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Developing college transition supports using student perceptions: Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

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Developing College Transition Supports Using Student Perceptions:

Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

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A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) enrolled four-year institutions in the United States. Current but inconclusive estimates state that between 2% and 8% of college students report clinically significant levels of ADHD (DuPaul Weyandt, O'Dell, & Varejao, 2009). The nature of the disorder and demands of higher education put these students at risk for several academic and mental health issues while in college. The purpose of the current research was to obtain information from current college students with ADHD about their college transition and adjustment experiences and use their perspectives in developing transition plans for future college student with ADHD. Study participants were primarily sophomore or second-semester freshman students at James Madison University and consisted of 12 females and 6 males. Participants participated in individual interviews and completed a demographic questionnaire. Overall, independence was a fundamental theme in participant responses and none of the respondents aware of a school psychologist presence in their high school. Further results and implications for school psychology are discussed.

Introduction

According to the US Center of Disease Control, the nationwide prevalence of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is 11% (CDC, 2011). It was less likely for students with ADHD in previous years to pursue higher education because of executive function difficulties. Furthermore, it was unlikely for them to be admitted into or attend a post-secondary education. There has, however, been an increase in the number of students with ADHD applying to both two- and four-year institutions, and these students are also being accepted at a higher rate than in the past. It is uncertain the prevalence of ADHD among college students, however, approximately 2% to 8% of college students in the United States, report clinically significant levels of ADHD symptoms (DuPaul Weyandt, O'Dell, & Varejao, 2009).

Although the amount of students with ADHD admitted into college has increased, there are problems that occur whenever these students begin college. These students are largely unprepared for the demands of college, which can result in higher rates of academic failure or dropping out. Students with ADHD are eight times more likely to drop out of college than their peers (as cited by Weyandt & DuPaul., 2011). After dropping out, the option to return to college exists but presents other difficulties, especially individuals that have been away from school for extended periods of time. Students are also at-risk for greater post-high school educational and occupational under-attainment (Kuriyan et al., 2012).

Individuals with ADHD that attend college appear to have milder difficulties than those who do not attend college during the initial transition, however anxiety and depression rates increase when students encounter academic and social difficulties (as

cited by Weyandt & DuPaul, 2013). First-year students with ADHD may be unprepared for the effect the disability has on potential college performance. Individuals with ADHD may not be ready for the increased expectations and independence required to succeed in college. These students may have a poorer foundation when beginning college, resulting from lack of preparation and a deficit in executive functioning skills. When entering college, students with ADHD may have issues transitioning from high school to college and this might make adjustment difficult.

Reasons for their poorer performance are unclear but preliminary findings suggest inadequate academic coping strategies, poor organizational and study skills, time management difficulties, and cognitive impairments, such as, inattention, intrusive thoughts, and internal restlessness may also contribute (DuPaul & Weyandt, 2009). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a legislation that provides individuals with disabilities education services that are designed for their individual needs. For students with ADHD, IDEA services can provide accommodations and modifications that assist in education, such as allowing an individual with ADHD to take a test in a separate room from other students to avoid distractions. IDEA does not extend services to college education (Alao, 2015). As a result, it is essential for high school students with ADHD to be aided in the transition process. School psychologists have a responsibility to assist these student in their transition before they move on to higher education. Whether it is developing and intervention plan or making recommendations, prospective college students could benefit from the advice of a school psychologist.

This population requires support prior to, during, and after the transition from high school to college (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2013). There are however not many

transition programs that exist for individuals with ADHD that plan on attending college. Research on effective programs regarding college transition is also lacking. In helping provide more information on college transition, the following review seeks to explore student perceptions of their college experience, compare student perceptions with experiences of other students, and investigate issues faced by college students with ADHD.

Perceptions of College Experience

Due to the lack of empirical information that exists concerning the transition of college students with ADHD, exploratory research is necessary to gather data and themes. As a result, studies that provide the most useful information are those that investigate the perceptions of students about their experiences.

Stamp, Banerjee, and Brown (2014), published an article about self-advocacy and perceptions of college readiness among students with ADHD. Open-ended interviews were conducted with twelve students diagnosed with ADHD that had transferred to a community college from a four-year university. Their research suggested that problems with the disorder itself, executive functioning, self-esteem, and coping strategies lead to adjustment challenges. The results of the study yielded six broad themes which were interaction with others, seeking help, societal perceptions, disclosure, coping with ADHD, and interventions and supports (Stamp, Banerjee, & Brown, 2014).

Interaction with others. Students' previous experiences greatly influenced their current behaviors. In educational settings, seventy-five percent of participants noted feeling different from their peers. Some participants mentioned that they did not understand the nature of these differences. Others reported feeling overwhelmed by

difficulty starting and following through to completion compared to peers (Stamp et al., 2014).

Seeking help. Reluctance in seeking help was a concern for participants. Reasons for reluctance were feeling ashamed, believing that asking help was a sign of weakness, and being embarrassed about advocating for themselves. This sense of shame can dually be attributed to students feeling that they don't measure up to standards set by others and learned helplessness (Stamp et al., 2014).

Societal Perceptions and Disclosure. A major occurrence for students was that the general public trivializes ADHD because people view it as a willpower problem or character issue and unlike dyslexia it is not a "real" disorder. The idea that a person can overcome ADHD if they try hard enough often influences the self-perception of students with ADHD. Students might question their intelligence because of the disorder and the trivialization that comes with it. As a result, students may feel uncomfortable disclosing the disorder except to their close friends. Difficulties can arise when explaining the disorder as fear of judgment and/or stigmatization may result from disclosure (Stamp et al., 2014).

Coping with ADHD. Coping with the disorder presents many psychological struggles. Student may feel discouraged by a lack of understanding from others. An increased desire to perform at high levels because of expectations can result in avoidance or not completing tasks. Coping can result in depression. Learning more about the disorder can help accepting strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, students mentioned seeing themselves succeeding in careers that highlighted their strengths and minimized weaknesses (Stamp et al., 2014).

One may ask if the perceived experiences are the same for students that have remained at a four-year university. Morgan (2012) explored the transition experiences of first year college students with ADHD in her dissertation. Participants consisted of eight first-year college students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder from a mid-western research university. She used a three-series model where students answered questions exploring backgrounds, discussing current college experiences, and discovering what they have learned from their college transition. The research questions that framed the study involved how students with ADHD plan and manage college decision-making, family member roles in transition, personal strategies and campus resources, obstacles, and use of treatment options. The results suggested that these students did not adequately plan for their college transitions, relied heavily on family for assistance in transitioning and medical treatment, did not utilize many campus resources available, and lacked the strategies to manage their ADHD symptoms (Morgan, 2012).

