SURVEY RESEARCH ON STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS WHO COMPLETED
A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATORS
INTERIM EXECUTIVE PLACEMENT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

A Dissertation
by
BRANDON ERIC NELSON

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
Appalachian State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

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A NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATORS
INTERIM EXECUTIVE PLACEMENT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

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This survey research examines the population and experiences of Student

Affairs administrators who applied for and completed a National Association of

Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Interim Executive Placement over the

last three years. Candidates apply through the NASPA Interim Executive Placement

Services website; Keeling & Associates, LLC facilitates the match-making of these

professionals with the institution seeking an interim. Over the last three years,

Keeling & Associates has connected 24 interim executives with placements, of

which, 16 completed this research survey.

The purpose of the study was to learn more about the professionals

completing NASPA Interim Executive Placements and why they sought the position,

along with gain an understanding of the perceived barriers, lessons learned, and

recommendations to aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executive

Placements. Additionally, the study sought to establish what assistance or guidance

Keeling & Associates and host institution could provide to aid in the success of future

NASPA Interim Executive Placements. Qualitative data gathered from the open-

ended survey questions was coded and analyzed separately, by the researcher and a

staff member from the Office of Research Design and Analysis at Appalachian State

University, themes and their summations were then resolved through agreement. The

quantitative data captured provided insight into the host institutions, along with the

demographics, placement details, and responsibilities of the interims. The

summarized findings from the study are presented descriptively, numerically, and

graphically. As a result of this research, future interim executives, host institutions,

and Keeling & Associates are now better equipped with more data and insight into the

experiences of these professionals and their placements. The study adds to the

limited body of knowledge on interims in Student Affairs as addressed in the

literature review.

Acknowledgments

Dr. James "Jim" Evans was the individual that led me to a career in Student Affairs and follower of Jesus. I literally knew nothing about either before we met. He was the Dean of Student Affairs and Vice President at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, my alma mater. He will always be Dean Evans to me, or better yet, a dear friend. He took me under his wing as a first-generation commuter college student from Warren, Pennsylvania, and provided mentorship in more ways than one. I ended up traveling around the world on a Semester at Sea thanks to Dean Evans, a journey that changed my perspective and life.

I came to Appalachian State University in 2008 to pursue my master's degree in College Student Development. I was single, felt alone, but somehow Boone felt kind of like home. At Boone First Presbyterian Church, I started another new beginning, my journey in faith. From just listening in the pews to lighting candles during a special service with a buddy I asked to tag along. Another dear friend I met at Appalachian would walk through Durham Park and talk about masculinity, relationships, and what being a "man" really meant to us. God pushed me to do things outside my comfort zone even then, and provided healthy, genuine relationships in a time I needed them most.

In 2009 I married my high school sweetheart in Boone, we were not communicating prior to my arrival to the high country. God is good. Then in 2010, I earned my master's degree and we moved to Lincoln, Nebraska. We knew no one, yet we built friendships there that will last a lifetime. Our dog Lincoln is named after that adventure. We were called back to Boone in 2012. Out of kindness for a co-worker we attended the grand opening Sunday of the church she helped start, ReGeneration Church. We enjoyed ourselves and kept going, and it wasn't too long before we were asked to be Executive Leaders. I'm not sure either of

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my spouse, Adryona. If not for her, I would have never finished. She encouraged, comforted, listened. proofread, asked questions, and assisted me until the very end. Thank you for never wavering on this long, long journey. I hope you feel as much satisfaction as I do with the conclusion of this degree. I love you Adryona, now let's go play some golf!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the fall semester of 2007, I took a temporary live-in position in housing and residence life managing multiple floors of a local hotel, with 50 residents, two resident assistants, and 10 van drivers who transported students to and from campus. This was my first full-time job in Student Affairs. The position was created to serve the students who were displaced from on-campus housing, due to the construction of a new residence hall not being finished by the scheduled completion date. The temporary position supervised and managed the students living in the hotel, filling the void between the academic year starting and completion of the new residence hall. This temporary or "interim" role provided me the opportunity to gain experience in student housing and Student Affairs, previously having neither as a commuter student. This firsthand experience of being hired to lead and manage during the interregnum, or interim period, inspired me to pursue a master's degree in College Student Development. The term "interim" is derived from interregnum, the interval between permanent administrators (Farquhar, 1991). Little did I know back then, my experience in an interim placement would later become the subject matter of my dissertation.

Over the course of my 13-year career in Student Affairs, I have assumed additional responsibilities when a colleague left for a new position. This is not abnormal in Student Affairs. There is a philosophy in the field that in order to move up, one must move out. A promotion requires leaving your current role for a new department or institution. A quick search on HigherEdJobs (https://www.higheredjobs.com) for administrative, non-faculty positions displays a thousand or more job openings throughout the year. This phenomenon wasn't impactful until I accepted my current role as the Associate Director of University Housing for Recruitment, Selection, and Training five years ago. I oversee all full-time,

temporary, and student hiring. We have approximately 100 full-time staff and 300 student

staff members. I have witnessed high turnover in various positions, but most notably with

our master's degree required staff. Within five years only one master's level employee

remains from the 13 residence life staff members. Some of these positions have been

occupied by multiple staff members in this time span. The transient nature of the Student

Affairs field has created challenges for our department and my role; I am often conducting a

search to fill one of these vacated positions.

My interest in learning more about interim appointments came from conversations

with colleagues and a presentation at the National Association of Student Personnel

Administrators (NASPA) Annual Conference in 2017 regarding high turnover rates in

Student Affairs. An interim appointment is a temporary employment assignment, used to

sustain operations and services while an organization works to recruit and select the next

permanent staff member. Although there is a lack of research on interim appointments in

Student Affairs, other professions, including Academic Affairs, utilize these temporary

assignments. This study seeks to fill a research gap, to better understand these appointments

in the field of Student Affairs. This non-experimental exploratory research study will focus

on professionals who have served in an interim role during the last three years, specifically

through the NASPA Interim Executives Placement Services.

Problem Statement

Student Affairs administrators are imperative to the holistic development of college

students and operations of a college or university, yet the transient nature of the field makes

it nearly impossible to keep a consistent team from year-to-year. Most Student Affairs

positions require a specialized master's degree, such as in College Student Development,

Higher Education Administration, or Counseling. A Student Affairs administrator possesses a unique skill set and advanced education, making it difficult to find a replacement in a timely manner. Crain and Steele's (2015) research found the average job search duration for new Student Affairs administrators lasted 119 days. Additionally, each administrator submits approximately 28 applications and attends at least two on-campus interviews before receiving their first job offer. Searching for a Student Affairs administrator with a refined and diverse set of skills and experiences, such as a director or associate vice chancellor, can take much longer. During the search process universities have three options: leave the position vacant and re-distribute work to other staff, temporarily promote someone within the organization, or hire an individual currently not employed by the organization to serve during the interim. The transient nature of the Student Affairs field, along with the challenge of replacing an administrator in a timely manner, generates many interim opportunities; although, little research exists on Student Affairs administrators who have served in an interim role.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to learn more about the professionals completing NASPA Interim Executive Placements and why they sought the position, along with gain an understanding of the perceived barriers, lessons learned, and recommendations to aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executive Placements. Additionally, the study sought to establish what assistance or guidance Keeling & Associates and host institution could provide to aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executive Placements. Specifically, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. Who are the individuals being selected for a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

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2. Why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?

4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

The data gathered and analyzed in this study supports future NASPA Interim Executives, host institutions, and Keeling & Associates by supplying information, recommendations, and hands-on experiential accounts from this population. Furthermore, themes generated from interims' experiences and insights were refined into three segments: moving into, through, and out of the placement. These segments, identified in Schlossberg's transition theory (1981), break the placement into three phases.

Methodology

This exploratory survey research sought to learn more about a unique population in Student Affairs, NASPA Interim Executives. The research examined previous interim executives and their experiences from a post-positivist research paradigm. A mixed methods research approach was selected to capture both quantitative and qualitative data to assist in explaining the population and their experiences. The convergent mixed method design was followed, utilizing an anonymous online survey for data collection. This design provided a step-by-step approach to data collection, analysis, and integration.

The study and survey were critiqued by the dissertation committee, the Office of Research Design and Analysis at Appalachian State University, Keeling & Associates, and Institutional Research Board of Appalachian State University. The survey was pilot

tested with three previous NASPA interim executives. The final survey was administered through email by Keeling & Associates. Of the 24 participants surveyed, 16 responded, a response rate of approximately 67%.

The survey incorporated a mix of demographic, open-ended, close-ended, multiple choice, and contingent questions. The survey included multiple open-ended questions, because they are helpful when exploring new or unfamiliar topics (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Criteria for demographic, close-ended, and multiple-choice questions were informed from the 2014 NASPA Vice President of Student Affairs census. Using criteria from the census aimed to assist participants' understandability of the survey and connect the findings to previous research. Language from Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) was also intentionally used in the survey, breaking the interim placement into three segments: moving into, through, and out. These three phases provide clarification to an adult in transition, creating digestible segments to better understand the cumulative process. The Student Affairs language and transition segments assisted with data collection and analysis. I worked closely with the Office of Research and Design to code and analyze the data. Coding was conducted by hand and independently, using the same process of highlighting key words and phrases. Coding discrepancies were resolved through agreement, and themes were identified through an iterative process. The counting and summation of themes were also performed independently, results were then compared and agreed upon. The information and findings from the research, generated from both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered, are presented through descriptive, numerical, and graphical means.

Significance of Issue

The transient nature of the Student Affairs field provides opportunities for both administrators and institutions to benefit from hiring interims. Student Affairs administrators can gain valuable experiences in an interim role. An interim not only fills a vacated position, but assists the institution with sustaining operations and services. Despite the benefits to both parties, the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service is underutilized, only placing 24 interim executives over the last three years. This research provides much needed information on the experiences of NASPA Interim Executives, both to Student Affairs administrators and host institutions. The study sheds light on these unique roles, promotes the success of both parties by supplying research data on the population and firsthand knowledge from past interims, including barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations. The data and findings from this research can also inform and advise the decision-making of any future interim, regardless of their status as internal or external. Student Affairs administrators considering an interim, or even supervising one, can benefit from this research. The turnover rate in the field does not appear to be changing, more information and research on interims can help address this significant issue within our field.

Definition of Key Term

The terms "interim" and "acting" are often used synonymously in previous research studies to describe someone temporarily serving in the role. Everley (1994) stated the frequency of use in research is the same; however, interim has recently been used more frequently to distinguish someone serving between permanent administrators. According to Langevin and Koenig (2004), acting is the title typically used for an employee appointed

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within the organization, while someone hired from outside is referred to as interim. Farquhar (1994) noted that the acting title may be linked to less authority or a shorter appointment, than if the person is appointed from within or outside the organization. An added layer, which does not fit in an explanation above, is an employee within an organization, but outside the department or unit from which they are selected to serve as the interim or acting administrator. From conducting a literature review, the term *interim* is used more frequently in articles and scholarly research to describe someone from either within or outside a department or organization. All Student Affairs research studies on this subject matter use the term *interim* to describe these temporary leaders and positions.

The three options of interim appointments include serving within the same department, outside one's typical functional area, or external. The first two options are internal interims, both staying within the same organization, just taking on different roles and responsibilities either in the same department or a new functional area. External interims come from outside the organization. The interims are outsourced, contracted through services such as The Registry or NASPA Interim Executive Placement Services. Both higher education focused services provide an accelerated option for institutions to fill a vacated position, not having to re-distribute work to remaining staff, thus shifting the focus to conducting a national search. This research centered on external interims, specifically Student Affairs professionals who completed a NASPA Interim Executive Placement within the last three years.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provided a short overview of the study. Chapter two examined the classic and research literature on interims, including the

four previous studies in Student Affairs. The methodological approach, design of the study,

role of researcher, participants, and various data related details are examined and explained

in chapter three. The results generated from the survey are described and presented in

chapter four. Lastly, the concluding chapter connects the results to previous research,

presents major findings, addresses limitations, and makes recommendations for future

research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

It is common practice for organizations to fill a vacated leadership role with an "interim," or temporary professional, while they search for a replacement. Interims are used in many sectors including: business, religion, hospitals, K-12 education, and higher education. The term "interim" is derived from interregnum, the interval between administrations (Farquhar, 1995).

Individuals are no longer working for one or two companies during their career; they are changing employers and shifting positions as new opportunities arise. The increase in turnover creates circumstances for people to serve in an interim role or experience an interim supervisor; at minimum to be impacted by the shifting of the departed employee's duties and responsibilities to other staff or themselves. As the demand for interims has increased, professional organizations have connected companies or institutions with interim leaders. For example, "The Registry" (https://www.registryinterim.com) is a placement service for interim provosts and vice presidents for Academic Affairs.

Interim chief executive officers, chief operating officers, pastors, chief physicians, superintendents, principals, chancellors, deans, and department chairs are just a few positions where interims are utilized. By doing a simple Google search, placing "interim" in front of positions above will result in job posting, articles, and press releases referencing interim appointments. There is some scholarly research on interims in each area, but none prevalent in any one field (Goss & Bridson, 1998). Research from each field can assist organizations as they navigate the previous employee's departure through the hiring and start date of the new leader.

This literature review will highlight and connect previous research on interims to assist in better understanding these unique positions. The information gained from the literature review aided in formulating the four research questions and development of the survey to examine interim executive administrators in Student Affairs. A specific group of executive administrators in Student Affairs was selected, because no previous research exists on this group. These professionals pursued an interim executive role through the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service. In 2012, NASPA partnered with Keeling & Associates, a higher education focused consulting company, to develop a placement service that connects executive administrators in Student Affairs with colleges or universities seeking an interim leader. As stated on Keeling & Associates website, the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service has placed over 75 interims in senior-level leadership roles since 2012.

Classic Literature

From a human resource perspective, an interim is similar to hiring a temporary employee, the position is meant to fill a need for a specific amount of time. Knowing the interim is only working for a designated time period and a formal search will be conducted, an interim appointment or placement can typically be done quickly. Due to their temporary status and often limited or no employee benefits provided, there are less restrictions on hiring an interim versus conducting a search for a permanent position. Hiring temporary help can assist with mitigating the impact on the organization or department. Although temporary, an interim can play a vital role in maintaining the services provided and even move the department or organization forward. An interim can assist in the success of an organization and incoming permanent administrator, making important adjustments and decisions during

their temporary appointment. Though an organization can hire an interim or temporary employee to fill-in for any position, the following literature review will focus solely on interims in higher education.

Timeframe of Interim Role

Human resource policies and procedures require organizations to determine the length of time an interim position will be occupied prior to the start date. A timeframe can assist with easing uncertainty among staff, setting realistic goals, and success of the interim. Farquhar's (1995) range for an interim spanned from a few months to two years; however, most research suggested interim leaders serve between nine months and one year (Fretwell, 1995; Goler, 2003; Ondercin, 2009). This time frame provides organizations with the ability to conduct a thorough search.

Reasons for Utilizing an Interim

Farquhar (1995) explains that the previous leader's departure influences whether to appoint or hire an interim. A leader within or over an organization can leave at any time, and for a number of reasons such as: retirement, another position, relocation, change in career path, termination, or medical concern (Farquhar, 1991). If the departure is abrupt or unexpected, organizations may be ill prepared to immediately start a replacement search. An interim can be appointed from within an organization or hired from outside to manage and fill the leadership gap while a search is conducted for the new permanent leader. Ultimately, organizational instability and staff uncertainty are common reasons for selecting an interim (Chapman, Chapman, & Lostetter, 1988; Farquhar, 1991; Farquhar, 1995; Goss & Bridson, 1998; Inkson, Heising, & Rousseau, 2001; Mundt, 2004; Rud, 2004).

The organization may have lost confidence in the previous leader, resulting in termination, and now needs someone to immediately provide calm, steady leadership (Johnston, 2014). The interim serves as a steady buffer between leaders (Farquhar, 1991). Additionally, the leadership role may need to be filled quickly to manage any current or potential crisis situations (Johnston, 2014). Depending on the leader's role, a vacancy beyond a few weeks could have serious consequences on the organization. The decision to select an interim from within or outside the department or organization can depend on how quickly they are needed, and length of appointment.

Organizational Benefits from Utilizing an Interim

When the leader of a department or organization vacates their position for whatever reason, uncertainty is inevitable until a successor or plan of action is announced. If the departure was planned there may be less anxiousness among personnel; however, staff will still wonder what the next leader will be like, what that means for them professionally, and in what direction the department or organization will head. As Bridges (1986) and Mundt (2004) found, a poor transition between leaders negatively impacts organizational consistency, employee productivity, and can hinder strategic planning. Leaving the position vacant is not the answer, especially considering the amount of time it could take to find a successor. An interim fills the leadership void, providing stability and someone to prepare the organization and staff for the next permanent leader (Chapman et al.,1988; Farquhar, 1991; Farquhar, 1995; Goss & Bridson, 1998; Inkson et al., 2001; Mundt, 2004; Rud, 2004). An interim can accomplish a considerable amount of work for an organization during this period of transition.

An interim leader can provide a fresh start, which can invigorate staff, promote productivity and reestablish commitment to an organization (Inkson et al., 2001). New leadership provides an opportunity for staff to share their ideas and establish their professional identity moving forward. Rather than leaving the position vacant Jones (2011) explained hiring an interim allows for staff to psychologically disconnect and move on by "creating a new work reality allows the staff to overcome emotional responses; such as anger, disappointment, relief, and even joy, to the departure of the previous leader" (p. 135). Filling the vacancy encourages the organization and staff to move forward at a faster rate.

An interim can do much more for an organization than just assist in completing the workload left by the previous leader. An interim should advance the organization while the search for the successor is completed (Bridges, 1986; Gilmore, 1990). Hindering the decision-making authority of the interim is detrimental to their development and permanent staff trying to maintain momentum. An organization may seek an interim with a specific skill set to address issues or concerns that would best be solved prior to the permanent staff members beginning (Donaldson, 1993; Goss & Bridson, 1998; Inkson et al., 2001). For example, having the permanent staff member start, and then proceed to cut budgets, reallocate resources, or restructure the organization would immediately impact their ability to build relationships and trust with staff. Osse's (2009) research on interim chief executive officers noted it is much easier for an interim, especially one from outside the organization, to be objective and make hard, unpopular restructuring or other decisions. Organizations should utilize the interim leader's skill sets and temporary status to their advantage, such as making the unpopular, but necessary decisions to move forward. Organizations can reassess

their goals, values, and mission during this transition (Rud, 2004). Position descriptions and responsibilities of staff may be adjusted during installment too. An interim can assist the organization by listening and gathering information from staff and key stakeholders to generate recommendations, or even make decisions based on this feedback. The interregnum should be used to promote openness and transparency to build cohesion and trust (Thompson, Cooper, & Ebbers, 2012). Any long-standing issues can also be addressed and resolved (Huff & Neubrander, 2012).

Organizations can benefit financially by selecting an interim. As Donaldson (1993) and Goler (2003) note an interim is a low risk, cost effective solution, because they are temporary and often do not receive benefits, such as healthcare and retirement, a permanent staff member would. At minimal cost, Fretwell (1995) stated the interim can get all "remedial work" completed (p. ix).

An organization may bring in an interim to experiment. Choosing an interim based on skills and abilities may provide insight into whether these traits would be beneficial or needed in the next permanent leader (Johnston, 2014). An organization can internally promote an employee to determine if they would be a good fit for the permanent position (Rud, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2012). If there is no viable internal employee within the department, an organization may bring in someone from outside the functional area or organization. An external interim provides a detached, potentially more objective perspective of the organization, thus making it easier to restructure, adjust employee duties, or make other unfavorable decisions because of their disentanglement with current staff (Johnston, 2014).

Making a bad hiring decision can have a lasting impact on an organization and staff, which may be why interim leaders have become so popular. Interims not only complete real work, but allow time for a thorough search to be conducted (Barbieri, 2005). A strong interim leader will advance the organization and prepare staff for the transition (Bridges, 1986; Gilmore, 1990). Whether the previous leader left planned or unplanned, there can be significant organizational benefits from hiring an interim. Although, Inkson et al. (2001) concluded organizations experience few problems with interim appointments, some do exist.

Organizational Drawbacks from Utilizing an Interim

An organization must carefully examine their situation prior to deciding whether to utilize an interim, because as Goler's (2003) research on interim directors in nonprofit museums found, poor leadership during this transition can lead to repetitive turnover, loss of organizational focus, and decreased productivity among staff. If an organization moves forward with an interim, they must decide if someone internally or externally would best accomplish their goals and objectives. The timeframe and reasons for the previous leader's departure may impact what documents or other elements there are for an incoming leader. If specific roles and responsibilities are not established or no formal training is planned, both the interim and organization are set up for failure (Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). An interim cannot necessarily hit the ground running.

The length of the interregnum can dictate the decision to appoint or hire an interim. An interim making short or long-term decisions, which can result in real implications, without having time to truly build relationships and understand the organization's culture and people can have a negative impact (Munde, 2000). As Barbieri (2005) explained there is a short honeymoon period for interims, they often must work fast to

accomplish the organizational goals and objectives set for them. Depending on the

appointment period and learning curve of the interim, organizations may choose to wait on

making long-term decisions or engaging in strategic planning.

The state of the organization may make it difficult to correct all mistakes or concerns

(Munde, 2000). If the staff are not emotionally ready to be receptive to new leadership, some

additional work may need to be completed prior to anyone stepping into the

role. Challenging staff can have a "wait it out" mentality or push their own agenda with an

interim (Huff & Neiubrander, 2012; Mundt, 2000; Rud, 2004). Bringing anyone into an

unfriendly environment, whether internally or externally, is not a good idea. In summary,

organizations have to be thoughtful in determining if the leadership role is ready for someone

to step in, temporarily or not. Organizational drawbacks to bringing in an interim leader

include staff pushback, moving away from long-term or strategic planning, or unintentionally

not preparing or providing the tools for an interim to be successful.

The benefits of utilizing an interim seem to outweigh the drawbacks, especially

considering a loss in productivity can impact staff morale and satisfaction (Rud,

2004). Organizations are not the only ones that can benefit from interim leadership, the

individual selected for the role can gain valuable experience. The individual serving in the

interim role is examined in the next section.

The Interim Leader

In an ideal world, organizations would know when their leaders will be departing,

allowing them to plan ahead and create a seamless transition from old to new. Unfortunately,

unless the leader is retiring, organizations rarely have time to prepare. Even when an

employee gives two weeks' notice, there is not enough time to conduct a thorough search and

find a replacement. The nature of the departure and timeframe impacts the organization's

need to appointment an interim (Farquhar, 1995). The interim leader's role, responsibilities,

and length of appointment is affected by the departure of the previous employee (Farquhar,

1995; Goler, 2003; Goss & Bridson, 1998; Inkson et al., 2001). Before diving into the traits,

skills, roles, and responsibilities of interims, the benefits and drawbacks from the interim's

perspective are examined.

Benefits to Serving in an Interim Leadership Role

Motivation for accepting an interim leadership role often include: salary increase,

gaining experience, building professional reputation, and expanding one's network

(Ondercin, 2009). An interim appointed from within an organization receives additional

compensation for either serving in two roles or taking on new leadership responsibilities

(Goler, 2003; Inkson et. al., 2001). A new role and set of responsibilities add experience to

an interim's resume. This low-risk experience can positively impact career progression,

marketability, and future earning potential (Goler, 2003; Inkson et al., 2001). The position is

low-risk considering the appointment is temporary. In the interim role, the individual can

showcase their skills and abilities, along with building new professional connections (Goler,

2003; Inkson et al., 2001; Ondercin, 2009).

The interim position cannot only be a confidence booster, but may also serve as an

excellent trial run, stepping stone for next position, or audition for the permanent role (Goler,

2003). The insight gained in the role may impact the desire to pursue the permanent position

or future role. Organizations and interims often negotiate if applying for the permanent role

is allowed prior to accepting the position. For leaders, an interim role can improve

proficiency with supervision, management of resources, utilization of technology, and

strategic planning (Goler, 2003). Interpersonal skills such as communication, problem

solving, and crisis management can be further developed (Goler, 2003; Inkson et al., 2001;

Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). Again, an interim leadership role serves as a lower-risk

opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. Increasing future career choices and

likelihood of advancement make serving in an interim leadership role worthy of serious

consideration (Goler, 2003). The drawbacks of accepting an interim position are discussed in

the following section.

Drawbacks of Serving in an Interim Leadership Role

As mentioned earlier, an organization must intentionally evaluate and establish

certain criteria prior to pursuing an interim. If the organization has not determined the roles,

responsibilities, goals, compensation, timeframe, and whether the interim can apply for the

permanent position ahead of time, ambiguity and uncertainty can quickly overwhelm the

staff and interim leader (Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). A professional may get themselves

into a negative interim situation without knowing it right away. Often there is a limited

amount of time to accept the role, even less time to prepare, no training provided, and limited

transition documents left by the previous leader (Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). A

significant drawback is the lack of training, especially if the interim has never served in a

temporary leadership role.

