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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# THE CONCEPT OF BRAND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

CHRISTINE M. SOH GUEK TIN COBB

Norman, Oklahoma

2001

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THE CONCEPT OF BRAND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO

STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST

A DISSERTATION

APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES



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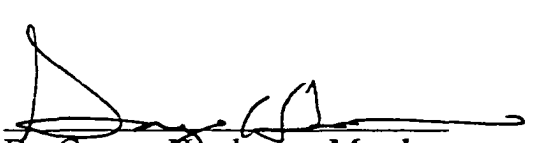

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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# THE CONCEPT OF BRAND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine students' perception of the six brand identity attributes and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. Twenty-first century demographic and financial trends will compel colleges to improve their retention percentages. A crucial tool that could be borrowed by colleges from the business world to accomplish this task is "brand identity," often expressed in mission statements.

In this study, brand identity was defined as "what a college wants to be known for." Colleges could be perceived as providing a "product" (blending academic, social, and credentialing components) to their students/"customers." The assumption made in this study was that students' positive perception of their colleges' brand identity through their freshman year might increase their satisfaction, enhance their loyalty to their college, and thereby increase their persistence.

The six brand identity attributes from business literature that were identified to be most applicable to higher education were: (a) vision of the institution's brand identity, (b) brand-customer relationship, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of programs, (e) commitment of financial resources, and (f) pricing. Tinto's (1996) findings on student persistence indicated that the interaction between students' goal and institutional

commitment could affect their academic and social integration, which in turn could impact their persistence.

The partial correlation findings revealed that all the six brand identity attributes had a positive correlation with students' ratings of their academic and social integration. Amongst the student characteristics, gender, students' financial aid status, housing arrangements (living on or off campus), current cumulative GPA, family's annual income and parents' educational attainment were found to be correlated with one or more of the six brand identity attributes. Of the six brand identity attributes, an institution's emphasis on the quality of its academic and non-academic programs had the highest ranking based on students' perception. Amongst the top five positive reasons for students intent-to-persist, institutional commitment and quality of programs were perceived to be the most important. Personal reason (distance from home) and difficulty with academic integration were cited as the top two reasons for students' non-persistence.

# THE CONCEPT OF BRAND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' INTENT-TO- PERSIST

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Within the next decade, colleges will be faced with an increasing challenge to design and implement effective persistence strategies due to changes in the job market requirements and demographics in America. In this decade, there will be a significant increase in the number of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree. In the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2000-01), the Labor Department projected that between 1998-2008, jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree would increase by almost 22%, as compared to an increase of only 12% for jobs which did not require postsecondary education. It will therefore be increasingly important for colleges to ensure that the students they recruit persist and attain a degree. College enrollments will continue to grow in the next decade. The U.S. Department of Education in *Projections of Education Statistics to 2009* anticipated the higher education enrollment would increase by 14% to 16.3 million in 2009, as compared to 14.4 million in 1997 (NCES, 1999). That increase seemingly paints an optimistic outlook, but there continues to be a persistent gap between enrollment and graduation rates. The same report estimated an increase in the number of bachelor's degrees of only 8% to 1,257,000 in 2008-09, as compared to 1,160,000 in 1996-97. This projected increase of 14% in enrollment and an increase of only 8% in degree completion between 1996-97 and 2008-09 poses a great challenge for colleges to continue their efforts on increasing students' persistence.

Following the above national job market and demographic projections between the period 1996-97 and 2008-09, the enrollment figures for the past decade, from 1987-1997, revealed similar increasing trends. The *Digest of Education Statistics* (1999) revealed that between 1987 and 1997, higher education enrollment had increased by approximately 13% to reach a total of 14.3 million. In line with the projections on the number of degree holders required for jobs between 1998-2008, there was a heartening national trend that more people had achieved degrees from 1987-1997. The *Digest of Education Statistics* (1999) reported an increase of 18% of bachelors' degrees conferred between 1987-1997. The figures also revealed the 53% of the students who had enrolled in a four-year college in 1989-90 had completed their degree by spring 1994. *The Condition of Education* (2000) report cited the findings from NCES (2000) which highlighted that 75% of students who started their college education at a 4-year college in 1995-96 persisted at the same or another 4-year institution three years later. These figures for the past and future decade indicate that student persistence has been and will continue to be an important issue that warrants colleges' attention and continued focus.

The above optimistic figures from a national perspective were matched with similarly encouraging trends at the state level. The Oklahoma State Regents' *Admission Impact Policy Study* (2000) reported that in Fall 1998, the total first-time freshman enrollment at the 28 public institutions in Oklahoma was 26,804, which was an increase of 5.3% compared to those same colleges' enrollments in Fall 1997. The same report indicated that between Fall 1997 and Fall 1998, the enrollments at the comprehensive universities increased by 9%, at the regional universities by 8.8%, and at the two-year

colleges by 2.3%. First-time freshman enrollment in Oklahoma has been a success story, but as noted by Chancellor Hans Brisch in *State Regents Announce Task Force on Student Retention* (2000), while student retention and graduation rates in Oklahoma have improved over the last few years, they still lag behind national averages.

According to The Oklahoma State Regents' *Brain Gain 2010* report (1999), Oklahoma's dropout rate from the first to the second year for first-time, full-time freshman in four-year universities varied between 41.8% and 34.7% between 1988 and 1995. The comparable national figures were 29.6% and 28.1%; so it is clear that Oklahoma's persistence problem is significantly more acute than that of the nation as a whole. Chancellor Brisch, *in State Regents Announce Task Force On Student Retention* (2000) news release made it clear that the Regents were interested to find out the reasons so many of Oklahoma's college students left college without a degree. In the same news release, Chancellor Brisch also stated that the Regents needed to design proactive strategies to assist students to persist and succeed in college.

In another news release, the State Regents commended Governor Keating for his focus on education and expressed their satisfaction that the Governor has endorsed the Regents' goal of doubling the state's expected growth rate of college degree holders by 2010 *(Chancellor Commends Governor for Recognizing Higher Education's Role In State's Future*, 2000). As revealed by research findings, the highest percentage of attrition rates occurs during the first year in college (Levitz, Noel & Richter, 1999). The Regents' goal of doubling the growth rate of college degree holders in Oklahoma will be

much easier to achieve if colleges are able to design and implement effective persistence strategies.

What must colleges consider before they attempt to design effective persistence strategies? Before colleges devise strategies to retain their students, it is important that they first address the question of who they are and how they want their brand image to be perceived by their students. A college presents a student/consumer with at least two entities: (a) the actual education which the student purchases/consumes and (b) the image of that education experience, which often is the hook that draws in the potential student/consumer. Therefore, by presenting an attractive brand image of the college and persuading the student to buy what the college is offering, the college can anticipate generating a greater level of student satisfaction. Students' satisfaction will enhance their loyalty to the college, which in turn increases their persistence. The brand identity concept and customer loyalty are clearly evidenced in the business world. It is an established axiom in the business world that a company can increase its customers' loyalty to its product through its brand identity. This brand identity is often perceived as a mark of the company's capacity to deliver promptly and efficiently its product to its customers. If the business model were applied to colleges, then colleges which are able to project their brand image positively to students would similarly have a greater chance of increasing their students' satisfaction and ultimately, their persistence.

We often hear the argument by university leaders that higher education is not a product and that business practices are not applicable to academe. It is true that education is not just another commodity and that students are more than mere consumers.

However, it is also true that students are indeed customers of colleges which provide a "product" (such as academic programs, social experiences and vocational credentials) for which the students pay a monetary price. This was emphasized when Keller (1983) highlighted Clark Kerr's assertion that higher education has entered a revolutionary period of consumer sovereignty in which the road to colleges' survival leads through the arena of consumer preference *(Three Thousand Futures: The Next 20 Years in Higher Education*, 1980). Based on the business model, if the customers are not satisfied with the "product," then they will cease to repeat their purchases. Applying that phenomenon to higher education, if students cease to become positively affected by their perception of their colleges' brand identity, then they may cease to persist.

The findings from my MBA thesis on *Global Brand Marketing and Development* (1995) revealed that companies attempting to establish a brand in the competitive business world must first have a clearly defined mission. This mission should explicitly shape the focus of the company in terms of its brand identity and brand positioning (how the company desires its brand to be perceived by its customers). Developing a distinctive mission statement is certainly crucial to a company's branding success in the business sector. Drucker (1973) declared that business objectives were achievable only when the company adopted a well-defined purpose and mission.

The above arguments and my research findings on global brand marketing had revealed that businesses commonly express their brand image through their mission statements. The important role of mission statements of colleges was recognized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. In the State Regents' *Brain Gain 2010*

report, they asserted that missions of institutions played a major role in defining student success. However, the literature findings also reflected a muddled view of: (a) what colleges said their distinctive characteristics were and (b) what colleges actually did in terms of student retention. Other studies, however, showed that mission statements were not always indicative of institutional functioning. In their survey of 142 institutions in eleven southeastern states, Newsom and Hayes (1990-91) argued that institutions paid lip service to the necessity of having a mission statement because they did not feel that their mission statements were important. Both Wilson (1999) and Laramee (1987) criticized the lack of distinctiveness in institutional missions. Keller (1983) pointed out:

> As the French marketers say, 'Cherchez le creneau,' or 'Look for the hole. Your campus needs to look for the special hole, or market niche, that you already hold or wish to occupy. To be trite, no college can be everything to everybody (p. 159).

Lang and Sweetman (1991) supported Keller's (1983) advice that "a key to success in both internal and external campus relations is for the college to possess a distinctive mission, and to project a clear, forceful image" (p. 606). In a survey of 56 small to medium-sized institutions, Parker (1986) found that institutions with a greater commitment to a clearly defined mission would respond better to conditions of decline. However, none of the existing literature seems to have explored the possible connection between a clearly defined mission statement and student persistence. One of the reasons why persistence is a crucial issue is a budgetary concern. The research by Levitz, Noel and Richter (1999) revealed that $15,000 to $25,000 would be saved by a four-year institution that succeeded in cutting down its freshman dropouts by only one student. Therefore, it is in the college's financial interest, not to mention furthering its academic

mission, to adopt strategies that encourage student persistence. Some of the literature said that mission statements could focus and refine a college's sense of identity and therefore had an important role. Other research dismissed mission statements as mostly boilerplate. Given the above inconsistencies in the literature on mission statements, is it important for colleges to provide students with a knowledge of what their brand identities are, as reflected in the colleges' mission statement? Since persistence is a major concern amongst colleges, it would be useful for administrators to determine if a knowledge of their college's brand identity has any impact on students' persistence.

For any brand to achieve success, a company must decide on what its brand should represent. Hanlin, CEO of Sunkist Growers, stated that "an orange ... is an orange ... is an orange. Unless, of course, that orange happens to be a Sunkist, a name 80% of consumers know and trust" (Aaker, 1996, p. 1). What impact could a brand have? As mentioned by Morris (1996), Coca-Cola executives at the Atlanta company could confidently find the resources to expeditiously establish Coca-Cola in a new market purely on the strength of Coca-Cola's brand name.

I had conducted an in-depth research on global brand marketing and development on the secrets of brand success of world-renowned brands (such as Nike, Swatch, Omega, Mercedes Benz, Benetton, American Express, Galbani and Coke) in my MBA thesis. Coupled with my many years of international brand marketing experience, these research findings have led me to the conclusion that the only way for companies to compete successfully and to generate growth and profits in the long run was first to decide to be a brand-oriented company and then to act intelligently on that decision. Farr, the Vice

Chairman of American Express, in a *Fortune* interview in 1995 reinforced that "the brand is the engine that will drive the business. If we can't use the brand, we won't be in the business" (Grant, 1995, p. 74).

Once this brand identity vision is established as a guiding principle, the next challenge is for company management to understand how brand identity should be developed. The challenge is for such companies to devise the most effective ways to translate this brand identity vision into appropriate strategies that would ultimately result in customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is important because it ensures repeat purchases and enhanced revenue for these companies.

Part of my MBA research culminated in the development of ten consistent theses/guidelines on brand identity. These ten components on brand building and development include: (a) company's vision and brand identity, (b) brand-customer relationship, (c) communications, (d) top management and entire employee commitment, (e) product attributes, (f) pricing, (g) distribution channels, (h) commitment of financial resources, (i) brand protection, (j) knowledge of overseas business environment. These ten guidelines are best illustrated in the form of a wheel (Appendix A). The wheel is hypothesized to turn smoothly (that is, at maximum efficiency) if all of its spokes are in their proper places. A break in any of these spokes can impede the smooth running of the wheel. This study focused on six of the above ten brand identity attributes that I assumed to be most applicable to the field of higher education, namely (a) vision of the institution's brand identity, (b) brand-customer

relationship, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of programs, (e) commitment of financial resources, and (f) pricing.

If one were to parallel higher education with a private business enterprise in the realm of brand marketing, then the brand-customer relationship would refer to the institution-student relationship. Tinto (1991b) argued that when effective retention programs were focused on their students, the institution developed an ethos that permeated every facet of the college so that the institution and their students would be reciprocally committed to each other. He also pointed out that this ethos was easily identified and that the ethos resulted in increased persistence.

Tinto (1991) revealed that students' goal and institutional commitment would affect their academic and social integration, which in turn would affect students' persistence. Students' goal commitment refers to how important they value their college education and getting their college degree. Students' institutional commitment refers to their dedication to their college, which could be manifested in terms of students' participation in academic and social activities. Academic integration includes the students' ability to keep up with their academic work, which includes attending class, completing assignments and turning them in on time, attaining appropriate grades, and possessing a coherent major. Social integration includes the students' ability to fit in well on campus and the extent of their participation in social activities.

According to Tinto (1991b), successful retention programs were achievable by all institutions, especially if they strove to fulfill their persistence obligations that were

stated in their educational missions. Following the above reasoning, is it possible that a college's brand identity could be a factor contributing to student persistence?

The relevant education literature showed that the colleges which had effective retention programs were those that paid attention to the needs of their students. My own MBA research on brand identity among international companies indicated that the most successful companies were those which explicitly knew (a) what their product was, (b) who their customers were, (c) what those customers wanted and (d) the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customers with their products. Colleges which have an understanding of who they are, what they can offer and their students'/customers' expectations and satisfaction with the their offerings will be better able to succeed in their retention efforts.

One of the keys to a company's successful brand identity efforts was that all employees should understand and be committed to the company's mission. As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, a company's brand identity is reflected in its mission statement. Translating the business model of brand identity to the world of higher education, all hired constituencies (faculty, staff, and administrators) need to be aware of and be committed to their colleges' brand identity. In the business world, it is crucial that companies are aware of how their brands are perceived by their customers. Similarly, on campus, it is important for college administrators to understand their customers' (students') perceptions of their colleges' brand image. This understanding would enable colleges to devise strategies to increase brand loyalty, which in turn could impact students' persistence.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were the students' perceptions of each of the six proposed brand identity attributes, namely:
   - (i) vision of the institution's brand identity (as reflected in the institution's mission statement),
   - (ii) brand-customer relationship (with reference to the relationship between the institution's service providers and students, manifested in the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services),
   - (iii) total employee commitment (with reference to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students),
   - (iv) quality of programs (with reference to the academic and non-academic programs and activities offered),
   - (v) commitment of financial resources (with reference to financial resources to promote its brand identity),
   - (vi) pricing (with reference to making education affordable to the students)?
2. How did the students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes vary by the following student characteristics, namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on

or off campus, pre entry attributes (specifically high school grades), current academic performance (specifically cumulative grade-point average), receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background?

