A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY INTO COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ADJUSTMENT WHEN TRANSFERRING TO A LARGE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation research investigated community college transfer students' perception of the adjustment process that takes place when transferring from a two-year college to a four-year college. The research question is: How do community college transfer students perceive their adjustment experience at the University of Missouri? The research site is a large research intensive university that is the flagship institution of higher education for Missouri. Participants in this qualitative research were adult community college transfer students 18 years of age or older who attended community college in the state of Missouri and transferred to the research site with the goal of baccalaureate attainment or admission to a professional program.

Data were collected during the final weeks of the spring semester 2013 and during fall semester 2013 using personal interviews and an online survey instrument constructed for this research, Community College Transfer Student Adjustment. Research participants were solicited from lists of community college students transferring to the research site during the fall semester 2013, seniors who were former community college transfer students who planned to graduate that winter or in the summer 2014, and community college transfer students transferring to the research site during the fall semester 2013. Total potential participants was N = 1040. Email solicitations for interviews and requests to take the online survey produced 49 personal interviews and 88 surveys. Analysis of data was performed using line by line coding and the constant comparative method. This research discovered new findings in transfer student adjustment that have implications for research, offered recommendations for practitioners, and provided conclusions summarizing the data in the thematic categories identified by this research.