An interim may be treated poorly by permanent staff for a number of reasons,

including their temporary status, qualifications, and decision making (Vaillancourt,

2012). Staff may have little interest in devoting time and energy into forming a relationship

that will end. The interim may have had no previous experience in a similar role and lack the

qualifications to even apply for the permanent position. Furthermore, if the organization asks

the interim to make unfavorable decisions, staff may voice their frustrations and displeasure at the interim. An interim can face several challenges in the role, which can negatively impact their personal and professional wellness. Goler's (2003) research found some interim leaders experienced heightened performance expectations, stressors, negative impacts on relationships, and loneliness. Additional benefits and drawbacks in relation to internal and external interim leaders are explained in the following sections.

Internal Interim Benefits

Internal interim appointments are often less disruptive to an organization, since they are already working for them and can step in immediately (Ferrin, 2002). An internal staff member also has pre-existing knowledge of the organization and staff. Staff often trust an internal more than an external, are more comfortable with an existing rather than new relationship, and less suspicious of their agenda (Johnston, 2014). More unknowns exist with an external interim brought in by the organization.

Promoting someone from within can reward a valuable employee, be cost-effective, and quickly address any decline in productivity (Goler, 2003). As employees change jobs more frequently, organizations are challenged with keeping good staff and leaders. Providing an employee the opportunity to gain additional skills, responsibilities, professional connections, perspectives of the organization, and leadership experiences is a nice way to reward and develop a staff member (Huff & Neubrander, 2012). Since the internal staff member is often serving in both their former and interim leadership role, an adjustment to their salary does not match the cost of hiring someone from outside the organization. Lastly, not only is onboarding easier, but an internal interim can hit the ground

running by utilizing their local knowledge, familiarity with stakeholders, and connections within and outside the organization (Goler, 2003).

Organizations may select an internal interim for many of the reasons listed above. The perceived shorter learning curve and ability to promote someone within can make appointing an internal interim seem much easier; however, there are drawbacks for both the organization and individual serving in the interim leadership role.

Drawbacks of Internal Interims

Internal interims are often trying to fulfill two positions, which puts stress not only on the leader, but others that may be assisting with or delegated part of the workload. Productivity and staff morale can decrease by the increased workloads (McWilliam, Bridgstock, Lawson, Evans, & Taylor, 2008). Moving from peer to leader among colleagues can also be challenging. Huff and Neiubrander's (2012) research determined an internal interim faced strain on relationships with colleagues as they worked to establish themselves as the leader and decision-maker. The internal interim may also struggle when adjusting back to their previous role.

The assumptions made about an internal interim hitting the ground running may result in less or zero onboarding or training. The internal interim can be seen as a quick fix with little planning being needed from the organization's standpoint; however, the lack of preparedness could result in a bad experience for the interim and/or staff, resulting in their decision to leave (Eder-Van Hook, 2013). Strong communication and involvement of staff can help mitigate negative reactions and improve understanding in relation to the interim appointment.

Finally, an internal interim may not be able to address core organizational issues, implement changes, or objectively make decisions based on their relationships and connections within and to the organization (Eder-Van Hook, 2013). Their current colleagues' perceptions of their personality, skill set, and leadership ability matter. Based on their relationships with staff they may be perceived as part of the organization's leadership problem and lacking the experiences and skills needed to be successful in the role (Eder-Van Hook, 2013). Appointing an external interim may be more beneficial for an organization.

Benefits of External Interim Appointments

Although potentially more challenging to find, eternal interim appointments can be very beneficial to an organization and leader. An external interim is brought in to perform one job, has no institutional baggage, or organizational experience that may impact their ability to be neutral (Johnston, 2014). If an external interim is appointed, employees can continue to focus solely on their job responsibilities, because the organization is fully staffed again. An external can be seen as more objective and neutral, having no ties or commitments to the organization. An external interim often is hired for their specific skill set, fresh perspective, or experience leading during the interregnum (Johnston, 2014). An interim may have expertise that does not exist in the organization, such as experience restructuring or accreditation (Boerner, 2011). If the external interim has worked with multiple organizations they can provide ideas and experiences from previous positions held.

One of the biggest benefits to appointing an external interim is they have no connection to the organization after the appointment. This allows them to make unfavorable decisions, which a permanent leader or internal staff member could not endure (Johnston, 2014). Restructuring an organization, shifting employee duties, and cutting positions are

examples of unfavorable decisions. Also, if the appointment does not allow for the leader to apply for the permanent position, employees may be very receptive to opening up and working to improve the organization during the interregnum. External interims can utilize "small wins" to build trust and cohesion faster (Boerner, 2011). An example would be adopting a policy or procedure to help staff in their roles. Lastly, an external interim can stay in communication with the permanent leader after the appointment. This ongoing communication can cover their transition report or answer any questions that may arise.

Drawbacks to External Interims

The lack of organizational knowledge and relationships with staff, constituents, and stakeholders can significantly hinder an external interim's ability to be successful, especially quickly (Everley, 1994). Onboarding and training, which takes time, may need to be conducted for the external interim to be successful. Knowing the external interim is not connected to the organization and is temporary, staff may not take them seriously, thus impacting productivity and staff morale (Weber, 2004). Staff willingness to work with an external interim is a real concern.

The final drawback is the cost, which can be substantial based on what the interim is asked to accomplish and the amount of experience and expertise they have.

Attributes of Interim Leaders

With the ambiguity that can exist in an interim leadership role, certain attributes may be imperative to navigate the uncertainty. Since interim leadership crosses multiple disciplines, the essential traits and skills can vary by role and field. The following paragraphs outline attributes of successful interim leaders in higher education.

The ability to build relationships is vital to the success of interim leaders within

higher education (Hoppe & Speck, 2003; Hughey, 1997; Jones, 2011; Langevin & Koenig,

2004; Ondercin, 2009; Pounder, 2001; Sidoti, 1997; Trudeu, 2001; Waddington, 2001;

Winston & Creamer, 1997; Woodward, Love, & Komives, 2000b). Collegiality and

collaboration are built on strong relationships. An interim, whether internal or external, must

build relationships with staff to accomplish organizational goals and objectives during the

interregnum. A key piece to relationships is communication. An effective interim leader is

an excellent communicator (Hoppe & Speck, 2003; Hughey, 1997; Jones, 2011; Langevin &

Koening, 2004; Ondercin, 2009; Pounder, 2001; Sidoti, 1997; Trudeau, 2001; Waddington,

2001; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Woodward et al., 2000b). As Jones (2011) stated, "one

cannot over communicate with staff about the changes to their workplace environment,

especially when change involves leadership" (p. 136). Ongoing and clear communication

can keep staff and constituents on the same wavelength of what is happening and why.

An interim leader should serve as a role model through leading by example,

demonstrating integrity, open-mindedness, and patience (Birnbaum, 1989; Clement &

Rickard, 1992; Hoppe & Speck, 2003; Jones, 2011; Ondercin, 2009; Sandeen, 2001; Smith &

Hughey, 2006). As mentioned earlier, building trust and cohesion among staff is

critical. Leading by example, involves listening to staff, remaining open to change, and

acting in an ethical manner. An interim leader must also be adaptable, flexible, and able to

solve problems, all while remaining positive (Birnbaum, 1989; Hoppe & Speck, 2003;

Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Pounder, 2001). New issues and concerns arise daily in higher

education, problem solving skills are essential. Decision making and strategic planning skills

are necessary in an interim leadership role to move the organization forward (Birnbaum,

1989; Jones, 2011; Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009; Sandeen, 2001; Trudeau, 2001). The confidence to make decisions signifies to staff that the leader is taking an active approach to move the organization forward.

Finding a leader with all these attributes can be challenging to say the least. As Powers and Maghroori (2006) stated "If being an administrator is hard, then being an interim is even harder" (p. C2). An interim is asked to come into a potentially ambiguous, time-sensitive situation, and lead. With the attributes of interim leaders explained, the next section examines interim leadership roles in higher education.

Roles of the Interim Leader

The success of an interim may only be based on whether they fulfilled the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to starting the position. Variance in organizational structures, cultures, and goals makes comparing and measuring effectiveness difficult. Birnbaum (1989) noted that leadership success and effectiveness is subjective if there is no clear standard of measurement. Each person involved with, supervised by, or overseeing the interim would assess their effectiveness by their own standard. Gilmore (1990) stated that the effectiveness of the interim leader lies in their ability to navigate the "spaces between people and on the environment" (p. 135). Success can only be described by the organizational environment created by the interim leader, perception of goals achieved, and reduction in organizational problems (Birnbaum, 1988; Gilmore, 1990; Hughey, 1997). Ultimately, an interim will build relationships and trust among staff, improve communication, address organizational concerns, and implement a succession plan for the permanent leader to seamlessly transition into the role. Farquhar (1991), Martin (2006), Mundt (2004), Rud's (2004) research on interim leadership roles are discussed below.

Farquhar's (1995) research included for-profit and nonprofit interim leadership positions. Farquhar (1995) identified three interim roles: acting executive, interim executive, and lame duck. An acting executive comes in to stabilize the organization, carry out day-to-day operations, and make a few changes. The acting executive role is filled by someone within the organization and lasts days or months. The interim executive comes from outside the organization and has the authority to make more substantial changes than the acting executive. Restructuring, resource allocation, and layoffs are examples of the authority the interim executive is given. The appointments last a couple of months up to two years. The lame duck is currently in the leadership role and has announced their intent to leave, but will remain until the new leader is announced. The lame duck has very little authority to make decisions and can be seen as just occupying an office.

Mundt's (2004) research on interim academic administrators indicated that leaders fell into two roles, either to maintain stability or to initiate change. Mundt (2004) noted that interims are "often an invisible actor in the history of a school or department...yet are key players in maintaining stability, facilitating change and providing a transitional pathway for the new, permanent leader" (p. 501). Although a basic framework, this clearly defines two responsibilities and roles interims are often called upon to serve.

Rud's (2004) research on interim acting deans established three roles: aspiring interim, beguiled interim, and reluctant interim. The aspiring interim is interested in the role because they recognize it could lead to a promotion. The beguiled interim is not necessarily considering the role at the time, but may consider it in the future. The reluctant interim only wants to help the organization, and is not interested in the permanent role. The degree of

motivation declines moving from aspiring to reluctant interim. The organization may choose one of the three based on the role and responsibilities set forth.

Martin's (2006) research on university presidents identified four roles: caretaker, strategic leader, consultant, and preparer. The caretaker is focused on just maintaining the status quo until the permanent leader begins. The strategic leader moves the organization forward by making key decisions. The consultant, as it would imply, provides guidance to decision-makers, but does not implement the changes. The preparer focuses on making minor improvements to the operations of the organization in order to set-up the leader to come in and focus on the larger issues or concerns. Improving staff relationships and procedures are examples of operational improvements.

The studies listed above categorized and named the various roles an interim can play. The previous studies could assist in interpreting and identifying the roles of Student Affairs executive interims. From the literature review, no known study exists on the roles of an interim Student Affairs executive. Culler (2014) recognized this gap in research and noted the role of student services directors or leaders are extremely different from academic administrators. The next section will examine higher education and Student Affairs in greater detail to further understand serving in an interim role within these organizations.

Field of Higher Education

Higher education is as susceptible to change as any other organization. As Woodward, Love, and Komives (2000a) indicate, "change is and has been a fact of life in American higher education" (p. 17). Higher education has expanded to accommodate more students. As diversity among the student body has also increased, institutions have expanded services to meet their needs. Federal and state involvement through regulations and

mandates has forced institutions to adapt (Birnbaum, 1989; Kerr, 2001). Other university constituents, such as the board of trustees, alumni, donors, parents, faculty, staff, and students have also impacted institutional change.

Leadership turnover in higher education has grown alongside expanding issues, regulations, and pressures generated by internal and external constituents. Deans, department heads, and chancellors average time spent in their respective positions has declined (Johnston, 2014). Filling these instrumental leadership roles takes time. Various constituents want to, and expect to, be a part of the process. Knowing the scrutiny and pressures the leader will face, making a "good hire" is imperative. In order to conduct a thorough search, devote the time and energy needed to gather input, and select a successor, institutions can utilize an interim leader. This has become common practice in higher education, just as it has in other organizations. The next section will examine the development and use of interim or acting leaders in higher education.

Higher Education Uses of Interims

DeZonia's (1979) article "Acting Presidents Should Act like Presidents," and Evans and Fletcher's (1979) work "The Interim President - What are the Options?" may be the first published research on interim leadership in higher education. Surprisingly, over the last 40 years only a limited amount of scholarly research exists on interims in higher education (Jones, 2011). The experiences of interim academic deans and department heads have been studied by Chapman et al. (1988), McWilliam et al., (2008), Mundt (2004), and Rud (2004), and interim college and university presidents by Martin (2006), Sidoti (1997), and Zenger (1996). These studies have provided a better understanding of the benefits, challenges, attributes, and roles of academic interim leaders in higher education. More scholarly

research is needed, which could assist current and future interim leaders, considering the turnover among senior-level leadership in higher education continues to rise (Chapman et al., 1988; Gilmore, 1990; McLaughlin & Riesman, 1990; Sandeen, 2001).

A more recent study conducted by Johnston (2014) on interim senior-level appointments found that 60% of the approximately 2,500 respondents stated leadership turnover in the last five years was greater than the previous five years. Two out of three respondents stated one or more interims were hired for a senior-level leadership position within the last five years. Nearly 50% stated a rise in the use of interims at their institution in the last five years, with less than 10% stating a decline in usage. This study provides additional justification on research for interim leaders in higher education, especially with the complexities and challenges leaders face today.

Shift in the Role of Higher Education

Higher education institutions have been tasked with holistically educating students, to ensure they are "career ready" upon graduation and prepared for a diverse, global economy. In order to prepare students, institutions have expanded services to engage students in learning outside the classroom, hoping to broaden their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Winston, Creamer, Miller, and Associates (2001) declared, "Student Affairs programs and services function professionally as a distinguishable set of educational and management activities that occur mostly, though not exclusively, outside the formal classroom" (p. 4). Overall, the growing demands from both internal and external constitutions has bolstered the administrative structure in higher education (Birnbaum, 1988). New positions, often in Student Affairs, have been created to address these needs and demands.

Growth in the Field of Student Affairs and Services

As Winston et al. (2001) explained, "The administration of Student Affairs programs and services has evolved from marginal or ancillary duties of faculty members to specialized functions central to effective institutions of higher education" (p. 4). The Student Affairs or services side of higher education has morphed into a layered and complex set of departments, with various roles and responsibilities, within a large organization. The role of a Student Affairs administrator is now extremely different from the role of a faculty member (Culler, 2014). Student Affairs administrators no longer just assist faculty with the areas they have little time to address, they work separately and together to cultivate student learning and development inside and outside of the classroom. The next section will examine the development and use of interim Student Affairs administrators.

Interims in Student Affairs

Throughout Student Affairs, the consensus among many professionals is that they must leave their current institution for a promotion. There is a stigma within the field of working at one institution for an extended period of time. For example, a staff member may move from a Coordinator to Assistant Director level position, but would then be encouraged to go elsewhere for an Associate Director role. Student Affairs professionals are encouraged to move every three to five year, sometimes even in less time for entry level positions (Gardner, Hughes, Lowry, & Marshall, 2016). There is a general agreement that hiring staff from other institutions promotes change, often positive, because a new staff member will have different experiences and skills to draw from bringing fresh ideas and diverse perspectives, which can positively impact the department, institution, and students served. This mentality in Student Affairs has led professionals to consistently look ahead for

"the next job." When an opportunity arises at a specific school, location, or from a job responsibilities perspective, staff would be seen as shortsighted if they did not apply.

Moving Out to Move Up

This common practice in Student Affairs of moving from one institution to another for a new position with greater responsibility and oversight is known as "moving out to move up" in the field. Seeking a promotion involves moving out of your current institution to move up in position responsibilities. On average, Student Affairs administrators work for five or more schools (Santovec, 2014). Opportunities to move up at each institution decrease due to the fact that fewer mid and even less upper-level positions exist in comparison to entry level. In addition, the expectation to stay longer in positions with greater responsibilities creates fewer opportunities for promotion within an organization.

Job titles in Student Affairs vary by institution, typical progression would be moving from a residence director or coordinator position to an assistant director, followed by an associate director, onto a director level. A director oversees and leads a functional area or entire department: an executive director title insinuates elevated responsibilities. The assistant and associate title delineate rank, provide clarity to dean, vice chancellor or president positions as well. There are minor nuances to job titles, a residence director in housing is an entry level position, whereas an assistant or associate director position at a smaller institution, one with fewer students, is also an entry-level position. Overall, executive level positions in Student Affairs would include directors from mid to larger sized institutions, along with deans, assistant or associate vice chancellors, and vice presidents.

With limited options to move up within an organization, Student Affairs administrators often pay close attention to job openings at other institutions throughout the

year. A quick search on HigherEdJobs.com confirms there are plenty of position openings in Student Affairs throughout the year. Job opportunities in the field are on-going because of this moving out to move up mentality. The transient nature of Student Affairs creates ongoing problems for institutions, who need to sustain services and operations even without being fully staffed. Unless something changes in the field, there will always be a need for temporary support or assistance. As positions are vacated, institutions must embark on the tedious and drawn-out search for a replacement.

Search Process in Student Affairs

Due to the importance of finding the next administrator, institutions often conduct a national search to find the most qualified individual. In hopes of capturing a diverse candidate pool, positions are marketed and advertised through various methods: websites, social media, direct emails, and listservs. These searches can be costly and take a significant amount of time. Search processes often include working with Human Resources and other key stakeholders to update the position description, form a search committee, conduct phone or video interviews, and bring candidates to campus for additional interviews, meetings, and tours. Dave Eng (2018) explained, the extended length of Student Affairs job searches is equated to "higher education's oldest principles of plurality and shared governance." Student Affairs searches take months because they involve multiple individuals, departments, and interviews. The average job search duration for entry level Student Affairs position lasts 119 days (Crain & Steele, 2015). Not only is coordinating and aligning schedules of the involved parties challenging, conducting searches is typically just an additional job responsibility. By including so many individuals to gather feedback and input about each candidate, even

beyond the search committee, the search process for the next administrator inevitably moves slowly.

Further complicating searches are the institutions specific search guidelines and processes. In addition, the uniqueness and variance between each college or university makes it challenging to find the Student Affairs administrator with the skill sets and experiences to best serve the students and university. With search processes taking months to complete, institutions are left juggling the job responsibilities of the departed administrator.

Uniqueness of Student Affairs

Sandeen (2001) explained that staff structuring in Student Affairs can change frequently to adapt to new leadership, institutional mission, and shifting priorities. Specialized functions in Student Affairs continue to grow as student behaviors and needs shift. Today's Student Affairs organizations include departments such as counseling, inclusion and intercultural relations, housing, conduct, wellness, student involvement, career development, recreation, disability services, veteran affairs, and community engagement to name a few. Even within a department such as student involvement, areas may include Greek life, clubs, organizations, campus activities, and leadership development. As Jones (2011) noted the difference between academic and Student Affairs being "the sheer number of units within a single division makes Student Affairs distinct" (p. 28). The breadth of opportunities and services provided, along with the complexities of today's students, creates many challenges for Student Affairs administrators. The job responsibilities and duties for Student Affairs administrators are complex and immense (Sandeen, 1991). Directors and

leaders within divisions of Student Affairs have demanding roles and responsibilities to fulfill.

Culler (2014) explained the role of a Student Affairs administrator is extremely different from the role of a faculty member, which insinuates interim leadership would likely not look similar. Student Affairs administrators are responsible for managing crisis, developing students' soft skills, and creating opportunities for personal and professional development through programs, resources, and intentional interactions. The relational attributes are imperative in association to the success of a leader in Student Affairs (Winston et al., 2001; Woodward et al., 2000b). Using research from academic affairs, business sector, health industry, or K-12 education may be ill advised when trying to compare or generalize the roles, characteristics needed, benefits and challenges, or experiences of interim Student Affairs administrators. The next section solely focuses on the four previous research studies on interims in Student Affairs.

Research Literature

Only four studies relating to interims in Student Affairs were found in the review of literature. Each study took a separate approach and studied various groups in Student Affairs. These studies highlight more benefits than drawbacks for the interim, staff, and organization. The four individual studies and findings are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Ondercin's (2009) research was twofold, short survey followed by a case study approach involving interviews and focus groups at three universities in the Midwest. The survey captured the prevalence and basics of Student Affairs professionals that served in interim roles in a NASPA defined geographical area. The survey was sent to all 1,884

NASPA member Student Affairs professionals in the geographical area, of which 405

completed, and 196 responded having served or were currently serving in an interim or

acting position. Additionally, interviews were conducted at three institutions with an interim

and their supervisor, along with focus groups with the supervisees. Interims were mid-level

managers, somewhere between the senior or executive and entry-level positions. The

findings from the research noted the prevalence of Student Affairs professionals having

served as an interim, nearly of the survey respondents. The research also found benefits of

serving in an interim role included additional compensation, taking on new responsibilities,

and mitigating the impact of the previous professional's departure. Themes from the

supervisor interviews centered around determining if the interim can apply for the permanent

position, expectations in terms of priorities and goals, and training. Additionally, the

supervisees noted improved relationships with other offices and collaborative problem

solving while the interim was present; however, office dynamics and uncertainty of the next

leader were challenges at times. This study focused on internal interims, meaning those

moving into the role from within their department.

　　　Jones (2011) single site case study examined staff reactions to interims through

interviews, observations, and document analysis. Fifteen interviews were conducted with

those directly impacted by the interim. Staff were observed during department and division

meetings. Lastly, the university's website and campus wide email communications provided

documents for analysis. The major findings from these three avenues were: staff expressed

positivity and acceptance towards the interim because they were well respected within the

organization, establishing specific and measurable expectations in terms of priorities and

objectives was critical for understanding success of both the staff and interim, staff should be

included or communicated with regularly during the search process for the permanent leader, and building relationships across campus and cohesion amongst staff was integral for moving the department forward. This study shows the importance of not just focusing on the interim, but the staff as well. Preparing and supporting both ensures all parties can be successful during the interim. On-going communication and transparency can ease staff through the transition. Again, this study focused on internal interims.

Culler's (2014) single site study centered on the experience of one academic dean and six Student Affairs interim administrators at the director level. The research focused on three elements: the experience and perspectives of the interims, organizations decision-making to appoint interims, and the experiences and perspectives of individuals who worked under interims. Data was gathered through interviews of the seven participants, along with additional analysis of university documents, department memos, newspaper articles and participant observations. Findings from the study included the use of an interim provides a cost savings to the organization, reduces employee stress by allowing for a thorough search process for the permanent leader, and meaningful work is accomplished during the transition. The study centered on internal interims, the cost savings was generated from not paying the full salary of the departed staff member, just a portion. A temporary pay raise was provided to the interim for their added responsibility. The interims also benefited from the experience by gaining additional responsibilities, income, and experience that could positively impact career progression. This small study found the length of the interim position to be important, beyond the six month mark the interim spoke of additional challenges and stressors, not just among themselves, but staff as well. Those serving for a longer period experienced burnout. Participants noted the challenge with the "interim" title,

they perceived staff did not take them as seriously in terms of the authority given to the permanent leader. Additionally, determining and communicating the needs for the organization during the interim were key for a positive experience of the staff and interim. The organization, interim, and staff benefited from the experience, especially when communication, expectations, and perimeters were clear prior to the interim.

Finally, Boerner's (2011) research on mid-level managers in Student Affairs examined the experiences of individuals serving in interim roles. The study involved three steps: an elite informant interview, nine interim administrator interviews, and reflective questionnaire completed after the interview. Overall, the experience of serving as an interim was positive. All interims, except for one, completed most if not all of their previous responsibilities in addition to those of the departed staff member. Interims noted the role provided a strong learning experience and boosted their confidence. The study found the interims serving in another department, referred to as external interim, had a more positive experience than those moving up within. Externals learned another area within the field and faced less challenges with staff, not having to supervise or manage staff whom they worked directly with. Furthermore, the more years of experience in the field and those who had served in more than one interim role had a more favorable experience. This study was the first exploration of interims in Student Affairs serving in roles outside of their functional area. One recommendation from this study was to explore "outsourced interim" managers in Student Affairs, identified as professionals coming from outside the institution to serve in a temporary role. The outsourced interim is the focal point for this research study, centering on external interim executives in Student Affairs.

Summary

As outlined above, there is limited research on interims in Student Affairs, especially senior-level administrators. More importantly, no research focuses on external interim appointments or referred to as outsourced interims above. This research looks to fill both gaps. Furthermore, the previous studies were small, often interviewing 10 or fewer participants. This survey research gathered qualitative and quantitative data on a population not previously studied. This study was exploratory, examined the demographics and characteristics of the collective group and gained insight into their experiences. From the broad understanding of this population and some of their experiences uncovering additional questions and areas for future research.