3. What were the students' perception of:
   (a) their goal commitment (with reference to how important students value their college education and getting their college degree),
   (b) their institutional commitment (with reference to students' dedication to their college in terms of their participation in academic and social activities)?
4. How did the students' perception of the six brand identity attributes interact with students' perception of: (a) their goal, and (b) their institutional commitment?
5. What were the students' perception of:
   (a) their level of academic integration (with reference to students' ability to keep up with their academic work and the level of satisfaction with their academic work),
   (b) their level of social integration (with reference to students' ability and willingness to fit in on campus, and their level of satisfaction with the extent of their participation in social activities)?
6. How did students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes interact with their perceptions of: (a) their levels of academic integration, and (b) their levels of social integration?

7. How did the students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration affect their intent-to-persist?

8. How did students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration jointly interact to affect students' intent-to-persist?

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A review of the literature pertaining to student persistence revealed that students' goal and institutional commitment affected their academic and social integration, which in turn influenced their persistence. Little however is known about the extent to which brand identity might influence the factors affecting students' persistence. An understanding of brand identity, particularly if it was found to be related to student commitment and persistence, could be extremely important to institutions as they strive for greater effectiveness and efficiency in the twenty-first century.

As pointed out in the introduction, between 1998-2008, the nation's job market was projected to increase its demands for bachelor degree holders by 22%. But since the increase for degree completion between 1998-2008 was projected to be only 8%, colleges would be faced with a greater need to increase their students' persistence rate. Determining a college's brand identity as it was actually perceived by their students/customers would provide critical insights as to whether what the college wanted to be known for was indeed perceived accurately by students. What was more important was to examine whether students' perception of the colleges' brand identity would indeed have any effect on their decision to persist in the college.

The results of this study would add to the existing literature in the area of the interaction between students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, and students' level of academic and social integration, which in turn influenced student persistence. It was also hoped that this research would motivate other researchers to explore further how the marketing and development of brand identity of institutions of higher education could further contribute to the progress of these institutions.

## ASSUMPTIONS

This study assumed that students' decision to persist would result from students' satisfaction with their perception of their colleges' brand identity. A student's positive perception of the college's brand identity would lead to an expectation of a desired collegiate experience. If this holistic collegiate experience led to a higher student satisfaction, then persistence would result. Also, it assumed that first-time, full-time students had a clear awareness of the college's brand identity culminating from their active participation in activities such as orientation programs in the first year, as compared to participation by sophomores, juniors and seniors. The study also assumed that these first-time, full-time freshman had some knowledge of what their colleges' brand identities were as manifested in the colleges' mission statement.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The survey for this study was carried out with first-time, full-time students in their second semester (Spring 2001) at one institution. The results might not be representative of all students who were not first-time, full-time students within that institution. Also,

the results might not be representative of first-time, full-time students from other comprehensive, regional and two-year institutions. The analyses would be based on the participants' interpretation of the college's mission/vision statement, which might be subject to individual participant's biases. As Tinto (1991a) pointed, out, students in different colleges might very well hold in common a number of reasons for their departure, and colleges could learn by studying these commonalties. However, Tinto stressed that each college had to examine the unique non-persistence factors on its campus if it was ever to devise effective retention strategies.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were defined as used throughout the paper:

Brand-customer relationship–With reference to *Building Strong Brands* by Aaker (1996), this phrase was used in this study to refer to the institution's service providers' relationship with students, manifested in the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services.

Institutions' vision statements–Used synonymously with institutions' mission statements.

Intent- to-persist–In this study, this referred to student's intention to persist in the same institution. It was used synonymously with the term 'student persistence' and 'student retention.'

Students–First-time freshman-With reference to the *Student Data Report* (April 1999), compiled by the Oklahoma State Regents, this referred to full-time (taking at least 12 semester hours) and degree seeking. The State Regents' policy definition of First-time Entering Students (II-2-38) included a transfer student with six or fewer attempted credit

hours, excluding remedial or pre-college work and excluding credit hours accumulated by concurrently enrolled high school students.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One provided the reader with an introduction to the research topic in the study. Also included was the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, assumptions, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter Two comprised the literature review. It provided the reader with an overview of the concept of brand identity, and theories on student retention, the role of mission statements in institutions in higher education and how all these factors related to the field of higher education.

Chapter Three detailed the methodology and data collection procedures used in this study. Also included was a discussion of the survey instrument as well as the methods of data analyses.

Chapter Four comprised the findings of the study.

Chapter Five provided a discussion of the results, qualitative analysis, final comments on the sample, conclusion as well as recommendations.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. In order for college administrators to grasp the relationship, if any, between students' perception of the colleges' brand identity and their intent-to-persist, college administrators need to first understand the concept of brand identity. This chapter provided college administrators with an understanding of the origin and definition of branding, importance of branding, secrets of brand success, enhancement of brand value, brand system management and obstacles to brand building in relation to higher education.

The concept of branding has been thoroughly explored in the business literature but there is a void in the higher education literature pertaining to this same issue. Therefore, the origin and definition of branding, importance of branding, secrets of brand success, enhancement of brand value, brand system management and obstacles to branding were taken from the business literature. Insights from past research findings in education on reasons for students' failure to persist and principles of effective retention analyzed in the light of a college's brand identity and mission statement in relation to its brand identity were reviewed. The chapter also provided college administrators with an understanding of the factors related to students' persistence as well as the principles of effective retention in relation to brand identity.

## ORIGIN OF BRANDING FROM BUSINESS LITERATURE

This section was based on the findings in the business literature and attempted to introduce the origin of branding to college administrators. Stobart (1994) explained that the word "brand" was derived from the Old Norse word *brandr*, which meant to burn. As pointed out by Stobart (1994), branding originated among herding societies to identify an owner's cattle. Later, in agricultural societies, pottery came to carry the potter's thumbprint in the wet clay to signify proof of origin. Customers could therefore be confident about the product's authenticity. By the time of the Middle Ages, branding had become widespread when craft guilds (similar to unions) and merchant guilds formed to control the quantity and quality of production (McCarthy & Perreault, 1996).

Stobart (1994) also pointed out that the real impetus for brand development over the last two hundred years was the Industrial Revolution's improvements in transport systems. Prior to development of an efficient transport system, distribution of goods on barges or sailing ships was both time-consuming and limited to relatively small volumes. The efficient communication systems facilitated by railways and steam-driven ships led to an outburst of economic growth. Railways enabled US farmers in the Midwest to transport their produce to the East or West at greater speed with lower cost. This, in turn, facilitated the growth of international brands like Coca-Cola and Kodak. Companies taking advantage of these efficient transport systems eventually realized that developing a brand name facilitated their customers' recognition of their products. Proctor & Gamble soap and Kraft cheese outperformed their competitors largely because of their brand names (Stobart, 1994). This process of brand development was repeated in other parts of

the world, especially in the service sector, exemplified by such companies as Visa, British Airways, and American Express.

The next section provided some suggestions on how college administrators could gain an understanding of the definition of branding from the business literature.

## DEFINITION OF BRANDING FROM BUSINESS LITERATURE

After acquiring an understanding of how branding originated, it would be helpful for college administrators who are interested in the concept of branding to be familiar with the definition of a brand. This section explained the definition of branding from the business literature.

Tennant (1994) defined a brand as a sign which sets one product apart from its competitors. A brand was a kind of shorthand for the key features of the product, such as its image, its use and its price, which was readily recognized and remembered. Other crucial aspects of the term's definition were touched on in the American Marketing Association's analysis which defined a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 1994, p. 444). The seller or manufacturer was identified in a brand. A brand depicted a seller's pledge to deliver specific features of products or services consistently to its buyers or consumers. The guarantee of quality was implicitly included in all renowned brands.

The next section provided an explanation to college administrators on why branding is important to higher education.

## IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

It is not enough for college administrators merely to understand the definition of branding. College administrators would need to realize the importance of branding to higher education before they would be convinced to adopt the concept of brand identity. To address the question on why branding is important to higher education, the importance of branding as depicted in business literature was first reviewed. Then an attempt was made to apply the importance of branding to higher education.

Stobart (1994) noted that a brand was almost like a contract between a brand owner and the consumer. As part of its contract, the brand offered the consumer a certain quality, value, and satisfaction. As long as the brand kept its part of the bargain, the customers would keep their contract by buying the product. If for whatever reason the consumer decided to buy a rival product, the first product's brand image alerted the consumer to avoid the undesired product. Applying the importance of brand identity to higher education, we could say that colleges devised a particular brand identity in order to attract students to attend and stay in their colleges. Students would be more inclined to persist in their colleges as long as they perceived that they were satisfied with what their colleges were offering them (such as academic quality or social benefits) as conveyed and promised by their colleges' brand image.

The process of branding entailed a great financial commitment (in terms of packaging, labeling, advertising, legal protection). However, the advantages and benefits of brand marketing and development were justifiable and real. The following four results of branding explained its importance. First, branding provided the seller an opportunity to

build up a loyal customer base (Stobart, 1994). A loyal customer base could result in a constant flow of income necessarily enhancing the stability of businesses. As pointed out by Stobart (1994), such stability, in turn, increased the seller's capacity to engage in coherent planning and investment. A reputable brand that reinforced the quality and reliability of its product greatly enhanced the corporate image of a company, and once customers' confidence in the brand was cemented in customers' minds, the company could be assured of repeat purchases. Niefer (1994) pointed out that the world-renowned Mercedes Benz logo, for instance, "has come to represent the best in quality, reliability, safety and technology" (p. 104). In the case of Mercedes-Benz, the corporate logo (a three pronged inverted Y within a circle) was the mark of the company's legitimate boast during the early 1900's of its engines' supremacy on land, air, and sea.

Applying the above importance of branding to higher education, we could say that colleges' "desirability" is enhanced by providing "products" which their students/ customers perceived as high quality. Of course the perception of high quality "products" might vary from one student to the next. Some students might see an institution with Nobel laureate faculty as having prestige; some might see a vibrant Greek system as conveying value; others might regard a championship football team or even an excellent Education Department as important. Regardless of what "products" were perceived by the students/customers as important, if the students were satisfied that their perception of their colleges "products" were befitting the colleges' brand image (consistent with what the colleges said they are delivering), then those students would be more likely to persist. As mentioned in chapter one, the research by Levitz, Noel and Richter (1999) revealed

substantial monetary savings by a four-year institution which succeeded in reducing its freshman dropouts by only one student. Colleges which succeeded in retaining their students would therefore gain substantial revenue, and at the same time, develop goodwill ambassadors or alumni. Students, in turn, would benefit by attaining a successful degree completion. The situation would therefore be a win-win situation. It would therefore be worth the effort of colleges to devote their attention on building their brand identity.

Second, Stobart (1994) explained that branding allowed the seller to reap the rewards of any promotional investment made earlier. Companies such as Kellogg, Pepsi, and Marlboro (which had invested heavily in the 1950s and 1960s) were still able to benefit extensively from their huge advertising expenditures. The above importance of branding to higher education could be understood by analyzing the benefits of Duke University's brand identity. The brand identity of Duke University combined both academic excellence and basketball prowess. Duke's national basketball championships in 1991-92 were still reaping rewards in 2000 as parents paid their childrens' tuition to the university. That tuition check constituted a dividend to Duke University's prior investment efforts in brand building (winning national basketball championships).

Third, branding assisted the seller to segment its markets. Each of the different detergent brands offered by Proctor & Gamble, for instance, was formulated to target a specific benefit seeking segment (Stobart, 1994). From the perspective of the retailer, a store's image was enhanced by the presence of leading branded goods on the shelves. If customers had faith in a particular brand's value, then they would think more highly of the retail store that carried these valued brands. The seller could then exploit its

reputation for quality to include other products, thereby extending this advantage to other products or services that the company might have. Hewlett Packard's recent success in personal computers was an illustration of this point. The reliability of H-P's LaserJet or DeskJet printers made users willing to give H-P the benefit of the doubt when the company introduced personal computers.

Applying the above importance of branding to higher education, colleges with a heritage of excellent academics could use their academic prestige to market the value of new programs when they were being introduced. For instance, Oklahoma City University (OCU) had been recognized as a national leader in the performing arts for three quarters of a century. When OCU recently decided to add a related degree program in arts management, the university was able to market the new program to arts-oriented young people. These new students/customers presumed and perceived the new program to be of similar high quality because they associated OCU with its reputation for excellence in performing arts.

Fourth, a strong brand could greatly expedite a company's establishment of a global presence ahead of its competitors. It was not surprising for McDonald's to set repeatedly new opening day sales records in successive new outlets around the world (Morris, 1996). Coca-Cola had a similar experience. Morris (1996) commented on the reasons why the red and white delivery trucks of Coca-Cola were cheered at a traffic light in Warsaw. Morris noted that the cheering was not so much because the Poles had a taste for a carbonated, caramel-flavored drink; rather they were cheering the arrival of the fluted green bottles that represented a sense of status, liberty and capitalism.

Applying the above importance of branding to higher education, University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and Johns Hopkins University were successful in establishing their presence in Singapore as a result of their brand images. Singapore's leaders wanted to establish American-style, world class education centers in business and medical schools and to accomplish this rapidly. As a result, the leaders who were knowledgeable about the brand identities of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and Johns Hopkins University invited these schools to introduce their programs in Singapore. Singapore leaders were confident that these two universities' brand image would provide instant credibility among Singapore's demanding student clientele.

When the college administrators have gained an insight into the importance of branding to higher education, it would be helpful for them to be aware of some secrets of brand success.

## SECRETS OF BRAND SUCCESS AND ITS APPLICATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Not only would it be helpful for college administrators to understand the importance of branding to higher education, it would also be beneficial if they are made aware of the underlying secrets of brand success and how these success could be applied to higher education. One of the best ways to understand the secrets of brand success is to analyze the strategies adopted by successful brand leaders. In my analysis of global brands, world-renowned brands such as Nike, Swatch, Omega, Mercedes-Benz, Benetton, American Express, Galbani, and Coke were analyzed. The result of this analysis culminated in the ten guidelines/theses that provided the yardstick by which

institutions could evaluate their brand identities (Appendix A). Only the success story of Nike was detailed.

Nike's secrets of brand success lay in the Chairman's vision of what the brand should represent and Nike's sensitivity to the needs of its customers. Willigan (1992) noted Phil Knight's (Founder, Chairman and CEO of Nike) comment that originally, Nike merely focused on designing and producing a product. Eventually the company realized that it was not good enough to establish a brand. Nike had to get to know its customers and what its brand meant to their customers. Relating this secret to the field of higher education, it would be important for colleges interested in developing their brand image to pay attention to how their brands were being perceived by their customers (in the context of this research, the customers would refer to students).