Family roles in transition. Families play a significant role in transition into college. Students were appreciative of the parental support, however it often negatively affected adjustment. For example, students heavily relied on parents for accessing treatment options, such as making appointments with doctors and taking medications. Parental involvement made it difficult for students to manage treatments independently because of lacking experience (Morgan, 2012).

Obstacles. The stresses of increased freedom and responsibility had been a primary difficulty. Students largely mentioned financial challenges resulting from newfound independence. Finally, college was more difficult than the students had anticipated (Morgan, 2012).

Use of treatment options. Although medication was perceived as critical to success, students had a lack of awareness about the disorder or how medications worked to combat it, especially those who had been diagnosed early. Side effects influenced how students used or did not use medication. Respondents also perceived medication being perceived as the only treatment option (Morgan, 2012).

Morgan recommended several options for students, parents, and learning institutions. For students, recommendations included familiarizing themselves with resources prior to attending, living in residential halls during the first year, meeting with advisors early on, carefully plan schedules, understand the effects of ADHD, and develop self-advocacy skills prior to attending college. Parents should also assist students in preparing for college by encouraging greater responsibility at home, maintain supportive role, and assist in teaching self-advocacy skills (Morgan, 2012).

Students that enroll in community college first may also have different experiences than others. Dubose (2014) discussed in her dissertation the experiences of freshman students with ADHD while attending a community college. The study was conducted with six community college freshman that have been diagnosed with ADHD. The participants were interviewed twice and also participated in a focus group. In these interviews, the students were asked open-ended questions to explain their experiences as first year students with ADHD. The results provided four themes: challenges, factors affecting success, support services available, and support services used (Dubose, 2014).

Academic challenges were independence and responsibility. It was evident from participant responses that being left to fend for themselves after having things always done for them was problematic. Social challenges were namely adjusting to new

environments and feeling isolated. Success was determined by the student's academic performance. Students felt that having a positive orientation, social and academic experiences supported academic success and increased confidence. Beneficial experiences for participants were college prep and transition support in high school, coursework supporting interest in college, parental involvement in preparing; and in college, the special resource office. The least beneficial experience was the College 101 class (Dubose, 2014).

Although research focuses were different, the collection of student perceptions stressed the importance of students with ADHD preparing in high school for the college experience in order to successfully adjust. Various support services are available, however students having trouble adjusting may not take advantage of these opportunities.

Comparing Adjustment Issues

From the accounts of students with ADHD it appears that issues faced by these students, such as academic challenges, have an impact on their ability to adjust, however some of these concerns might not be exclusive to students with ADHD. For instance, some research suggests that the struggles students with ADHD deal with are more daunting in comparison to their peers because of the disability (Meaux, 2009). It is important to explore whether college adjustment for ADHD students are the same as peers without the disability. A study conducted by Rabiner, Anastopoulos, Costello, Hoyle, and Swartzwelder asked participants whether they were currently, previously diagnosed, or never diagnosed with ADHD. The participants were grouped into categories based on their responses. Students that were currently diagnosed with ADHD exhibited more concerns regarding their academic performance ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .99$, d

=.48) as well as exhibiting higher rates of depressive symptoms ($M = 2.80$, $SD = .85$, $d = .37$) (Rabiner, Anastopoulos, Costello, Hoyle, & Swartzwelder, 2008).

The symptomology differed among student from different groups in Rabiner's study. Current ADHD students with ADHD reported higher rates of inattentive symptoms ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.19$) and hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .80$) than previously ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.05$; $m = 3.27$, $SD = .88$) and never diagnosed ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .96$; $M = 2.47$, $SD = .74$) ADHD students (Rabiner et al., 2008).

Inattentive symptoms showed moderate, negative correlations with conscientiousness ($r = -.49$) and a smaller negative association with both emotional stability ($r = -.28$), and agreeableness ($r = -.16$). Hyperactivity and impulsivity symptoms were negatively correlated with conscientiousness ($r = -.48$) and agreeableness. ($r = -.25$). Furthermore, inattentive symptoms remained a significant predictor of academic concerns and depressive symptoms (Rabiner et al., 2008). This suggests that this disorder adversely affects the academic experiences of students with ADHD compared to their peers.

Similar results were suggested when comparing ADHD students from different cultures. Chinese and American students with ADHD were compared on levels of adjustment by Jill Novilitis (2010). Cultural differences were consistent in ADHD symptomatology, specifically inattention, which is related to difficulty with college adjustment. Hyperactivity did not play a role in adjustment. Chinese students reported better study skills than the American students ($F(2, 375) = 7.60$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$) and also reported more confidence in career decision making ($F(2, 401) = 14.77$ $p < .001$, $\eta^2 =$

.04). This may be a direct effect of the Chinese educational system that encourages a greater focus on academics from a young age than the American system, which college education remains a relatively rare privilege that students would not want to squander (Novilitis, Sun, & Zhang 2010).

Variations are present when comparing the transition experience of ADHD students from public and private schools. Rabiner et al. also suggested that depressive symptoms were evident in students with ADHD who attended public schools but not in those who attended a private university. Higher depression rates could be a result of greater enrollment of students with ADHD. Reported rates of ADHD from their sample at the public university was more than double the rate at the private university, 5.8 % vs. 2.2 %, respectively (Rabiner et al., 2008). Another explanation could be the profile of students admitted. Students with ADHD are less likely to gain admission into more competitive schools, and those who do gain admission have a history of accomplishment that protects against depressive symptoms (Rabiner et al., 2008).

Academic Concerns

Academic challenges in college are also not restricted to students with ADHD. Many students, with or without a disability, may have similar difficulties adjusting to differences in academic standards in college. A common occurrence is a lack of study skills for academically struggling college students. Proctor, Prevatt, Adams, Hurst, and Petscher (2006) investigated the study profiles of normally-achieving versus academically struggling college students. When comparing low-GPA and high-GPA students, lower GPA student had consistently lower scores in anxiety ($M = 17.81$), concentration ($M = 30.74$), attitude ($M = 21.14$), information-processing ($M = 26.61$),

motivation ($M = 27.07$), selecting main ideas ($M = 23.87$), time management ($M = 22.49$), and test strategies ($M = 24.67$) (Proctor Prevatt, Adams, Hurst, & Petscher, 2006).