This research surveyed a group of professionals that sought and completed a NASPA Interim Executive Placement. These research participants applied through the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Services website and were connected by Keeling & Associates to the institution seeking an interim executive. This study gathered a diversity of perspectives, surveying all professionals who have served in an interim executive placement within the past three years. These Student Affairs professionals managed multiple areas and functions, served at various institution types, sizes, and locations. The data gathered, themes generated, and findings from this research provided knowledge and guidance for future interims, host institutions, and Keeling & Associates. The framework and methodological approach selected for this study is described in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research was conducted to assist future NASPA Interim Executives, Keeling & Associates, and universities by providing basic information and recommendations about this population and their experiences moving into, through, and out of the interim executive placement. A survey was sent by Keeling & Associates to all previous interim executives who have completed one or more placements in the last three years. To better understand this population and their experiences serving in an interim executive placement, the survey captured both quantitative and qualitative data through closed and open-ended questions. From the population surveyed, 24 interim executives, 16 participants completed the survey, a response rate of roughly 67%.

This exploratory research examined previous interim executives and their experiences from a post-positivist research paradigm or worldview. A mixed methods research approach was selected to capture both quantitative and qualitative data to assist in explaining the population and their experiences. Creswell and Creswell's (2018) convergent mixed method design was followed, utilizing a survey as the research tool for data collection. The convergent mixed methods design provided a step-by-step approach to data collection, analysis, and integration. The selection of the post-positivist research paradigm, mixed methods research approach, and survey research method are explained in this chapter.

Research Paradigm

Each research paradigm is grounded by certain assumptions, providing a lens through which to view the world and make sense of it. Just as selecting a different camera lens alters a picture, and some lenses work better for certain shots than others, so do paradigms in relation to research topics and questions. One's belief and assumptions about reality,

knowledge, and truth can guide which research paradigm to follow. This research is using

the post-positivist lens. Conducting this study through a post-positivist lens, utilizing survey

research methodology, and selecting survey as the method will generate new knowledge,

which can be used to aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives, Keeling &

Associates, and host institutions.

Post-positivism

This study is guided by a post-positivist research paradigm belief system. Beliefs are

explained through epistemological, ontological, and methodological assumptions. A post-

positivist epistemological base (nature of knowledge assumption) asserts that through

research, one can get closer to truth. The researcher has an influence in the process, but

should work to minimize their impact through the use of scientific research principles and

methods. The post-positivism ontological stance (nature of being and reality assumption) is

one of critical realism. Guba and Lincoln (2005) described critical realism as "reality but

only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable" (p. 93). Reality cannot be fully

understood because the researcher cannot completely remove themselves from the research

process. Trochim (2011) noted post-positivist research acknowledges, "all observation is

fallible and has error, and all theory is revisable" (p. 24). Conducting multiple research

studies on a subject matter can assist with reducing, not eliminating, researcher error and

biases. Post-positivist methodology seeks knowledge through scientific inquiry through

hypothesizing, deducing, and generalizing (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1991; Merriam,

Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Post-positivist methodological approach (strategy for

understanding) can include quantitative and qualitative research methods. Both quantitative

and qualitative data are valid and equal in terms of their ability to understand reality (Guba &

Lincoln, 2005). Quantitative and qualitative research approaches provide different ways to examine and explain. The chosen research method, tool or technique, centers on what is trying to be understood or interpreted. The researcher's role is to gather data, objectively as possible, which can be done by distancing themselves from research participants, receiving technical training on data collection, and utilizing scientific methods, rather than one's perceptions, to produce data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). By using research tools and techniques to gather and interpret data, the researcher further separates themselves to promote objectivity.

Validity, reliability, and credibility of the research and researcher are measures of quality under the post-positivist paradigm. Each is pursued by thoroughly investigating all aspects of the subject matter, seeking peer review and critique throughout the research process, using proven research methods to aid in remaining objective, and explaining the steps and measures taken to address each during the research process. Under the post-positivist paradigm, knowledge can be produced through research to make decisions and generalizations, even with incomplete data, and inability to reach an absolute truth (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1991; Merriam et al., 2007). Research under the post-positivist paradigm provides a better understanding of what is occurring in reality and why, leading to data informed decisions and conclusions.

Research conducted under the post-positivist paradigm is purposeful. Post-positivist research is action-oriented and the data gathered can be used for positive change. Interims are being used in the field; however, the lack of data and research on these roles, may be hindering their full potential. The opportunity to inform decision-making and help future interims in the field of Student Affairs is why I selected to conduct research under the post-

positivist research paradigm. The post-positivist research paradigm encourages input and critique from others, another value I hold dear as a lifelong learner and educator.

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach selected for this study provided the ability to capture a breadth of interim experiences at institutions of varying type, size, and classification. This research focused on describing a specific population, NASPA Interim Executives, and understanding their experiences and insight gained during their interim placement. This research was aimed at helping future interim executives, Keeling & Associates, and host institutions by promoting awareness and understanding of this unique population and role. The research questions for this study were:

1. Who are the individuals being selected for a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

2. Why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?

4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

Mixed Methods

A mixed methods approach was optimal for this exploratory research study, capturing both a breadth and depth of data through one survey. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe mixed methods research as "an approach to inquiry that combines or integrates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research" (p. 249). Gathering both forms of data, rather than mainly one particular form through a qualitative or quantitative research study, provided

the opportunity to examine a population through multiple perspectives. The data gathered was used to describe this population and highlight individual interim's experiences and insights.

A mixed methods approach was selected for this research to gain both a broad understanding of this population, along with in-depth experiences and insights from the survey participants. In this study the close-ended survey questions captured the quantitative data, used to describe the NASPA Interim Executive population. The open-ended survey questions gathered the qualitative data, which aided in explaining the experiences and insights of the NASPA Interim Executives. The specific approach followed is known as convergent mixed methods.

There are many models and designs for conducting mixed methods research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describes convergent mixed methods as a "single-phase approach, a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results" (p. 217). In this case, the data was collected simultaneously by an online survey sent to participants by email. Data from the close-ended questions were counted and the words, phrase, and sentences from the open-ended were coded. Each process was done separately. In a single survey, a holistic view of the population and their experiences were generated by following the convergent mixed methods approach. Additional justification of the research design is described below.

Design Rationale

With no previous research on NASPA Interim Executives, the design of the study was centered around understanding this population. With no information on this population, gaining as many participants as possible was critical for explaining who they are, why they

pursued the opportunity, and their experiences and insights. Survey research, using an online survey, was selected for this study because of the advantages including: being cost effective, easily created and distributed, flexible with the use of contingency questions, providing direct data entry, and ability to reach a wide geographical area (Sue & Ritter, 2012). In this case, the online survey cost nothing and was able to be created in a short amount of time. The software to create the survey provided flexibility with capturing participant responses in a variety of ways, and allowed for contingency questions. Multiple choice, text entry, and rank order were just some options to collect data, each choice had an assortment of ways to achieve the desired question objective and response style. Contingent questions provided adaptability to secure additional information with no effect on the respondent.

The three disadvantages outlined by Sue and Ritter (2012) of online surveys had minimal to no impact: coverage bias, reliance on software, and survey overload. The online survey method was efficient and effective, able to be administered to the entire population through an email and be taken at the convenience of the participant regardless of location. The survey software, Qualtrics, captured responses in one location, with options to view, analyze, and report all data collected. Additionally, the online survey allowed for anonymity, encouraging participation. Based on Qualtrics analytics, the survey could be completed in less than 15 minutes. Survey research was selected for the design of the study due to an online survey's ability to reach the entire population with ease and collect the data needed to answer the four research questions. The cumulative benefits associated with survey research to address the objectives and goals for this study provided ample support for the design.

Role of the Researcher

The role of researcher in this study was twofold, study design and data analysis, not data collection. I designed the study through consulting with experts in research design, both from the dissertation committee and a staff member of the Office of Research Design and Analysis at Appalachian State University, along with the review of literature and previous research studies on interims. The Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University provided additional review and feedback on the study and survey instrument. I utilized previous NASPA Interim Executives and Keeling & Associates as the experts on the subject matter, gathering feedback on the survey design and objectives. The collaboration with these experts throughout the survey design was to mitigate researcher bias and produce a survey to best address the four research questions. The survey was anonymous and sent out by Keeling & Associates, eliminating any involvement or communication between the research and participants. Additionally, I worked closely with the same staff member in the Office of Research and Design to code and analyze the data. Coding was researcher driven, discrepancies were resolved through agreement, and themes were identified through an iterative process. As the researcher, my role in this study was to separate myself from participants and involve experts in their respective areas in order to design a study that was effective at gathering the data needed to answer the four research questions. This scientific approach to data collection aligns with the post-positivist lens in which the researcher distances themselves from participants. By not interacting with participants and only the experts, I was able to provide an objective stance during the data analysis process as well, generating data-based descriptions of the population and representations of the individual

participants' experiences and insights. My role was to gather the facts and report them, taking necessary steps to mitigate any biases.

Ethical Issues

I had no significant connection with the subject matter prior to conducting this study. I was truly an outsider in relation to external interims and this population. Based on the research design, selected data collection method, and how analysis was conducted, the researcher influence was minimized. The study was voluntary and survey anonymous. I had no interaction with the participants. As outlined above, multiple steps were taken to limit researcher bias and subjectivity.

My full-time job for the last five years has been recruiting and hiring Student Affairs professionals. The initial curiosity surrounding the use of interims began when studying the transitional nature of the field, recognizing that position vacancies occur throughout the year. This population of interims was identified after attending a session on the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service put on by Keeling & Associates at the NASPA Annual Conference in 2017. The uniqueness of this position in the field, along with no previous research on external interims or this population, provided an excellent research opportunity. I had no prior connection to Keeling & Associates or NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service. I do not know anyone who has completed a placement. The only knowledge of interims prior to this study was the use of few internal interims in Student Affairs at their current university. I have not held an interim position.

IRB Procedure

The research project and survey were approved by the university's Institutional Research Board (IRB). The IRB determined this research study as exempt from further

review, because it involved minimal risk. The IRB number for this research project is 19-0300. The survey was confidential and anonymous, Keeling & Associates distributed the email survey link to all potential participants on my behalf. Names, emails, and other identifying information were not collected to encourage participation. Participation was voluntary, no compensation or incentive was provided to participate.

Data Source

The population of NASPA Interim Executives for the last three years were identified as the data source for this study. Twenty-four individuals completed one or more interim executive placements over the past three years. Keeling & Associates was not confident with their ability to have correct email addresses and contact information for previous executive interims beyond three years, which is why the three-year time frame was selected. Sixteen interim executives responded, providing the data for the research. The data was collected through an online survey.

Participants

These professionals completed an online application and uploaded their curriculum vitae or resume through the NASPA website. Keeling & Associates maintains the applications and candidate materials for placement consideration. Institutions contact Keeling & Associates when they have an interim executive opening and pay them a fee for managing the process. Keeling & Associates identifies three candidates, or more if desired, from their candidate database and sends them to the institution. The institution and selected candidate typically work out the rest of the interim position details and compensation package.

With such a small population, only 24 NASPA Interim Executives within the last three years, the sample size was the entire population, in order to maximize the data to explain and understand this group and their experiences. Keeling & Associates served as the intermediary between the researcher and participants. The survey was anonymous and emailed to participants by Keeling & Associates. Of the population emailed, 16 responded to the survey, a response rate of approximately 67%.

Participants and sample size are potential issues that need to be addressed prior to data collection. By using a single survey to conduct this research, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, aligns with the convergent mixed methods approach. The survey approach kept the participants and sample sizes the same. Qualtrics, a common research suite, was the survey software selected for data collection. This software was available for use at no cost, purchased by Appalachian State University to assist faculty, staff, and students with research projects.

Data Collection

The survey was developed using language, definitions, and classification from a previous NASPA research project, census of Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) in 2014. A vice president is an executive or senior level position in Student Affairs, aligning with the population in this study. The NASPA VPSA Census provided a starting point for creating the closed-ended questions: the criteria or classification for items such as age, institution type, and educational level provided a framework to design these questions, which were aimed at learning more about this population. Keeping the language and criteria consistent with previous NASPA research aids the readers ability to understand from study to study. Studies are also able to be connected and analyzed. The NASPA website serves as

the connection point for this population and Keeling & Associates. With the evolution of terminology and criteria, as it relates to defining people and identities, some minor changes were made to the close-ended questions, such as the addition of the non-binary/third gender option to the gender question. The open-ended questions were based on the research questions, again using Student Affairs terminology from Schlossberg's transition theory (1981). Schlossberg addresses transitions through three stages: moving into, through, and out. These criteria not only connect to Student Affairs, but assisted survey participants in breaking their interim placement into three segments. An interim position is a prime example of an adult in transition, these individuals are moving to a new place, institution, and position. There is a transition into, through, and out. Collectively, using criteria and language from the NASPA VPSA Census (2014) and Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) provided a solid framework for participants to not only explain their experiences and insight, but assisted with the data analysis process and presenting the research findings.

The Qualtrics survey was reviewed by the Office of Research Design and Analysis (RDA) at Appalachian State University, two Keeling & Associates staff members, and the dissertation committee prior to submitting for IRB approval. Following IRB approval, the survey was emailed to three previous NASPA Interim Executives for review and feedback on the following questions:

1. Do the survey questions make sense?

2. Is there any text or area that is difficult to understand?

3. Do you feel there are any criteria or items missing from particular survey questions?

4. Based on the four research questions, do you see anything missing from being asked/investigated?

5. Is there a question you would ask to better understand the experience(s) of previous NASPA Interim Executives?

Some feedback received resulted in wording adjustments to questions for readability and understandability, updating criteria for close-ended questions to match current language in the field, expanding the overview and explanation of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, and moving the open-ended questions to earlier in the survey. Shifting the open-ended questions to earlier in the survey was aimed at increasing the depth of participant responses. Survey fatigue may have resulted in fewer and shorter responses to the open-ended questions if placed at the end. After incorporating feedback, the final survey was reviewed by RDA, Keeling & Associates, and dissertation committee chair. The survey was re-submitted and approved by IRB.

The purpose of the study, research questions, contact information for the researcher and faculty adviser, and survey disclaimer were outlined in the beginning of the survey. The survey was emailed by Keeling & Associates to potential participants on October 16, 2019 and closed six weeks later. Two participant reminders were emailed out to the population. A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix A.

Data Coding

Data coding and analysis were aimed at validating the accuracy of information. I followed Creswell and Creswell (2018) approach to the data analysis process (Figure 9.2, p. 194). Figure 1 provides a copy of Creswell's flowchart.

Figure 1. Data Analysis in Qualitative Research
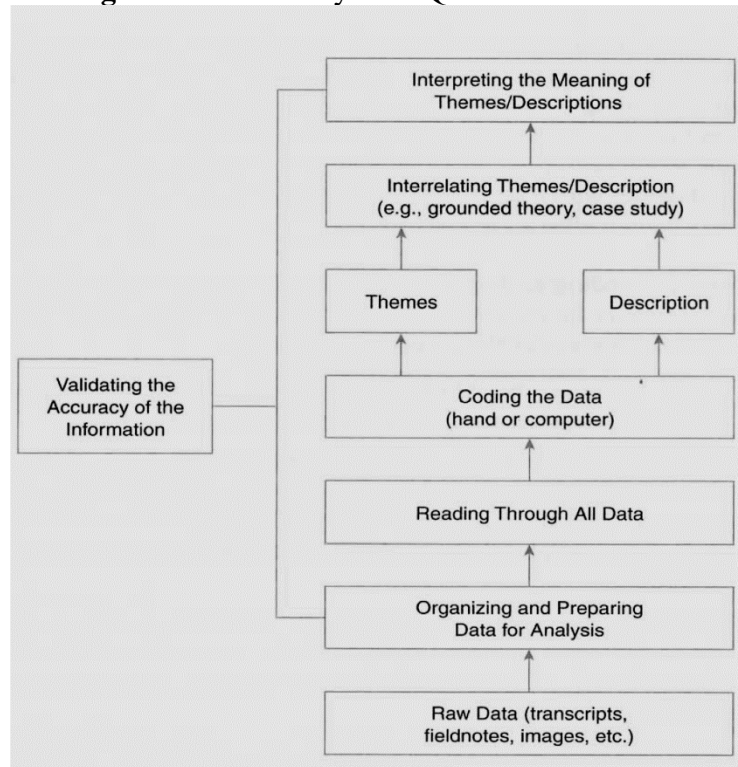
Figure 1. Flowchart illustrating the data analysis process in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194).

I worked closely with an RDA staff member to provide additional guidance and expertise throughout the data coding and analysis process. Specifically, the RDA staff member assisted with coding and analyzing the participant's responses to the open-ended questions. The open-ended questions in the survey allowed for participants to share their experiences and insights in greater detail.

The words, phrases, and sentences used by the participants to respond to the open-ended questions became the text data to code and analyze. Tesch's eight steps in the coding process (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 196) provided guidance to data coding. The participants' responses for each open-ended survey question were consolidated to a single document, and then read through multiple times prior to coding. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe coding as "taking text data gathered during data collection,

segmenting sentences or paragraphs into categories, and labeling those categories with a term

often based on the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term)" (pp. 193-

194). With 16 participants and most responses to open-ended questions being a few

sentences or a paragraph, the RDA staff member recommended the coding be conducted by

hand. RDA staff member and I used the same coding process, each independently

highlighted key words or phrases in the participant's responses. Following the initial coding,

RDA staff member and I compared results. Themes were established together, guided by

language used by participants and from previous research studies outlined in chapter

three. Themes often included verbatim words or phrases from the participants

responses. Additionally, to assist with consistency and understandability when reading the

results, some theme titles were used multiple times, for various research topic areas and

questions. For example, the theme of "housing" was present in multiple open-ended

questions.

Data Analysis

Once the themes were established, a designated highlighter color was selected for

each theme. Using themes and refined coding measures, the RDA staff member and I

independently coded and analyzed the data again. This data analysis process provided visual

clarity and separation of the themes found within the cumulative data set. The RDA staff

member and I compared results again. Both parties then analyzed the data one last time to

determine the number of occurrences per theme. Lastly, RDA staff member and I compared

their summations, establishing the final totals for each theme.

Graphs were created to visually explain the results. Joint display graphs were created

through Microsoft Excel to display the qualitative and quantitative results of the themes and

their summation, demonstrating the integration of data from the mixed methods research approach (Guetterman, Fetters, & Creswell, 2015). Graphical representation of the data and results are presented in chapter four.

Trustworthiness

The collaborative and iterative approach throughout the data analysis process were strategies aimed to reduce researcher bias and subjectivity. The RDA staff member provided an outside perspective and expertise on data coding and analysis, improving upon the trustworthiness of the results found in the next chapter. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recognized the use of an external auditor, like the RDA staff member, as one of eight qualitative validity strategies; additionally, comparing the data with the codes and having codes cross-checked by an outside researcher are qualitative reliability strategies (pp. 201-202). The RDA staff member provided peer review and research accountability, which aided in the consistency and accuracy of the codes and themes established. The final summation of each theme was also determined jointly. Working with the RDA staff member throughout the data coding and analysis process strengthened the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the research, and the results and findings.

When doing mixed methods research, trustworthiness should be addressed. Validity was addressed through the research instrument, content and construct of the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 153). As noted earlier, language and theory were used from the field of Student Affairs to develop the content of the survey. The survey was constructed and organized through expert review, finalized after multiple iterations. The RDA staff member, two representatives from Keeling & Associates, and dissertation committee, and three previous interim executives were involved in the review and feedback process. The review

and feedback process assisted with items such as: organization and flow of the survey, criteria in close-ended questions, and whether questions made sense in relation to the research study. The survey was pilot tested by three previous NASPA Interim Executives.

The survey included closed and open-ended questions, collecting both forms of data, quantitative and qualitative. Collecting both forms of data to assist with describing, explaining, and understanding a population is known as a validity strategy called triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). The description and findings section can be enhanced by using two forms of data. Another measure taken to enhance the overall validity of the study was having an external auditor, someone not familiar with the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 201). The RDA staff member reviewed and provided feedback on the survey and research study at the beginning, along with assisting during the coding and data analysis processes. Each step of the research process was carefully thought out and intentionally designed, and then analyzed by key constituents, to create a research study that could accurately describe a previously un-researched population, and capture their experiences and insight as they moved into, through, and out of their interim executive placement. The credibility and trustworthiness of the study were imperative, which is why key constituents were actively involved through the research project. This research was important for future interim executives, Keeling & Associates, host institutions, and the field of Student Affairs, each could benefit from the information gathered and findings from this study.

Another mark of validity is the equal sample size, the same participants provided both the qualitative and quantitative data. In convergent mixed methods, the sample sizes are often different, the quantitative being larger and supplemented with qualitative data from a

smaller group of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 220). One adverse outcome

related to sample size was not all participants responded to every question. Although

convergent mixed methods, a single-phased approach, has many benefits, a drawback was

having no stage or phase for additional follow-up with participants.

Keeling & Associates, who manage the NASPA Interim Executive Placement

Service, provide a trustworthy and credible partner for not only the researcher, but

participants. The survey link was administered through email by one representative from

Keeling & Associates, a familiar connection point for the population, rather than directly

from the researcher. This approach was focused on yielding the best response possible, along

with protecting confidentiality of the participants.

Limitations

Due to the small population a deeper statistical analysis, generating inferential

statistics, was not an option with 16 survey participants. Additionally, there was no follow-

up or connection to participants beyond the survey. The anonymous survey added an

additional hindrance to data analysis, limiting the ability to connect participant responses

from multiple questions and the descriptive data. Each question had to be analyzed

individually; however, some commonalities between generated themes strengthened the

connection between questions. The final chapter of the dissertation will examine themes that

appeared more than once.

Summary

This exploratory survey research sought to learn more about a unique population in

Student Affairs, NASPA Interim Executives. The post-positivist research paradigm provided

the guardrails for research, focusing on obtaining the facts about this group of professionals,

along with the reality of their experiences. Through post-positivist research one can get

closer to what is actually occurring in reality, by using and interpreting the data generated to

inform decision-making. Providing research to inform decision-making and assisting future

interims in the field of Student Affairs is why I selected to conduct this study under the post-

positivist research paradigm. In addition, the convergent mixed methods design provided a

step-by-step approach to data collection, analysis, and integration. An electronic survey was

chosen as the research instrument, to gather both quantitative and qualitative data in a

singular phase. The data collected from the survey was used to describe the population and

better understand their experiences and insights. The results and findings are described and

illustrated in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

This survey research on NASPA Interim Executives who completed a placement within the last three years yielded 16 responses of the 24 potential participants. With no previous research on this specific population nor on external interims in Student Affairs, this exploratory study aimed to provide a foundation for future research on this population and topic. This study was geared at describing the population and understanding their experiences and insight. A convergent mixed methods research approach was selected to capture both quantitative and qualitative data in a single phase, through surveying the population, to address each of the four research questions:

1. Who are the individuals being selected for a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

2. Why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?

4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

The data and results of the research are explained in this chapter. First, the population will be described through data from the close-ended questions in the survey. Second, the population's experiences and insight will be explained through data from the open-ended questions. A mixture of text and graphs will be used to represent the findings from data gathered in the survey. The research questions will be addressed in sequential order.

Participants

This research study focuses on the 16 respondents of the 24 NASPA Interim Executives that completed a placement within the last three years. This population only consists of the Interim Executive applicants who were selected by an institution and completed a placement. The three-year mark was set by Keeling & Associates, based on their ability to produce correct email addresses and records for these 24 professionals. The following section will highlight the first research question: who is being selected for these positions?

Demographics and Characteristics

The demographic and characteristic survey questions were optional for participants. Most categories or criteria were pulled from the NASPA Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) Census. Three participants did not respond to the majority of the optional questions. Eight participants identified as male and five as female. Eleven respondents identified as white, one as Black or African American, and one selected, "prefer not to say." The majority of respondents, ten participants, identified as straight or heterosexual, two as gay or lesbian, and one participant selected, "prefer not to say." Ten identified their relationship status as married and three as single. Ages for participants ranged from 40 to 66 or older. Figure 2 illustrates the age breakdown of the NASPA Interim Executives.

Figure 2. Age of Interim Executives

A horizontal bar chart showing age ranges of interim executives. The x-axis ranges from 0 to 5. Bars: 66+ = 3, 60-65 = 3, 50-59 = 3, 40-49 = 4.
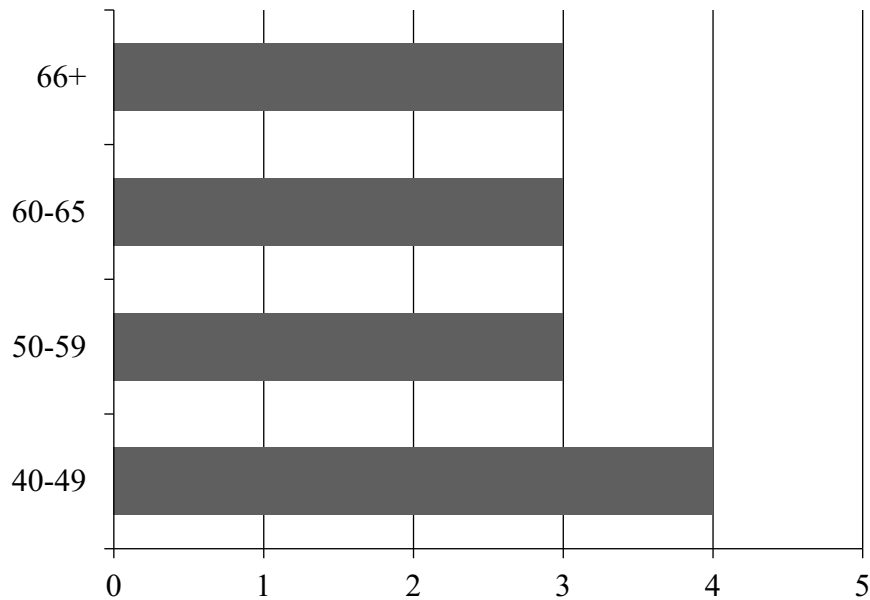
Prior to the interim placement.