When Nike first started out, customers recognized Nike as a running shoe company whose brand stood for excellence in track and field. This specific brand image assisted the company to clearly rule out the production of items such as ugly, casual shoes which did not befit its brand image. Nike's failure in casual shoes compelled the company to re-evaluate the essence of Nike brand. When the casual shoes were introduced, a different message was communicated, which confused the public. Another mistake committed by Nike was that the functional casual shoes they had created were not appealing in design and the public did not desire them. Nike's brand was diluted and the casual shoes effort failed to succeed. When Nike redirected its attention to its primary brand image of sports and fitness, it was able to command 29% of the market share and generated sales of $3 billion for fiscal year 1991 (Willigan, 1992). Nike used

famous athletes such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods as its spokesmen to represent and publicize its brand. Having established its quality through its "swoosh" logo, Nike had (with the constant use of appropriate marketing research studies to gather and ascertain customers' perception) successfully widened the scope of its product offerings to include quality apparel.

Nike's experiences revealed the importance of understanding what a brand entailed (its focus) and the importance of creating products that fitted its image. Quite apart from producing an innovative product at the most efficient cost, any company involved in branding must identify, understand and know its customers' needs. The choice of advertisement media, message and choice of the right personalities in advertisement could enhance the building of a brand. Applying the example of Nike to the field of higher education, the activities that a college should get involved in must be consistent with its brand image. For instance, if college's brand image involved excellence in education, the college should emphasize the recruitment of quality faculty and improvement of its academic offerings to provide quality education, instead of focusing on producing a championship football. An example of the choice of right personalities in advertisement in the field of higher education would be President Boren's example of presenting himself on camera to personify excellence in the arts, academics and athletics of OU, as he attempted to project the brand image of the University of Oklahoma as an excellent institution.

The next section provided college administrators an insight into how the value of a brand could be enhanced.

## ENHANCEMENT OF BRAND VALUE AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO HIGHER EDUCATION

It would be helpful for college administrators not only to understand the secrets of brand success but also to comprehend how the values of brands could be increased. This knowledge would enable the administrators to devise appropriate strategies to increase their brand values. The trust and stability in a brand did not magically appear by themselves. These qualities must be constantly nurtured and deliberately cultivated in a dynamic process where failure (erosion of brand value) was just as possible as increasing its brand value. Aaker (1996), in his book, *Building Strong Brands,* highlighted that brand value could be enhanced by 3 major categories, namely brand name awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Each of these categories was explained in the following paragraphs.

First, a brand owner had to achieve brand familiarity. Brand familiarity referred to the ease with which each customer recognized and accepted or rejected a company's brand (Aaker, 1996). Brand familiarity could be classified into five levels, namely (i) rejection, (ii) non- recognition, (iii) recognition, (iv) preference and (v) insistence. The first level of brand familiarity, brand rejection, occurred when potential customers declined to buy a brand because they reacted negatively to a brand. Building a positive image was particularly crucial in service-oriented businesses such as hotels. It would be difficult to convince customers to frequent an international chain of hotels if a negative image was created.

The second level of brand familiarity, brand non-recognition, arose when products were regarded by consumers as basically the same. Customers, for instance, would not

recognize the brands of ordinary stationery items or inexpensive dinnerware. Especially in the 1950's and '60's, Shell, Texaco, Gulf, and other oil companies spent huge amounts of money on advertising to build up their brand images and to increase their customer brand loyalty. But since the 1970s, American consumers had become increasingly oblivious to brand uniqueness of automobile gasoline. They purchased gasoline on the basis of price and convenience of pump locations.

The third level of brand familiarity, brand recognition, referred to the familiarity of the customer with the brand, although this familiarity did not have to be so specific that customers remembered where they previously encountered the product, how the brand differed from its rivals, or even what the brand's product claim was. For instance, Intel manufactured microprocessors which were the core of personal computers. Aaker (1996) observed that Intel encouraged computer firms such as IBM, Compaq, Gateway and Dell to put the 'Intel Inside' logo in their advertisements and on their computers. Joint advertisements by Intel and hardware companies were carried out. The 90,000 advertisements spread over a 18-month period increased the recognition of Intel amongst computer end users from 46 to 80%. As pointed out by Aaker, this customer recognition paid off in that Intel's sales increased by 63% during the first year of the "Intel Inside" campaign. Consumers reasoned that since trusted industry leaders like IBM and Compaq were exerting money and effort to promote Intel, then this particular brand of microprocessor must be a good one. Part of the positive brand value of IBM and Compaq had been transferred to Intel, which now possessed credibility with consumers worldwide for high tech quality. Not only did Intel acquire this trust, now Intel could

convey that trust to other brands as it had proven in Japan, when Matsushita (a previously little known computer manufacturer) used the "Intel Inside" decal on its product line. Consumers bought the machine because they had faith that Intel would not allow its microprocessors to be part of an inferior computer (Aaker, 1996).

Relating the above level of brand recognition to higher education, colleges which aimed at enhancing their brand value should stimulate their customers to become familiar with the brand. A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2000) pointed out that applicants to Emmanuel College did not want to enroll in that women's college because it had projected its image as being too academically oriented with too few social opportunities. The brand image created by Emmanuel College was not well received by the potential customers and therefore, applications were not forthcoming. If a college failed to differentiate its brand image from its competitors, its students/customers would not recognize the brand value. For instance, OCU's brand emphasis was on providing its students with quality academic education. If potential students selected the college solely based on price, OCU would not be able to compete with its lower priced rivals.

The fourth level of brand familiarity, brand preference, was influenced by the customers' ability to recall the brand's unique quality. Niche brands, such as high quality, up-market branded jewelry, that were known to a particular market segment, have a high recall among their loyal customer groups. Relating this level of brand preference to higher education, Oklahoma's regional colleges such as Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) were faced with the problem of not being clearly differentiated from one another. In an effort to overcome this and to induce customer

preference, SWOSU used cinema advertisements to project its image as the safest campus to attend in Oklahoma. Potential students who recalled SWOSU's advertisements in cinemas would be influenced by their preference of SWOSU when choosing a directional college.

The fifth level, brand insistence, occurred when customers insisted on purchasing the branded product and were willing to search for it. At this stage, brand loyalty was achieved. A company that had successfully created its brand recognition and induced customer preference would result in customers' insistence to purchase the branded product. For instance, customers would be willing to patronize a particular retail store that had the up-market jewelry that they wished to own. When customers arrived at the stage where they insisted on owing the particular product, the company would have succeeded in building brand loyalty.

Following brand familiarity, the second category that would have enhanced brand value was brand loyalty. Brand loyalty in the business world would primarily be encouraged by providing tangible perks such as offers of credit cards, frequent flyer programs, and club memberships. The third category that would have enhanced brand value was perceived quality. In brand marketing, the goal was to induce in the customer a positive image of the product and thereby enable the customer to perceive the product as high quality. This perception was not necessarily the same as a product's actual quality. The perceived quality was often enhanced by the high price of the product. Applying the category of brand loyalty to the field of higher education, potential students of Harvard University, for instance, would be willing to pay a higher price for their

education. This was because of the students' perceived high value of Harvard professors. The reality, all too often, was that introductory subjects at Harvard University were taught by graduate students so the actual quality of Harvard education was significantly lower than the perceived quality. This was based on the underlying assumption that graduate assistants were less experienced and less knowledgeable than full professors.

After college administrators understand how a brand's value could be increased, he/she would need to know what is the best way to manage its brand as well as be aware of the obstacles of branding. This was discussed in the next section.

## BRAND SYSTEM MANAGEMENT AND OBSTACLES TO BRAND BUILDING IN RELATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

After college administrators understand what enhanced the value of brands, it is necessary for them to learn from business literature how brands should be managed. Once a company decided to be a brand-oriented company, it was critical that the company addressed the issue of how its brand image should be managed. It was important for the company to ensure that a consistent brand image was projected by the various sub-units within a company. The two basic approaches to brand management were based on the concepts of centralization and decentralization. An example of centralized brand management in the field of higher education occurred when one of the University of Oklahoma's (OU) former presidents once stated that his vision of OU was to build a university in which the football team could be proud of. In this instance, the President was centrally managing OU's brand identity to challenge the academic units to improve their quality to match up to the excellence of OU's football team.

An example of the second approach to brand management – decentralization - in the field of higher education involved OCU, which prided itself on its brand image of high quality general education. A problem with decentralized brand management occurred when various academic units, like music or business, diluted the general education emphasis. This resulted in several different educational brand images being presented. Regardless of whether a centralized or decentralized brand system management was adopted, companies as well as colleges needed to ensure that their brand images were consistently projected, for instance, through use of standard color logos and consistent printing papers.

Why was it difficult to build brands? To be able to develop effective brand strategies, it was useful for brand builders to understand the pressures and barriers that existed in today's environment. One of the obstacles pointed out by Aaker (1996) was the pressure to compete on price. Applying this to the field of higher education, colleges were often unable to emphasize brand building because of the limitation of financial resources. Another obstacle in higher education was that leaders might lack brand identity vision or might be resistant to adopt the concept of branding from the business world.

The next section provided college administrators with a knowledge of why students fail to persist in institutions. The section also sought to address the purpose of this research which was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist.

## STUDENTS' FAILURE TO PERSIST AND PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE RETENTION IN RELATION TO A COLLEGE'S BRAND IDENTITY AND MISSION STATEMENT

From the discussion above, a case could be made that colleges possess brand identities, whether or not they are conscious of it. In line with the purpose of this study, which was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist, this section was a review of the literature on theories of student persistence viewed in the matrix of brand identity. Tinto (1991a) and Grosset (1991) both pointed out that recent research emphasized that students' decisions to withdraw were functions of what occurred after entering college rather than of what preceded entrance.

Tinto (1996) pointed out that student departure during college could take a variety of forms, from dropout to stop-out to transfer. This research merely focused on first-time, full-time students' intent-to-persist and did not factor in whether these first-time, full-time students would be stop-outs or drop outs in the event that they failed to persist. The issue of stop-outs or drop outs in the event that students failed to persist was outside the purview of this research. The data analyzed would reflect only the first-time, full-time students' intent-to-persist. The bulk of this literature review was focused on Tinto's longitudinal process model. In this model, Tinto (1996) analyzed various student characteristics (race, gender, ethnicity, GPA, high school grades, receipt of financial aid, parents' educational background and family income were among some of the student characteristics) which affected students' goal and institutional commitment. The intensity of students' goal and institutional commitment in turn affected the students'

academic and social integration. Based on Tinto's findings, all these factors interacted to influence students' persistence.

In analyzing students' goal commitment and how that affected students' persistence, Tinto (1996) also observed that students who did not possess a high level of commitment to earning a baccalaureate degree often might still have the ability to carry out college work. However, their lack of commitment might be the overwhelming cause for their departure. In such cases, students might lack institutional commitment. Tinto classified students who lacked institutional commitment and departed in order to handle external crises (such as divorce, death or a drinking problem at home or a move to another state) as stop-outs rather than dropouts. Such stop-outs were likely to return to college at a later date. In addition, Tinto discovered that these students were faced with a different, more competitive social life when they were placed in a "foreign" environment of new students. These students often were unclear of their goals for entering college and such unresolved vagueness might result in students' unwillingness to persist. Others, as pointed out by Tinto, who entered with too narrow or limited goals might alter their goals after a year or two and so depart from the institution that now did not fit their new goals.

Tinto (1996) observed that the inability of students to integrate academically and socially was another factor affecting students' persistence. Insufficient academic skills or poor study habits accounted nationally for 30 to 35% of all departures. Entering students might not be ready for the adjustments to either the more demanding academic work or to the new social environment.

Another cause of student departure identified by Tinto (1996) was the incongruence or mismatch of students with the institutions. Such students felt that they did not integrate socially or academically. Another cause of leavers identified by Tinto was the group who had difficulty bonding with other members of the institution. Tinto's findings (1991a) revealed that an individual's experience within college after entry were more important to persistence and departure than what has gone on before entry. According to Tinto, the student's academic and social experiences helped with the student's integration, which then fostered the student's attachments. This ultimately increased the individual's commitments to the pursuit of education and to the institution.

Tinto (1993) further emphasized that a student's holistic (including both academic and social integration) collegiate experience was more important than any individual student characteristic or prior experiences in determining student persistence. Tinto (1996) discovered that students' perception of a disconnect between the cost and perceived value of college education was one of the causes of their non-persistence. He also discovered that students who failed to persist for financial reasons were prone to return at a future date.

Colleges which seek to develop their brand identity and ultimately hope to increase their students' persistence rate should reevaluate what role their mission statements play in communicating what their colleges want to be known for to their students. Tinto (1991a) argued that colleges needed to participate in an institutional assessment for their retention programs to be effective. Institutional assessment, if conducted properly, would result in colleges reexamining their brand identity (what the

colleges wanted to be known for). Findings from business literature on global brand marketing showed the relation between brand identity and a company's mission statement and revealed that companies attempting to establish a brand in the competitive business world must first have a clearly defined mission. The role of the mission statement should be to direct the focus of the company explicitly in terms of the brand identity and brand positioning (how the company desires its brand to be perceived by its customers). In addressing the issue of increasing persistence in Oklahoma's higher education, the important role of mission statements was recognized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. In the State Regents' *Brain Gain 2010* report, they asserted that missions of institutions played a major role in defining student success. Other literature, however, have dismissed mission statements as boilerplate. Given the above inconsistencies in the literature on mission statements, college administrators should develop an understanding of how their brand identity was perceived as reflected in their mission statements. In this study, students' perception of their colleges' brand identity (what the college wanted to be known for) as revealed in the colleges' mission statement would be obtained.

In summary, the purpose of this research was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of students' perception of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. In order for college administrators to grasp the relationship, if any, between students' perception of the colleges' brand identity and their intent-to-persist, college administrators needed to first understand the concept of brand identity. This chapter provided college administrators

with an understanding of the importance of branding, secrets of brand success, enhancement of brand value, brand system management and obstacles to brand building in relation to higher education. The chapter also provided college administrators with an understanding of why students fail to persist in institutions as well as the principles of effective retention in relation to a college's brand identity and a college's mission statement.

# CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. The increasing demand in the job market for degree holders and the gap between enrollment and graduation rates in the coming decades will pose a great challenge for colleges to continue their efforts on increasing students' persistence. Between 1998-2008, the Labor department projected that jobs which require a bachelor's degree will increase by almost 22%. Student enrollment was projected to increase by 14% to 16.3 million in 2009 but degree completion was projected to increase only 8% between the period 1996-97 and 2009. On a state level, Oklahoma's retention and graduation rates still fall behind national averages. As a result of these discrepancies, Oklahoma's State Regents for Higher Education realized their need to address the issue of student persistence by designing proactive strategies to assist students to persist and succeed in college.

Tinto (1991a) argued that colleges needed to undertake institutional assessments for their retention programs to be effective. Institutional assessment, if conducted properly, would result in colleges reexamining their brand identity and reflecting their brand image in their mission statement. From the many examples cited in chapter 2 relating the concept of brand identity to higher education, it is clear that colleges possess a brand identity, whether or not the colleges or students are conscious of it. It is an established axiom in business that when a company's brand identity is positively

perceived by its customers and they are satisfied with the brand's offerings, it increases customer loyalty. Applying the business model to higher education, it could be argued that if a college's brand identity is positively perceived by its students/customers and they are satisfied with the college's offerings, then it increases the likelihood of students' intent-to-persist. The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist.

## RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING FIRST-TIME, FULL TIME FRESHMAN IN THE STUDY OF STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST AND PERCEPTION OF A COLLEGE'S BRAND IDENTITY

Findings in The *Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange* (CSRDE) report (1998-99) revealed that approximately 41% of students dropped out of college over a six-year period. Of the total, 21% of the dropouts took place in the first year, 11% in the second year, and 9% in the third and later years. Literature findings have also revealed that "[today's] contemporary late adolescent in college is in a psychological no-man's land where the many roadsign [s] point in a hundred directions, the travel guides have disappeared, and few reliable others (sic) exist to tell him or her what is expected" (Seltzer, 1990-91, p. 13).

The challenges facing first-time freshman are varied and complex and these challenges could significantly attribute to their non-persistence. Tinto (1996) discovered that first-year students were faced with a different, more competitive social life when they were placed in a "foreign" environment of new students. Also, he pointed out that

these first-year students were often unclear of their goals for entering college and such unresolved vagueness might result in students' unwillingness to persist. Among the different yearly cohorts, first-time, full-time freshman face greater adjustment problems and therefore are likely to experience greater non-persistence. I therefore identified first-time freshman, full-time freshman in their second semester of enrollment as the appropriate sample for this study.

I also chose to assume that this same group of first-time, full-time freshman were most influenced by the concept of brand identity. If one were to parallel higher education with a private business enterprise in the realm of brand marketing, then the brand-customer relationship would refer to the institution-student relationship. Tinto (1991b) argued that when effective retention programs focused on their students, the institution developed an ethos that permeated every facet of the college, so that students and their colleges would be reciprocally committed to each other. He also pointed out that this ethos was easily identified and that the ethos resulted in increased persistence.

My selection of first-time, full-time freshman as being the most influenced by the concept of brand identity was based on the assumption that these freshman had just undergone their college selection process and would therefore have a greater awareness of their college's brand identity, as compared to participation by sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This would be particularly true if their decision for choice of college was based on their positive perception of the college's brand identity. I also assumed that these freshman had a clearer awareness of the college's brand identity in lieu of their active participation in activities such as in orientation programs, as compared to

participation by sophomores, juniors or seniors. I also assumed that these first-time, full-time freshman had some (if not a well-informed) knowledge of what their colleges' brand identities were (which were derived from their colleges' mission statement).

## RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

A pilot study was conducted in Fall 2000 to assess how well each of the mission statements of the ten public institutions in Oklahoma reflected that specific institution's brand identity (Appendix D). These ten public institutions included the two comprehensive universities and eight regional universities, as categorized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. These ten institutions were short-listed instead of the Special Purpose Universities and Two-Year Colleges categorized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Special Purpose and Two-Year Colleges by definition attracted a particular group of students, whereas a cross section of the ten public institutions was more appropriate as representative for this study.

A composite score was conducted for each of the ten institutions. The University of Oklahoma had the highest overall score (130 out of 175 or 74.3%) among the ten institutions by the five evaluators taken together. I have therefore decided to select the University of Oklahoma since the pilot study results revealed that it had the highest brand identity emphasis in its mission statement.

## RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING TO STUDY THE SIX ATTRIBUTES OF BRAND IDENTITY

These ten components on brand building and development included: (a) company's vision and brand identity, (b) brand-customer relationship, (c) communications, (d) top management and entire employee commitment, (e) product

attributes, (f) pricing, (g) distribution channels, (h) commitment of financial resources, (i) brand protection, and (j) knowledge of overseas business environment. This study focused on six of the above ten brand identity attributes that I assumed to be most applicable to the field of higher education, namely (a) vision of the institution's brand identity, (b) brand-customer relationship, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of programs, (e) commitment of financial resources, and (f) pricing.

First-time, full-time freshman's perception of their college's brand identity was important because this study assumed that a negative or positive perception would affect the first-time, full-time freshman's intent-to-persist.

## POPULATION, SAMPLE AND METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

With the approval of the dissertation committee, the data for this study was collected by surveying first-time, full-time freshman cohorts taking the compulsory ENGLISH 1213 (Principles of English Composition) classes in their second semester in Spring 2001 at the University of Oklahoma. Permission was granted by the Director of English Composition Department to distribute and administer the surveys in class. This method of data collection was chosen to ensure a higher response rate from a representative sample of first-time, full-time freshman in their second semester. A total of 908 surveys were distributed to 41 sections of ENGLISH 1213 classes. Out of the total of 762 surveys that were received from these 41 sections, 669 (response rate of 73.7 percent) were completed by first-time, full-time freshman. Each of the survey forms had a consent form inserted. Students who wanted to participate in the two $50 book voucher drawings were requested to complete and submit the consent form with their email

addresses. Out of the 669 participants, a total of 518 participants returned the consent forms with their email addresses and were considered for the drawing. The two names would be drawn in the presence of one of my committee members and the winners would be notified by email during the last week of the Spring 2001 semester.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Various survey instruments that were used previously by Noel-Levitz and American College Testing in student retention studies were examined and modified appropriately to specifically capture the research questions in this study. Original questions were created by the researcher where needed to specifically address the research questions (Appendix C). The following research questions were addressed:

1. What were students' perceptions of each of the six brand identity attributes, namely:
   - (i) vision of the institution's brand identity as reflected in the institution's mission statement,
   - (ii) brand-customer relationship (with reference to students' relationship with OU's service providers, manifested in the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services),
   - (iii) total employee commitment (with reference to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students),
   - (iv) quality of programs (with reference to the academic and non-academic programs and activities offered),

(v) commitment of financial resources (with reference to financial resources to promote its brand identity),

(vi) pricing (with reference to making education affordable to the students)?

2. How did students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes vary by the following student characteristics, namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, pre entry attributes (specifically high school grades), current academic performance (specifically cumulative grade-point average), receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background?

3. What were students' perception of:

(a) their goal commitment (with reference to how important students value getting their college education and getting their college degree),

(b) their institutional commitment (with reference to students' dedication to their college in terms of their participation in academic or social activities?

4. How did students' perception of the six brand identity attributes interact with students' perception of: (a) their goal, and (b) their institutional commitment?

5. What were the students' perception of:

(a) their level of academic integration (with reference to students' ability to keep up with their academic work and the level of satisfaction with their academic work),

(b) their level of social integration (with reference to students' ability to fit in well on campus and the extent of their participation in social activities)?

6. How did students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes interact with their perceptions of:
   (a) their levels of academic integration (with reference to students' ability to keep up with their academic work and the level of satisfaction with their academic work),
   (b) their levels of social integration (with reference to students' ability to and willingness to fit in on campus and their level of satisfaction with the extent of their participation in social activities)?
7. How did students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration affect their intent-to-persist?
8. How did students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration jointly interact to affect students' intent-to-persist?

VARIABLES

The variables in this study were student characteristics, students' perception on each of the six brand identity attributes, students' perception of their goal commitment, institutional commitment, academic integration, and social integration. The student characteristic variables (such as race, gender, ethnicity, current cumulative grade point average, high school grades, receipt of financial aid, parents' educational background and family income) were selected based on what Tinto (1996) had used in his research on student persistence.

For research question 2, the independent variable was student characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, living on campus, high school grade, current cumulative grade-point average, receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background. The dependent variable was students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes, namely vision of brand identity, brand-customer relationship, total employee commitment, quality of programs, commitment of financial resources, and pricing. For research questions 4 and 6, the independent variable was students' perception of the six brand identity attributes and the dependent variable was students' perception of their (a) goal commitment, (b) institutional commitment, (c) academic integration, and (d) social integration. For research question 7, the independent variables were students' perception of their academic and social integration and the dependent variable was students' intent-to-persist. For research question 8, the independent variables were student characteristics, students' perception of the each of the six brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' levels of academic and social integration. The dependent variable was students' intent-to-persist.

## METHODS OF ANALYZING DATA

The following statistical analyses were selected to answer the eight research questions:

The first research question addressed the students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes, namely: (i) vision of the institution's brand identity as reflected in the institution's mission statement, (ii) brand-customer relationship (with reference to the relationship between the institution's service providers and staff, manifested in the

professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services), (iii) total employee commitment (with reference to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students), (iv) quality of programs (with reference to the academic and non-academic programs and activities offered), (v) commitment of financial resources (with reference to financial resources to promote its brand identity), and (vi) pricing (in terms of making education affordable to the students). Question 12 of the survey instrument asked, "Based on your understanding, how much importance you think OU places on: (a) brand identity, (b) the relationship of its service providers to students, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of its academic and non-academic programs, (e) financial resources to make known its brand identity, and (f) total educational costs for the students? Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequencies and percentages for responses to each of the questions.

The second research question addressed how students' perception of each of the above six brand identity attributes varied by the following student characteristics, namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, pre entry attributes (specifically high school grades), current academic performance (specifically cumulative grade-point average), receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background. This question was addressed by question 1 to 10 of the survey instrument. The independent variables, student characteristics (gender, ethnicity, housing arrangement, grade point average, current college cumulative grade-point average, financial aid, parents' education) were categorical; and student characteristics (age, family's estimated annual income, either parents' highest educational attainment) were continuous. The

dependent variable, students' perception of each of the above six brand identity attributes, was continuous. The differences in the means were tested by using ANOVA and Pearson's *r*.

The third research question addressed students' perception of (a) their goal commitment, and (b) their institutional commitment. Question 13 of the survey instrument asked, "How would you rate (a) the importance of the value you place on your education and in getting your degree, (b) your dedication to OU in terms of your participation in academic and social activities? The variables were continuous. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequencies and percentages of each of the questions.

The fourth research question addressed students' perception of how the six brand identity attributes interacted with students' perception of (a) their goal, and (b) their institutional commitment. Question 14 (a) to (f) asked "Based on your perception, how do the following affect your goal commitment and institutional commitment: (a) OU's emphasis on its brand identity, (b) your relationship with OU's service providers, (c) OU's total employee commitment, (d) OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, (e) OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity, (f) OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students? Simple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between each different brand identity attribute (independent variable and a single, dependent variable (goal commitment and institutional commitment separately) at the 5 percent significance level. Multiple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between all the brand identity

attributes, as a group, and a single, dependent variable (goal commitment and institutional commitment separately).

The fifth research question addressed students' perception of (a) their level of academic integration, and (b) their level of social integration. Question 15 of the survey instrument asked, "How would you rate (a) your ability to keep up with your academic work and the level of satisfaction with your academic work, (b) your ability to and willingness to fit in on campus and your level of satisfaction with the extent of your participation in social activities? The variables were continuous. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequencies and percentages of each of the questions.

The sixth research question addressed students' perception on how each of the six brand identity attributes interacted with their perceptions of their levels of academic and social integration. Question 16 (a) to (f) asked "Based on your perception, how do the following affect your academic integration and social integration: (a) OU's emphasis on its brand identity, (b) your relationship with OU's service providers, (c) OU's total employee commitment, (d) OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, (e) OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity, (f) OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students?" Simple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between each different brand identity attribute (independent variable) and a single, dependent variable (academic and social integration separately) at the 5 percent significance level. Multiple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between all the brand identity attributes, as a group, and a single, dependent variable (academic and social integration separately).

The seventh research question addressed how students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration affected their intent-to-persist. Question 17 of the survey instrument asked students: "Based on your perception, how would the following affect your intention to come back to OU next year: (a) your level of academic integration, and (b) your level of social integration?" The independent variables were students' perception of their academic and social integration, which were continuous. The dependent variable was students' intent-to-persist which was continuous. Pearson's *r* or simple regression was used to test the correlation between the one dependent variable and one independent variable.

The last research question asked how students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration jointly interacted to affect students' intent-to-persist. A path analytical model (Appendix B) using partial correlation was used to study these interactions. This partial correlation method was used to reveal information about specific episodes in the path leading to students' intent-to persist.

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A qualitative dimension was added to this study in an attempt to find out the reasons why students intended to persist or not persist at the University of Oklahoma. In line with the purpose of this study, the comments given by students were grouped into the categories such as goal commitment, institutional commitment, academic integration, social integration, quality of program, quality of faculty, quality of staff, overall image of

the institution, physical environment, and personal reasons. The frequencies and percentages of each of these comments were computed and analyzed.

## VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

In the pilot study, five independent raters were asked to use a standard survey form to individually evaluate the respective mission statements of ten public institutions in Oklahoma. This was done to ensure inter rater reliability. The validity of the survey instrument for the actual and pilot studies was dependent on the appropriateness of the survey questions in capturing the research questions in this study. A pilot study was conducted to test the comprehensibility of the questions prior to the actual study and appropriate revisions were made based on the feedback received. The random selection of 908 students from 41 sections of ENGLISH 1213 (Principles of English Composition) classes) ensured that all subjects had an equal, non-zero chance of being selected.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. This chapter presented data collected through classroom surveys completed by students from a selection of 41 sections of the ENGLISH 1213 (Principles of English Composition) classes at the University of Oklahoma. Before presenting the data, information was presented on the sample, and response rate.

## SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE

A random sample of 908 first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who were currently taking the compulsory ENGLISH 1213 (Principles of English Composition) classes were given the questionnaires to complete in class during February 2001. Based on the number of students present at the time of sampling, 762 students from 41 sections of the ENGLISH 1213 classes returned the questionnaires during the same class period. A total of 146 of these questionnaires were returned uncompleted. Out of the 762 questionnaires received, 669 (response rate of 73.7 percent) were completed by freshman and were used for the analysis. The balance of 93 questionnaires were not used for the purpose of this research. A total of 518 participants returned the consent forms with their complete email addresses and were considered for the drawing. Out of these 518 participants, two names were drawn, in the presence of one of my committee members, for the two $50 book voucher drawing. The two winners were notified by email during the last week of Spring 2001 semester.

The sample demographics were presented in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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The sample demographics revealed that the sample was made up of a larger proportion of: females (51.3%), predominately whites (75.8%), nineteen years of age (51%), living on-campus (67.0%), with high school GPA of between 3.01 and 4.00 (57.4%), current cumulative college GPA of between 3.01 and 3.50 (33.6%), not receiving financial aid (51.6%), with estimated family income of $75,001 and above (27.1%), and either parent having attained graduate or professional school (25.6%). The population of all first-time freshman enrolled in Fall 2000 was 3,420 with a larger proportion of females (52.8%), predominantly whites (74.5%), with average GPA of 3.52.

For the purpose of this research, students whose primary housing arrangement during the first academic year was not at residence hall was grouped as living off-campus. Due to the small number of students whose ethnic background fell in the category of "Other, Asian-American/Pacific Islander and non-US or non-permanent residents (7.2 percent), they were grouped as "Others."

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

Eight research questions guided the study. The data analysis was organized to address each of these research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The first research question addressed the students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes, namely: (i) vision of the institution's brand identity as reflected in the institution's mission statement, (ii) brand-customer relationship (with reference to the relationship between the institution's service providers and staff, manifested in the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services), (iii) total employee commitment (with reference to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students), (iv) quality of programs (with reference to the academic and non-academic programs and activities offered), (v) commitment of financial resources (with reference to financial resources to promote its brand identity), and (vi) pricing (in terms of making education affordable to the students). This research question was addressed in question 12 of the survey instrument which asked, "Based on your understanding, how much importance do you think OU places on: (a) brand identity as stated in its mission statement, (b) the relationship of its service providers to students, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of its academic and non-academic programs, (e) financial resources to make known its brand identity, and (f) making education affordable to the students?"