Proctor et al.'s study illustrates that students who experience academic difficulties exhibit a paucity of study skills as compared to their normal achieving counterparts, and the profiles of study skill deficits are relatively consistent across different groups of low-performing students (Proctor et al., 2006). Although study skill deficits may be similar, these individuals experience greater concerns about academic performance during their initial semester than their peers (Rabiner et al., 2008).

Social Interactions

Another adjustment difficulty students with ADHD expressed, related to social problems. The disability has an influence not only on the how students with ADHD interact with others but how peers perceive them during an interaction. Canu, Newman, Morrow, and Pope (2008) examined how students without ADHD judged students with ADHD in social interaction. His findings suggested that students appraise individuals with ADHD negatively compared to peers without ADHD and the mere association with ADHD was stigmatizing (Canu, Newman, Morrow, & Pope, 2008). Stigma is a factor in the social difficulties of adults with ADHD. Behaviors associated with the disorder elicit negative reactions in others. Mere labeling seems to be enough to substantially lower one's desire for interaction (Canu et al., 2008).

On the other side of interaction, students with ADHD might find interactions difficult because of the inability to understand social cues. Zweifel, Trice, and Dougherty (2008) evaluated students with ADHD social cues. ADHD student were likely to agree

that their actions elicit unexpected emotions in others ($m = 2.27$, $SD = 1.28$), they get the gist of a conversation but miss tiny details ($m = 2.47$, $SD = 1.13$), and they focus on the direct meaning of a speaker's words ($m = 1.87$, $SD = 0.74$). They also disagreed with not having trouble identifying the emotional context of a story ($m = 2.733$, $SD = 1.16$).

Therefore individuals with ADHD may have more trouble being attentive to minor details and emotional context in social communication (Zweifel, Trice, & Dougherty, 2008).

The aforementioned results suggest that from both sides, students with ADHD experience difficulties developing social relationships, which can make the transition to college even more difficult. Difficulties in social interaction may exist but there is no indication that students with self-reported ADHD experience less satisfaction with their social lives during their first semester in college (Rabiner et al., 2008).

Other Difficulties

Academic and social issues are not the only issues that cause students with ADHD problems when transitioning to college. These students are also at-risk for reckless behaviors. Students with ADHD have greater rates of alcohol and illegal substance use (Weyandt et al., 2013), and tend to have a higher number of driving citations, speeding violations, license suspensions and revocations. They are also more likely to be involved in more motor vehicle accidents than their non-ADHD peers (DuPaul et al., 2009).

If we compare students with ADHD to their non-ADHD peers, the behaviors may not be limited to ADHD students. According to Rabiner et al. (2008), current and previously diagnosed ADHD students were not more likely than others to report consuming alcohol or alcohol during the past 6 months. Current and previously

diagnosed individuals with ADHD were, however, between 2.5 and 3.5 times as likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days (Rabiner et al., 2008).

Transitioning

It can be seen that individuals with ADHD face unique challenges not encountered by their non-ADHD peers (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2013). The research also suggested several steps to aid students with ADHD and their college transition. According to their findings, students should meet regularly with school personnel, such as a school psychologist or guidance counselor, to assist in long-term planning and should also be assisted in developing self-advocacy skills. In addition, it is imperative that students are identified and provided with effective treatment support. Interventions directly targeting areas of academic and social impairment are also needed (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2013).

In regards to effective treatment strategies, Ramsey and Rostain (2006) suggest that cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) can be a means in helping individuals better navigate their lives. An important aspect of CBT is case conceptualization or seeing the world through the patient's eyes (Russell & Rostain, 2006). Using this approach, student perceptions can be gathered and used to assist in creating transition programs catered to their specific needs. Additionally, a multimodal treatment approach can help college students with ADHD direct their academic and social lives more constructively, which can be beneficial to their adjustment (Russell & Rostain, 2006).

CBT case conceptualization can be helpful addressing specific needs students perceive that they need. In addition, Meaux Green, and Brossard (2009) suggest the need for a more proactive approach, such as teaching and reinforcing strategies in younger

children and adolescents with ADHD and providing basic education about the disorder may improve outcomes for adolescents with ADHD. Meaux et al. also indicate the importance of developing appropriate transition from parents to peers as a primary source of support as they transitioned to college and exploring ways to improve social competence in adolescents with ADHD (Meaux, Green, & Brossard, 2009).

Research Questions

Themes were gathered to explore the following overarching research question: What information can college students with ADHD give that can assist high school students with ADHD in their college transition? The following questions addressed the primary research question:

Research Question 1. What do current college students with ADHD wish they had been told in high school about transitioning to college? (Questions 6-12)

Research Question 2. How could support services in high school have better assisted in the transition and adjustment process? (Questions 13-15)

Research Question 3. What factors of independent living do first year college students with ADHD believe that they needed to be better prepared for? (Questions 4, 5, and 12)

Research Question 4. What advice would college students with ADHD give high school students about college adjustment and transitioning? (Questions 11 and 15)

Research Question 5. Would students from different types of school systems have varying perceptions regarding transition advice? (Demographic Questionnaire)

Research Question 6. How do expectations compare to current perceptions of the social life of students with ADHD? (Questions 17 and 18)

Study Design

Participants

The study consisted of 18 participants; 16 currently diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and two participants without ADHD. There were 10 sophomores, seven-second semester freshmen, and one senior from James Madison University (JMU). There were 12 female and six male. Participants were recruited from the JMU participant pool.

Method

Individual interviews were used to collect qualitative data for the purpose of this study. Participants signed a consent form, completed a demographic questionnaire, and then asked interview questions regarding their transition from high school to university. Interviews took place over two weeks and each lasted between 30-45 minutes. Participant responses were recorded onto a notepad. Following the interviews, themes were generated based on cut and sort methodology.

Materials

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants filled out a form that will include questions about age, ethnicity, college classification, and GPA (Appendix C). Questionnaires were identified by a number that corresponds to the order that the participant was interviewed (*ex. JMU-1*).

Interview Questions. There were 18 open-ended questions to allow participants to freely discuss their experiences (Appendix B). Questions were modified in order to get specific information from participants or to further investigate interesting experiences.

Notepad. To assist in analyzing responses, a notepad or record sheet was used. Notes were taken after participants have given consent and will end immediately after all questions are answered. Participants will be distinguished again on the record sheet by the number that corresponds with that on the demographic questionnaire (*JMU-1, JMU-2...etc.*).