All but one participant had 20 or more years of experience in the field of Student Affairs or Higher Education prior to their interim placement. Nine participants had a doctorate and four had their master's degree. Prior to the interim placement, six identified as retired, five seeking employment, two neither retired or seeking employment, one doing consulting work, and one employed part-time. The following figures further expand upon the breakdown in years of experience prior to interim, pre-interim career status of participants, and prior occupation level before interim placement.

Figure 3. Years in Field Prior to Interim Placement

Less than 20	1
Greater than 30	6
Between 20 and 30	6

(horizontal axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7)
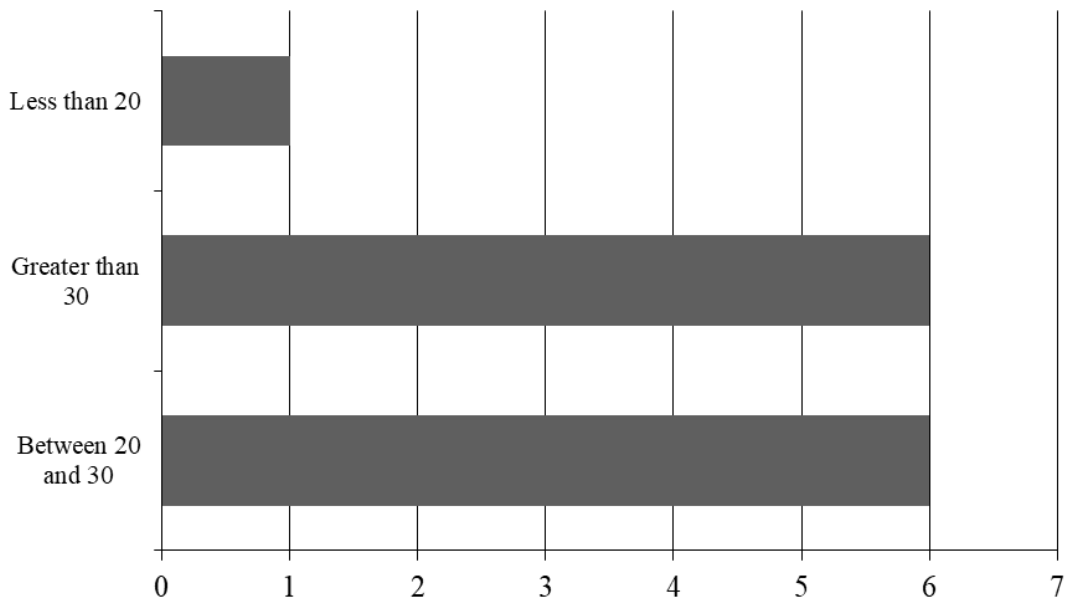
Figure 4. Career Status Prior to Interim Placement

- Retired — 38%
- Seeking Employment — 31%
- Neither Retired or Seeking Employment — 13%
- Employed Part-Time — 6%
- Consulting — 6%
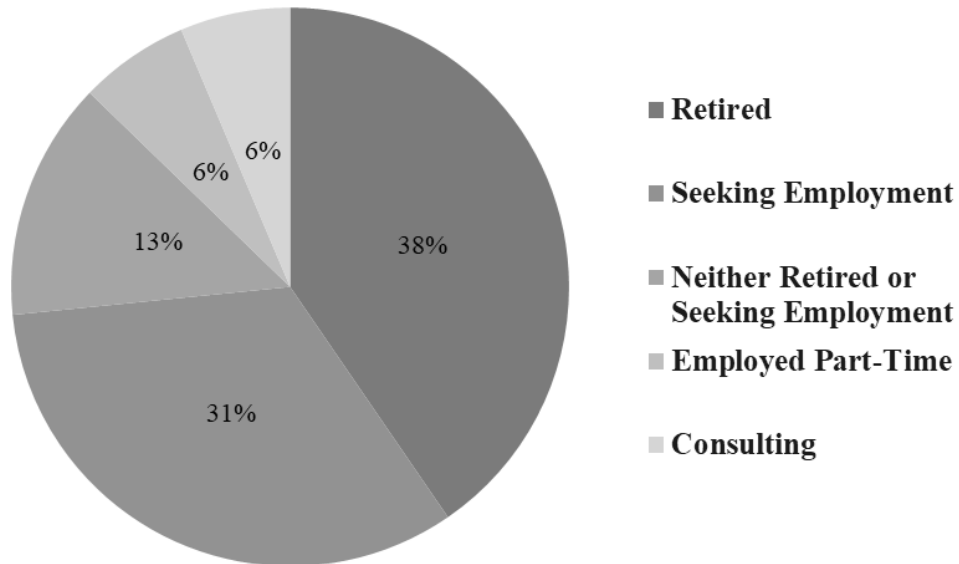
Figure 5. Occupation Level Prior to Interim Placement

- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Associate/Assistant Dean
- Dean
- Director
- Faculty
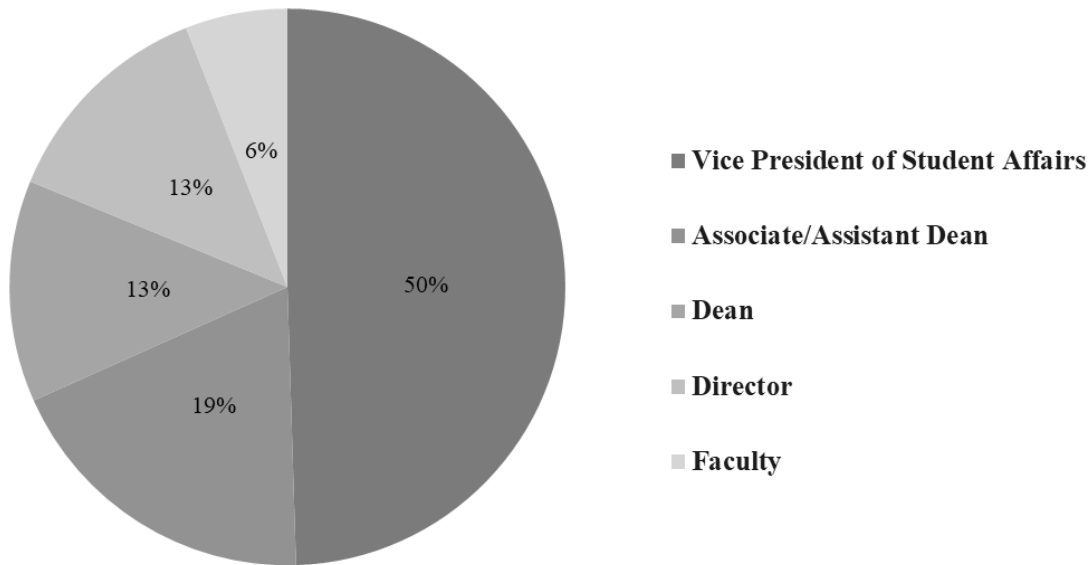
The majority of respondents from both groups had a terminal degree. The VPSA Census did not capture years of experience or previous job title. The interim executives were seasoned professionals, some even retired, all previously holding an executive level position prior to the placement, and all but one respondent had 20 or more years of experience. The majority of respondents completed just one interim executive placement.

Length of interim executive placement.

Fourteen participants completed one interim placement, one respondent three, and another four. The length of the interim placement varied, from three months to three years. Figure 6 provides the interim placement length, in six-month increments, for the 21 placements completed by the 16 respondents.

Figure 6. Length of Interim Placement (months)

Legend:
- 0-6
- 7-12
- 19-24
- 25-30
- 31-36

Values shown: 43%, 33%, 14%, 5%, 5%
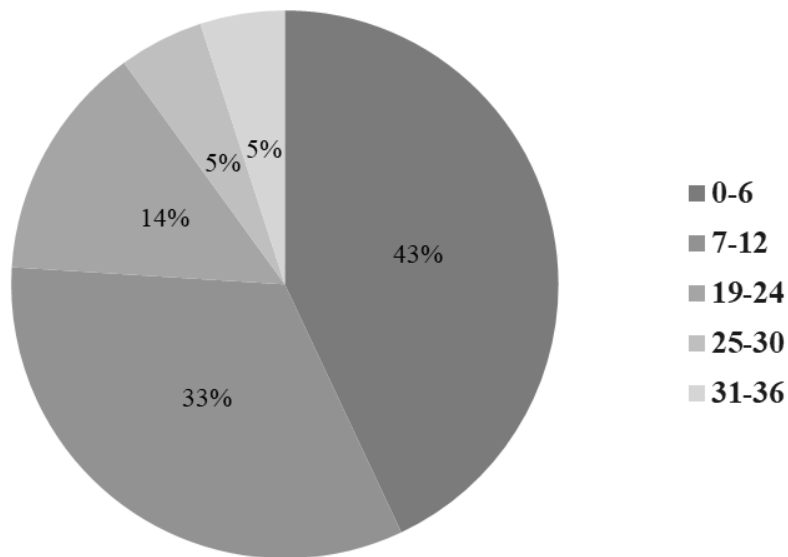
Reasons for Pursuing Interim

The second research question focused on why these professionals pursued an interim executive placement. As noted above, these individuals were at various stages of their career when they sought this opportunity. After coding the data, RDA staff member and I agreed upon five themes: staying professionally engaged, contributing to the profession and/or students, personal financial gain, seeking new opportunity, and to enrich other work.

Figure 7. Reasons for Pursuing Interim Executive Placement

- Professional Engagement
- Student/Field Contribution
- New Opportunities
- Financial Gain
- Enrich Other Work
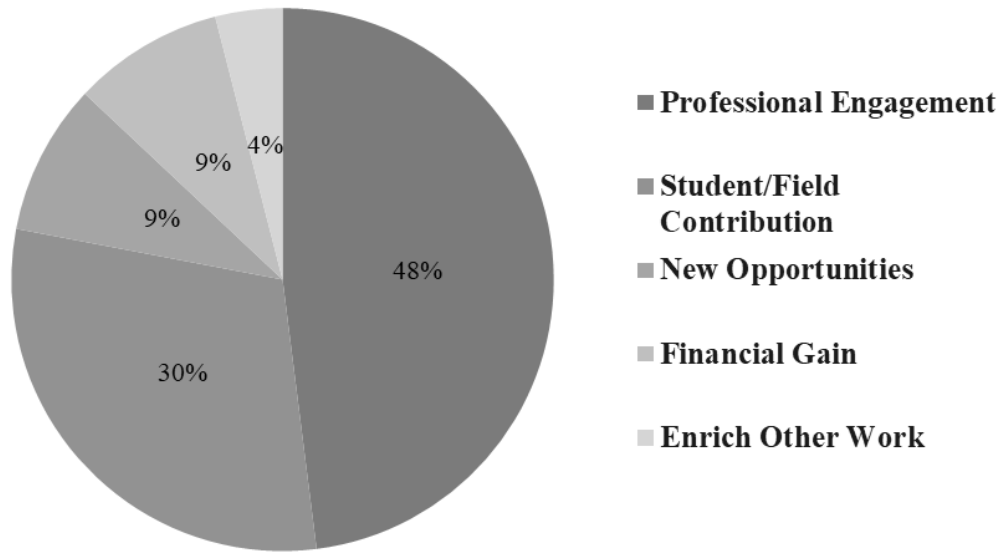
Staying professionally engaged.

Eleven participants noted they wanted to stay professional engaged. Staying professionally engaged included retired professionals, a few being in between jobs, and others just seeking employment. The temporary nature of the interim executive placement caters to all of these employment circumstances. A couple excerpts from the data include: "looking to continue working with some flexibility," "retired and wanting to stay active," "unable to secure permanent employment," and "keeping me relevant." This temporary employment caters to the retired professionals wanting to continue working at a new institution, and the administrator seeking to avoid employment gaps on their resume.

Contributing to the profession and students.

The next highest theme, seven responses, highlighted wanting to continue contributing to the profession and/or students. A service or helping others' mindset was evident throughout the responses, such as: "opportunity to serve the profession," "contribute

to student success," "mentoring other Student Affairs professionals," and "assist the organization and staff through change." The field of Student Affairs centers on serving others and developing students outside the classroom, so wanting to continue contributing to the profession and students aligns.

New opportunity.

Two participants solely stated they were looking for a new opportunity, which is why they pursued an interim executive placement. With the position being temporary, the new opportunity is just for a designated period of time. An interim executive placement allows for a professional to go to a new place, work for a new institution, and meet new people.

Financial benefit.

Two participants highlighted the financial benefit in their responses as reason for pursuing. One used the extra resources to build a second home, and another for income between permanent jobs. Their next permanent job was not starting for another 4-6 months. This temporary employment opportunity provides the professional both experience and a short-term income stream.

Enrich other work.

One participant had a consulting firm and pursued the interim executive placement to enhance their future work in that area. The interim placement provided them with hands-on experience to aid in their consulting business. The temporary nature of the interim executive placement provided the opportunity to try something different, potentially beneficial for subsequent career roles, within a designated time frame.

Retired Participants

Six respondents were retired prior to accepting the placement. Four of the six respondents explained they wanted to stay engaged after retirement, felt they still had something to offer. Six of the 16 respondents were retired prior to the interim placement. Navigating the circumstances associated with temporary employment may be less of a hinderance for retired professionals, which could be why nearly 40% of participants were retired. Retirement provides some flexibility, these individuals have an income source from retirement, can adjust to any interim placement length, and lack the burden of having to find their next employment opportunity during the interim. The next section focuses on the actual interim position: job title, responsibilities, and time spent on executive tasks.

Interim Position

The job titles of the interim executive placements included director, dean, and vice president, from various functional areas in Student Affairs. Job titles vary at institutions; the functional areas represented in the title provide a baseline for comparison. The figure 8 graph outlines the functional areas represented in the interim executive job titles. The "A" in AVPSA equates to assistant or associate.

Figure 8. Functional Areas Represented in the Interim Exexcutive Job Titles
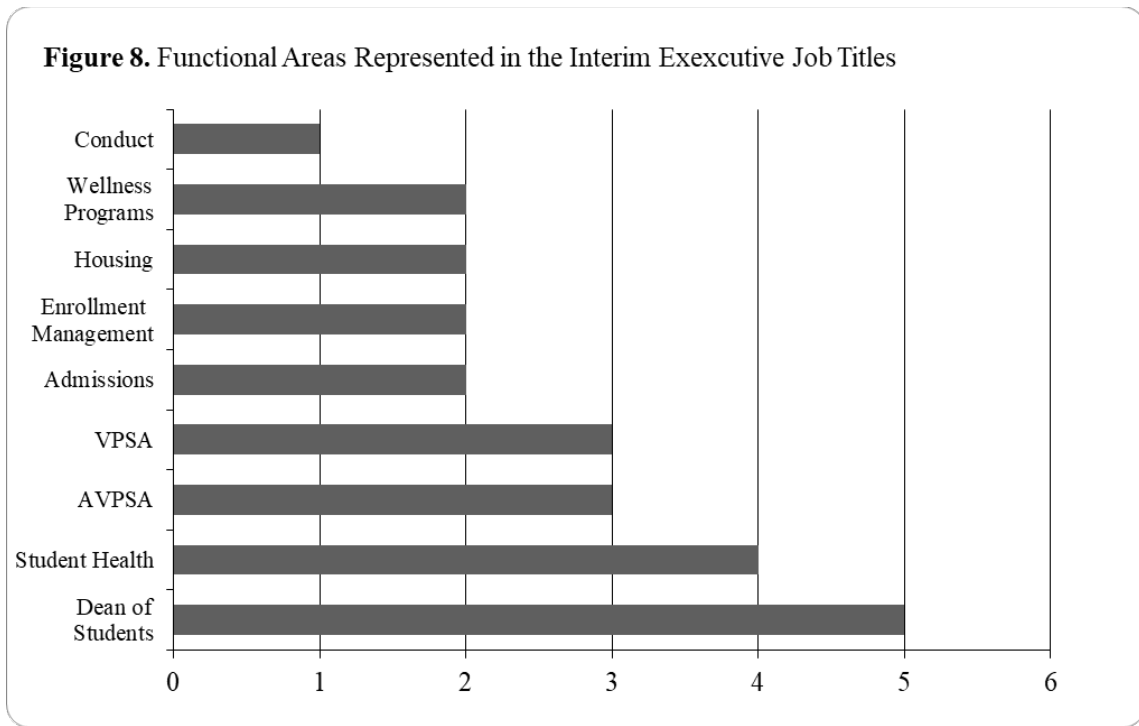
Oversight of functional areas.

Looking deeper into the responsibilities of the interim executive position, respondents were asked to select from the 39 Student Affairs functional areas, as outlined in the NASPA VPSA Census, in which they directly or indirectly supervised or managed. All but three functional areas were represented: alumni programs, graduate and professional student services, and women's center. Admissions, student conduct (behavioral case management), and veteran's services were the functional areas most represented with six participant responses. Five respondents noted oversight in the following eight functional areas: campus activities, career services, enrollment management, financial aid, housing, orientation, student conduct (academic integrity), and wellness programs. The number of responses for each of the 39 functional areas is represented in a chart found in the Appendix B.

Time spent on executive tasks.

Finally, the time spent on executive tasks, as defined in the NASPA VPSA Census, was included in the survey to help understand where the interim focused their attention during the placement. The highest mean or average time spent in a particular area from the sixteen respondents was devoted to administration. Personnel management came in second, followed by strategic planning. The line graph, figure 9, provides additional clarity into percentage of time spent on executive tasks.

Figure 9. Time Spent on Executive Tasks during Interim Placement
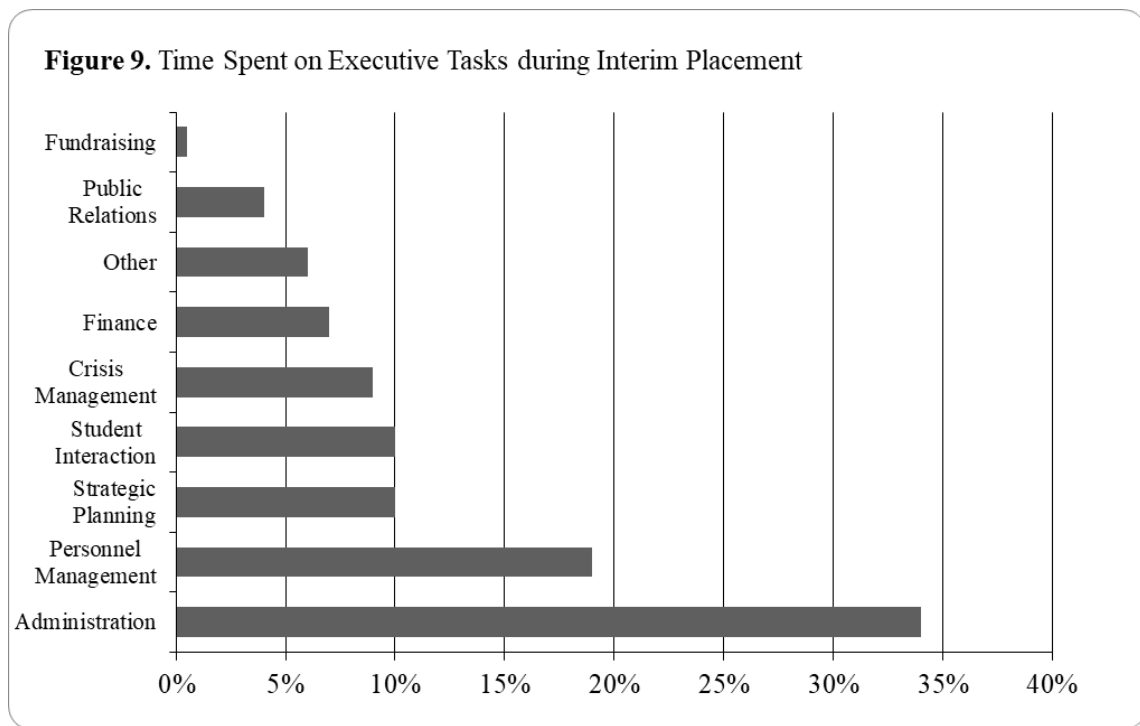
Institution Information

A few questions in the survey were geared toward learning about institutions utilizing the interim executive placement services. A diversity of institutions was represented in the study, from type, degree granting, and total number of students. The majority were conducted at four-year institutions, six at public, five at private not-for-profit, and one at a private for-profit. The other four placements were at two-year public institutions. Based on

16 responses, the two respondents that completed more than one placement, must have completed all in one institutional sector. Institutional type reflects multiple responses from one or both of these participants. Nine of the placements were hosted at doctoral-granting and research institutions, five at master's granting schools, and four at educational organizations that confer associate's degrees. No placements were conducted at solely bachelor's degree granting institutions. The diversity of institution types, classifications, and student populations represented highlights interim executive placements are not primarily hosted a specific college or university. Figures 10, 11, and 12 illustrate the characteristics of the host institutions: institutional type, classification and size.