Responses to each of the questions were rated on a rating scale with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important. The mean average ratings, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages of each of the responses were presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

The mean average rating for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the quality of its programs was 4.22 (n=669, sd=0.79) (Q12D), vision of its brand identity as reflected in its mission statement (Q12A) was 4.00 (n=669. sd= 0.81), total employee commitment (Q12C) was 3.87 (n=699, sd=0.78), the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B) was 3.85 (n=669, sd=0.86), commitment of financial resources (Q12E) was 3.75 (n=669, sd = 0.99), and making education affordable to the student (Q12F) was 3.47 (n=669, sd=1.12).

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The second research question addressed how students' perception of each of the above six brand identity attributes varied by the following student characteristics, namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, pre-entry attributes (specifically high school grades), current academic performance (specifically cumulative grade-point average), receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background. This question was addressed by question 1 to 10 of the survey instrument. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the differences in mean scores for each of the levels within the student characteristics (independent variable). The significance value generated was used to examine if there were significant differences

between each of the student characteristics (independent variable) and each of the brand identity attributes (dependent variable). The significant results were presented in Table 3.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Question 1 asked for age of the students. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of the age groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F).

Question 2 asked for the gender of the students. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of gender groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the vision of its brand identity as reflected in its mission statement (Q12A), total employee commitment (Q12C), quality of programs (Q12D), commitment of financial resource (Q12E), and making education affordable to the student (Q12F).

There was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of gender groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B). Levene's test for Homogeneity of Variance indicated that variances in scores for each of the gender groups did not differ significantly for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students ($p>0.05$) so homogeneity of variance

was assumed. Approximately 1.1 percent of the variance in students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students was accounted for by gender. The effect size between gender and students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students was small (f=0.011).

Question 3 asked the students for their ethnic background. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of ethnic groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to Q12F).

Question 5 asked for the students' primary housing arrangement during their first academic year. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of housing groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F).

Question 6 asked for the students' high school GPA. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of high school GPA groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the vision of its brand identity as reflected in its mission statement (Q12A), the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B), total employee commitment (Q12C), quality of programs (Q12D), and making education affordable to the students (Q12F).

There was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of high school GPA groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on commitment of financial resources (Q12E). Levene's test for

Homogeneity of Variance indicated that variances in scores for each of the students' high school GPA groups did not differ significantly for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its financial resources to promote its brand identity ($p>0.05$) so homogeneity of variance was not assumed. The effect size between financial aid status and students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its financial resources to promote its brand identity was small ($f=0.012$). The post hoc tests of LSD (Least Significance Difference) and Tukey HSD revealed a significant difference between students' high school GPA of 3.50 and 4.00.

Question 7 asked for the students' current cumulative GPA. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of cumulative GPA groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on for each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F).

Question 8 asked for students' financial aid status in this year. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of financial aid status groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the vision of its brand identity as reflected in its mission statement (Q12A), the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B), total employee commitment (Q12C), quality of programs (Q12D), and commitment of financial resources (Q12F).

There was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of financial aid status groups on students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students (Q12F). Levene's test for

Homogeneity of Variance indicated that variances in scores for each of the students' financial aid status did not differ significantly for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students ($p>0.05$) so homogeneity of variance was assumed. The effect size between financial aid status and students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students was small ($f=0.006$).

Question 9 asked for the students' estimated family's annual income. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of estimated family's annual income groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F).

Question 10 asked for the highest educational attainment of either of students' parents. The ANOVA results revealed no significant differences ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level in mean scores of highest educational attainment of either parents groups for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F).

Pearson's $r$ was used to compute the correlation between each of the student characteristics and each of the brand identity attributes. The results were presented in Table 4.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Students' age, ethnic background, primary housing arrangements, high school GPA, and estimated family income did not have any significant correlation ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F). Gender did not have any significant correlation ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A, Q12C TO Q12F) but had a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers (Q12B).

Students' current cumulative grade-point average did not have any significant correlation ($p>0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B), total employee commitment (Q12C), quality of programs (Q12D), commitment of financial resources (Q12E), and making education affordable to the student (Q12F) but did have a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the vision of its brand identity (Q12A).

Students' financial aid status and the highest educational attainment of either parent had a significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$) at the 5 percent significance level with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students (Q12F).

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The third research question addressed students' perception of (a) their goal commitment, and (b) their institutional commitment. Question 13 of the survey instrument asked, "How would you rate (a) the importance of the value you place on your education and in getting your degree, (b) your dedication to OU in terms of your participation in academic and social activities?" Responses to each of the questions were rated on a rating scale with 1 being the lowest value and 5 being the highest value. The mean average ratings, standard deviation, and frequencies were presented in Table 5.

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Insert Table 5 about here

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The mean average rating for students' perception of their goal commitment was 4.73 (n=669, sd=0.59). The mean average rating for students' perception of their institutional commitment was 3.97 (n=669, sd=0.96).

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

The fourth research question addressed students' perception of how the six brand identity attributes interacted with students' perception of (a) their goal, and (b) their institutional commitment. This question was addressed in question 14 (a) to (f) which asked "Based on your perception, how do the following affect your goal commitment and institutional commitment: (a) OU's emphasis on its brand identity, (b) your relationship with OU's service providers, (c) OU's total employee commitment, (d) OU's quality of

academic and non-academic programs and activities, (e) OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity, (f) OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students?"

Simple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between each different brand identity attribute (independent variable and a single, dependent variable (goal commitment and institutional commitment separately) at the 5 percent significance level. Multiple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between all the brand identity attributes, as a group, and a single, dependent variable (goal commitment and institutional commitment separately). Students' perception of the effects of brand identity attributes that were significant ($p<0.05$) on their goal and institutional commitment were presented in Table 6.

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Insert Table 6 about here

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The simple regression results revealed that significant correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between students' perception of each of the brand identity attributes (Q14A to Q14F) on students' goal commitment except for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students (Q14B), and financial resources to promote its brand identity (Q14E) ($p>0.05$). The results of the simple regression revealed that a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between

students' perception of each of the brand identity attributes (Q14A to 14F) and students' institutional commitment.

Students' perception of the effects of brand identity attributes, taken as a group, that were significant ($p<0.05$) on their goal and institutional commitment were presented in Table 7.

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Insert Table 7 about here

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The multiple regression results revealed that there was a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of OU's emphasis of brand identity, as a group, (Q14A to Q14F) and students' goal commitment. When taken as a group, students' perception of the importance placed by OU on quality of its academic and non-academic programs (Q14D) had a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) with students' goal commitment. The zero-order correlation (0.179) was higher than the semi-partial order correlation (0.110) which confirmed the absence of suppressor effects. The partial correlation explained the correlation between students' perception of OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities and students' goal commitment, without the influence of other brand identity attributes. Suppressor effects would be caused by the presence of variables which were correlated with brand identity attributes but not with students' goal commitment.

The results of multiple regression revealed that there was a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of OU's emphasis of brand identity, as a group, (Q14A to Q14F) on students' institutional commitment. When taken as a group, a significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity (Q14A), OU's total employee commitment (Q14C), and quality of academic and non-academic programs (Q14D) on students' institutional commitment. The zero-order correlation for these significant independent variables (0.356 for Q14A, 0.269 for Q14C, and 0.335 for Q14D) was higher than their partial order correlation (0.171 for Q14A, 0.073 for Q14C, and 0.178 for Q14D) which confirmed the absence of suppressor effects.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5

The fifth research question addressed students' perception of (a) their level of academic integration, and b) their level of social integration. Question 15 of the survey instrument asked, "How would you rate (a) your ability to keep up with your academic work and the level of satisfaction with your academic work, (b) your ability to and willingness to fit in on campus and your level of satisfaction with the extent of your participation in social activities?" Responses to each of the questions were rated on a rating scale with 1 being the lowest value and 5 being the highest value. The mean average ratings, standard deviation, frequencies were presented in Table 8.

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Insert Table 8 about here

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The mean average rating for students' perception of their academic integration was 3.80 (n=669. sd= 0.83), and social integration was 3.85 (n=669, sd=1.00).

RESEARCH QUESTION 6

The sixth research question addressed students' perception on how each of the six brand identity attributes interacted with their perceptions of their levels of academic and social integration. Question 16 (a) to (f) asked "Based on your perception, how do the following affect your academic integration and social integration: (a) OU's emphasis on its brand identity, (b) your relationship with OU's service providers, (c) OU's total employee commitment, (d) OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, (e) OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity, (f) OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students?"

Simple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between each different brand identity attribute (independent variable) and a single, dependent variable (academic and social integration separately) at the 5 percent significance level. Multiple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between all the brand identity attributes, as a group, and a single, dependent variable (academic and social integration separately). Students' perception of the effects of brand identity attributes that were significant ($p<0.05$) on their academic and social integration were presented in Table 9.

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Insert Table 9 about here

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The simple regression results revealed that a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between students' perception of OU's emphasis on each of its brand identity (Q16A to 16F) and students' academic integration. The simple regression results revealed that a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between students' perception of each of the brand identity attributes and students' social integration.

Students' perception of the effects of brand identity attributes, taken as a group, that were significant ($p<0.05$) on their academic and social integration were presented in Table 10.

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Insert Table 10 about here

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The multiple regression results revealed that there was a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of OU's emphasis of brand identity, as a group, on students' academic integration (Q16A to Q16F). When taken as a group, there was significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of OU's total employee commitment (Q16C), OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students (Q16F) and students' academic integration.

The results from multiple regression revealed that there was a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of OU's emphasis of brand identity, as a group, and students' social integration (Q16A to Q16F). When taken as a group, a

significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$) was found between students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity (Q16A), quality of academic and non-academic programs (Q16D), and OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity (Q16E) on students' social integration.

RESEARCH QUESTION 7

The seventh research question addressed how students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration affected their intent-to-persist. Question 17 of the survey instrument asked students: "Based on your perception, how would the following affect your intention to come back to OU next year: (a) your level of academic integration, and (b) your level of social integration?" Simple regression was used to examine the strength of relationship between each independent variable (students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration separately) and a single dependent variable (students' intent-to-persist) at the 5 percent significance level. The results were presented in Table 11.

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Insert Table 11 about here

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There was a significant positive correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of their level of academic integration (Q16A) as well as social integration (Q16B) and students' intent-to-persist.

RESEARCH QUESTION 8

The last research question asked how students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration jointly interacted to affect students' intent-to-persist. A path analysis model using partial correlation was created to illustrate the relationships between students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration and the dependent variable, students' intent-to-persist. An attempt was made to find the highest correlation between the different variables in the path analysis model.

To identify the significant variables in the path analysis model, bivariate correlation was done to find out the correlation of student characteristics (namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, high school GPA, cumulative GPA, receipt of financial aid, family's annual income, and highest educational attainment of either parents), each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to Q12F), goal commitment (Q13A), institutional commitment (Q13B), academic integration (Q15A), social integration (Q15B) and students' intent-to-persist (Q18).

The bivariate correlation matrix revealed that (a) students' current cumulative GPA had a significant correlation (r=0.086) with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its brand emphasis (Q12A), (b) gender had a significant correlation (r=0.112) with students' perception of the emphasis placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B), (c) students' financial aid status and parent's educational level had a significant correlation (r=–0.3000 and –0.301 respectively) with

students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students. The results were presented in Tables 12A to 12H.

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Insert Tables 12A to12H about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of the emphasis placed by OU on its brand identity as stated in its mission statement (Q12A), the relationship of its service providers to students (Q12B), total employee commitment (Q12C), quality of its academic and non-academic programs (Q12D) and financial resources to promote its brand identity (Q12E) and students' goal commitment. To obtain the best causal model to link each of the significant brand identity attributes to students' goal commitment, partial correlation was done between each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to Q12E) and students' goal commitment, whilst controlling for one covariate each time.

The highest partial correlation linking Q12A and students' goal commitment ($r=0.137$), controlling for covariate Q12B ($r=-0.9822$), controlling for covariate Q12C ($r=-0.9180$), controlling for covariate Q12D ($r=-0.9000$), controlling for covariate Q12E ($r=-0.9827$), was found to be –0.9827. The results were presented in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12B and students' goal commitment (r=0.147), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.4406), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.4520), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.0871), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.2228), was found to be 0.4520. The results were presented in Figure 2.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12C and students' goal commitment (r=0.097), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=-0.9180), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.8857), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.5047), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.8788), was found to be -0.9180. The results were presented in Figure 3.

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Insert Figure 3 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12D and students' goal commitment (r=0.158), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=-0.1855), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.8825), controlling for covariate Q12C (-0.6212), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.8931), was found to be -0.8931. The results were presented in Figure 4.

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Insert Figure 4 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12E and students' goal commitment (r=0.129), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.4289), controlling for covariate Q12B (r= 0.1163), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.3461), and controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.2403), was found to be 0.4289. The results were presented in Figure 5.

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Insert Figure 5 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of the emphasis placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F) and students' institutional commitment (Q13B). The highest partial correlation linking Q12A and students' institutional commitment (r=0.178), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.9740), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=-0.8900), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.8683), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.9735), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.8648), was found to be -0.9740. The results were presented in Figure 6.

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Insert Figure 6 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12B and students' institutional commitment (r=0.144), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.4155), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.4536), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.1018), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.2068), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.2672), was found to be 0.4536. The results were presented in Figure 7.

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Insert Figure 7 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12C and students' institutional commitment (r=0.186), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.1744), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.8775), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.4804), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.8674), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.4045), was found to be –0.8775. The results were presented in Figure 8.

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Insert Figure 8 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12D and students' institutional commitment (r=0.264), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=-0.0893), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.8674), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=-0.5786), controlling for

covariate Q12E (r=-0.8774), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.5623), was found to be –0.8774. The results were presented in Figure 9.

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Insert Figure 9 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12E and students' institutional commitment (r=0.133), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.3543), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.1089), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.3290), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.2218), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.3409), was found to be 0.3543. The results were presented in Figure 10.

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Insert Figure 10 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12F and students' institutional commitment (r=0.125), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=-0.0785), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.8799), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=-0.5418), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.5445), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.8898), was found to be –0.8898. The results were presented in Figure 11.

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Insert Figure 11 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' ratings of their goal commitment (Q13A) and their academic integration (Q15A). The highest partial correlation linking Q13A and Q15A ($r=0.197$), controlling for covariate Q13B ($r=-0.0786$) , was found to be 0.197. The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' ratings of their institutional commitment (Q13B) and their academic integration (Q15A). The highest partial correlation linking Q13B and Q15A ($r=0.196$), controlling for covariate Q13A ($r= -0.0922$), was found to be 0.196. The results were presented in Figure 12.

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Insert Figure 12 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' ratings of their goal commitment (Q13A) and their social integration (Q15B). The highest partial correlation linking Q13A and Q15B ($r=0.138$), controlling for covariate Q13B ($r=-0.1393$) , was found to be –0.1393. The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' ratings of their institutional commitment (Q13B) and their social integration (Q15B). The highest partial correlation linking Q13B and Q15B ($r=0.460$), controlling for covariate Q13A ($r=0.1458$), was found to be 0.460. The results were presented in Figure 13.