Data Analysis

Participant responses from the open-ended questions were examined by a thematic analysis. Themes will be gathered from the total group of participants. Based on the questions, responses that are similar in content will be group together using the cut-and-sort method.

Results

What advice would college students with ADHD give high school students about college adjustment and transitioning?

If you could go back in time, what three things would you tell yourself about college?

When asked about what advice they would give themselves about transitioning to college, participants stated being mindful about academic choices, being yourself and open to new experiences, and preparing for increased independence overall as important to have known prior to starting college.

In regards to academics, college students with ADHD mentioned that choosing your professor carefully is critical. Having a good professor in their opinion was also more important than having a preferred timeslot. Students with ADHD also stated that a future student should be mindful of selecting their college major.

Students with ADHD regarded being open to new experiences as important to future students to be aware of upon entering college. Specifically, it is important to get out of your comfort zone and meet people. Although getting out of your comfort zone is important, several students stated that you don't have to party in order have a good experience. In addition, several participants said that you have to worry less about being judged by peers in college than in high school.

Other advice students gave was to be careful of choices, be organized, take care of yourself, and that "it's going to be okay." Students with ADHD also stated that while in high school it is important to take advantage of opportunities and practice autonomy at home.

Lee: "I would probably tell myself to get ready to do more work, don't be afraid to get out of my comfort zone, and to take advantage of opportunities in high school"

Sally: "I would probably tell myself it is going to be okay, put time and effort into choosing your major, and you're going to make mistakes."

Maria: "I would probably tell myself to use post-it notes in my planner, college is more manageable than you think, and you don't have to worry about people judging you."

Vickie: "Don't procrastinate. Make friends. Get Involved."

What do current college students with ADHD wish they had been told in high school about transitioning to college?

Do you participate in on-campus activities? What are they and why did you choose these activities? Did you feel very involved in high school?

Fourteen out of the eighteen students participate, or have participated, in on-campus activities. Thirteen out of eighteen students felt they were involved in high school.

In college, students with ADHD were involved in Greek life, major related clubs, JMU University Recreation Center (UREC) activities, intramural sports, JMU Honor Council, student government, campus activity board, tutoring, film production group, Madison Equality, and the LGBTQ++ ally organization. In high school, study participants were involved in sports, honor society, community service, performance arts, student government, newspaper/yearbook, and other miscellaneous organizations.

Social involvement, wellness, career growth, and making a difference were factors important in choosing extra-curricular activities Students with ADHD. For social aspects, students with ADHD wanted meet people and make connections, feeling that they belonged, and having fun. Relaxation and being active were influential to student's wellness interests. Students that sought career growth desired to build resumes and gain opportunities to network through on-campus activities.

Lee: "In high school I was a part of Habitat for Humanity, and I did some photography, pick-up basketball, and Frisbee for fun. I ski and snowboard and I am in a

fraternity. I didn't plan on being in a fraternity, but it seemed like that was the only way that guys could have fun."

Sally: "I am in a sorority for the social setting, SGA to make a difference, and CAB to build connections in dorms. In high school I did sports, campus kitchen, Jill's House in Haiti, and a cappella."

Taylor: "I joined Inter-Varsity because I was in a youth group at home, and I was looking for more connections at college. I really liked when I did powder puff in high school, so I joined an intermural flag football team here."

How have you liked your classes so far? What classes was your favorite/least favorite? Why?

Generally, the students that liked their college classes enjoyed professors and the learning style; those that did not like college classes particularly did not like the lecture style in college. Students with ADHD mentioned enjoying learning from their professor, and having the chance at more applied and advanced learning. In contrast, respondents did not enjoy lecture or PowerPoint styles of certain professors, the enrollment process, difficult teacher's assistants, and having to take early classes.

Lee: "My major is hard, but day to day works well. I would give it about 8 out of 10. What made my least favorite class a bad experience was because the power points were only pictures. Also, it was an 8am class, and my roommate would turn off my alarm clock....In my ISAT 131 class, I had an enthusiastic teacher that showed a different approach to applying school knowledge to modern day."

Kayla: “I think they’ve been good, and I like them more than high school. The spread out schedule makes it easier to concentrate than the block schedule....In my least favorite class, the TA [teacher’s assistant] was very rude.”

How do college classes compare to high school classes? Which do you like more? Can you tell me three reasons why?

There were 13 participants that preferred college classes, three that preferred high school, and two that were undecided when asked which classed they preferred.

Students with ADHD who preferred high school classes to college enjoyed the less stressful academic environment. These participants mentioned high school being less stressful with a slower pace, having smaller classes that were also in the same building, and knowing people better as reasons why they preferred high school.

Those that preferred college enjoyed the more purposeful learning environment and independence. Regarding purposeful learning, students mentioned liking the “hands on” nature of learning, classes being more interactive and thought provoking, learning more “useful” information, and professors having greater expertise. For independence, students endorsed freedom, making their own schedule, and working on his or her own time.

Michelle: “I don’t think college classes are that much harder because I went to a governor school that allowed us to take AP [advanced placement] and dual enrollment classes. I think that because I went to an intense high school it prepared me for college, and helped me develop good strategies and organization skills. I like college more

because I like making my own schedule, and people are open-minded and have different backgrounds.”

Monica: “My high school was very academically challenging, and I took mainly AP classes, so I don’t see much of a difference. I like college more because once you finish your work your done, there is no busy work, classes are actually about what I want to learn, and it is nice to have people who are so passionate and educated about the subject.”

What was it like getting used to college level work? What is the biggest difference between now and high school?

The greatest differences between college and high school were increased workload, greater need for independent work skills, and institutional differences. For increased workload, students mentioned that they had to study more, be more focused on academics, that they spend more time on work, and needed to be more engaged in class.

Largely, the differences helped students take more pride in work and developed better self-reliant academic skills. In terms of institutional differences, students with ADHD believed that college has less leeway than in high school, there are larger periods between class, and the structure of college is less rigid.

Rick: “The medication helped me get used to it, so the adjustment wasn’t too different. I knew I would have to work harder. In high school, they organized everything for you, like having your class schedule and doing your work in class. I had less freedom in high school because I was under the close eye of my parents.”

Hiro: “It took some time. I had a tough first semester, and dug myself into some holes. I had to be more disciplined after the first semester, and started to focus more.”