Figure 10. Host Institution Type
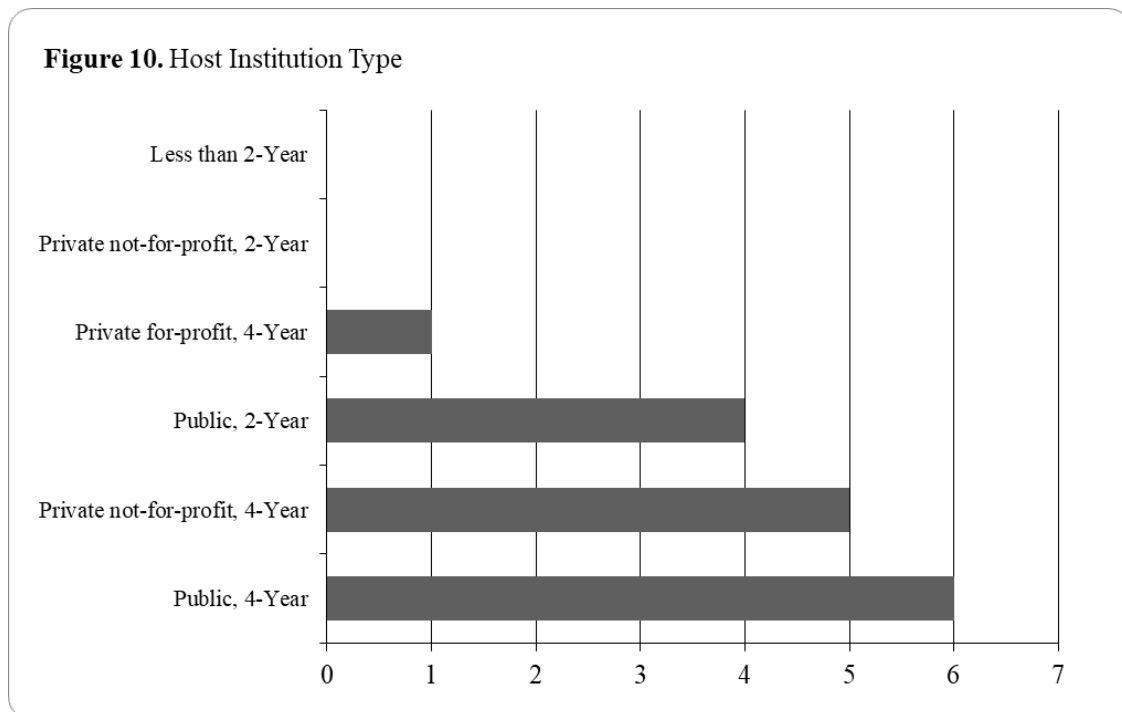
Figure 11. Host Institution Classification
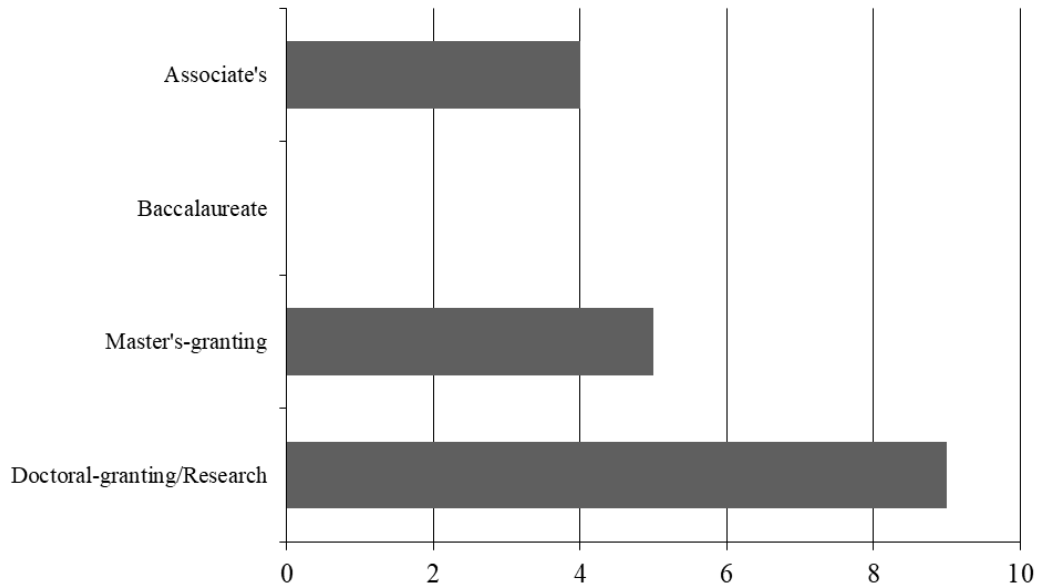
Figure 12. Host Institution Student Population
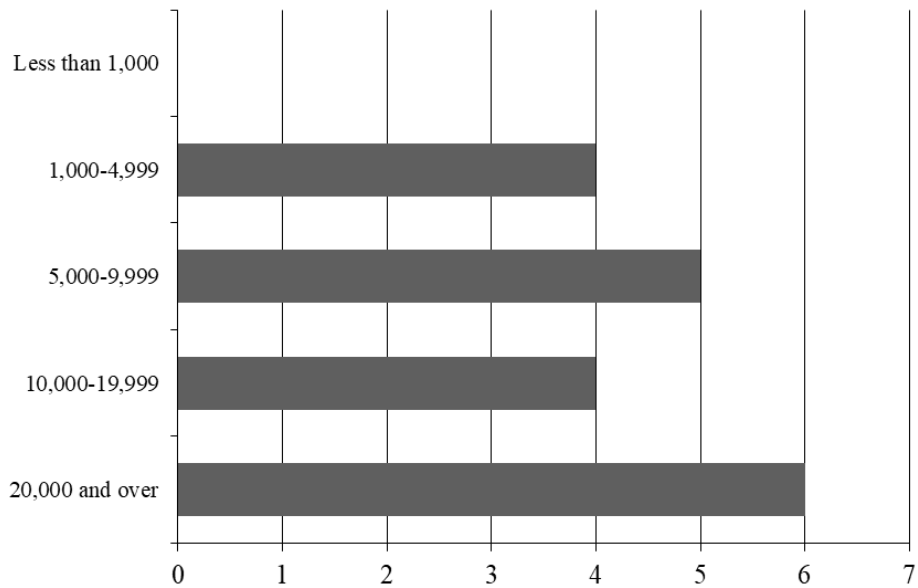
Conversations or Negotiations

A variety of interaction types occurred prior to the interim placement including:

phone conversations, email communication, formal interviews, and on-campus visits. The

conversations and negotiations prior to the interim placement centered around three themes: goals and expectations, compensation package, and ability to lead.

Goals and expectations.

Ten of the sixteen respondents stated the goals and expectations of the placement were discussed prior to accepting the interim position. Multiple participants noted the importance of clear or specific goals, knowing the interim position was for a designated amount of time. One respondent stated, "most important was leaving with a very strong reference, so accomplishing the expected goals was key for me." This quote signifies the understanding and importance of having a positive reference from a previous institution, because an employer often contacts the most recent supervisor for a reference check. This area of establishing clear and specific goals and expectations will be explored further, based on responses to other open-ended survey questions.

Compensation package.

Five participants spoke specifically about negotiating the compensation package, items such as salary, housing, and vacation time, prior to accepting the position. Although the position is temporary, the compensation package has to be considered to ensure the interim can afford housing and cost of living in the new place. Vacation and other fringe benefits provide additional means of compensation worth considering and negotiating.

Ability to lead.

The professional's ability to lead during the interim was discussed before assuming the role. One of the three participants connecting with this theme highlighted a conversation with the host institution stating, "They made it clear that I was accepting a position that would require me to reposition the staff and the program, which would involve some

challenging work." Recommending or making difficult decisions, especially regarding personnel, requires a certain level of leadership to carry out those actions.

Interim and Employment

One area of interest discovered in the literature review was whether an interim was permitted to apply for the permanent job. The population was asked whether they were allowed to apply, yes or no, and were also given the options of yes permitted, but not interested in applying or not permitted, but would have applied if allowed. Of the thirteen responses to the question, twelves said they were able to apply; however, seven stated they were not interested in applying. Only one respondent stated they were not permitted to apply for the permanent position. Five respondents did apply for the job. No question confirmed if these individuals were successful in obtaining the permanent position or not.

Job search for next position.

Five of the thirteen respondents sought a permanent position either during or after the interim placement. Eight respondents did not seek a permanent position during or after the placement. From the five that sought employment, four were employed within three months of completing the interim, one respondent was not.

The final survey question related to employment after the interim placement. Participants were asked if they thought the NASPA Interim Executive Placement assisted them in obtaining their next position, seven said "yes" and six said "no." Seven participants thought the experience gained in the interim executive placement was beneficial and helped secure their next job. It is worth noting, that this question failed to take into consideration the eight respondents who did not pursue employment after their interim placement.

Open-ended Questions

The next section will explore the participant responses to the eight open-ended, essay text survey questions. Participants were given essay text boxes to provide responses, encouraging more in-depth and descriptive responses. These questions were aimed at answering the final two research questions:

3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?

4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

The interim executives provided sentences and even paragraph responses to each open-ended question. As noted in chapter three, language from Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) was intentionally used in the survey, to break the interim placement into three segments: moving into, through, and out. Participants were asked to respond to perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations in relation to each of these segments. These criteria aided in breaking the responses and data into chunks. Some participants even labeled their responses using the segments of moving into, though, and out.

The participant responses to questions surrounding barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations as it relates to moving into, through, and out of the interim executive placements, provided rich data to code and create themes to better understand their experiences and insights. A deeper analysis was conducted with each theme, the responses connected to each theme were linked to when each occurred, whether moving into, through,

or out of the interim placement. Joint display graphs provide a visual representation of not only the themes, but where they lie incrementally during the three stages of the interim.

Additionally, the themes generated from the personal and professional benefits and challenges questions are examined in this section. Finally, the interim executives' themed recommendations and feedback aimed at improving the success of future interims, and were broken down into two areas: Keeling & Associates and the host institutions. The section closes with the findings from the last open-ended question asked in the survey, where participants had one final opportunity to provide any additional information or thoughts relating to serving in an interim executive placement.

Barriers to Success

Participants were prompted to provide their barriers to success that they perceived moving into, through, and out of the interim executive position. Participant responses to the open-ended survey question were narrowed to five themes: away from family/home, new residence logistics, temporary nature of the job (effectiveness), staff relationship building, and culture or circumstance.

Away from family and home.

Two interims noted the distance from home and being away from family for an extended period of time were barriers to success. These individuals not only missed their families, the distance between their homes and institutions was so great that it was difficult to travel home even for a short period of time, such as over a weekend. Along with being away from home and family, they were adjusting to a new place and position.

New residence logistics.

The theme "new residence logistics" related to the challenges moving and adjusting to a new community. Four respondents recognized items such as: learning the health benefits, adjusting time zones, and finding an auto mechanic or dry cleaner. Being a new resident requires additional effort outside of work, from navigating the community, locating necessities, and learning the available resources. Transitioning to a new place can be stressful, especially on top of the pressures of adjusting to a new institution and role, which is temporary.

Temporary nature of the job (effectiveness).

The nature of the position being temporary, limiting one's ability to be effective, whether it be colleagues not taking them seriously, because the appointment is limited, or just the lack of time in terms of quantity to achieve the goals set out at the beginning. Excerpts from the four participants who connected with the temporary nature barrier noted, "interim position has little influence because of its temporary nature, the interim label casts you as temporary, and I found I need to justify my decisions more vigorously as there is no professional relationship to leverage."

Staff relationship building.

The building of staff relationships was an obstacle for five participants. Difficulties included not having the same language as most employees, staff needing time to heal from the last supervisor, achieving buy-in and consensus, and the short period of time given to build relationships. Learning staff member names, personalities, and positions takes time, yet an interim executive placement is time limited. The prevalence of this theme signifies the

importance of building relationships with staff. Staff can play a critical role in an interim's ability to be successful and meet the desired expectations in the position.

Culture or circumstance.

Five interims spoke about the complication of adjusting to the culture or circumstance during the interim placement. Participants noted barriers to success, such as not knowing the institutional culture, having no understanding of how decisions were made or who makes them, and lack of supervision and clear goals. One interim accepted the placement and later found out they were the only professional with enrollment management knowledge and experience at the institution. Gaining some prior understanding of the culture or circumstances appears to be important. This theme tied for the most frequent in participant responses.

Barriers moving into, through, and out.

Within each theme, the barriers to success were placed into one of the three segments by the RDA staff member and I. This additional step in the data analysis process provided clarity to where each barrier of success occurred in relation to the cumulative time frame of the interim executive placement. The majority of the barriers to success related to moving through the interim placement; all five themes were present in the segment. The joint display graph in figure 13 indicates the quantity of each theme and where the barrier occurred during the interim placement.

Figure 13. Barriers To Success: Moving Into, Through, and Out
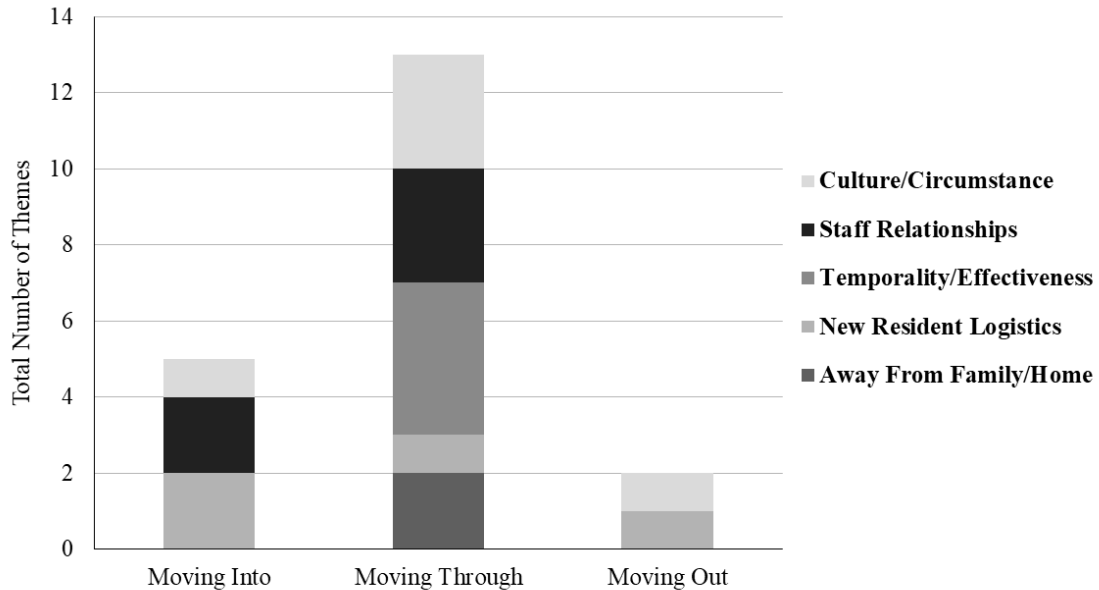
Lessons Learned

The interim executives were asked to express their lessons learned, providing future interims with items to prepare for and think about. Five themes were generated from the responses: building relationships with staff, gleaning information from staff, focus on key elements for success, staying mindful of your personal goals and aspirations, and temporary nature of the job (effectiveness).

Staff relationship building.

As noted in the barriers to success question, the themes of building relationships with staff and the temporary nature of the job were also present in the lessons learned. "Building relationships with staff as quickly as possible is essential" and "treat colleagues as though this is a permanent assignment," are a couple quotes from participants, signifying the lesson they learned about building relationships with staff. The theme was recognized in three interim responses as a lesson learned.

Gleaning information from staff.

Along with building relationships, gleaning information from staff was highlighted by five respondents. Gleaning information involved taking the time to ask questions and listen to staff, some specific topics included: institution's culture, key decision makers and constituents, history and tradition as it related to the organizational structure, and expectations for interim. One interim's insight, "Learn institutional history quickly and who are the power brokers on campus. Often, history and tradition are strong undercurrents to both the organizational structure and significant resistance to change you might seek." The interim can discuss the expectations for the interim placement with staff, gain a better understanding of what staff members anticipate and think. The process of listening to and learning from staff was noted by one interim as an opportunity to ease any potential fear that may be present.

Focus on key elements.

Beyond asking questions and listening to staff, another lesson learned was to focus on key elements. Four of the interim executives learned to focus on the key elements: specific goals in role, moving organization forward, and supporting the employees and students. With the position being time limited, an interim should primarily concentrate on the specific goals and objectives agreed upon with the host institution. Focusing on key elements can assist with effectiveness.

Temporary nature of the job (effectiveness).

The temporary nature of the job (ability to be effective) was highlighted by two participants. This theme was present in the barriers to success as well. One interim learned that some staff avoided difficult conversations or delayed projects knowing they would

eventually leave the institution. The other respondent had to deal with unforeseen events on campus, including protests and an athlete committing suicide, which took time away from working on the goals and objectives they were hired to complete. They were not able to complete everything within the interim time frame.

Stay mindful of personal goals and aspirations.

Lastly, the final lesson learned, indicated by two respondents, was staying mindful of one's own personal goals and aspirations. One participant learned that the position could be permanent, meaning if they were to consider the position after the interim, they needed to enter the placement with that mindset. The respondent stated an interim's approach to the role may be different if interested in the permanent position. The second respondent noted a graceful exit and transition to the next opportunity has to be on one's mind. With the position being temporary, an interim has to find a balance between staying focused in the present while planning ahead for after the placement.

Lessons learned moving into, through, and out.

Figure 14 highlights the lessons learned moving into, through, and out of the interim placement. From the interim experience a recognizable lesson learned pertained to the importance of building relationships with staff, especially gleaning information. The graph provides a glimpse into the challenge of moving into an interim placement, listening and learning from staff, along with trying to quickly assimilate into the institution, while remaining cognizant of one's personal goals and aspirations. Unlike barriers to success, where the majority occurred during the moving through phase, lessons learned were primarily centered on moving into the placement.

Figure 14. Lessons Learned: Moving Into, Through, and Out
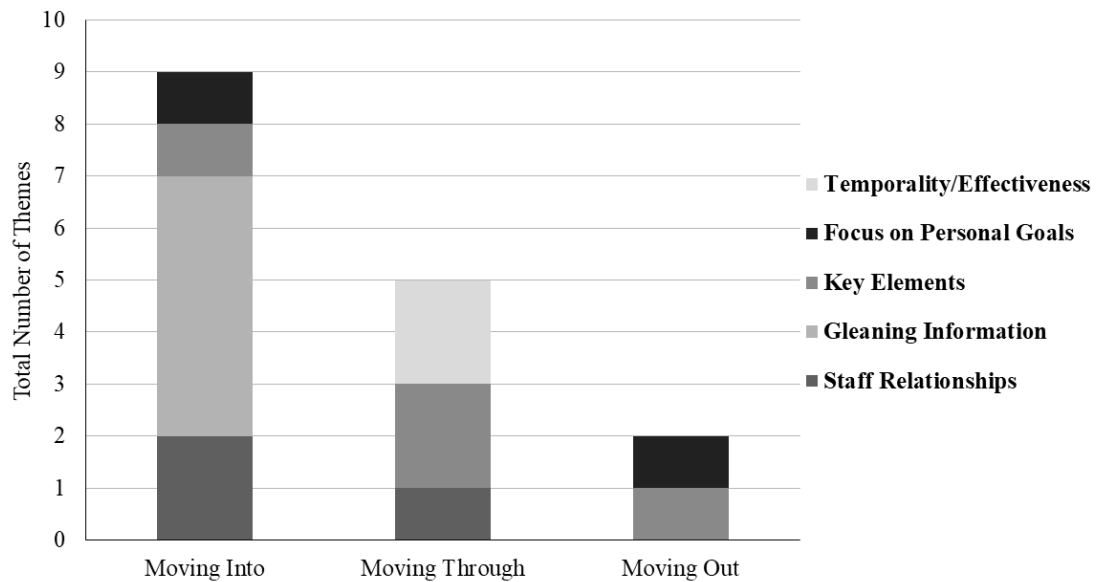
Recommendations

Along with barriers and lessons learned, the participants provided recommendations for future interim executives. This provided participants to make recommendations for interims as they move through, into, and out of the placement. From the open-ended survey question, six themes were generated: expectations for position, building relationships with staff, focus on key elements for success, stay mindful of your personal goals and aspirations, sense of belonging, and managing the transition.

Expectations for position.

Six participants recommended establishing clear expectations for the position, including re-evaluating those expectations during the placement. Expectations was the term selected for the theme, because four participants used the word or slight variation in their response. Objectives and priorities would be replaceable terms for expectations to further clarify this theme. The RDA staff member and I saw this theme as relating to what the

interim and host institution agreed upon, in terms of what needed to be accomplished during the placement time frame. For further clarification, one respondent stated, "be sure to have a VERY clear understanding of the expectations of the Interim role," and another participant expands on the importance, "Continually go back to your supervisor and clarify priorities. As time evolves, there can be many new things that come up, but you need to clarify where the person wants you to spend your time, staying focused on the items in the original agreement or substitute (not just adding more) some new items." Another interim stated, "Make sure you get an honest overview of the position. Learn before you accept the position whether you are being hired to keep a department/division moving forward along a known path or expected to make a big change." Expectations for the position was the most prevalent theme found in the recommendations for future interim prompt.

Staff relationship building.

Within barriers to success and lessons learned, the theme surrounding building relationships with staff appeared. Four respondents recommended building strong relationships with staff. For one interim, the building of relationships with staff led to hearing firsthand suggestions for areas of improvement. Another interim recognized that by building authentic relationships with staff they were able to guide, advise, and better manage personnel through the interim placement. Lastly, one interim thought the building of staff relationships assisted with the stabilization of the team.

Focus on key elements.

Another theme showing up again was staying focused on key elements. Staying focused was noted by two respondents. One respondent recommended staying focused by remaining an outsider, providing a different perspective and point of view as someone not

previously immersed in the program or organization. Again, interims should stay focused on the key elements in the role, considering the position is time limited.

Stay mindful of personal goals and aspirations.

Lastly, another theme that carries over from lessons learned was staying mindful of your personal goals and aspirations. Four respondents connected with this theme. Whether pursuing the permanent position after the interim, planning on working elsewhere after the position, or wanting to stay professionally active as noted in the responses, interims need to stay mindful of their goals and aspirations to best prepare for next steps after the placement. Planning for what is next, whether personally or professionally, should not wait, the respondents' recommended thinking about next steps early on in the interim placement.

Sense of belonging.

Even though the position is temporary, four respondents insinuated the importance of establishing a sense of belonging. Having housing settled, ideally provided by the institution, prior to the placement was one recommendation to establish a sense of belonging. Another participant recommended finding ways to feel personally at home in the new place, such as setting up their temporary home or apartment, to locating restaurants and other amenities. Two respondents encouraged future interims to make new friends. Establishing a sense of belonging through a transition can be personally taxing, one interim advised staying in close contact with family and friends back home.

Managing the transition.

Three interims made recommendations about managing the transition. One endorsed documenting what was addressed and completed during the interim, another participant even

created a binder with lessons learned and recommendations for the incoming permanent

leader. Lastly, managing the transition also involved preparing staff for the next supervisor.

Recommendations moving into, through, and out.

Barriers to success were found within each phase, moving into, though and out, but

the majority of the recommendations centered in the moving through stage. Establishing

clear expectations moving into the placement allowed for interims to focus on key elements

during the middle stage, moving through. Establishing a sense of belonging, while remaining

aware of personal goals and aspirations were recommended moving into and through the

placement. Again, building relationships with staff was advised by the participants. A new

theme of managing the transition appeared in the recommendations for future interims; this

entailed, preparing staff and documenting accomplishments for the next permanent leader

while moving out of the placement. Figure 15 provides a visualization of the

recommendations provided by the interims as they moved into, through, and out.

Figure 15. Recommendations for Future Interims: Moving Into, Through, and Out
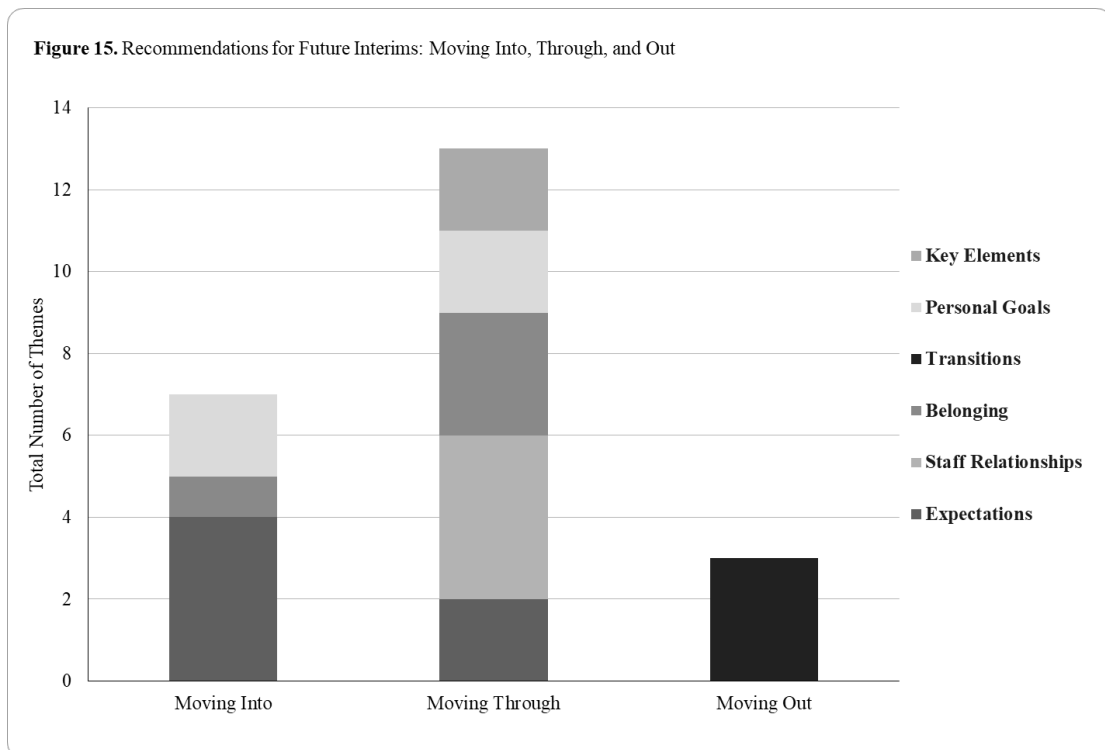
Personal and Professional Challenges

Some of the personal and professional challenges were addressed in the previous open-ended questions surrounding barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations for future interims. Themes were identified and split between personal and professional challenges. Interims focused primarily on the personal challenges totaling 17 connections within six themes. The professional challenges centered on five themes, with only seven responses associations between them.

Personal.

The personal challenges encompassed six themes: housing location and amenities, away from family/home, geographic area, new residence logistics/necessities, sense of belonging, and compensation. Challenges associated with housing were present throughout the open-ended questions. One participant noted the challenge of their housing and long commute to work. Another respondent stated the small apartment issued by the institution made living difficult. A personal challenge salient in the open-ended questions was the difficulty associated with being away from home and family. Five respondents suggested this in their responses, the most of any personal or professional challenge. The geographic area was a specific challenge for two participants, one being rural and another a small town. The move to a new area was captured in the new residence logistics/necessities theme, recognized in four participants' responses. From finding a doctor, gym, or place of worship to relocating to a new time zone, the personal challenge of relocating to a new community was present. Finding a sense of community and connection points with people was another challenge expressed by two respondents. The final struggle was related to compensation, one

participant stated "They were not paying me enough to live in the city where the college was housed." Visual clarification of personal challenges is represented in figure 16.