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Insert Figure 13 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between gender and students' current cumulative GPA and students' academic integration (Q15A). The highest partial correlation linking gender and students' academic integration ($r=0.111$), controlling for covariate students' current cumulative GPA ($r=0.1699$), was found to be 0.1699. The highest partial correlation linking current cumulative GPA and students' academic integration ($r=0.315$), controlling for covariate gender ($r=0.2770$), was found to be 0.315. The results were presented in Figure 14.

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Insert Figure 14 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of the emphasis placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F) and students' academic integration (Q15A). The highest partial correlation linking Q12A and students' academic integration ($r=0.175$), controlling for covariate Q12B ($r=-0.1095$), controlling for covariate Q12C ($r=-0.1509$), controlling for covariate Q12D ($r=-0.0335$), controlling for covariate Q12E ($r=-0.0510$), and controlling for covariate Q12F ($r=-0.1515$), was found to be 0.175. The results were presented in Figure 15.

Insert Figure 15 about here

The highest partial correlation linking Q12B and students' academic integration (r=0.234), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.2348), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.2253), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.2787), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.1718), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.2163), was found to be 0.2348. The results were presented in Figure 16.

Insert Figure 16 about here

The highest partial correlation linking Q12C and students' academic integration (r=0.163), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.1478), controlling for covariate Q12B (r= -0.0805), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.0919), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.0038), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.0089), was found to be 0.163. The results were presented in Figure 17.

Insert Figure 17 about here

The highest partial correlation linking Q12D and students' academic integration (r=0.145), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.7480), controlling for covariate Q12B (r= -0.0904), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=-0.0924), controlling for covariate Q12E (r= -0.0428), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.0984), was found to be 0.7480. The results were presented in Figure 18.

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Insert Figure 18 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12E and students' academic integration (r=0.151), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.1477), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=0.0675), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.1422), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.1482), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.1419), was found to be 0.151. The results were presented in Figure 19.

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Insert Figure 19 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12F and students' academic integration (r=0.157), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.1489), controlling for covariate Q12B (r= -0.0473), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.0081), controlling for covariate Q12D

(r=0.0988), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.0080), was found to be 0.157. The results were presented in Figure 20.

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Insert Figure 20 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' living on or off campus, family income and students' social integration (Q15B). The highest partial correlation linking students' living on or off campus and students' social integration (r=-0.104), controlling for covariate parent's educational level (r= -0.1318), controlling for family income (r=-0.2545), was found to be -0.2545. The highest partial correlation linking family income and students' social integration (r=0.156), controlling for covariate parent's educational level (r=0.5110), controlling for students' living on or off campus (r=0.5128), was found to be 0.5128. The highest partial correlation linking parent's educational level and students' social integration (r=0.112), controlling for covariate students' living on/off campus (r=0.1742), controlling for family income (r=-0.1736), was found to be 0.1742. The results were presented in Figure 21.

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Insert Figure 21 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' perception of the emphasis placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes (Q12A to 12F) and students' social integration (Q15B). The highest partial correlation linking Q12A and students' social integration (r=0.164), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=-0.0605), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=-0.2023), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=-0.0165), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=-0.0032), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.0706), was found to be 0.164. The results were presented in Figure 22.

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Insert Figure 22 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12B and students' social integration (r=0.208), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.2348), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.2005), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.2111), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.1677), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.1218), was found to be 0.2348. The results were presented in Figure 23.

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Insert Figure 23 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12C and students' social integration (r=0.163), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.3794), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=0.0058), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.0560), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.0804), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.2290), was found to be 0.3794. The results were presented in Figure 24.

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Insert Figure 24 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12D and students' social integration (r=0.254), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.4230), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=0.0379), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.0091), controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.0792), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=-0.3719), was found to be 0.4230. The results were presented in Figure 25.

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Insert Figure 25 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12E and students' social integration (r=0.122), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.1891), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=0.1116), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.1744), controlling for covariate Q12D

(r=0.1821), and controlling for covariate Q12F (r=0.1465), was found to be 0.1891. The results were presented in Figure 26.

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Insert Figure 26 about here

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The highest partial correlation linking Q12F and students' social integration (r=0.109), controlling for covariate Q12A (r=0.7467), controlling for covariate Q12B (r=0.2906), controlling for covariate Q12C (r=0.4857), controlling for covariate Q12D (r=0.4828), and controlling for covariate Q12E (r=0.3239), was found to be 0.7467. The results were presented in Figure 27.

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Insert Figure 27 about here

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The correlation matrix revealed a significant correlation ($p<0.05$) between students' ratings of their academic integration (Q15A), social integration (Q15B) and their intent-to-persist (Q18). The highest partial correlation linking Q15A and Q18 (r=0.118), controlling for covariate Q15B(r=-0.0935), was found to be 0.118. The highest partial correlation linking Q15B and Q18 (r=0.249), controlling for covariate Q15A(r= -0.2845), was found to be 0.249. The results were presented in Tables 12I and Figure 28.

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Insert Table 12I and Figure 28 about here

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The final path analysis was presented in Figure 29.

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Insert Figure 29 about here

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## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

An additional dimension of this study attempted to find out the reasons why students intended to persist or not persist at the University of Oklahoma. This was addressed in Question 19 of the survey instrument which asked, "Give the reasons for why you are coming back or not coming back to OU." In line with the purpose of this study, the comments given by students were identified as positive or negative comments under the categories of goal commitment, institutional commitment, academic integration, social integration, quality of programs offered, quality of faculty and service staff, overall image of the institution, physical environment, and personal reasons. The frequency and percentages of each of these comments were computed and analyzed. The results were presented in Table 13A and 13B.

A total of 1371 comments were stated in the 669 responses. Out of these 1371 comments, 1256 (91.6 percent) were positive reasons for choosing to return to OU and 115 (8.4 percent) were negative comments for choosing not to return to OU. Among the

positive reasons stated for choosing to return to OU, 267 (21.3 percent) of them were due to institutional commitment (stating that they derived enjoyment for their involvement/participation in social activities), 201 (16.0 percent) of them were due to quality of programs offered, 186 (14.8 percent) of them were due to personal reasons (stating the reasons as proximity to home, personal preferences, parent's association with the school and inertia – "I'm already here"), 176 (14.0 percent) of them were due to the overall image of the institution (stating that they were proud to be a Sooner, and that they liked the image of OU's football team winning national championships), 115 (9.2 percent) of them were due to goal commitment (stating that their goal was to get their degree from OU), 111 (8.8 percent) of them were due to social integration (stating their ability to integrate with diversity on campus), 73 (5.8 percent) of them were due to reduced costs (stating the availability of scholarship opportunities), 46 (3.7 percent) of them were due to academic integration (stating their satisfaction with their good grades at OU and ability to keep up with the academic work), 43 (3.4 percent) of them were due to quality of faculty (stating that faculty were knowledgeable) and service staff (stating that they were helpful), and 38 (3.0 percent) of them were due to physical environment (stating that OU was a pleasant and clean campus).

Among the negative reasons stated for choosing not to return to OU, 40 (34.8 percent) of them were due to personal reasons (stating that they missed home as a result of non-proximity to home relocation or were moving out of Oklahoma to another state), 26 (22.6 percent) of them were due to difficulty with academic integration (stating their inability to keep up with academic work), 16 (13.9 percent) of them were due to costs

(stating the non-availability of appropriate financial aid), 13 (11.3 percent) of them were due to difficulty with social integration (stating their inability to adjust among their peers, and dissatisfaction with the Greek system), 10 (8.7 percent) of them were due to non-availability of programs offered (stating that the majors they wished to pursue were not offered at OU), 6 (5.2 percent) of them were due to the overall image of the institution (stating that OU lacked prominence in national ranking), 3 (2.6 percent) of them were due to lack of institutional commitment (stating an overemphasis on sports and not academics), 1 (0.9 percent) of them was due to dissatisfaction with quality of service staff (stating that the service staff was not helpful), none were due to physical environment and lack of goal commitment.

# CHAPTER 5

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist. The six brand identity attributes assumed to be most applicable to the field of higher education were (a) vision of the institution's brand identity, (b) brand-customer relationship, (c) total employee commitment, (d) quality of programs, (e) commitment of financial resources, and (f) pricing. The factors affecting students' intent-to-persist were obtained from Tinto's (1996) findings and included students' goal and institutional commitment, and their academic and social integration.

This chapter outlined the discussion of the results according to the research questions, followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The first research question, "What were the students' perceptions of each of the six proposed brand identity attributes, namely: (i) vision of the institution's brand identity (as reflected in the institution's mission statement), (ii) brand-customer relationship (with reference to the relationship between the institution's service providers and students, manifested in the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services), iii) total employee commitment (with reference to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students), (iv) quality of programs (with reference to the academic and non-academic programs and activities

offered), v) commitment of financial resources (with reference to financial resources to promote its brand identity), vi) pricing (with reference to total educational costs paid by students)?" was addressed by the ratings of students' perception of the importance that OU placed on: (a) brand identity as stated in its mission statement?, (b) the relationship of its service providers to students?, (c) total employee commitment?, (d) quality of its academic and non-academic programs?, (e) financial resources to make known its brand identity, and (f) making education affordable to the student" (Q12A to 12F).

The mean ratings for students' perception of the importance placed by OU on each of the brand identity attributes were in the range of 3.47 to 4.00, which indicated that the freshman perceived OU to have placed above average importance on each of these six brand identity attributes. Within the six brand identity attributes, the results revealed that students perceived OU to be placing the greatest importance on quality of programs (mean of 4.22), followed by vision of OU's brand identity (mean of 4.00), total employee commitment (mean of 3.87), brand-customer relationship (mean of 3.85), commitment of financial resources (mean of 3.75), and pricing (mean of 3.47).

From the above research findings, we could infer that students at OU were able to recognize OU's brand identity (what the university wanted to be known for) from OU's mission statement. This inference was consistent with findings from my MBA thesis on *Global Brand Marketing and Development* (1995) which concluded that companies which aspired to be brand-oriented companies needed to state explicitly their brand identity in their mission statements. Similarly, institutions of higher education which attempt to build their brand image should endeavor to use their mission statements to

reflect and communicate their brand identity to their students. Based on this finding, it would be worth the money and effort for OU to continue attempting to project its brand image and communicate it clearly through its mission statement since students' awareness of its brand image would continue to be strengthened.

The research findings also revealed that among the six brand identity attributes, students perceived OU's greatest emphasis to be on the quality of its academic and non-academic programs. This was found to be consistent with President Boren's attempt to project the brand image of the University of Oklahoma as an excellent institution. President Boren used promotional TV spots and his image as President to personify excellence in the arts, academics and athletics of OU. Based on President Boren's promotional focus and findings from students' perception, we could infer that OU had been successful in communicating its emphasis on the quality of its programs to its students, as part of its brand identity image. It would be advantageous for OU's administrators to continue their emphasis on their program quality in the light of this research finding.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The second research question, "How did the students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes vary by the following student characteristics, namely age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, pre-entry attributes (specifically high school grades), current academic performance (specifically cumulative grade-point average), receipt of financial aid, family income, and parents' educational background?" was addressed by analyzing to see if age, gender, ethnicity, living on or off campus, high

school GPA, current cumulative GPA, status of financial aid, family income, and either parents' highest educational attainment had any significant effects on each of the six brand identity attributes (Q1, 2, 3, 5 to Q10).

Students' gender was found to have a significant difference on students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students. Since this finding revealed that males and female freshman differed in their perception of the importance that OU placed on its brand-customer relationship, it would be useful for OU's service providers to conduct further research to explore ways in which they could better serve the different genders.

Students' high school GPA was found to be have a significant difference on students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the commitment of its financial resources to promote its brand identity. It is conceivable that students with higher GPA were more "brand conscious." They were therefore more inclined to recognize the importance that OU had placed in investing financial resources to promote its brand identity when compared to those with lower GPA. Students with higher and lower GPA might be similar to the more affluent and less affluent customers of branded products respectively. More affluent customers presumably received better education, had higher GPA, and because of their higher earning capacity, tended to be more brand conscious. These affluent customers would naturally recognize the importance of companies investing financial resources to promote the brand image.

Students' financial aid status had a significant difference on students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students. Students

who received or did not receive financial aid differed in their perception of the importance that OU placed on making education affordable to the students. It would be conceivable that students who had received financial aid would be more inclined to perceive that OU had placed a greater emphasis on making education affordable to the students than students who did not receive financial aid.

Students' current cumulative GPA had a significant positive correlation with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its brand identity emphasis. From this, it would be conceivable that students with a higher GPA had a higher perception of the importance placed by OU on its brand identity emphasis. Students who performed better academically could be perceived as being more brand conscious and therefore were paying more attention to OU's brand identity emphasis.

Students with higher parental educational attainment were found to have a positive correlation with their perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students. It would be conceivable from this finding that students with more highly educated parents (who believed in academic pursuits for their children) perceived that OU has placed importance on making education accessible to them. In the light of this finding, it might be useful for future informational campaigns to be aware of the need to stress OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students whose parents had low educational attainment as well. By so doing, the enrollment opportunities and persistence of the latter group of students might be increased.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

The third research question, "What were the students' perception of: (a) their goal commitment (with reference to how important students value their college education and getting their college degree), (b) their institutional commitment (with reference to students' dedication to their college in terms of their participation in academic and social activities)?" was addressed by the ratings of students' perceptions of their goal and institutional commitment (Q13 A and 13B).

The results revealed that students were very committed to pursuing their college education and getting their degree (mean of 4.73). The students' ratings for their dedication to OU in terms of their participation in academic and social activities (institutional commitment) ranked lower than their goal commitment (mean of 3.97 compared to 4.73). A comparison was made of this research result with students' comments for choosing to persist at OU. Out of the total of ten positive reasons listed by students, institutional commitment had 267 responses (21.3 percent) and ranked as the most important, as contrasted to goal commitment which had 115 responses (or 8.4 percent) and ranked as the fifth most important. The results implied that while students perceived their goal commitment to be of a higher ranking than their institutional commitment, they ranked their institutional commitment as a more important reason for choosing to persist at OU.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

The fourth research question, "How did the students' perception of the six brand identity attributes interact with students' perception of: (a) their goal, and (b) their

institutional commitment?" was addressed by students' ratings of their perception of the effects that each brand identity attribute had on their goal commitment and institutional commitment (Q14A to 14F).

The next section discussed the results of the effects of students' perception of the six brand identity attributes on students' goal commitment.

## EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIX BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES ON STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

The results revealed that students perceived that OU's emphasis on its brand identity, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of its academic and non-academic programs and activities and OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students had significant effects on their goal commitment.

This research result implied that students' goal commitment would be increased if OU were to: (a) devote more effort to increase its brand identity emphasis, (b) improve the overall dedication of its faculty and staff to OU and students, (c) enhance the quality of its academic and non-academic programs and activities, and (d) devote more resources to make education affordable to the students. Based on this research finding, it might be worth the effort for OU to explore how it could provide: (a) more aggressive publicity of its brand image, (b) better staff development, (c) improvements in the quality of academic and non-academic programs (by hiring better quality professors and/or enhancing the learning environment), (e) more financial aid to students.