Vickie: “It was horrible getting used to college level work. I cried a lot. I would put in time on the work, but not effort. I take more pride in learning things in college than I did in high school.”

Do you like setting your own schedule? Was it easier to go to class in high school than in college? What made it easier?

The majority of students, 17 out of 18 participants, preferred setting their own schedule.

Regarding which classes were easier to attend, eight said high school, seven said college, two could not decide or had mixed feelings, and one person did not respond.

Students who believed college classes were easier to attend stated being closer to campus, shorter classes, and having the choice of time and subject all make it easier to attend. Those who found high school easier stated it was mandatory to attend, all classes were in one building, and free time in college can make it easier to procrastinate.

Dustin: “I like it. It’s easier [to go to class] in college because you are paying for it, so why waste the money.”

Kara: “Yeah, I can spread out the time and figure out when I want to do stuff. I feel like it’s the same because in high school my mom got called when I didn’t go.”

Sally: “Scheduling is a hot mess. It is annoying, and I don’t like that there are restrictions to classes, and there are so many GenEd [general education] requirements.”

How could support services in high school have better assisted in the transition and adjustment process?

Did your parents go to college? How much did they talk to you about college?

What did they tell you about college?

There were 17 participants with at least one parent attending college and one participant whose parents did not attend college. From the group of college-attending parents, two had some college, 14 were college graduates, and one was a postgraduate.

Overall, parents gave their children advice on expectations, social aspects, and academic preparation. Many students' parents had not talked about college, but attendance was an expectation. Parents warned participants about parties, the competitive application process, and the increase of academics. Some parents helped students with choosing a school, the application process, and preparing for independent living. Other parents were less specific and told their children that is a great experience.

Sally: "My mom has a bachelor's, and my dad has an MBA. They talked about college a lot, and I always knew I was going. They said it would be the best four years of my life."

Michelle: "Both of my parents went to JMU. My mom warned me about parties and boys. They said that being away from home is a good experience."

Corey: "Neither of my parents went to college. They had expectations for me to go but never talked about it. They would have helped more with the process, but they didn't know what to ask."

Taylor: “Both of my parents went to college. Mom focused on dorm and living stuff, like ironing and doing housework. Dad focused more of academics. He told me to start working harder and challenge myself senior year to get ready for college.”

Rick: “Both went to college. They said you’ll have the best time of your life. They talked about what they regretted more than anything else. Dad wishes he spent more time on schoolwork. Mom wishes she spent more time with friends.”

What did school staff tell you in high school about college? Was it a teacher, counselor, or an administrator? Did you ever speak with a school psychologist about college? What was the most important thing that they told you?

When asked what advice school staff gave about college in high school, college students with ADHD stated that they were informed of the increased workload and it being a chance to establish a career. Most respondents mentioned that school staff said that college would be more difficult than high school; and that you would have to stay focused on your work, do the reading, and that test performance is crucial to success. Other information from school staff included college is an opportunity to establish a career and is a time to be open to other career paths. School staff also gave specific advice to maximize your success, such as, go to class, be prepared and organized, stay focused, and college professors won’t hold your hand but are reasonable to student request. Several students mentioned that some of their school staff gave a general message that college is a great experience that they would enjoy. One respondent stated that school staff talked exclusively about academics but not life experiences.

Taylor: “My history teacher used to tell me that college would be much harder. You can’t get by with just doing homework, and you have to perform on the test.”

Rick: “My teachers didn’t tell me enough about college other than, ‘it’s different and you won’t be babied.’ They very specifically talked about academics, not much about life aspects.”

Dustin: “They lied to me! They said ‘your professors won’t hand hold’, which they don’t, but they made it sound so much worse than it is. Professors are actually reasonable.”

Vicky: “My school seemed divided between the people who wanted to apply themselves, the rednecks, and the bad kids. The staff really only put in time into the people who wanted to apply themselves. Counselors and teachers mostly told me that college only gets harder.”

Eight students with ADHD received advice from multiple school staff members including teachers, administrators, and school counselors. Six participants received advice from only teachers and four from guidance counselors only.

None of the respondents recalled ever speaking with a school psychologist about transitioning, largely respondents were unaware that there was a school psychologist at their schools.

Do you feel that there was more they [high school support staff] could have told you? What are three things that you would have liked them to tell you?

Ten participants believed that there was not more advice needed from school staff while eight stated they felt more information could have been given. Overall themes students wish they were told was concerning independence, social aspects, and academics.

Concerning independence, respondents said they would have liked to learn about managing time, budgeting, self-care, independent living, not getting a pet, and cooking. For social aspects, student wished they had advice on being open to new experiences, being safe, and not being afraid to talk to people. Finally, regarding academic advice participants stated reaching out to professors, adjusting schedule to preferences, taking early classes, study strategies, being careful choosing your major, and providing experiences of what college is actually like.

Corey: “I wish my teachers would have told me how to apply myself to classes and gave me an experience of what a college class is like. They mostly told me not to do anything stupid that I would regret, and how to deal with the stress of school, like, if what I was stressed about would bother me in five years.”

Brittany: “I wish my teachers would have told me how to prepare for tests better, like, five days ahead of time instead of five hours before. Also, that 8am classes are harder than they seem, even though you did it in high school, and not to get an animal because it is too much responsibility.”

Maria: “I wish my teachers would have talked more about budgeting and time management. I had to learn that from my parents. It would have been nice if they talked

about how to make food on our own so that we have more options other than campus food.”

Dustin: “No [I don’t wish they told me more], they told me the wrong stuff. They could have told me real aspects, like, what the schedule is actually like and how to manage my time wisely. They also could have taught me useful stuff like how to fill out a tax form.”

Did you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in high school? What did the IEP say about transition plans?

Five participants stated that they had an IEP in high school. Of those students, none of their IEP’s included any information about transition plans.

Brandon: “I didn’t have an IEP, because my mom did not want me to ‘own’ or ‘flaunt’ my ADHD.”

What factors of independent living do first-year college students with ADHD believe that they needed to be better prepared for?

Do you live on- or off-campus? How do you feel about living on-campus/away from home?

Thirteen participants lived on-campus and five lived off-campus.

When asked about living away from home, students with ADHD said that being close to home makes it easier, and that they like the convenience of living on campus, meeting new people, having more alone time, and being independent. In contrast, some students said that they miss their family while at school.

Corey: “I live in a dorm, I like it a lot. It’s nice meeting new people in the dorm, and being near campus...so I don’t have to drive.”