Figure 16. Personal Challenges during the Interim Placement
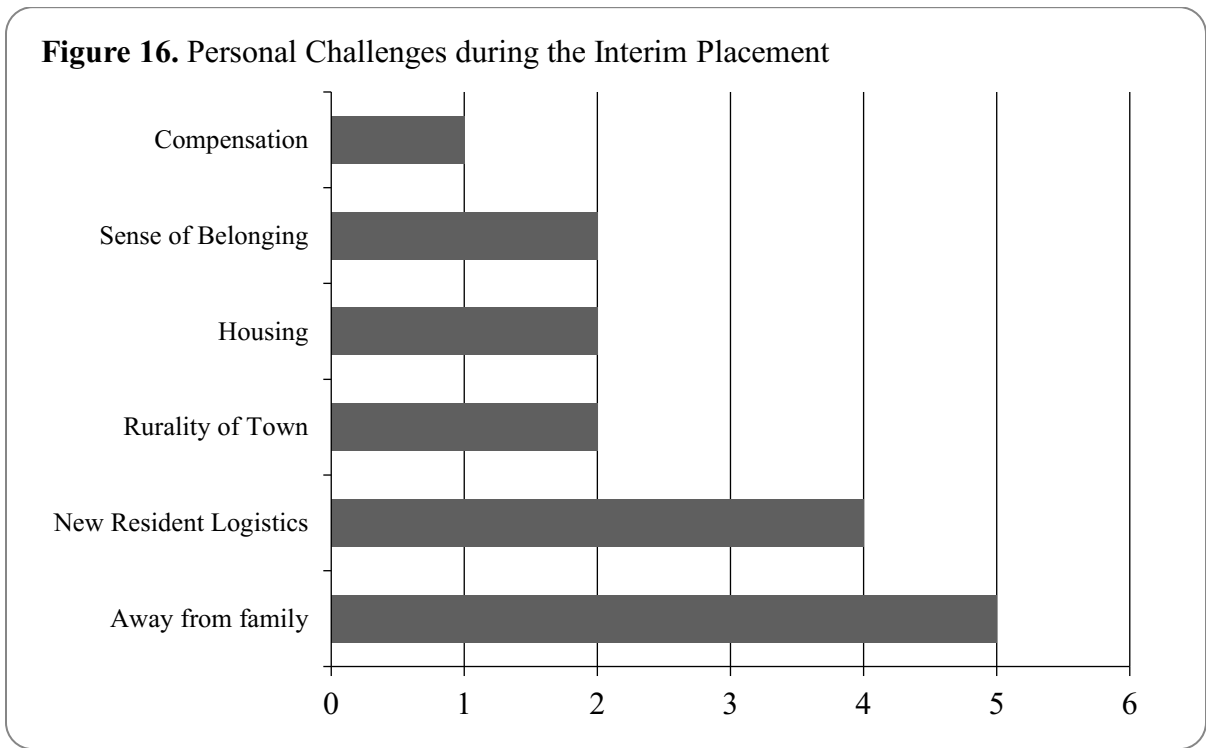
Professional.

A few of the respondents shared professional challenges, including: culture or circumstance, temporary nature of job, student population, institutional system, and finding the next job. Upon entering any new job, learning the culture and circumstances can take time, unfortunately that timeframe is compressed in an interim position. One participant stated, "Professionally, it was a challenge not understanding the culture of the institute and the politics that established some of the power dynamics." Another participant entered a difficult circumstance, describing what they faced upon moving into the position as, "a changing president, union conflicts with the faculty, internal politics that had set the faculty against the president." The temporary nature of the position, associated with "interim" in the position title, arose again in two participant responses. One stated the lack of credibility

associated with the qualifier of "interim" in the title was a challenge. A second respondent noted, "there are instances when you believe an institution needs to act/change, but you are not in the position to affect that change as an interim." From being labeled as "interim," signifying temporary, perceived trustworthiness can be a hindrance to effectiveness. One interim faced the professional challenge of working with a new student population, another respondent worked with an unfamiliar institutional budgeting system. Lastly, one interim was challenged professionally during their placement with finding their next permanent position. Figure 17 illustrates the professional challenges from the research findings.

Figure 17. Professional Challenges during the Interim Placement
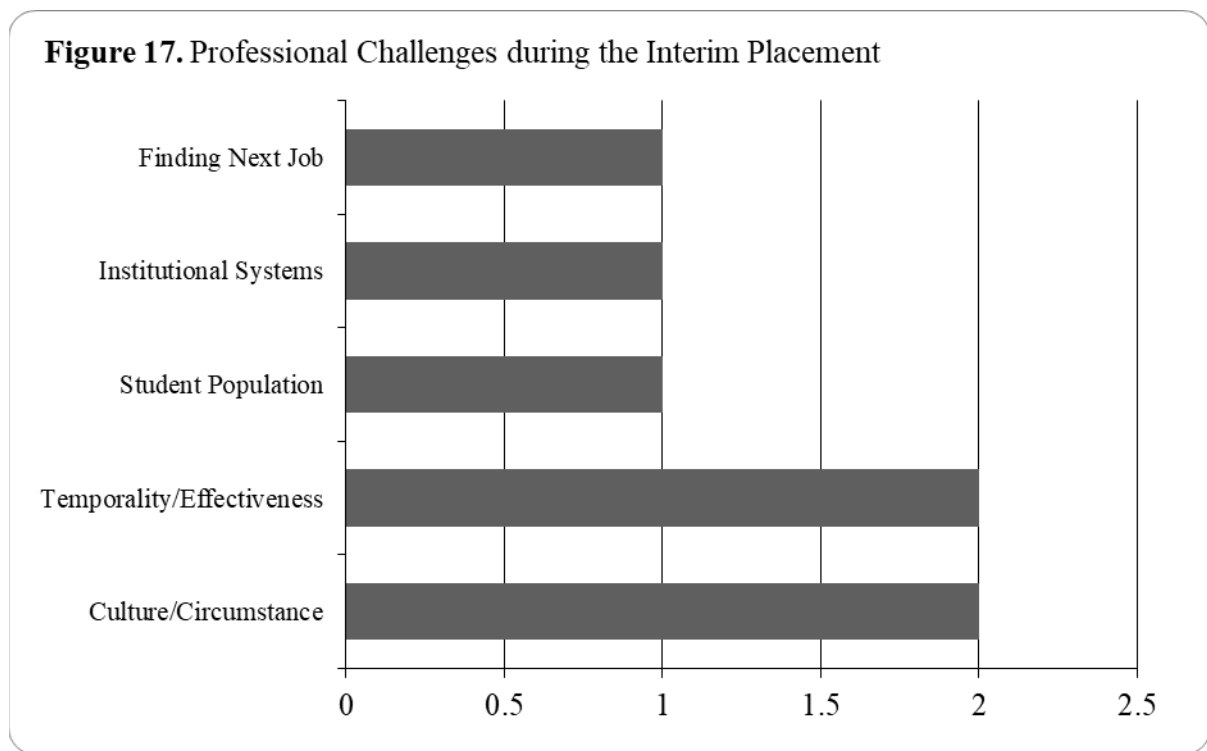
Personal and Professional Benefits

In addition to personal and professional challenges, the interim executives were also asked about the personal and professional benefits from serving in a placement. Although there were a number of personal challenges, 12 participants responded with related to

benefits, captured in four themes. While there were a limited number of professional

challenges, 13 professional benefits were recognized within three themes.

Personal.

The personal benefits include financial, working in a new place, confidence, and

meeting new people. Three respondents spoke of the personal benefit relating to finances,

one spoke of the benefit as "adding some money to my retirement account." One interim

enjoyed working at a different type of school and in a new city. Another respondent enjoyed

working in a new part of the country. The increase in confidence theme was generated from

three respondent responses. One participant stated, "it helped me better understand my

strengths and weaknesses...I learned from the position that I am good at setting up others to

get things accomplished." Lastly, four respondents appreciated meeting and working with

new people. Figure 18 illustrates the personal benefits described by the interim executives.

Figure 18. Personal Benefits during the Interim Placement
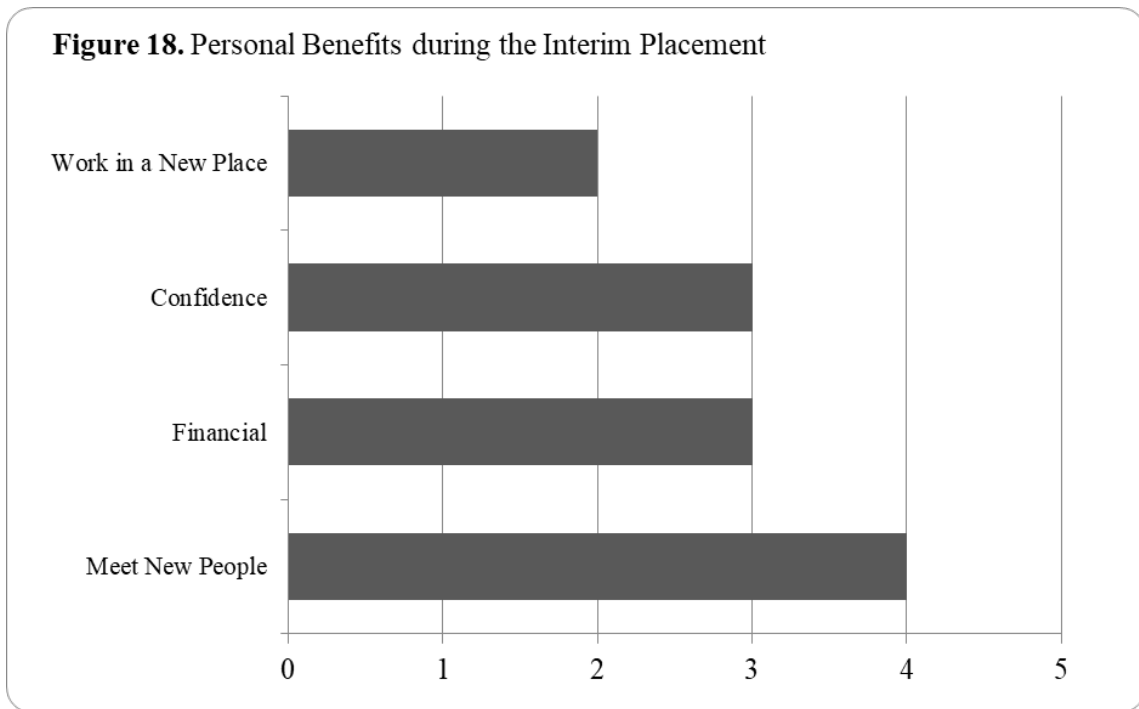
Professional.

The professional benefits described by the participants were themed into three categories: experience, staying involved, and contributing to university. Five interims expressed they gained valuable experience in the placement. One interim stated, "I expanded my portfolio in Student Affairs in a short period of time, making me a deep generalist." Another noted the good experience and "nice component to my resume." Three respondents noted that staying involved in the field was a professional benefit for them. Contributing to the university and people involved was recognized by five interims as a professional benefit. The professional benefits outlined by the interim executives are portrayed in figure 19.

Figure 19. Professional Benefits during the Interim Placement

Category	Value
Stay Involved in the Field	3
Contribute to University/Staff	5
Experience	5
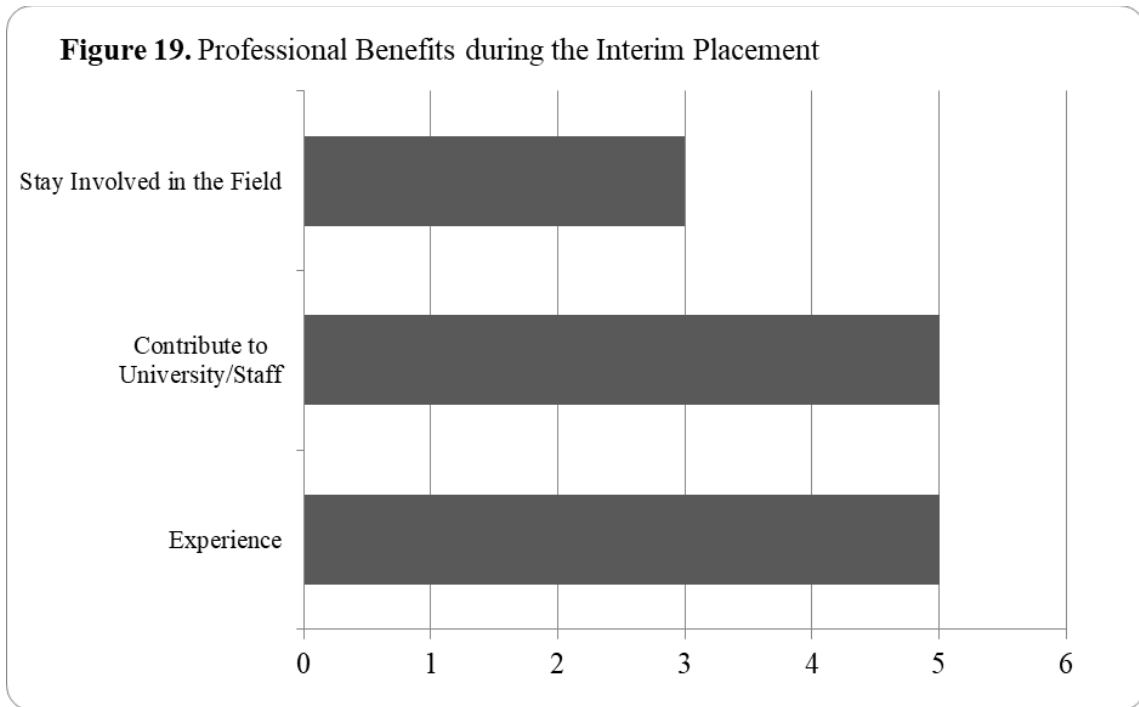
Assistance or Guidance from Keeling & Associate

Keeling & Associates manages the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service. The participants were provided the opportunity to give feedback to Keeling &

Associates, specifically surrounding what assistance or guidance they could provide to aid in the success of interim executives. The respondents provided limited feedback, only seven total suggestions, as to what Keeling & Associates could do better. Items Keeling & Associates could address to aid future interims in success included: communication, placement inquiry, housing, background check, and job search. Three participants spoke about the opportunity of more communication during their interim placement. One interim suggested Keeling & Associates could serve as an outside perspective to communicate with during the interim, another suggested connecting current interim executives as an option. Keeling & Associates could provide a list of interim placement related questions for inquiry, one participant noted. Assistance with negotiating housing, completing the background check, and finding the next job opportunity were also recommendations, each theme highlighted by one respondent. Figure 20 highlights the suggestions provided to aid future interim executives.

Figure 20. Assistance or Guidance for Keeling & Associates
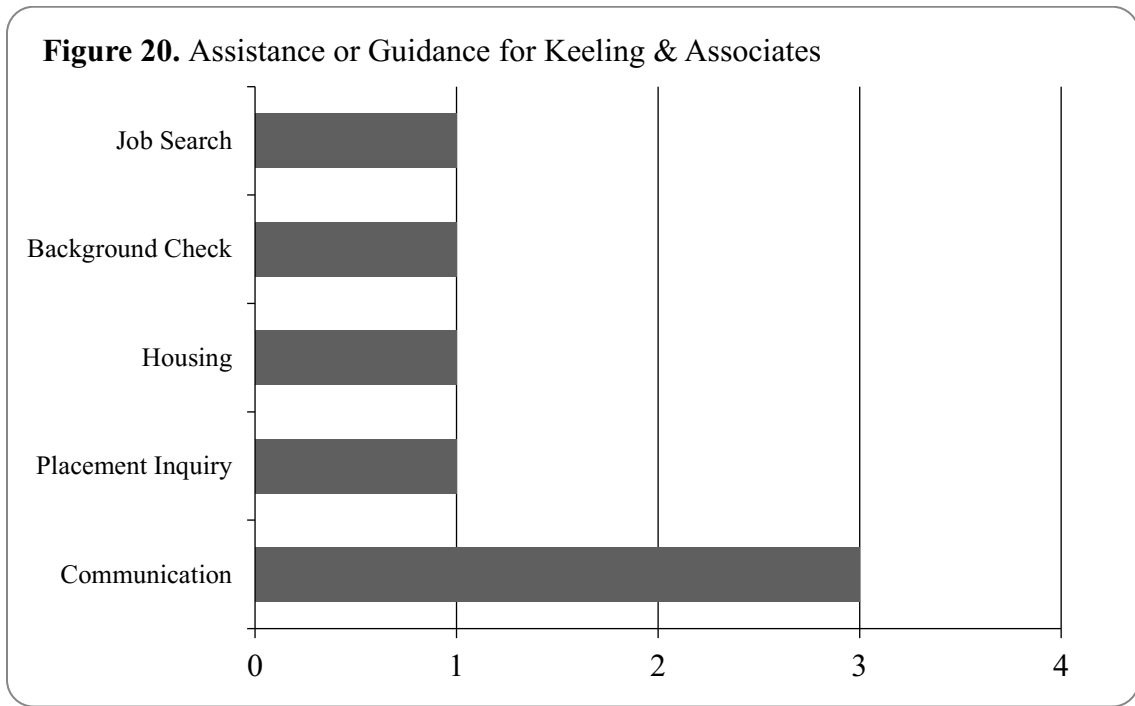
Although not direct guidance or assistance to aid future interims, one participant proposed promoting the service to institutions that have openings, specifically those wanting to hold off on the search process. The previous interim executives used this open-ended question to praise Keeling & Associates. Worth noting, as it relates to assisting in success, four respondents appreciated the information supplied by Keeling & Associates about their specific interim roles and institution. Six participants only contributed positive feedback about Keeling & Associates to this open-ended question.

Assistance or Guidance from Host Institution

The interim executives were also given the opportunity to supply feedback to the host institutions, as it relates to assistance or guidance that could benefit future interims. Based on the number of responses, the host institutions can aid in the transition and success of the interim. Eleven suggestions represented in four themes emerged: housing, new residence logistics/necessities, expectations for position, and culture or circumstance.

Housing.

Five of the respondents recommended the host institution assist with housing, whether it be providing or aiding in securing. There was a strong emphasis on providing housing, especially considering the temporary nature of the position and lack of familiarity with the location. The length of the appointment, such as less than one year or outside standard lease options, can make finding housing difficult. The host institution providing housing allows for flexibility with moving in and out, especially if the terms of the appointment were to shift.

New residence logistics.

Two respondents stated assistance or guidance with new residence logistics and necessities would be useful. As one interim executive described, "communication about the personal aspects…such as housing, transportation, and other essential components beyond the job." One respondent noted the importance of health benefits, from finding a doctor to feeling comfortable having insurance if something happened. The transition to a new community and place is challenging, the host institution can assist an interim around and over some of the obstacles related to being a new resident.

Expectations for position.

The expectations of the position need to be clear, the length of the interim placement and goals associated, as highlighted by two respondents. One interim had their placement extended, this was also noted by a few participants in their responses to questions surrounding the length of their placement and opportunity to provide any additional feedback about their experience. The exact number of interims extended and reasons for why were not addressed or discovered in this study; however, interims should recognize the possibility of being asked to stay beyond the original terms. The importance of establishing the expectations for the position was discussed in the conversations and negotiations section, along with recommendations provided by the interim executives. The host institution can aid in this process by determining the length of appointment, and establishing the priorities, goals, and objectives that can be addressed during the interim time frame.

Culture or circumstance.

Two other participants had institutional cultures and position circumstances that could have benefited with more information and explanation prior to the placement. Individual

institutions have unique policies, procedures, and politics, which can make a quick adjustment difficult. One participant would have appreciated the host institution providing a more "thorough explanation of the campus politics, and understanding of personnel changes and restructuring they want to accomplish, training on their administrative computing systems and an orientation to the budgeting process." Each institution has nuances and some uniqueness, identifying and explaining these items can promote an interims' adjustment to the culture or circumstance. Figure 21 portrays the participants' recommendations provided to the host institution to aid in the success of future interims.

Figure 21. Assistance or Guidance for the Host Institution
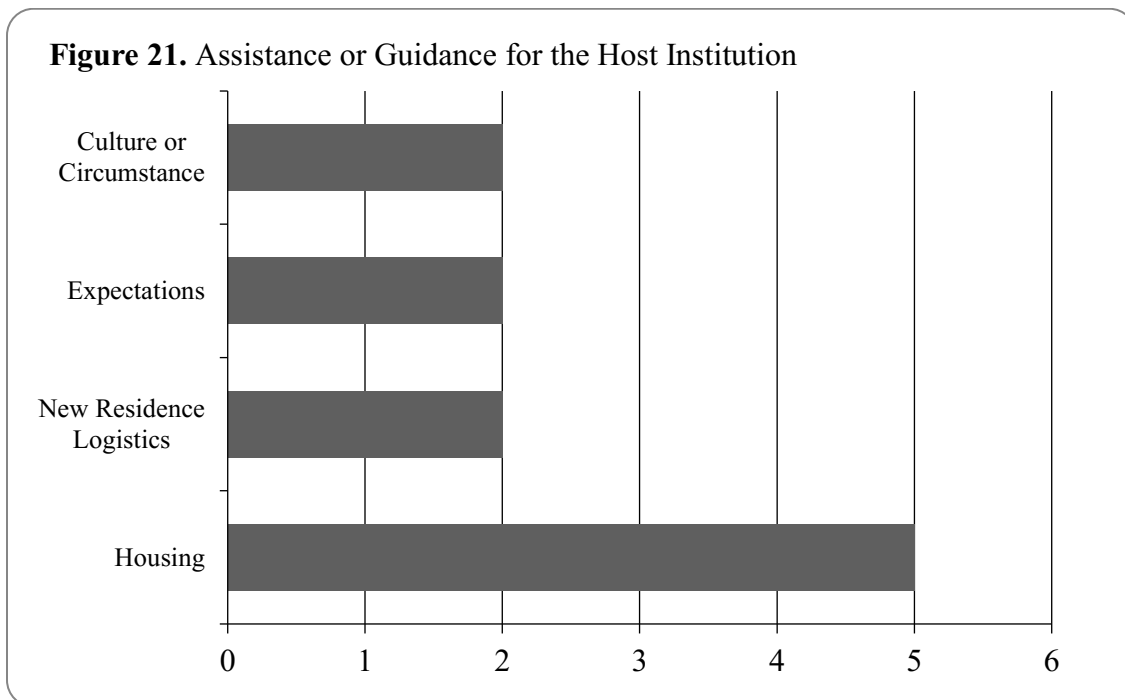
Lastly, one participant encouraged host institutions to promote the interim executive placement service because "there are benefits to using the concept." The promotion and use of interims are discussed further in chapter five. Overall, host institutions have the ability to positively impact the interim executives' experiences and success by being thoughtful about the interims' transitions into, through, and out of the placements.

Additional Information or Thoughts

The participants were given one open-ended question to provide any additional information or thoughts about serving as an interim executive. One participant provided two thoughts, an interim executive must be flexible and commit to personnel and planning. From their experience, "institutions continue to act and plan before, during, and leading up to the end of the assignment," so the interim must be adaptable and responsive during all three phases of moving into, through, and out. The importance of personnel has been echoed in other open-ended questions, one respondent pledged that they do not think someone can be successful in this type of role without demonstrating commitment to personal and planning. Two participants noted their interim placements were extended, one interim's placement was extended two years, another stated theirs was lengthened "well beyond," the initial assignment. Lastly, three of the respondents reiterated their high praise for the interim executive experience, labeling it as valuable, great, or enjoyable.

Summary

In conclusion, all four research questions were addressed through the participants responses to the survey. With a response rate of approximately 67%, the demographics and characteristics of interims highlight an educated and experienced group of professionals, predominantly White, male, heterosexual, married, and age of 50 or older. The interims were previously in executive level positions prior to the interim, most held terminal degrees, and had 20 or more years of experience in Student Affairs. The participants pursued an interim placement for a variety of reasons, such as staying professionally engaged, contributing to the profession and students, personal financial gain, seeking new opportunity, and enriching other work. Of the 16 respondents, six were retired prior to their interim placement.

The findings from open-ended questions produced rich details about interim executive's experiences and insights. The themes described above surrounding the barriers to success, lessons learned, recommendations, personal/professional challenges and benefits, and guidance for Keeling & Associates and the host institution will be connected to findings from previous research, laid out in the literature review, in the next chapter. The deeper analysis in the following chapter will produce the major findings, address research gaps identified to warrant this inquiry, limitations of the study, and conceptual framework with relation to the themes generated. Implications for future interims, Keeling & Associates, host institutions, and the field of Student Affairs moving forward will also be addressed. The research study will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This study examined a particular population in Student Affairs, NASPA Interim Executives, who have been previously unresearched. The four previous studies on interims in Student Affairs focused on internal interims and involved less than 10 participants. As there is no previous research on this specific population, nor on external interims in Student Affairs a number of results from the study equate to major findings. This concluding chapter will present the major findings, including linkages between the data and results presented in chapter four to the literature review and previous research described in chapter two. In addition, the research gaps filled and limitations of the study are outlined.

Implications for each key stakeholder are presented, including: future interim executives, Keeling & Associates, host institutions, and the field of Student Affairs. Readers will be presented with tangible, key takeaways for each stakeholder. Lastly, recommendations for future research will close out the dissertation.