As mentioned in chapter one, we have often heard the argument by university leaders that higher education was not a product and that business practices were not applicable to academe. The finding of this research revealed that based on students'

perception, four of the six brand identity attributes (namely, an institution's emphasis on its brand identity, the total employee commitment, the quality of its academic and non-academic programs, and making education affordable to their students) were found to have significant effects on their goal commitment. Based on Tinto's (1996) findings, students who have a higher goal commitment would ultimately be more likely to persist. It would therefore be worth the effort for college administrators to consider ways to focus on these four relevant brand identity attributes, especially since persistence is such a crucial concern for universities.

When all the brand identity attributes were taken as a group, there was a significant positive correlation between students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the quality of its academic and non-academic programs on students' goal commitment. Based on this research finding, the quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities offered would continue to constitute an important component of an institution's brand identity, since this would have a significant effect on students' goal commitment; and as stated in earlier paragraphs, the quality of programs offered ranked as the second highest positive comment (201 out of 1371 comments or 14.7 percent) stated by students.

The next section discussed the effects of students' perception of the six brand identity attributes on students' institutional commitment.

## EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIX BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES ON STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

The results revealed students' perception that all the six brand identity attributes had a positive correlation with students' institutional commitment (dedication to OU in terms of their participation in academic and social activities). When all the brand identity attributes were taken as a group, students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity, their relationship with OU's service providers, and OU's quality of its academic and non-academic programs and activities had significant effects on students' institutional commitment. Students who perceived OU as having placed greater emphasis on its brand identity presumably took greater pride in being associated with OU and were therefore more dedicated and ready to participate in the university's academic and social activities. They therefore perceived that OU's emphasis on its brand identity had a positive effect on their institutional commitment. Students who were satisfied with the services rendered by OU's service providers (as a result of dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students) were more likely to have a higher institutional commitment. If students perceived OU's academic and non-academic programs to be of a high quality, it would ultimately result in an increased institutional commitment. Based on the above findings, it would be worth the effort for college administrators who are focused on increasing their students' institutional commitment to focus on activities which would increase their students' loyalty and pride with the institution. Also, such college administrators should continue to focus on improving the quality of their services to students and continually aim at improving the quality of their program offerings.

## RESEARCH QUESTION 5

The fifth research question, "What were the students' perception of: (a) their level of academic integration (with reference to ability to keep up with their academic work and the level of satisfaction with their academic work), (b) their level of social integration (with reference to students' ability and willingness to fit in on campus, and their level of satisfaction with the extent of their participation in social activities)?" was addressed by students' ratings of their level of academic and social integration (Q15A and Q15B). The results revealed that students' perception of their academic integration and social integration ranked slightly above average (mean of 3.80 and 3.85 respectively). The results seemed to indicate that OU administrators might need to work to improve the students' academic and social integration. Amongst the list of ten positive comments given by students for choosing to persist at OU, social integration ranked as the sixth most important reason (111 or 8.8%) and academic integration ranked as the eighth most important (46 or 3.7%). Out of the eight negative comments stated by students for choosing not to persist at OU, difficulty with academic integration ranked as the second most important reason (26 comments or 22.6%), and difficulty with social integration ranked as the fourth most important (13 comments or 11.3%).

## RESEARCH QUESTION 6

The sixth research question asked, "How did students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes interact with their perceptions of: (a) their levels of academic integration; and (b) their levels of social integration?" was addressed by students' ratings

of the effects that each brand identity attribute had on their academic and social integration (Q16A and Q16F).

The next section discussed the effects of students' perception of each of the six brand identity attributes on their levels of academic integration.

## EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIX BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

The results revealed that students' perception of all the six brand identity attributes (namely OU's emphasis on its brand identity attributes, students' relationship with OU's service providers, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity, OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students) had a positive correlation with students' level of academic integration.

When all these six brand identity attributes were considered as a group, OU's total employee commitment and OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students were found to have significant effects on students' academic integration. In this research, total employee commitment referred to the overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students. The findings revealed that students' ability to keep up with their academic work and satisfaction with their academic work would increase if OU increased its overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students. Interpreted in another way, if students perceived that they were given the assistance and support needed by proactive faculty involvement and encouragement from support staff, they would conceivably perform better academically. Based on the above findings, college

administrators should be encouraged to boost the dedication of faculty and staff since improved total employee commitment was found to improve students' academic integration. In the light of this research finding, it would be a useful reminder to service providers such as staff in housing, financial aid, student services, academic support, food services to continue focusing on "student-centered" services.

Intuitively, the reason for positive correlation between OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students and academic integration could be the existence in the students' minds of a contract that "the university had enough faith in me and my abilities to reward me with financial aid; therefore I must try my best to live up to this faith in me and do well academically." Hence, as students' perception of the availability of financial aid increased, so would their level of academic integration. To be sure, the availability of financial aid would lead to a higher level of motivation among the students to excel academically and to a higher level of academic integration.

The next section discussed the effects of students' perception of the six brand identity attributes on students' social integration.

## EFFECTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIX BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES ON STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

The results revealed that students' perception of all the six brand identity attributes (namely OU's emphasis on its brand identity attributes, students' relationship with OU's service providers, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, OU's financial resources to promote

its brand identity, OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students) had a positive correlation with students' level of social integration.

When the brand identity attributes were considered as a group, OU's emphasis on its brand identity, OU's quality of its academic and non-academic programs, and OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity were found to have significant effects on students' social integration. It would be worth the effort for institutions of higher education to evaluate the importance they place on their brand identity and the quality of their academic and non-academic programs and activities, since these research findings indicated that these brand identity attributes had significant effects on students' institutional and social commitment. Based on these findings, students' ability and willingness to fit in on campus and their satisfaction with their participation in social activities increased when they perceived that OU's emphasis on its brand identity as well as the university's financial resources to promote its brand identity increased.

RESEARCH QUESTION 7

The seventh research question, "How did the students' perception of their levels of academic and social integration affect their intent-to-persist?" was addressed by students' ratings of their perception of the effects that each brand identity attribute had on their intent-to-persist (Q17). The results revealed that students perceived that their intent-to-persist was positively correlated to their levels of academic and social integration. This finding echoed Tinto's (1996) findings that social and academic integration were factors affecting students' persistence. According to Tinto, students' academic and social experiences helped with the students' integration, which then fostered the students'

attachments. College administrators should be encouraged to devise strategies that would assist the students to better cope with their academic work (such as tutoring by seniors) and social adjustments (such as encouraging mentoring or one-to-one contact with on campus residence faculty as well as regular rapport with counselors).

## RESEARCH QUESTION 8

The eighth research question, "How did the students' characteristics, brand identity attributes, students' goal and institutional commitment, students' level of academic and social integration jointly interact to affect students' intent-to-persist?" was addressed using partial correlation to create a path analysis model to find the highest correlation between each of these variables. The discussion of the results of this research question was based on analysis of the correlation between the significant variables.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES

As mentioned in the earlier discussion on the findings to research question 2, current cumulative GPA had a moderately strong positive correlation with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its brand identity (Q12A). The higher the students' GPA scores, the higher would be their perception of OU's emphasis of brand identity and vice versa.

Gender was found to have a weak positive correlation with students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of OU's service providers to students (Q12B). Although this correlation was weak, it would still be advantageous for OU's college administrators to be aware that gender differences did have some level of

significance in the way male and female students perceived the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services.

The independent variables (students' financial aid status and the students whose parents had differing levels of educational attainment) were found to have a weak negative correlation with the dependent variable (students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to students) (Q12F). Put in another way, students without financial aid and whose parents' educational attainment levels were lower perceived that the institution had placed greater emphasis in making education affordable to them. What could not be identified from the survey instrument was whether the classification of the financial aid status was need-based or academic-based scholarships, and therefore, we were only able to generalize from these findings.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES (Q12A to Q12F) AND GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities were found to be highly negatively correlated with students' goal commitment. These unexpected negatively correlated findings were attributed to the negatively skewed data on students' ratings of their goal commitment ($s^3 = -2.716$). The scatter plot diagrams and descriptive statistics of Q13A were presented in Figures 30 and 31.

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Insert Figures 30 and 31 about here

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The scatter plots of goal commitment vs. the significant brand identity attributes, Q12A, Q12B, Q12C, Q12D and Q12E confirmed the uneven distribution of scores. As a result of the skewed data on students' rating of their goal commitment, the finding was not found to reflect accurately the expected positive correlation between students' perception of the importance of the above brand identity attributes and the rating of their goal commitment.

It could be conceived, however, based on the findings addressing research question 4 (which asked for students' ratings of how each of the brand identity attributes affected their goal commitment) that students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity, its total employee commitment, OU's quality of its academic and non-academic programs and activities, and OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students had a correlation with students' rating of their goal commitment. Further research findings conducted with more normally distributed data might be necessary to regenerate the correlation analysis.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES (Q12A to Q12F) AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, and OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students were found to be highly negatively correlated with students' institutional commitment. These unexpected negatively correlated findings were also analyzed by examining the scatter plot diagrams

of institutional commitment vs. the significant brand identity attributes Q12A, Q12C, Q12D and Q12E. The scatter plot diagrams were presented in Figure 30.

The unexpected negative correlation results were attributed to the negatively skewed data on students' ratings of their institutional commitment ($s^3 = -0.949$). The scatter plots of institutional commitment vs. the significant brand identity attributes confirmed the uneven distribution of scores. The skewed data on students' rating of their institutional commitment, did not accurately reflect the expected positive correlation between students' perception of the importance of the above brand identity attributes and the rating of their institutional commitment.

However, the findings addressing research question 4 (which asked for students' ratings of how each of the brand identity attributes affected their institutional commitment) revealed that students' perception of OU's emphasis on its brand identity, OU's total employee commitment, OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs, and OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students had a positive correlation with students' rating of their institutional commitment. Further research findings conducted with a different sample group with a more normally distributed response might be necessary to generate the correlation analysis. It could be conceived from this finding that colleges targeting at increasing the students' institutional commitment ought to continue to focus on activities to increase their students' loyalty and pride in being associated with the institution. In addition, continued emphasis might be placed on improving the quality of student services as well as improving the quality of program offerings.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Gender and current cumulative GPA were found to be positively correlated with students' academic integration. The finding was consistent with the reasoning that students with better GPA were better able to keep up with their academic work and were more satisfied with their academic work. According to Tinto's (1996) observation, insufficient academic skill or poor study habits accounted nationally for 30 to 35 percent of all departures. Among the list of negative reasons stated by students for not returning to OU, difficulty with academic integration ranked as the second most important (22.6 percent). College administrators therefore needed to be concerned with increasing students' academic integration in order that they might persist.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES (Q12A to Q12F) AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

All the brand identity attributes were found to have a positive correlation with students' academic integration. Among these correlated brand identity attributes with students' academic integration, students' perception of OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities had the highest correlation. Based on this finding, it would be worth the effort of institutions of higher education to continue to focus on these various brand identity attributes, particularly on improving their program quality. The finding would also imply that students' improved academic integration would increase their perception of their brand identity. It is conceivable that students with better academic integration would attain higher GPA. These students with better GPA would

presumably would be more brand conscious and likely be more intelligent and able to integrate disparate elements of their cultural environment (which includes a greater brand awareness). Therefore, students with better academic integration would tend to have a higher awareness of brand identity.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Students' housing arrangements (living on or off campus) were found to be slightly negatively correlated with students' level of social integration (Q15B). This result implied that students' ability and willingness to fit in on campus and their level of satisfaction with the extent of their participation in social activities increased if students decreased their stay on campus. The possible explanation of this finding might be that as a result of living off campus, students might not have as much time to be exposed to social activities and were therefore less willing to fit in on campus. College administrators might therefore need to focus on activities that might provide off campus students an opportunity to integrate socially.

Students' annual family income was found to be moderately positively correlated with students' level of social integration (Q15B). This result implied that students' social integration increased when their family income increased. A conceivable explanation for this correlation might be that students from wealthier homes might have their financial needs taken care of by their parents. These students would have fewer concerns about their financial resources and would therefore avail themselves to more opportunities for a better social integration.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES (Q12A to Q12F) AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Each of the brand identity attributes (Q12 A to 12F) was found to be positively correlated with students' rating of their social integration. Among the positive correlation, students' ratings of OU's emphasis on making education affordable to the students had the highest correlation, followed by OU's quality of academic and non-academic programs and activities, OU's total employee commitment, students' relationship with OU's service providers, OU's financial resources to promote its brand identity and OU's emphasis on its brand identity. Students' inability to integrate socially was the fourth highest reason (11.3%) listed by students for choosing not to persist at OU. To assist with resolving students' difficulty with social integration, it might be useful, based on this research finding, for college administrators to consider investing their time and effort to devise strategies to strengthen their emphasis on these various brand identity attributes.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A), AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

The partial correlation results revealed a low positive correlation between students' goal commitment and academic integration, and a low negative correlation between students' goal commitment and social integration. As the data for both goal and institutional commitment were skewed, the strength of this correlation might not be an accurate reflection of the expected results. Further analysis with a normally distributed data needed to be done to confirm these results.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT, ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A), AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

The partial correlation results revealed a low positive correlation between students' institutional commitment and academic integration, and a moderately strong positive correlation between students' institutional commitment and social integration. These findings were not able to accurately reflect the true magnitude of these correlations since the data for institutional commitment were skewed. Further research conducted with normally distributed responses might be needed to confirm the magnitude of these positive correlation.

## PARTIAL CORRELATION RESULTS BETWEEN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC (Q15A) AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B) ON STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST (Q18 OR Q11)

The partial correlation results revealed a weak positive correlation between students' academic and social integration with students' intent-to-persist. The data for students' intent-to-persist (Q11 and Q18) were reexamined and found to be skewed ($s^3$=-3.125 and 3.001 respectively). The data for both Q11 and Q18 which asked the students if they intended to return to OU next semester were found to be consistently skewed. The skewed data prevented an accurate reflection of the magnitude of the correlation. An analysis of the retention rates for first-time freshman, after one year, between 1989 and 1999, at the University of Oklahoma revealed that the retention rates were in the range of 75.3% to 80.0%. The likelihood of respondents' persistence (which was confirmed in students' qualitative comments) was consistent with the exceptional high trends of retention rates of first time freshman at OU.

students' qualitative comments) was consistent with the high trends of retention rates of first time freshman at OU after one year.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The findings on reasons why students intended to persist or not to persist at OU revealed that the majority of the respondents were very likely to persist (91.6 percent). A total of 1371 comments were recorded, which indicated that the respondents were very willing to provide their reasons for their intent-to-persist. A qualitative dimension to this research could be considered in future research to provide additional insight into the research findings.

Goal and institutional commitment, academic and social integration were among the positive reasons for students' decision to persist. This was found to be consistent with the findings by Tinto (1996) which cited similar factors affecting students' persistence. Among the top five positive reasons listed in the students' comments were institutional commitment (19.5 percent), quality of programs offered (14.7 percent), personal reasons (13.6 percent), overall image of the institution (12.8 percent), and goal commitment (8.4 percent).