Becky: “I live in a dorm. There is some drama, but I like it because it makes it easier to meet new people, and I have a good relationship with my suitemates.”

Rick: “Freshman year I lived in a dorm, but now I live off campus. I like it, but I miss some things about the dorm. I like having my freedom though, being independent, and having more down time.”

What was it like getting used to living on your own? Can you give me two examples of what you like and what you did not like about living by yourself?

Overall aspects they like about being living on their own were freedom and social aspects. Students with ADHD enjoyed having freedom and their own space, meeting people with similar interests, and controlling their own schedule. In addition, participants like hosting guests, the convenience, and being alone.

In contrast, respondents did not like the responsibility of independent living, roommate problems, and missing home. Students spoke about messy roommates, having to do laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping and meal preparation, not having kitchen access (for those that lived in dorms), no enforced rules, no air-conditioning, small room, and scheduling appointments.

Lee: “Two things I like are having freedom, and friends who enjoy similar things that I do. It is hard to get motivated to get up and go get food though. I also struggle because I like to have a clean house, and my roommates are messy.”

Sally: “It was easy at the beginning because I liked having independence, but after a while, it became hard because I started missing home. Three things I like about being on my own are controlling my own schedule, having freedom, and doing whatever I want.”

Kara: “I relied on my mom a lot at home, so it was hard, but I feel like I am adjusting well. I room with my best friend from high school, and I talk to my mom a lot.”

Would students from different types of school systems have varying perceptions regarding transition advice? (Demographic Questionnaire)

There were three students that described their school districts as urban, eight as suburban, and seven as rural. In general, the advice students from different school districts was similar.

Taylor, from an urban school: “Don’t pack a lot of really nice clothes because you’ll always dress down. Start being more independent at home to prepare yourself for independence in college. Prepare to use time management skills.”

Kayla, from a suburban school: “Don’t worry about what school you go to. Classes in college are not too much harder than AP [Advanced Placement] classes. AP classes set you up well.”

Vickie, from a rural school: “Don’t use food as a stress reliever because you’ll end up putting on weight really fast. Don’t be worried about going out a lot and what people think about you. Come in single.”

How do expectations compare to current perceptions of the social life of students with ADHD?

Can you tell me what it was like meeting people at JMU? Are you a person that likes to have a lot of friends or a few friends?

Largely participants said that it was not difficult meeting people at JMU. Several mentioned that it was intimidating at first but eventually found their group. Respondents said that students from JMU were kind and polite, which made it easy to make friends and be themselves. In addition, participants said that classes and campus organization, such as, Greek life, equestrian club, and the theater community made it easier to make friends. Social life was not easy for all students. One of the respondents, a transfer student, mentioned having difficulty making friends.

Maria: “Theatre committee made it much easier to meet and make friends, because older classmates take new students around and help with meeting people....I like to have a few very close friends.”

Taylor: “Everyone here was very welcoming, and it was nice to meet freshman in the same boat who also needed friends. I like having a few friends, and I like to be alone a lot.”

Dustin: “It was pretty great because new people aren’t judge mental and everyone is in the same boat. People are nice, and I haven’t met any enemies, everyone tries to meet each other.”

Kayla: “Meeting people at JMU was a really good time. I try to be friendly with a lot of people, but I do like having a core group of friends. Most of my friends from high school go to other schools.”

Monica, a transfer: “I think it’s friendlier here [at JMU than at my old school], and there is not as much drama. It has been a challenge making friends because here because I am a transfer. It makes it harder to meet people.”

How is your social life compared to others? How different is your social life in college than you expected? How satisfied are you with your social life?

Sixteen participants stated that they were satisfied with their social lives versus two that stated they were not satisfied.

Corey: “I feel like my social life is just as good as others, and I can connect with pretty much anyone. Depth of relationships are different, and it seems like everyone finds their own group.” When asked further about his social life satisfaction he said, “I am very satisfied.”

Becky: “I feel like my social life is pretty good, probably average or a little above average. I keep in touch with my friends from high school and people here. I have lunch with different people from time-to-time to catch up. I was nervous coming in, but I met a lot of people that have the same interest as I do.” Further she said, “I am very satisfied, and I have many people to go to if I’m stressed or need to talk.”

Taylor: “I feel like I am less social than others, but that doesn’t bother me because I am very serious about school. I have friends that I can hang out with if I want to. It is

different than I expected, because I expected other girls to feel the same way I do, but I am still satisfied with my social life.”

Hiro: “It’s not where it could be because I am more introverted, but I want to have more going on when I am free. It is great to know that there aren’t cliques, and it’s easier to find friends. There is less pressure on who you hang out with [than in high school].”

Discussion

Impact for School Psychology

For students with disabilities, a major function of school psychology is to help students, families, educators, and the community understand and resolve issues that students face in schools. Moreover, school psychologists aim for the success of these children academically, emotionally, behaviorally, and socially in order for youth to thrive. Although this is applicable to students at all levels, older students, especially those nearing the end of secondary education, are left without the same amount of support from school psychologists compared to younger students. While this can be due to students gaining more autonomy as they mature, students might not recognize that they have the same access to supports. For example, none of the respondents remembered speaking with a school psychologist about college transition, and they were largely unaware of any school psychologist presence at their high schools. This indicates that, if needed, students are unlikely to seek transitional support from a school psychologist due to lack of awareness.

Typically, school psychologists devote much of their time to assessment and intervention to maximize student success. For the struggling student, a school

psychologist can be an agent in successfully completing secondary education. For other students that desire higher education, college acceptance is an achievement that demonstrates an individual's success throughout high school. As school psychologists, taking steps to ensure that students have success beyond high school, whether in college or employment, is essential and is part of the larger goal of creating thriving citizens.

From the current study, a consistent theme from participant responses was independence. Similarly, much of the background research emphasized self-advocacy as a factor in how successful a student's transition from high school to college will be. Considering student's overall desire for independence and the empirical importance of self-advocacy, it is important as practitioners to guide students with ADHD along the path to becoming self-advocates.

A school psychologist can provide opportunities through both education and mental health resources for many students in their transition to higher education, including students with ADHD. For example, being a part of, or leading, a multi-disciplinary transition team can result in teaming with other professionals involved in different aspects of a student's transition to college, such as, parents, general and special education teachers, nurses, school counselors, and administration. Examples include social workers preparing parents for the upcoming change or nurses providing information about medication. In addition, school psychologists can coordinate groups that focus on building self-advocacy skills, such as, goal setting, understanding the disability and how it influences the individual, time management, and post-secondary preparation. These skills can be either incrementally taught at each grade level or condensed for students near the end of high school.