As explained in chapter three, by conducting research under the post-positivist paradigm, knowledge can be produced through research to make decisions and generalizations, even with incomplete data, and inability to reach an absolute truth (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1991; Merriam et al., 2007). Data was generated by the 16 participants who completed the online survey, from which themes were produced through coding. The staff member from the Office of Research Design and Analysis and researcher compared their results from coding, and any discrepancies were resolved through agreement. From the data gathered, themes formed, and graphs created through this research, the population of NASPA Interim Executives are explained, including some of their

experiences and insights. The major findings and linkages to previous research can inform and guide future decision-making.

Major Findings

The four research questions are addressed by the findings sequentially. Again, the four research questions addressed by this study were:

1. Who are the individuals being selected for a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

2. Why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?

3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?

4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

The demographic and characteristics results provided answers to question one, followed by the reasons for pursuing the interim executive placement. Additionally, the experiences and perspectives provided by participants addressed research questions three and four.

Demographics and Characteristics

Research question one focused on identifying and understanding the demographics and characteristics of the population. This research gives a glimpse into the population of NASPA Interim Executives having completed a placement within the last three years. The characteristic and demographic survey questions were optional for participants. Thirteen of the sixteen respondents completed the demographic related questions. Most categories or criteria were pulled from the NASPA Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA)

Census. There were disparities in the gender, age, and race of the NASPA Interim Executives in comparison to participants from the NASPA VPSA Census.

Gender and sexual orientation.

Approximately 62% of the respondents were male, whereas the census respondents were nearly an even split between males and females. Participation in the census is significantly higher; however, this variance should be compared to who is applying interim executive placement to determine the level of significance. Two participants identified as gay or lesbian, all other as heterosexual.

Age.

The population varied in age, all being 40 and older. The four categories of 40-49, 50-59, 60-66, and 66+ were nearly equally represented. The interim executive group tended to be older; the slight age variance would be impacted by the 40% of respondents who identified as being retired prior to accepting the placement.

Race.

From the VPSA Census, nearly 75% of participants identified as White, whereas the interim executives were nearly all White. Only one interim executive identified as racially diverse, specifically Black or African American. Three participants did not respond to the question surrounding race, and one additional participant chose prefer not to say. The disparity in race of the interim executives in comparison to the census respondents warrants future inquiry; specifically, is there a significant difference between who is applying and who is being selected for the interim executive placement? Comparing the gender and race data of who is applying to those being selected is needed.

Relationship status.

One of the challenges of being an external interim is often having to relocate for the position. Participants were asked their relationship status to investigate whether the majority were dating, single, or married. Approximately 75% of the respondents were married, and the remaining were single. The interims were predominantly married, sparking no further inquiry into whether the interim executive placement was a better fit for a single person.

Previous experience and education.

As one may expect from the title Interim Executive, this population is experienced, with 92% of participants having 20 or more years of experience. Nearly 70% of respondents had a doctorate. All participants' previous job level was director or above. As described in chapter two, a director oversees and leads a functional area or entire department. At mid to larger sized institutions an executive director can denote overseeing an entire department. Overall, executive level positions in Student Affairs would include directors overseeing an entire department, along with executive directors, deans, assistant or associate vice chancellors, and vice presidents. The majority of interim executives were formally vice chancellors, vice presidents, or senior student affairs officers.

Career journey prior to interim placement.

Participants were asked where they were in their career journey prior to accepting the interim placement. Five participants indicated they were seeking employment. One participant was working part-time, one was not seeking employment, and two noted their situation did not fit in the survey response options provided. Six of the 16 participants stated they were retired prior to seeking a placement. If a respondent stated they were retired, they

were asked why they decided to return to work. Retired participants noted one or both of the following: they still had something to offer and wanted to stay professional engaged.

Length of the interim placement.

One linkage to previous research on interims was the length of the placement. Farquhar's (1995) range for interim leadership spanned from a few months up to two years. Most research suggested interim leaders serve between six months to one year (Fretwell, 1995; Goler, 2003; Ondercin, 2009). Twenty-one total placements were completed by the sixteen respondents. The length of the interim placement varied from three months to three years. Only 33% lasted between seven months to one year in length; however, 75% were no longer than 12 months. These results align with previous studies. Only two interim placements were longer than two years.

Time spent on executive tasks.

As defined in the NASPA Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) Census, time spent on executive tasks was included in the survey to help understand where the interim focused their attention during the placement. The average time spent on tasks by all respondents provided five main areas: administration, personnel management, strategic planning, direct interaction with students, and crisis management. Thirty-four percent of their time was spent on administrative responsibilities, along with 19% on personnel management. Executives in Student Affairs have a broad portfolio, often overseeing multiple areas and departments. As outlined in the VPSA Census Executive Summary, administration ranked first among average time spent at 30% and personnel management came in second at 16% (Figure 8, NASPA VPSA Census, p.15). The final three highest percentages directly correlated with the NASPA VPSA Census. The interims' spent approximately 10% of their

time on strategic planning, direct interactions with students, and crisis management. The

mirror reflection between the results found in this research to the VPSA Census provides

insight into the similarities of executive positions in Student Affairs, whether permanent or

temporary.

Applying for the permanent position.

Participants were also asked if they were interested in and permitted to apply for the

permanent role; previous studies highlighted the importance of having this determined prior

to accepting an interim role. Goler's (2003) study noted an interim position could serve as an

excellent audition for the permanent role. Only one participant stated they were not

permitted to apply. Five participants chose to apply for the permanent position. Even with

the temporality of the position, all but one participant who sought employment found their

next position within three months.

Reasons for Pursuing

Participants sought out interim executive placements through NASPA without

knowing if or when they would be selected. Unlike a typical Student Affairs job search

where candidates can see postings, these professionals have no way of knowing what interim

placement opportunities may be available until they submit their application. The

mysteriousness associated with these unique positions in Student Affairs sparked the

question, why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement? The

themes generated as the reasons for pursuing included: staying professionally engaged,

contributing to the profession and/or students, personal financial gain, seeking new

opportunities, and enriching other work. From the 16 responses, 11 participants indicated

wanting to stay professionally engaged as a reason for pursuing. Contributing to the

profession and/or students was indicated by seven respondents. Two participants expressed personal financial gain as a reason, additionally two others stated they were seeking new opportunities. Lastly, one participant pursued the interim to enrich other work.

As previously noted, these professionals were at various stages in their careers. The majority of respondents were not retired. Two participants completed more than one placement: one finishing four and the other three. The findings indicate the NASPA Executive Interim Placement Service provides opportunities for those who are retired, still working, and even professionals interested in completing multiple placements. The themes generated are not unique or unusual; one could expect those same responses from a Student Affairs professional pursuing a new job or position.

Professional and Personal Benefits

Considering the uniqueness of the roles, respondents were asked to elaborate on the professional and personal benefits in an open-ended question. Three themes emerged in relation to professional benefits. The professional benefits included the experience, staying involved in the field, and contributing to the institution and people. Five respondents noted the interim placement provided meaningful experiences; one recognized the role set them up for their next permanent position, and another stated it expanded their portfolio. Along with experience, three participants appreciated the ability to stay involved in the field. Whether retired or trying to avoid a gap in employment, the interim opportunity met both needs. Additionally, five respondents enjoyed contributing to the people and institution. Identifying and addressing issues, moving the program forward, and making contributions that positively impacted the staff were highlights. Getting to "go in, save the day and leave," as one respondent indicated, provides professional and personal benefits.

The professional benefit of the interim experience being rewarding could be linked to previous research findings, which recognized these types of position opportunities provided new experiences to bolster their resume, positively impacted future career progression, improved proficiency in skills, and expanded upon their professional network. These professional benefits are impressive, considering the position is temporary, yet can significantly impact their career beyond the interim placement.

A personal benefit mentioned by three participants was that the experience bolstered their confidence. The interim placement is time limited; the professional had to quickly learn, act, and prepare for transition. The confidence boost is understandable, as this is no simple job. The interim, who is viewed as temporary, is tasked with leading an institution through transition from one leader to another. Another personal benefit recognized by four participants includes meeting and working with new people. Multiple respondents stated they still communicate with colleagues from their interim placement. The final two themes related to personal benefits included financial, highlighted by three participants, and getting to work in a new place. One participant got to work in another part of the country, and another in a new city. The personal benefits of serving in these roles are all new findings, due to no research on external interims in the past. The interim executive placement did provide some professional and personal challenges, outlined in the next section.

Professional Challenges

The professional challenges related to the interim executive position were not as robust as the benefits. The themes of culture or circumstances and temporary nature of the position in terms of effectiveness were found in other topical areas of the research to be discussed later. Examples from the two responses surrounding the culture or circumstance

included changing presidents, union conflicts with faculty, leadership power dynamics, and institutional politics; although, each provides context into the potential professional challenges an interim may experience.

Additionally, the other professional challenge identified twice was being seen as temporary, making it difficult at times to be effective, which was found throughout the literature and previous studies. The defined appointment of the role and "interim" term in the title signifies the professional as temporary, and this hinders one's ability to build trust and relationships, which can impact their effectiveness. One participant stated they lacked credibility due to the "interim" in the title.

A few singular, unique professional challenges were noted by participants. One respondent had difficulty adjusting to working with the new student population. Another respondent was unfamiliar with the institution's budgeting system. One participant found it difficult to find their next job. These singular professional challenges indicate that not all can be accounted for when accepting the role; there may be unforeseen issues or concerns in an interim executive placement.

Personal Challenges

The personal challenges significantly outnumbered the professional. Moving to a new place was challenging. All seven themes connected to this matter. The interims had difficulties being away from family and home, establishing a sense of belonging, adjusting to the geographic area, finding housing, living on the compensation package, and navigating new residence logistics. Some of these challenges were noticeable in other open-ended survey questions.

Away from family and home.

The struggle with being away from family and home was the theme that most (five respondents) resonated with. The demands of moving to a new place and starting a unique, the temporary position afforded some personal struggles. The negative impacts on relationships and loneliness connects to findings from Goler's (2003) research, which found some interims' experienced heightened performance expectations, stressors, negative impacts on relationships, and loneliness. The future NAPSA Interim Executives need to be made aware of the potential impact this style of position can have from navigating moving to a new place, adjusting to a new community, working with new people, and learning a new job.

Sense of belonging.

Being away from family and home can be even more difficult in a completely new place and community. The interims had to try and establish a sense of belonging while starting a new, temporary job, in an unfamiliar place. The two respondents discussed the challenge of trying to establish a sense of belonging. They spoke specifically about trying to make friends, establishing a work and life balance, and settling into an unfamiliar community. Establishing a sense of belonging in an interim position should be a priority, even with the temporary nature of the position.

Housing.

One way to establish a sense of belonging is to secure housing. Finding housing in an unfamiliar location, with the added layer of appointment length in terms of months, can make finding a possible residence difficult. Two participants found this challenging, especially as it relates to location to the institution and amenities. One interim had to commute an hour to and from the institution; housing within the surrounding area was too expensive and hard to

secure. The other participant could only find a tiny apartment with limited amenities. The topic of housing was salient throughout the research.

Compensation.

Researching the area where the institution was located and gaining an understanding of the cost of living was noted. One participant realized after moving the compensation package was not sufficient enough in relation to the cost of living for the area. Although the position is temporary, spending time to research the community, cost of living, and area is still important.

Geographical area.

Two participants struggled adjusting to a new geographical area. One respondent moved from a city to a rural area. There was culture shock, along with the difficulty of starting a new position. The other participant mentioned the challenge of living in a small town. There are many benefits to an interim executive position, but the professional has to be mindful of all the other items and factors involved prior to accepting.

New residence logistics.

Four respondents highlighted the challenge of being a new resident, navigating a new place and community. Challenges included finding a local doctor to an auto mechanic. There was additional work outside of the interim position, finding and securing the familiar necessities and amenities. The new colleagues of the interim can be great resources for local insights and recommendations.

Moving Into, Through, and Out

As noted in chapter three, language from Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) was chosen to assist survey participants with breaking the interim placement into segments. This

research focuses on adults experiencing a transition, the focal point of transition

theory. NASPA Interim Executives *move into, through*, and *out* of their positions and

organizations in a specific timeframe and under the unique circumstances of having no prior

connections to the college or university. An interim executive placement personifies an adult

in transition. The open-ended questions centered around barriers to success, lessons learned,

and recommendations are connected to the transition theory segment of moving into,

through, and out. These segments not only assisted participants with breaking down their

experiences and insights, but also with presenting the research findings. The following

sections explain the findings through both the themes generated from participant responses

and segments of moving into, through, and out.

Barriers to success

The interims were prompted to provide their perceived barriers to success moving

into, through, and out of the interim executive position. The participant responses to the

open-ended survey question were narrowed to five themes: away from family/home, new

residence logistics, temporary nature of the job (effectiveness), staff relationship building,

and culture or circumstance. All five themes surrounding barriers to success were present in

other topic areas investigated in this research.

Away from family and home.

Two participants noted missing and being away from family and home. The theme of

being away from family and home was identified in the personal challenges as well. The

physical distance from home, lack of a close airport, and the challenge of getting away and

returning in a short period of time made it difficult to visit family. Future interims should

negotiate vacation or time away with the host institution, so they can visit home and family during the placement.

New residence logistics.

Four respondents highlighted the challenges of adjusting to a new location and community. An interim is responsible for learning a new job while navigating a new place and community. Moving to a new place can be personally taxing, trying to locate and evaluate personal necessity and amenity options adds an additional layer of work. The host institution can assist an interim with the transition by connecting them with resources they would typically provide a new employee. Assigning a work colleague to assist with on-boarding both in the workplace and community could be beneficial.

Culture or circumstance.

As highlighted in the professional challenges, the culture or position circumstance was a barrier to success. Five of the thirteen total responses identified with this theme. Trying to learn and understand the culture, language, decision-making structure, supervisor, and position were not easy. Some of these items may be difficult to discern prior to arrival; however, these are excellent topic areas to address and discuss with the host institution. One interim stated, "After a while, I realized I had to ask my supervisor for precise information about politics within the division and what she found acceptable to say and not say." Learning the culture can take time, which can be very limited in this type of position. The circumstance can also be challenging, one respondent was hired to help with enrollment management; however, no one else at the institution had any experience in that area. Another respondent's supervisor had only been at the institution for a few weeks, since both were new staff members it made adjusting and understanding the institution a longer

process. Ideally, both Keeling & Associates and the host institution can provide as much context and information about the position and organization as possible. If neither party discusses the culture or circumstance in the initial conversations and negotiations, the interim should address these items.

Temporary nature of the job (effectiveness).

The temporary nature of the position in relation to effectiveness was discussed by four participants. Respondents described how they were seen by other employees as a placeholder, temporary, or less serious. From their perceptions, these labels made decision-making more difficult, reducing their effectiveness. This theme was present in the barriers to success, lessons learned, and professional challenges. This finding correlates with previous literature and research, which found interims can be treated poorly, given less respect, and ignored or avoided by staff because of their temporary status (Huff & Neubrander, 2012; Mundt, 2000; Rud, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2012). The "interim" designation is often the person's title. The awareness of this challenge can help future interims better navigate the placement and staff, work to find allies to assist in accomplishing the goals and objectives set with the host institution.

Staff relationship building.

Considering the labels and limited time period of the positions, building staff relationships was identified by five respondents as a barrier to success. One interim response summed up this theme, "the challenge of building relationships to achieve objectives... the interim label casts you as temporary, and less serious." Another interim stated, "staff buy-in and consensus are difficult to achieve as some will see you as a placeholder." The challenge of building relationships with staff connected with previous studies. Everley's (1994) study

revealed the lack of organizational knowledge and relationships with staff, constituents, and stakeholders can significantly hinder an external interim's ability to be successful, especially quickly. There is so much to learn joining a new institution and starting an unfamiliar role. Additionally, Weber (2004) found that because an external interim is not connected to the organization and temporary, staff may take them less seriously, thus impacting productivity and staff morale. The findings outlined in this study suggest that staff did indeed see them differently, making it more challenging to be effective and build relationships.

Barriers moving into, through, and out.

The majority of barriers to success occurred in the moving through stage of the interim placement. All five themes were represented during this segment. Interims struggled with being away from family and home, building staff relationships, adjusting to the institutional culture or position circumstances, and realizing the temporary nature of the job was impacting their ability to be effective. As portrayed earlier, the personal challenges transitioning into the role can be difficult; however, the professional challenges and barriers to success are greatest once the interim is settled into the position, during the moving through stage. Findings in lessons learned and recommendations sections provide guidance to future interims in addressing some of these barriers.

Lessons Learned

Five themes arose from the question raised about lessons learned, four of which are represented in other responses to the open-ended survey questions: staff relationships, temporary nature of job with relation to effectiveness, focus on key elements, and staying mindful of personal goals and aspirations. Themes being repeated throughout the findings

provided clarity to some of the important and significant areas for future interims. The importance of gleaning information was the only theme in lessons learned not found in any other open-ended questions.

Gleaning information from staff.

The importance of taking the time to ask questions and listen to staff was identified by five respondents. Even with the time constraints of being interim, asking questions created the space to learn about the institutions and staff members, identifying the position duties and expectations, and understanding how decisions and changes come to fruition. There was a strong emphasis on learning as much as you can prior to making decisions. One participant stated, "you can ask the questions about the elephant in the room, and because you know that relationship will end, it helps the organization to have that person in the room." The ability to be an objective, outside perspective, permits asking challenging questions. This benefit of providing an objective viewpoint as an external interim, not being previously connected to a department or institution, was reflected in previous research. Another participant sought out understanding staff fears to potential change. Spending time to learn from and build relationships with staff assisted with understanding and making decisions. Even in an interim setting, staff are excellent resources to help achieve the institution's goals and objectives during the placements.

Staff relationship building.

Beyond just gleaning information from staff, the theme related to the importance of building relationships was again noticeable. Three interims recognized the importance of building relationships with staff as a lesson learned. In most cases, an interim is there to move the department or organization forward, rather than just leaving the position

vacant. An interim can reiterate their purpose and role to staff, helping and advancing their department or organization. Building staff relationships can aid in the process of preparing the team and institution for the permanent leader.

Temporary nature of the job (effectiveness).

Two interims recognized how the temporary nature of the job impacted their effectiveness. One interim experienced some staff negligence stating, "some people are just waiting for you to leave," equating it to their temporary nature. The response directly connects to previous research, which found that some staff can have a "wait it out" mentality or push their own agenda with an interim (Huff & Neiubrander, 2012; Mundt, 2004; Rud, 2004). Although no interim identified any staff member pursuing their own agenda, some felt the implications of their title and temporary status. This theme appeared throughout the research.

Focus on key elements.

Focusing on the key elements for success was another lesson learned. The key elements could be boiled down to student, staff and strategic plan. As one participant summarized this theme by stating:

> There are more similarities between higher education institutions (and the employees
> and students), than differences. If you are conscientious about the important elements
> - student success, respect for employee's abilities and concerns, strategic plan of the
> institution - you are likely to have a successful interim experience.

Four participant responses identified with this theme. Interims should focus on key elements, balancing with their goals and aspirations.

Stay mindful of personal goals and aspirations.

The final lesson learned, indicated by two respondents, was staying mindful of one's own personal goals and aspirations. One respondent learned the importance of considering potential plans after the placement early on, specifically if the permanent position may be of interest. They suggested the approach to the interim position may be different, if applying for the permanent role. Applying or not, an interim should think about what is next for them professionally, and plan accordingly. This theme is more ubiquitous in the following recommendations section.

Lessons learned moving into, through, and out.

The significant lessons learned found in the study pertained to the importance of building relationships with staff, especially gleaning information. In terms of lessons learned moving into, through, and out the majority were situated in the beginning of the interim placement. Interims learned the importance of listening and learning from staff, building relationships, and assimilating goals and objectives, all while remaining cognizant of one's personal goals and aspirations. Unlike barriers to success, where the majority occurred during the moving through phase, lessons learned were primarily centered on moving into the placement. Focusing on key elements and building staff relationships carried into the moving through stage. The quantity of themes moving into the placement signifies the need for more information about these roles, the interims' shared a number of lessons learned in the beginning and seemed to settle in as time progressed.

Recommendations

The final area to completely address research question three, recommendations for future interims, centered around six themes: expectations for position, focus on key elements

for success, building staff relationships, staying mindful of personal goals and aspirations, establishing a sense of belonging, and managing the transition. All themes are found in other areas of the research, except determining the expectations for the position. Four participants used the word *expectations* or slight variation. Expectations can have different meanings. The RDA staff member and I agreed in this instance the word related to the goals, priorities, and objectives agreed upon between the interim and host institution prior to the placement.

Expectations for position.

Six interims recommended establishing clear expectations for the position and some included the importance of re-evaluating those expectations throughout the placement. Establishing expectations are critical, specifically determining how many can be accomplished within the interim time frame. The time period of the interim placement provides parameters to assess what can and cannot be accomplished. The number of goals and objectives should be assessed too. As Barbieri (2005) explained, there is a short honeymoon period for interims, they often must work fast to accomplish the organizational goals and objectives set for them. One interim recommended, "staying focused on the items in the original agreement or substitute (not just adding more) some new items." Priorities can shift and expectations can be adapted, but not added. This theme or topic area was recognized by 10 of the 16 respondents when asked about what conversations or negotiations they had prior to the interim placement. The conversations and negotiations over expectations is imperative for an interim executive, without clear goals and objectives there is no way to measure success or accomplishments. Understanding the expectations and time frame of the interim placement allows the individual to stay focused.

Focus on key elements.

The theme of focusing on key elements appeared in the recommendations and lessons learned discussed earlier. This theme relates to establishing clear expectations. Considering an interim position is time limited, only so much can be addressed and accomplished. Unexpected events or changes at the institution can hinder meeting the expectations. On-going communication between the interim and supervisor can address any shifts in priorities, as well as provide progress updates regarding the initial goals and objectives.

Staff relationship building.

The carryover theme involving building staff relationships was highlighted by three respondents. In this instance, the recommendation of building staff relationships was solely concentrated in the moving through stage. One interim noted that by listening to and building relationships with staff they learned about specific areas for improvements. Whether permanent or temporary, gaining the support and help from staff increases the likelihood of success. As noted in the literature review, the ability to build relationships is vital to the success of interim leaders within higher education (Hoppe & Speck, 2003; Hughey, 1997; Jones, 2011; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Ondercin, 2009; Pounder, 2001; Sidoti, 1997; Trudeau, 2001; Waddington, 2001; Winston & Creamer, 1997; Woodward, Love, & Komives, 2000b). The significance of building relationships was the only theme found in barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations. The common occurrence of this theme signifies the importance for future interims.

Stay mindful of personal goals and aspirations.

Staying mindful of personal goals and aspirations, knowing the position is temporary, was recommended by four respondents. This recommendation was salient in lessons learned as well. One interim stated, "start looking early on to make the post-contract transition." Participants emphasized personal goals and aspirations should remain at the forefront, especially for the interims' still active in their careers. Attention has to be given to what occurs after the placement due to the amount of time it can take to secure their next position. As noted in the literature review, the average job search duration for an entry level Student Affairs position lasts 119 days (Crain & Steele, 2015). Recruiting and hiring executive level positions can take just as long, if not longer, due to the prominence of the position responsibilities and amount of faculty, staff, and students involved in the search process. The interim executive placement is temporary, and this planning ahead should start in the beginning.

Sense of belonging.

Although the position is temporary, four respondents recommended trying to establish a sense of belonging. Finding a way to feel personally at home involved making friends, settling into the living arrangement, and exploring the community. One respondent noted they completed multiple interim placements, and their recommendations was to find a way to "feel personally at home" in the temporary environment. Two of the four respondents wished housing had been provided by the institution to ease the transition into the community.

Managing the transition.

Lastly, three interims recommended managing the transition out of the placement. This was the only theme exclusively connected to moving out of the interim placement. Managing the transition out of the role included making a binder with information learned and recommendations, along with preparing staff for the permanent leader. With the potential of no overlap between the permanent leader, creating documentation provides the host institution with something to share upon their arrival. One participant received communication from the permanent leader, thanking them for the transition report provided. Additionally, the preparation of staff by the interim can set the permanent leader up for success. A graceful transition out of the interim placement can benefit the interim too, particularly if they need a job reference for their next position.

Recommendations moving into, through, and out.

The majority of the recommendations centered in the moving through stage of the interim placement. The respondents recommended establishing clear expectations moving into the placement, transitioning to the key elements and building staff relationships. Personally, establishing a sense of belonging, while remaining aware of personal goals and aspirations were recommended moving into and through the placement. The new theme of managing the transition appeared exclusively in the moving out segment.

Host Institutions

The interim executives were provided the opportunity to give feedback to the host institutions, as it relates to assistance or guidance that could benefit future interims. This specific question captured four themes, all of which have previously appeared: housing, new residence logistics/necessities, expectations for position, and culture or circumstance.

Housing.

