd scholars; Thirty winners announced*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-selects-2022-cohort>

<https://www.ruddfoundation.org/rudd-foundation-selects-2022-cohort>

Ruffalo Noel Levitz. (2008). Retention codifications student success, retention, and graduation: Definitions, theories, practices, patterns, and trends. Retrieved from

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/51146758/student-success-retention-and-graduation-definitions-theories->

Scholarship. (2022). Merriam-Webster. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scholarship>

Sepulveda, A. (2020). *Coaching college students to thrive: Exploring coaching practices in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (ProQuest No. 27962300)

Shirakawa, T. (2019). *The rise of importance of personal development education in higher education*. Retrieved from <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/rise-importance-personal-development-education-higher-education>

Soika, B. (2022). *What is student retention, and why does it matter?* Retrieved from <https://rossier.usc.edu/what-is-student-retention-and-why-does-it-matter/>

Spear, E. (2019). *Persistence vs. retention: How to measure & improve rates*. Retrieved from <https://precisioncampus.com/blog/persistence-vs-retention/>

Steele, J. (2022). *Student persistence vs student retention: What is the difference?* Retrieved from <https://www.suitable.co/knowledge-center/blog/student-persistence-vs-student-retention-what-is-the-difference>

Student Right-to-Know Act, 20 U.S.C 1001 (1990).

Kansas Board of Regents. (2019). *Board of Regents announces 2019 fall semester enrollment.*

Retrieved from <https://www.kansasregents.org/about/news-releases/2019-news-releases/727-board-of-regents-announces-2019-fall-semester-enrollment>

UNIVSTATS. (2022). *Kansas colleges' graduation rates.* Retrieved from

<https://www.univstats.com/states/kansas/graduation-rate/>

Vann, D. (2020). *The difference between personal growth & personal development.* Retrieved

from [https://www.danielleavann.com/blog/the-difference-between-personal-](https://www.danielleavann.com/blog/the-difference-between-personal-development-and-personal-growth#:~:text=With%20personal%20development%20being%20the,it%20as%20your%20end%20goal)

[development-and-personal-](https://www.danielleavann.com/blog/the-difference-between-personal-development-and-personal-growth#:~:text=With%20personal%20development%20being%20the,it%20as%20your%20end%20goal)

[growth#:~:text=With%20personal%20development%20being%20the,it%20as%20your%](https://www.danielleavann.com/blog/the-difference-between-personal-development-and-personal-growth#:~:text=With%20personal%20development%20being%20the,it%20as%20your%20end%20goal)

[20end%20goal](https://www.danielleavann.com/blog/the-difference-between-personal-development-and-personal-growth#:~:text=With%20personal%20development%20being%20the,it%20as%20your%20end%20goal)

Van Nieuwerburgh, C., & Tong, C. (2013). Exploring the benefits of being a student coach in

educational settings: A mixed-method study. *Coaching: An International Journal of*

Theory, Research & Practice, 6(1), 5-24. DOI: 10.1080/17521882.2012.734318

Voigt, L. & Hundrieser, J. (2008). *Student Success, retention, and graduation: Definitions,*

theories, practices, patterns, and trends. Retrieved from

[https://www.stetson.edu/law/conferences/highered/archive/media/Student%20Success,%](https://www.stetson.edu/law/conferences/highered/archive/media/Student%20Success,%20Retention,%20and%20Graduation-%20Definitions,%20Theories,%20Practices,%20Patterns,%20and%20Trends.pdf)

[20Retention,%20and%20Graduation-](https://www.stetson.edu/law/conferences/highered/archive/media/Student%20Success,%20Retention,%20and%20Graduation-%20Definitions,%20Theories,%20Practices,%20Patterns,%20and%20Trends.pdf)

[%20Definitions,%20Theories,%20Practices,%20Patterns,%20and%20Trends.pdf](https://www.stetson.edu/law/conferences/highered/archive/media/Student%20Success,%20Retention,%20and%20Graduation-%20Definitions,%20Theories,%20Practices,%20Patterns,%20and%20Trends.pdf)

Whitehall, A. P., Hill, L. G., Yost, D. M., & Kidwell, K. K. (2016). Being smart is not enough to

ensure success: Integrating personal development into a general education course. *The Journal*

of General Education, 65(3-4), 241-263. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jgeneeduc.65.3-4.0241>

Wichita State University. (2022, March 22). *Congratulations to the 2022 Rudd scholars!*

Welcome to the Shocker Rudd family! Retrieved from

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CbaUFbyF6M2/>

Appendices

Appendix A: Baker University IRB Approval

Baker University Institutional Review Board

April 26th, 2022

Dear Danielle Sutter and Tes Mehring,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Sara Crump, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Christa Hughes, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix B: Rudd Foundation Permission to Conduct the Study



April 28, 2022

Danielle Sutter,

Thank you for providing the completed Application to conduct research and a copy of the ethics approval from your institution.

I am pleased to inform that I give you permission in respect of your research request of studying the Rudd Scholarship Program supported by the Rudd Foundation. Your initiative is appreciable and I am ready to support this research at my best.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Corri Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Corri Roberts
Director
316.841.5400
Corri.roberts@ruddfoundation.org

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Rudd Foundation Scholar,

I am contacting you today to see if you would be willing to participate in my doctoral dissertation research study. This study focuses on graduating senior status college students and their perceptions about coaching from the Rudd Foundation staff on academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return each successive year, and graduating in four years.

Your participation is voluntary and will include a 60-minute interview (which will be audio recorded). The researcher will be taking notes throughout the interview.

You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. If there is any question that you prefer not to answer during the interview just indicate to the researcher that you prefer not to answer.

After the interview, I will email you a written transcript of your interview. You will have an opportunity to review your transcript and provide any needed corrections. After completion of the study, you will be sent a summary of the findings and will have an opportunity to review the findings and share comments with the researcher.

If you choose to participate, your interview will be assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1) to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. There are no risks or discomfort associated with this study. You will not receive any compensation or benefits for participation.

If you would like to participate in the study, please indicate your willingness to participate by contacting me at the email address listed below. I will then contact you to set up a day and time for the interview over zoom. Thank you for considering participation in the study.

Danielle Sutter
DanielleLSutter@stu.bakeru.edu

Tes Mehring Ph.D.
Major Advisor
tmehring@bakeru.edu

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

The Rudd Foundation supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to consent to participate in the present study. This study focuses on graduating senior status college students and their perceptions about the impact of coaching from the Rudd Foundation staff on academic success, personal growth outside the classroom, career aspirations, ability to return each successive year, and graduating in four years.

Your participation is voluntary and will include a 60-minute interview (which will be audio recorded). The researcher will be taking notes throughout the interview. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. If there is any question that you prefer not to answer just indicate to the researcher that you prefer not to answer.

After the interview, I will email you a written transcript of your interview. You will have an opportunity to review your transcript and provide any needed corrections. After completion of the study, you will be sent a summary of the findings and will have an opportunity to review the findings and share comments with the researcher.

If you choose to participate, your interview will be assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1) to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. There are no risks or discomfort associated with this study. You will not receive any compensation or benefits for participation.

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in the research study and are aware that the interview will be audio-recorded.

Signature of individual agreeing to participate in study

Date

I agree to be audio recorded: _____