Independence and College Adjustment

When assessing transitional responses, it is important to consider the sample demographics. Most of the participants came from homes with college-educated parents where higher education was an expectation. These participants, as a whole, are performing well in college with an average GPA of 3.13 (4.0 scale). Although their experiences might contrast with other students struggling to adjust in college, the participants' perspectives give insight into what strategies are being applied by successful students with ADHD.

Independence was important to all participants in the study. It encompasses what they believe is important about college in the areas of academics, living, and their social lives. Whether it was the option to control their own schedule or living on their own, freedom of choice appeared to be the principal characterization of their experiences. This autonomy allowed these students the opportunities to make their own choices and have more responsibility. Although independence was largely viewed as a positive, having to be responsible for themselves also produced challenges, such as managing their diets or handling difficult living situations.

Students with ADHD spoke of the adjustment to college-level academics as being a challenge. College courses required more studying and outside work than high school classes. Attendance is crucial for most classes to avoid falling behind. It is important for students to learn study, note-taking, time management, and organizational skills to increase their likelihood of success. In addition, respondents discussed using personal strategies for study and note-taking versus generic strategies. Future students should be

given expectations on what to expect and provided with multiple strategies on college preparatory skills.

Students with ADHD may enjoy the freedom associated with being on their own and away from parental/guardian supervision. Even though participants endorsed freedom from parental supervision, this freedom made it easier to procrastinate on schoolwork or other tasks. Independence and autonomy adds increased responsibility for themselves. The added responsibility for students with ADHD to care for themselves would be useful information for future students. Learning such skills as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, and other daily living tasks can help students live independently.

Social aspects are also important for a student's successful transition. Participants emphasized that the variety of people, organizations and experiences made finding their place and adjusting to college much easier. In his or her first semester, a freshman with ADHD may benefit socially from entering at the same time as other freshman in their age group, such as, in the fall semester after high school, as opposed to spring or later. Students with ADHD in this sample were mostly involved in campus activities, and all stated they enjoyed that aspect of college. If they know the college they will attend, future students can learn about different campus organizations that suit their interest.

Most participants had not been in contact with the campus office of disability services. Those that were in contact spoke of the assistance they received, such as, academic and/or living accommodations. Choosing campuses with an active and supportive community for disabled students can be a valuable resource for future students adjusting to college.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study, primarily regarding the sample of students interviewed. Although the sample was representative of JMU's student population, the sample lacked representation similar to the United States ADHD prevalence statistics. Information from a more representative sample could be generalized to the larger population of students with ADHD transitioning to college.

In order to provide more comprehensive information regarding student experiences, it would be beneficial to interview students from smaller schools and community colleges. Perspectives from students at different types of higher education institutions can provide information that is more specific for future students that are not attending large colleges. In addition, to assess perspectives on adjustment in general, it would be beneficial to interview students without ADHD and compare their experiences with those from this study.

Participants were recruited through the JMU participant pool. Although this allowed more variety in students with ADHD, many of the respondents had not sought out campus services nor have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in high school. Recruiting students with ADHD through JMU's Office of Disability Services would have allowed for more information on services provided to incoming students with ADHD. In addition, students with IEP's would have given specific information on accommodations and transitional plans.

Interview questions were limited in gaining specific information on aspects of college that students with, or without, ADHD struggle. Even though there was a question about other mental health diagnosis, there needed to be questions on whether participants

have experienced any symptoms of problems, such as, anxiety or depression. There was no specific question on whether students with ADHD had taken, or were currently taking, medication for their ADHD. In addition, questions about freshman orientation could have provided perspectives on how well the university informed students on academic, health, or disability related options available,

Conclusion

College provides students with many options, which can lead to either that person's success or failure. Autonomy in decision-making gives students with ADHD more options. It is imperative that students prepare for their future agency by providing resources that can inform them on how to be successful at the college-level. Although success cannot be guaranteed for every student with ADHD, seeking more information and resources regarding their disability could allow him/her to have the tools needed to achieve while adjusting to college.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Script

The following is a script of the interview, including informing, consent request, and interview questions.

“Good afternoon (or time of day). Thank you for volunteering to be a part of this study. I am interested in finding out about student’s personal college experiences and how it compared to what they thought high school. This will be a conversation between us about your personal experience. I will ask you several questions that you can answer in as much detail as possible. Your responses will be recorded on this notepad. The interview should last about 30 minutes.

“After we are done with the questions, I would like you to fill out this brief form that asks you questions like your major, classification ...etc. Your identity will remain completely confidential. If all of this sounds agreeable to you, I would like you to sign this consent form before we begin.

“Do you have any questions before we begin? Also, feel free to ask if you need clarification on any questions.”

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose JMU? Why did you choose your major? How have you liked going to JMU so far? If you were at a mixer and met an interesting person, what three things would use to describe yourself?
2. Were you excited about going to college? What were two things you looked forward to the most about college?
3. What do you remember about when you were diagnosed with ADHD? Who made the diagnosis? When were you first aware that you had ADHD? Have you ever had any other diagnosis?
4. Do you live on- or off-campus? How do you feel about living on-campus/away from home?
5. What was it like getting used to living on your own? Can you give me two examples of what you like and what you did not like about living by yourself?
6. Do you participate in on-campus activities? What are they and why did you choose these activities? Did you feel very involved in high school?
7. How have you liked your classes so far? What classes was your favorite/least favorite? Why?
8. How do college classes compare to high school classes? Which do you like more? Can you tell me three reasons why?
9. What was it like getting used to college level work? What is the biggest difference between now and high school?

10. If you could go back in time, what three things would you tell yourself about college?
11. Do you like setting your own schedule? Was it easier to go to class in high school than in college? What made it easier?
12. Did your parents go to college? How much did they talk to you about college? What did they tell you about college?
13. What did school staff tell you in high school about college? Was it a teacher, counselor, or an administrator? Did you ever speak with a school psychologist about college? What was the most important thing that they told you?
14. Do you feel that there was more they could have told you? What are three things that you would have liked them to tell you?
15. Did you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in high school? What did the IEP say about transition plans?
16. Have you ever been to ODS? Did they provide help with accommodations or living arrangements?
17. Can you tell me what it was like meeting people at JMU? Are you a person that likes to have a lot of friends or a few friends?
18. How is your social life compared to others? How different is your social life in college than you expected? How satisfied are you with your social life?