Five of eleven respondents recommended the host institution assist with securing housing. Considering the variance in length of each interim placement and interim's lack of familiarity with the location, finding viable housing can be difficult. Providing housing, ideally on-campus, eliminates a huge burden on the interim; including, minimizing the risk of separating from the appointment early. A few of the interim's noted their placement was extended, having housing provided by the institution easily accommodates an adaption to the original agreement.

New residence logistics.

In addition to housing, institutions can ease the transition by providing resources and assistance with settling into the new environments. Two respondents stated assistance or guidance with new residence logistics and necessities would be useful. On-boarding an interim beyond the job and into the community is needed.

Expectations for position.

The top theme in the recommendations section, expectations for the position, was highlighted by two respondents. The expectations need to be clear, from the length of the interim placement to the associated objectives and priorities. The institution has to prepare for the interim, assessing what is needed during the transition between permanent leaders. If the organization has not determined roles, responsibilities, goals, compensation, timeframe, and whether the interim can apply for the permanent position ahead of time, ambiguity and uncertainty can quickly overwhelm the staff and interim leader (Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). Appointing an interim bridges the gap between permanent leaders, yet not preparing for this temporary leader can have negative effects on the institution and staff.

Culture or circumstance.

Two participants cited the institution could have supplied more information and explanation with regards to the institutional cultures and position circumstances. The items mentioned were campus politics, personnel challenges, organizational structure, and administrative systems, which vary from institution to institution. Conversations and more information surrounding the position, personnel, and campus politics would be beneficial and assist with the transition moving into the placement.

Promote the service.

One interim encouraged the host institution to promote the interim executive placement service. Collectively participants acknowledge the experience as positive and valuable. Previous host institutions can work with Keeling & Associates to promote the service. A well-rounded picture of an interim executive placement can be established by sharing the experiences from previous interims and host institutions. Providing both perspectives can illuminate this opportunity for both future interims and host institutions.

Keeling & Associates

The participants were also given the opportunity to express what assistance or guidance Keeling & Associates could provide to aid in the success of future interim executives. Keeling & Associates serves as the connection point between the interim and host institution. Once the interim executive is selected by the host institution, Keeling & Associates steps away from the process. The themes generated from the findings included: communication, placement inquiry, housing, background check, and job search. The participants provided limited feedback to Keeling & Associates, only seven total suggestions, as to what they could improve upon.

Three participants spoke about the opportunity for more communication during their interim placement, from either Keeling & Associates or being connected to a past or present interim executive to serve as an outside perspective. Another suggestion was Keeling & Associates could provide a list of questions to aid in understanding the assignment, considering each is different. The questions could assist with moving into the interim placement, focusing on the negotiations and initial conversations with the host institutions and supervisors. Preparation is vital, as found in previous research on interims, often there is a limited amount of time to accept the role, even less time to prepare, no training is provided, and limited transition documents left by the previous leader (Mundt, 2004; Ondercin, 2009). All but two of the participants only completed one interim executive placement, so any support and assistance with the process could be advantageous. Lastly, assistance with negotiating housing, completing the background check, and finding the next job opportunity were singular suggestions, recognized by one interim.

The recommendations were seeded with praise for Keeling & Associates. Four respondents appreciated the information supplied by Keeling & Associates about their specific interim role and host institution. Six of the eleven respondents only contributed positive feedback about Keeling & Associates to this open-ended question. The praise and appreciation for Keeling & Associates is evidence the NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service is in excellent hands.

Although not relating to direct guidance or assistance to aid future interims, one participant proposed Keeling & Associates promote the service to institutions that have openings, specifically those wanting to hold off on searching for the next permanent

leader. Based on the positive feedback and experiences found in this study and in previous research, there is an opportunity for expansion and utilization.

Keeling & Associates is the common denominator in all placements. They could assist both parties by providing guidance, recommendations, or resources to help foster conversations and expedite negotiations. Most interims only completed one placement, so this was a new learning experience, potentially for the host institution too. Keeling & Associates expertise on interim executive placements can assist both parties through the unfamiliar journey.

Summary and Implications

The 16 participants in the study were seasoned professionals, all having 20 or more years of experience and were previously serving in a director or higher-level position. All participants spoke positively about the interim placement. The interims also spoke highly of meeting and working with new people, experiencing a new place and institution, gaining confidence and expanding their skills set. The experience as an interim executive was valuable, providing the opportunity to contribute and stay connected in the field. Based on their positive experiences, previous research highlighting the same findings, and participant's encouragement to promote the service, the utilization of this service and external interims in Student Affairs is highly recommended. As outlined in the problem statement, the transient nature of the field and lengthy job search processes creates opportunities to utilize an interim.

Personal and Professional Transition

To aid in the transition, the host institution should provide housing and other necessities. Assisting with new residence logistics and amenities was recommended. Moving to a new place requires adapting to a new community, finding goods

and services such as a doctor, dry cleaner, gym, or restaurant. Helping the interim transition allows them to focus more on the position. Furthermore, the findings advocate for establishing expectations, providing information about the culture and position circumstance, and specifying any other relative details about the role. The expectations, meaning objectives and priorities, provide a foundation between the institution and interim. Their agreement solidifies the items to be addressed and goals accomplished. Additionally, any information to ease the transition into the institution is useful. An interim has a lot of learning to do prior to making impactful decisions. An institution can help reduce the learning curve through purposeful communication and on-boarding. Proper on-boarding assists new employees adjust to the organization and culture. Helping new staff learn the processes, procedures, technology, and language takes time, as each institution has operational nuances. Lastly, the host institution can prepare staff for the interim.

The results described above reiterate findings from previous research that the interim's ability to build relationships with staff is crucial. The institution can be transparent with staff, and explain the interim's role and expectations. The institution can acknowledge the temporary nature associated with the interim title and placement, but should affirm with the staff the interim's decision-making authority. A staff who is receptive and willing to collaborate will make the interim's transition and work less complicated.

Expectations and Priorities

Interims need to work with host institutions to establish expectations, understand the culture and position circumstances, and gather information to aid in their success. The interim cannot rely on the host institution, considering both parties may be new to the interim experience. Interims addressed the objectives and priorities by asking questions, listening,

building relationships with staff, and communicating regularly with key constituents. The findings from this study show interims should primarily focus on themselves and the expectations set with the host institution. Focusing on self means staying mindful of their goals and aspirations, considering the position is temporary. Interims should contemplate whether they may be interested in applying for the permanent role or determine their next career move. Participants encouraged future interims to establish a sense of belonging while in their temporary role by making friends, finding ways to settle into the new environment, and staying connected with family and home. An additional recommendation was finding someone outside of the interim placement to communicate with. Having a professional connection, potentially even a previous interim, can provide a sounding board to process the experience.

Students, Staff, and Key Elements

Ultimately, the interim needs to focus on the key elements for success: students, staff members, and expectations. Previous interims recognized that only so much can be accomplished within the appointment; however, success is attainable by focusing on the key elements. Pouring into and preparing the students and staff members for the permanent leader is time well spent. Objectives and priorities can shift during the placements. By staying attentive to the expectations, the interim can adjust but not add to what needs to be accomplished, allowing for the scope of work to remain attainable.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) stages provided the language to divide the transition and placement into digestible segments. The transition stages assisted the participants by separating the placement, prompting some respondents to even list moving

into, through, and out in their answers to the open-ended survey questions. The three segments also helped with analyzing data and reporting findings. The condensed findings provided some guidance for future interims as they move into, through, and out of the role.

Moving into, through, and out.

While moving into the interim's focus should be the themes associated with establishing expectations, gleaning information, building staff relationships, working out new residence logistics, and remaining mindful of personal goals and aspirations. Moving through the interim needs to stay attentive to the expectations, building staff relationships, focusing on key elements for success, establishing a sense of belonging, and continuing to stay mindful of personal goals and aspirations. Interims need to stay aware of the time remaining throughout the placement, and document their work and notes for the incoming permanent leader. Transitioning out of the placement, the interim should focus on sharing information, solidifying the progress on key elements, and their personal goals and aspirations. The findings in terms of theme prevalence and connections to a particular segment, permit the interim to target their attention to certain items in the placement.

<div align="center">

Limitations

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This study had limitations to acknowledge. Although larger than previous studies on interims, this study captured the perspectives of only 16 participants. Additionally, the study only captured data through one method, an anonymous survey. The participant's text responses to the open-ended survey questions provided the only data source for examination. The anonymity of the survey created barriers, in that data from the individual participant responses could not be connected from one question to the next. Linkages could not be made between demographic information and responses to the open-ended questions. For example,

examining the responses of the interims who were retired in comparison to those still active in their career could have illuminated additional findings. Making the survey anonymous was to encourage participation, in hindsight, it limited the ability for data analysis.

Research Gap

The four previous studies on interims in Student Affairs provided some insight into interims and staff reactions to them. Boerner's (2011) found that an internal interim whose appointment was outside their department or functional area had a more positive experience than one serving within. The interim developed leadership skills and gained experience in another area of the field. Ondercin's (2009) research also focused on mid-level interims, specifically appointments within the same department. Both studies found significantly more advantages than disadvantages to serving as and utilizing an interim. Jones (2011) highlighted staff reactions to an interim; findings indicated the staff benefit more by having an interim than leaving the role vacant. Culler's (2014) affirmed interim directors or deans found the role to be a favorable experience. Each of these studies provided some guidance or recommendations to assist future interims, staff members, or organizations; however, no previous research was conducted on this group of professionals or on external interim appointments in Student Affairs.

This study accomplished what it set out to do, provide information about this unique population, including analyzing and summarizing their experiences and insights to assist future interim executives, host institutions, and Keeling & Associates. This study addressed and provided answers to all four research questions, improving the body of knowledge on interims in Student Affairs. As noted in the literature review, Johnston (2014) found leadership turnover in higher education is increasing, along with the use of

interims. Additional research is needed to expand upon the information regarding these temporary positions, not just at the leadership level but throughout the field.

Recommendations for Future Research

This exploratory study provided a baseline for future research. Now that a general description and understanding of the experiences and insights of NASPA Interim Executives has been established, future studies can dig deeper into details or themes that arose in this research. For example, a future study may examine previous host institutions for NASPA Interim Executive Placements. Additional research could focus on themes related to the temporary nature of the position in terms of effectiveness or examine the expectations established between the interim and host institution. Two areas not examined in this study were the skills and attributes of the interim, and tasks or projects completed during the placement. Understanding the skills and attributes of an interim could assist professionals considering the role. Learning about the assigned tasks and projects could provide context of what may be expected in the role, such as restructuring a department. Gaining insight by learning about previous examples of expectations, objectives and priorities, could also be beneficial. Each topic for future research could improve the experiences of future interim executives, which this study sought to do. This is really just the beginning of research on this population.

Future research could investigate the themes found in this study and whether or not they connect with the experiences of Student Affairs professionals during the transitions early on in their career. Student Affairs is a transient field, especially for new and mid-level professionals that often have to move out to move up as discussed earlier. Several topics and themes discussed in this research may resonate and assist both new and mid-level staff

including: establishing a sense of belonging, navigating new residence logistics, staying

mindful of personal goals and aspirations, and being away from home and family. Having

conversations with new and mid-level staff surrounding the transient nature of the field and

personal and professional challenges could assist them through their transitions as they move

out to move up. In addition to future interims, this research may be relevant for these

"permanent" staff navigating their own transition in the field.

This research on external interims, in conjunction with Boerner's (2011) study

involving professionals serving in an interim position in another functional area or

department, sparks the inquiry about the benefits of external versus internal interims in

Student Affairs. In Boerner's study, these professionals are considered external interims,

although working for the same institution, just not within the same department. From these

findings and results of this study, there appears to be significant benefits to external interims,

whether coming from outside the university or from another department. The use of external

interims may solve many of the challenges and issues with internal interims.

Conclusion

Since starting this study in May 2019 and its publication in October 2020, there have

been three interims in Student Affairs at the dean level or higher at my institution. These

interim executives were temporarily promoted from within the university. This example

further signifies that research on interims in Student Affairs is relevant and needed. With the

transient nature of the field and increase in leadership turnover, the use of interims can

provide some temporary stability. The NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service

provided opportunities to learn and grow as a professional, stay connected in the field, and

gain new experiences. These professionals also benefited the institution by completing real

work, servicing the needs of students and staff, providing an outside perspective, and allowing time for a proper search to be conducted. As this research found, these external interim positions were beneficial to the individual and institution, a win-win scenario. Additionally, Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) provided an excellent framework to understand and explain an interim position, as the professional moved into, through, and out of the placement. This exploratory research study was just the beginning, future studies are necessary to expand upon the knowledge surrounding external interims.

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APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION SURVEY

Appalachian
STATE UNIVERSITY.

Research Background

Purpose of Study:

This dissertation research study is being conducted as part of the requirement to complete the Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University. This survey research study seeks to describe the population of Student Affairs administrators who completed a National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Interim Executive Placement, through Keeling & Associates (K&A), over the last three years, and inform future participants by illuminating the experiences of these individuals as they moved into, through, and out of these positions. There is currently no research on this group of administrators. This research can assist future NASPA Interim Executive Placement Service administrators, Keeling & Associates, and host institutions by highlighting the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations of these individuals. This survey is confidential and anonymous, Keeling Associates provided the survey link to all participants. Names, emails, and other identifying information will not be collected to encourage participants to share their experiences transparently.

Research Questions:

1. Who are the individuals being selected for a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?
2. Why does an individual pursue a NASPA Interim Executive Placement?
3. From their experiences, what are the perceived barriers to success, lessons learned, and recommendations to share with future NASPA Interim Executives?
4. From their perspectives and experiences, what assistance or guidance from Keeling & Associates or the host institution can aid in the success of future NASPA Interim Executives?

Contact Information of Researcher and Faculty Advisor:

Brandon Nelson (Researcher)
814-688-4287
nelsonbe@appstate.edu

Dr. Tracy Goodson-Espy (Dissertation Chair)
828-262-7620
goodsonespyt@appstate.edu

Projected time to complete the survey: ~15 minutes

Disclaimer:

Participation is voluntary, no compensation or incentive is provided to participate. This survey is confidential and anonymous, Keeling Associates provided the survey link to all participants. Names, emails, and other identifying information will not be collected.

○ I DO NOT agree to participate

○ I agree to participate

Survey Section 1 of 4

Interim Executive Placement Information (Survey Section 1 of 4)

The criteria and categories chosen were selected from the 2014 NASPA Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) Census. The NASPA Research and Policy Institute VPSA Census provides a comprehensive look at student affairs divisions and individual VPSAs who lead our profession. For more information visit: http://census.naspa.org/

Number of completed NASPA Interim Executive Placement(s), through Keeling & Associates:

○ One

○ Two

○ Three

○ Four

○ Five or more

Length (months) of each Interim Executive Placement(s):

[text box]

Your reason(s) for pursuing Interim Executive Placement(s):

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[ ]

Job title(s) during the Interim Executive position(s):

[ ]

Average percentage of time spent performing various executive tasks during interim position:

Total of tasks should equal 100

Administration	0
Crisis Management	0
Direct interactions with students	0
Finance	0
Fundraising	0
Personnel management	0
Public relations	0
Strategic planning	0
Other [ ]	0
Total	0

Functional area(s) directly or indirectly supervised/managed during most recent interim executive position (select <u>all</u> NASPA Functional Areas that are applicable):

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple functional areas

135

Academic Advising
Admissions
Alumni Programs
Campus Activities
Campus Safety
Career Services
Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement
Clinical Health Programs
College Union
Community Service / Service Learning

Institution sector:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

Private not-for-profit, 4-year
Public, 4-year
Public, 2-year
Private for-profit 4-year
Private not-for-profit 2-year
Less than 2-year

Number of students at institution:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

less than 1,000
1,000-4,999
5,000-9,999
10,000-19,999
20,000 and over

Institution Type:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

Associate's
Baccalaureate
Master's-granting
Doctoral-granting and Research

Prior to accepting the interim position, what conversations or negotiations (if any) did you have with the institution as it relates to your role, purpose, goals, or expectations as the interim?

Survey Section 2 of 4

Open-ended questions (Survey Section 2 of 4)

Transition Theory and Moving Into, Through, and Out of Interim Executive Placement
This section provides all open-ended response areas. The majority of questions are connected to terms used in Schlossberg's Transition Theory; *moving into, through* and *out.* In hopes of aiding in the success of future interim executives, please provide perceived barriers, lessons learned, and recommendations as you navigated *moving into, through,* and *out* of your interim executive position(s).

Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering's (1989) Transition Theory, explained an adult in transition as "moving in the learning environment, moving through it, and preparing to leave, or moving on" (p. 15). External interim leaders transition into, through, and out of their position and organization in a specific timeframe and under the unique circumstance of having no prior connection to the college or university. An interim executive placement demonstrates an adult in transition as the interim moves into, through, and out of the position. For the purpose of this study, *moving into* the position encompasses all time and communication between the first conversations with the university through the first 90 days on the job. The *moving through* portion of the position encompasses all time between the first and final 90 days of the interim placement. The *moving out* phase of the interim placement includes the final 90 days of the position through any final communications with the university. Using 90-day increments breaks a 9 month interim appointment into three, 90-day periods. A 90-day scale was selected because it reflects a frequently used human resources probationary period, and provides time for an employee to begin developing relationships with key constituents, assessing organizational culture, and learning position responsibilities.

The following **eight** questions are open-ended response. Please respond in 200 words or less.

This area of the survey is expected to take the longest; however, will likely provide the greatest insight into your experience(s) as a NASPA, through Keeling & Associates, Interim Executive. I greatly appreciate your time and assistance with my dissertation research! Any insight, short or long, is welcomed.

Barriers to success that you perceived *moving into, through,* and *out* of your interim executive position(s):

Lessons learned *moving into, through,* and *out* of your an interim executive position(s).

Recommendations for future interims as they *move into, through,* and *out* of their interim executive position(s).
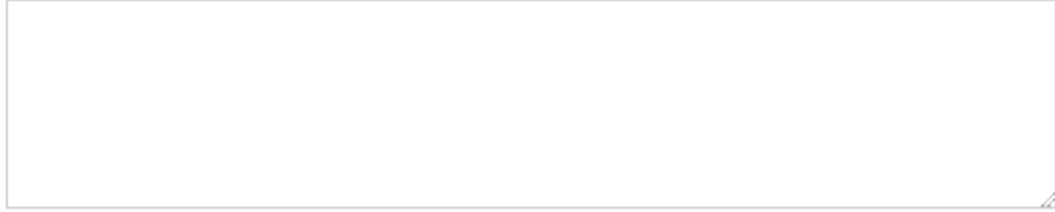
What were the personal and/or professional challenges you faced while serving in an interim executive placement?

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What were the personal and/or professional benefits from serving in an interim executive placement?

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What assistance or guidance could Keeling & Associates provide to aid in the success of interim executives?

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What assistance or guidance could a host institution provide to aid in the success of future interim executives?

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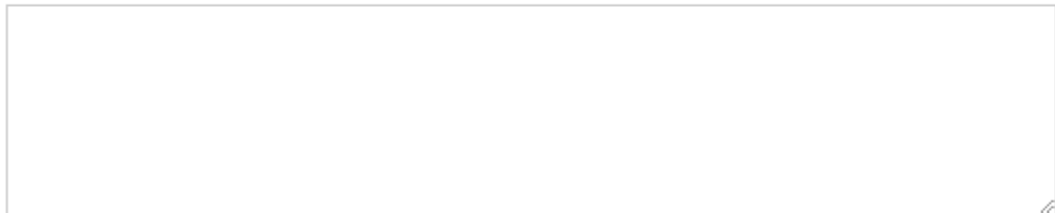
Any additional information or thoughts in relation to serving in an interim executive placement(s) you would like to share?

[   ]

Survey Section 3 of 4

Employment and Interim (Survey Section 3 of 4)

Prior to accepting the position, where were you in your career journey?

☐ Retired

☐ Employed, full-time

☐ Employed, part-time

☐ Seeking employment

☐ Not retired, nor seeking employment

☐ Other

[   ]

Why did you decide to return to work after retirement?

[   ]

Were you permitted to apply for the permanent position?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Yes permitted, but not interested in applying.

○ Not permitted, but would have applied if allowed.

If allowed to apply, did you apply for the permanent position?

○ Yes

○ No

Did you seek/pursue a permanent position at another institution while serving as an interim executive, or even after serving in the interim position?

○ Yes

○ No

Were you employed within 3 months of completing the interim executive position?

○ Yes

○ No

From your perception, did the NASPA Interim Executive Placement, through Keeling and Associates, assist you in obtaining your next position?

○ Yes

○ No

Survey Section 4 of 4

Optional Characteristic/Demographic Information (Survey Section 4 of 4)

Prior to interim position(s), number of full-time years of experience in Student Affairs/Higher Education:

Highest degree earned prior to interim position:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

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Bachelor's        ▲
Master's
Professional
Doctoral



                  ▼
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Previous job level prior to interim position:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

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Vice Chancellor/Vice President                    ▲
Associate/Assistant Vice Chancellor or President
Senior Student Affairs Officer
Faculty
Dean
Associate/Assistant Dean
Director
Associate/Assistant Director
Other (within higher education)
Not in Higher Education                           ▼
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Gender:

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-binary/ third gender

○ Prefer to self-disclose

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○ Prefer not to say

Sexual Orientation:

○ Straight/Heterosexual

○ Gay or Lesbian

○ Bisexual

○ Prefer to self-describe

       [ ]

○ Prefer not to say

Relationship status during the interim position:

○ Married/civic union/domestic partnership

○ Dating

○ Single

○ Prefer to self-describe

       [ ]

○ Prefer not to say

Race:

○ Black / African American

○ White

○ Hispanic

○ American Indian

○ Asian

○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

○ Two or more races

○ Prefer to self-describe

       [ ]

○ Prefer not to say

Age during interim position:

Hold Control or Command key to select multiple if completed more than one Interim Executive Placement

```
under 30
30-39
40-49
50-59
60-65
66 or older
Choose not to disclose
```

This research can assist future NASPA Interim Executives, Keeling & Associates, and universities by providing information, recommendations, and generalizations about this population and their experiences moving into, through, and out of the interim position. This dissertation research study is being conducted as part of the requirement to complete the Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

APPENDIX B: FUNCTIONAL AREAS MANAGED BY INTERM EXECUTIVES

#	Field		Choice Count
2	Admissions	4.84%	6
34	Student Conduct (Behavioral Case Management)	4.84%	6
37	Veterans' Services	4.84%	6
4	Campus Activities	4.03%	5
6	Career Services	4.03%	5
14	Enrollment Management	4.03%	5
15	Financial Aid	4.03%	5
25	Housing	4.03%	5
26	Orientation	4.03%	5
33	Student Conduct (Academic Integrity)	4.03%	5
38	Wellness Programs	4.03%	5
8	Clinical Health Programs	3.23%	4
11	Commuter Student Services	3.23%	4
12	Counseling Services	3.23%	4
20	International Student Services	3.23%	4
22	Multicultural Services	3.23%	4
23	Nontraditional-student Services	3.23%	4
28	Registrar	3.23%	4
7	Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement	2.42%	3
10	Community Service / Service Learning	2.42%	3
13	Disability Support Services	2.42%	3
16	GLBT Student Services	2.42%	3
27	Recreation	2.42%	3
30	Student Affairs Assessment	2.42%	3

#	Field	Choice Count	
36	TRIO / Educational Opportunity	2.42%	3
1	Academic Advising	1.61%	2
5	Campus Safety	1.61%	2
9	College Union	1.61%	2
18	Greek Affairs	1.61%	2
21	Learning Assistant / Academic Support Services	1.61%	2
35	Student Media	1.61%	2
19	Intercollegiate Athletics	0.81%	1
24	Dining	0.81%	1
29	Spiritual Life / Campus Ministry	0.81%	1
31	Student Affairs Fundraising and Development	0.81%	1
32	Student Affairs Research	0.81%	1
3	Alumni Programs	0.00%	0
17	Graduate and Professional Student Services	0.00%	0
39	Women's Center	0.00%	0
			124

Vita

Brandon Eric Nelson was born in Warren, PA to Karen Hill. He graduated from Warren Area High School in June 2003. The following fall, he entered the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford to study Economics, and in May 2007 was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree, graduating Summa Cum Laude. In the fall of 2008, he accepted a graduate assistantship in Housing and Student Affairs at Appalachian State University and began study toward a Master of Arts degree in College Student Development. The M.A. was awarded in May 2010. In summer 2014, he commenced work toward his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Higher Education at Appalachian State University.

Mr. Nelson has worked in Housing and Student Affairs for 13 years at four different institutions. Some of his research interests are recruitment and selection practices, interim placements, men and masculinity, and inclusive leadership. He has presented at annual conferences for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and Association of College and University Housing Officers – International on these topic areas. He hopes to be a Dean of Student Affairs one day.

Mr. Nelson is an executive team member of ReGeneration Church, overseeing the monthly Service Sundays, weekly men's group meetings, and finances. He plays golf and cheers on all the Pittsburgh sports team when possible. He resides in Blowing Rock, North Carolina with his spouse Adryona and dog Lincoln.