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

Age:

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity:

Class Standing:

GPA (on a 4.0 scale):

Please circle one of the following items:

Which best describes your high school systems?

Urban Suburban Rural

What type of high school did you attend?

Public Private

Did you transfer to JMU from another college?

Yes No

Appendix D

Participant Introduction

The following includes a brief participant demographic description, and their responses to the rapport-building introductory question [Interview question 1].

Why did you choose JMU? Why did you choose your major? How have you liked going to JMU so far? If you were at a mixer and met an interesting person, what three things would use to describe yourself?

Lee, a 19 male sophomore: “I chose JMU because it was close to home, and it was good for my major... I chose my major [ISAT-Integrated Science and Technology] because it was a good field that has many different branches for a career... I love it at JMU and would not want to go anywhere else... I would say that I’m caring, love to ski, and I go out of my way to help others.”

Sally, a 19 female sophomore: “I applied to six schools and liked JMU the best... I was a CSD (Communication Sciences and Disorders) major and then SMAD (School of Media Arts & Design) before deciding on social work. I chose social work because I wanted to help people... I would describe myself as loyal, funny, and blunt.”

Michelle, an 18 female freshman: “I could not afford to go out-of-state to a place, like Michigan State, and ended up choosing JMU because I got a scholarship... I’m a nursing major. I was a finance major at first because I was good at math, but I thought I eventually would get bored [with that job]. My mom suggested nursing because she thought I would enjoy it... I have liked JMU so far, and I am roommates with a friend from high school... I’m social, active, and carefree.”

Corey, a 19 male sophomore: “I liked JMU because it was close to home but also far enough away, and I never heard anything bad about it [JMU] from anyone... I chose business management because of my dad. He said that ‘your life is like a business’. I was not really interested in anything else [as a major], and business applies to a lot of other things... My experience here [at JMU] has been good, and it has not disappointed. Early on it was tough but after getting to know people, it was great... Funny, jack-of-all-trades, and cultural.”

Brittany, a 19 female sophomore: “My parents went to JMU, and I fell in love with the school when I visited... I chose nursing because I knew I would love the job... I love the school. Loud, talkative, and I laugh a lot.”

Lindsay, an 18 female freshman: “I was waitlisted at Virginia Tech, and then toured JMU again. I ended up choosing [JMU] after that... I changed my major from dietetics to health science because [dietetics] was stressful. I like the idea of working with the community and in non-profit health... I love JMU and there are so many welcoming people to campus.”

Maria, a 19 female sophomore: “JMU was a last minute choice. I am a musical theater major and auditioned at multiple schools. I wanted to go to a place out of state that was close enough to home but far enough away. I had a really good feeling at my JMU interview and believed that it was the place to be... It has been my dream school... Talkative, understanding, and nice.”

Becky, a 19 female freshman: “I heard great things about JMU. The campus was pretty, it had my major, and it was not too far away from home... I chose WRTC

(Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication) as my major because I always loved writing and English. It comes easy to me, and I'm interested in journalism in the future... I love it at JMU. I was nervous to start, but it was better than I expected... Creative, intuitive, and giving.”

Taylor, an 18 female freshman: “I toured [JMU] when my brother wanted to come to here, and I liked the campus. When I found out the school had my major, it was a definite ‘yes’... My major is CSD because I want to be a speech pathologist... I like the campus, professors and different activities... Athletic, introverted, and passionate.”

Rick, a 19 male sophomore: “I was deciding between JMU and Penn State. JMU was the better, cheaper option that was also not too far from home. I had a preferred walk-on status for baseball but decided not play because of my major... I chose business as my major because of my father. It is basically a family tradition. I also like the idea of financial security, it's easy to get a job, and degree utility... I like JMU a lot, but I'm still trying to adjust my schedule for branching out and meeting people... Open-minded, hard-working, adventurous.”

Hiro, a 19 male sophomore: “I've always liked JMU and wanted to go here since the fourth grade. I live in Nova (Northern Virginia) and visited a lot... I'm an international business major. I have good knowledge of German and thought it would be useful to combine... It's been really cool. I didn't expect it to be so good this early because I made friends easily, recognized all of the different programs available to participate in... I would tell people where I am from, what I want to do, and my classification.”

Kayla, a 19 female freshman: I got a scholarship... I'm an English education major and want to be a teacher... I've had a really good time at JMU... Outgoing, humorous, and friendly/weird."

Kara, an 18 female freshman: "I wanted to go to JMU because it was similar to home and people were friendly during the tour... My major is Psychology. I want to be a therapist because it is very interesting and I want to help people... I love it here because of my friends and the environment... Funny, like hanging/chilling, open and easy to talk to."

Monique, a 21 female senior: "My brother attended JMU. I liked it a lot after visiting, and it had my major... Health sciences. I want to be a nurse... I love it here. Friendly people, food is awesome, great academics, and I feel at home... Confident, funny, bubbly."

Dustin, an 18 male freshman: "Didn't want to start out at a big school, and I wanted to go to a community college first. This was the only university I applied to, and I decided to get the 'big college' experience of the bat... I chose a health administration major because there is growth in the health field, a good job market, and it pays well... It's decent, but I don't like the dorms and there's too much of a party scene... Outgoing, persistent, and friendly."

Brandon, a 19 male sophomore: "I chose JMU because it had a beautiful campus, friendly atmosphere, and it was a Division-1 school better than other options... My major is marketing right now. I want to switch to finance because I like my accounting class

and it makes more money... I'm loving it. I'm making lots friends and getting involved... From jersey, funny, nice guy."

Monica, a 19 female sophomore: "I'm a transfer student. I started at College of Charleston for one semester, then, went home to a community college. I picked JMU because mom went here and loves the JMU education program, and it's closer to home... My major is IDLS (Inclusive Early Childhood and Special Education) because I love kids... People are so friendly here. In Charleston, you didn't have a life outside of Greek life/drinking. Here [at JMU], have you can have any sort of social life you want... Introvert, loyal, caring."

Vickie, a 19 female sophomore: "I'm from somewhere close to here, and heard great things about JMU... Came in as bio major, but it was too tough. I'm a psych major now. My mom was psych major, so I'm used to that environment. I loved psych 101, researched possible careers, and felt that psychology was the way to go... Loud, all over the place, funny."

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