As these research findings revealed that the overall image of the institution ranked higher than students' goal commitment, academic or social integration in students' reasons for choosing to persist at their institution, it might be worth the effort for colleges to study ways in which their overall image could be improved. Depending on the brand identity of the institution, the overall image of an institution could be focused on having a great football team that would continue to win national championships or it could be

focused on excellence in both academics and sports (Duke University). Enhancing the overall image of the institution would provide greater credibility among its "customers" and thereby, generate greater willingness to continue their association with the institution. Out of the list of ten positive reasons stated, students' institutional commitment to OU received the highest number of responses (267 out of 1256 positive comments). As pointed out by Tinto (1996), students' lack of institutional commitment might be an overwhelming cause for students' departure. It would be useful for college administrators to continue their focus on increasing students' dedication to their institution and participation in academic and social activities in an attempt to increase students' persistence.

Among the personal reasons cited by students were proximity to home, parents' association with the school and inertia – "I'm already here." In attempting to study student persistence, colleges should not neglect to factor these personal reasons as well. The challenge would be to attract students who live within the vicinity to enroll in an institution closer to their home since such students were perceived to be more likely to persist. Also, it would be worth the effort for OU to continue to build its good relations with alumni members as students whose parents were affiliated with the institution tended to be more likely to persist.

Among the other five comments listed by the students were social integration (8.1 percent), affordable costs (5.3 percent), academic integration (3.4 percent), quality of faculty and service staff (3.1 percent), and physical environment (2.8 percent). Tinto's (1996) finding revealed that students who did not possess a high level of commitment to

earning a baccalaureate degree might still have the ability to carry out college work, so goal commitment might not rank as important as students' institutional commitment as a factor affecting students' intent-to-persist. Clearly, the comments stated by the students for their intent-to-persist indicated that institutional commitment ranked higher than goal commitment and this was consistent with Tinto's (1996) conclusions.

Among the top five negative reasons listed in the students' comments were personal reasons (34.8 percent), difficulty with academic integration (22.6 percent), costs (13.9 percent), difficulty with social integration (11.3 percent), and non-availability of programs offered (8.7 percent). Distance from home appeared to be a major deterrent to students' persistence. Institutions of higher education who enrolled students who did not live close to their homes could focus their orientation courses to assist such students cope with loneliness away from home. As suggested by Tinto (1996), students' academic and social experience helped with the students' integration, which then fostered the students' attachments. The inability of students to adjust academically or socially would therefore lead to students' non-persistence.

## FINAL COMMENTS ON THE SAMPLE

The sample in this research comprised a larger sample of females, who were predominately white, aged nineteen, lived on-campus, had higher school GPA of between 3.01 and 4.00, had current cumulative college GPA of between 3.01 and 3.50, were not receiving financial aid, had estimated family annual income of $75,001 and above, and had either parent attaining graduate or professional school. The research results also revealed that this group of respondents were very committed to pursuing their college

education and getting their degree (goal commitment), were dedicated to OU in terms of their participation in academic and social activities (institutional commitment), were predominately very likely to persist and had identified their institutional commitment, quality of OU's programs, personal reasons, overall image of the institution, goal commitment, and social integration to be the six important reasons leading to their intent-to-persist.

## CONCLUSION

The increasing demand in the job market for degree holders and the gap between enrollment and graduation rates in the coming decades will pose a great challenge for colleges to continue their efforts on increasing students' persistence. Literature findings pertaining to student persistence had revealed that students' goal and institutional commitment had an effect on students' academic and social integration, which in turn influenced their persistence. Little however was known about the extent to which brand identity might influence factors affecting students' persistence. The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of the six attributes of brand identity and the relationship of these brand identity attributes to factors affecting their intent-to-persist.

This study provided college administrators with some information about how a college's brand identity was perceived by students. The brand identity attribute ranked highest by students was the importance placed by a college on the quality of its program and non-academic programs. Among the student characteristics, gender, students' financial aid status, housing arrangements (living on or off campus), current cumulative GPA, family's annual income and parents' educational attainment were found to be

correlated with one or more identity attributes identified for this study, namely vision of the institution's brand identity as reflected in its mission statement, brand-customer relationship, total employee commitment, quality of programs, commitment of financial resources and pricing.

All the brand identity attributes were found to have a positive correlation with students' ratings of their academic integration and social integration. Among the student characteristics, gender and students' cumulative GPA were found to be correlated with students' academic integration. Students' housing arrangements (living on or off campus) were found to be negatively correlated with students' level of social integration.

The skewed data on goal and institutional commitment prevented an accurate reflection of the magnitude of the correlation between the brand identity attributes and students' goal and institutional commitment as well as the magnitude of correlation between students' goal and institutional commitment, academic and social integration. Similarly, the skewed data on students' intent-to-persist prevented an accurate reflection of the magnitude of the correlation between students' academic and social integration on students' intent-to-persist.

Among the top five positive reasons for students' intent-to-persist in this study were institutional commitment, quality of programs offered, personal reasons (primarily proximity to home and parents' affiliation with the institution), overall image of the institution, and goal commitment. The top five negative reasons for students' non persistence were personal reasons (distance from home), difficulty with academic

integration, costs, difficulty with social integration, and non-availability of programs offered.

It is hoped that the insights from this research finding would motivate other researchers to explore further how the marketing and development of brand identity of institutions of higher education could further contribute to the progress of their institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the following recommendations for further research emerged:

1. Further research should be conducted to confirm the magnitude of the correlation between students' goal and institution commitment and their perception of the six brand identity attributes as well as the correlation between students' intent-to-persist and their academic and social integration.
2. Further studies should add a qualitative dimension to the research by soliciting verbal feedback from respondents on their perception of brand identity and how that would affect their intent-to-persist. This would provide the researcher with an opportunity to add another dimension to this study.
3. The survey instrument should be redesigned to include:
   (a) more comprehensible questions, within the space restraints, that would capture the intent of the researcher and convey respondents' real views,
   (b) less definition of terms so that respondents can focus on answering the questions,
   (c) an improved layout of the survey questions,

(d) a clearer differentiation between need and academic-based financial aid,

(e) a range of high school GPA and current cumulative GPA for respondents' selection.

4. Future research should attempt to test the reliability of the survey instrument with a larger pilot sample. When working with a smaller pilot sample size, more in-depth interviews should be conducted to enable the researcher to better test the students' comprehensibility of the questions.

5. Future research may need to factor in the timing to conduct the research since the beginning of the second semester might still be too early for students to reflect accurately on their intent-to-persist. Also, to ensure a more randomized sample, the survey should be administered to more sections of the ENGLISH 1213 classes.

6. In addition to literature findings on goal and institutional commitment, academic and social integration, additional factors such as quality of program offerings, personal reasons (particularly proximity to home), overall image of the institution, physical environment, costs of going to college should be considered when analyzing student persistence.

7. Future research should explore further into how various marketing strategies adopted by institutions of higher education could effectively communicate the institution's brand identity to its students/"customers".

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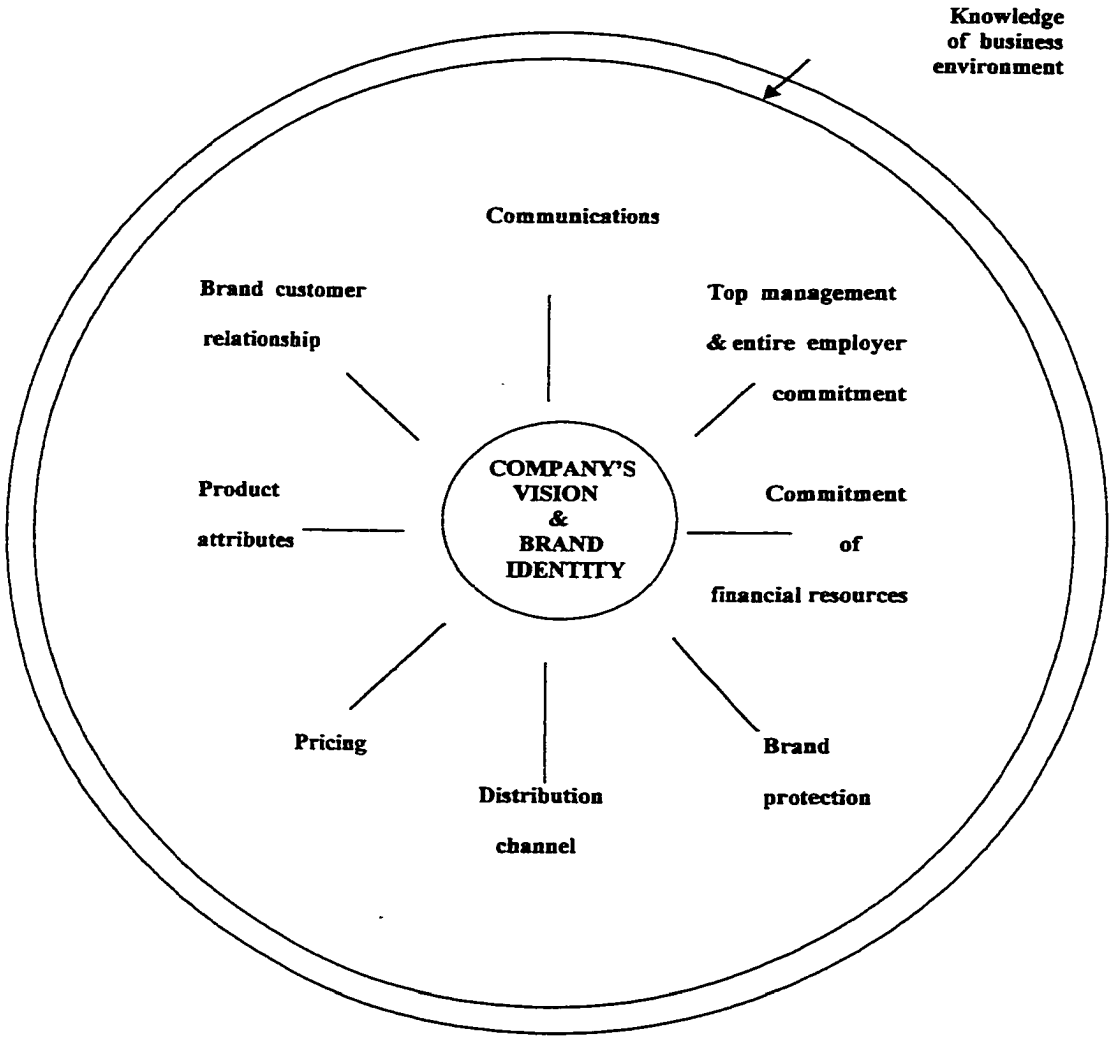
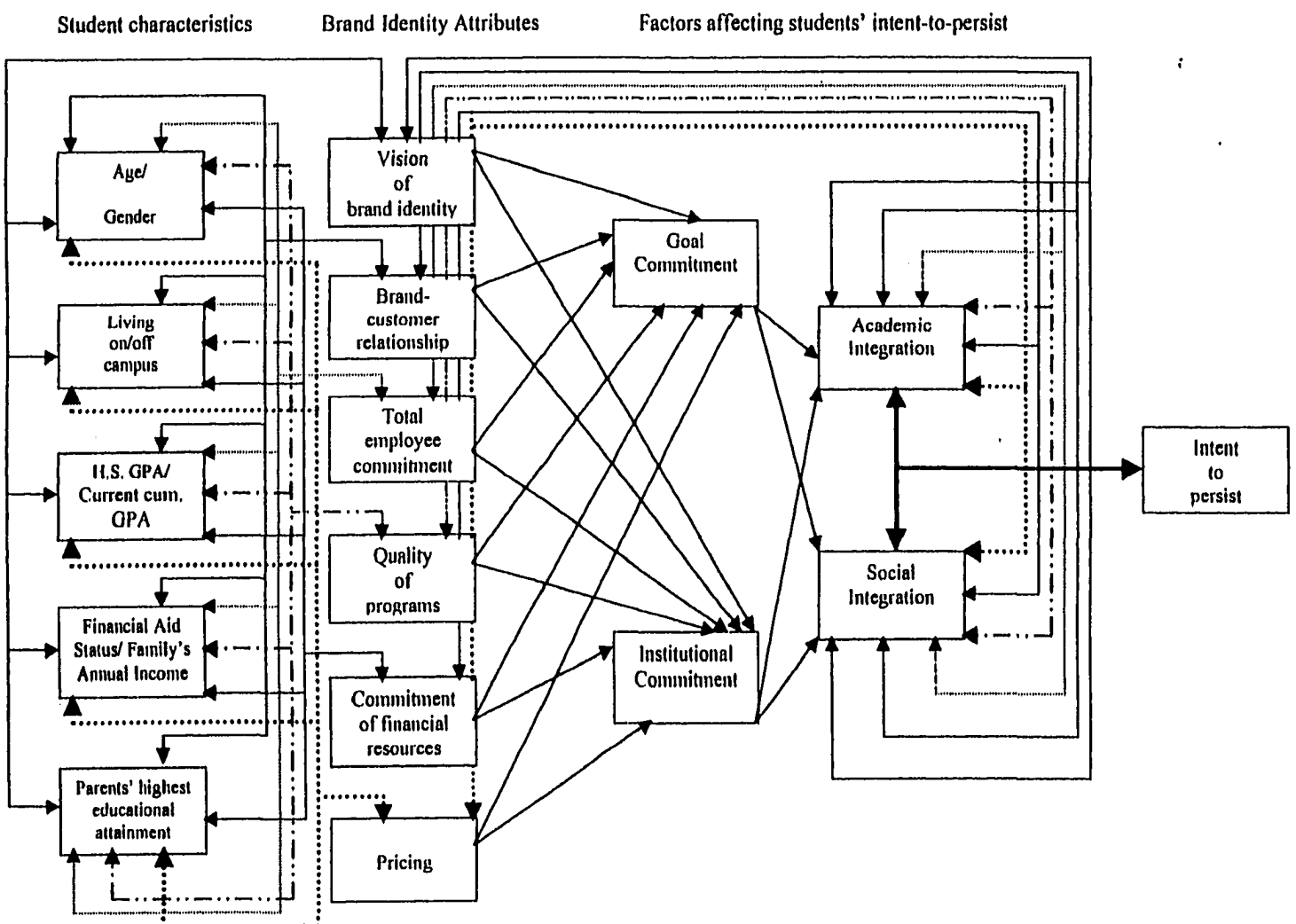
Appendix A

# GLOBAL BRAND DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING



## The concept of brand identity in relation to student's intent-to-persist

Appendix B



Appendix C

***STUDENT SURVEY 2001***

1. Age: ____

2. Gender: ____ MALE
____ FEMALE

3. What is your ethnic background?
____ WHITE
____ BLACK
____ HISPANIC
____ NATIVE AMERICAN
____ OTHER
____ ASIAN-AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
____ NON-US CITIZEN OR NON-PERMANENT RESIDENT

4. Based on your earned credit hours (ECH), what is your current student classification?
____ FRESHMAN (1-29 ECH)
____ SOPHOMORE (30-59 ECH)
____ JUNIOR (60-89 ECH)
____ SENIOR (90 & ABOVE ECH)
____ OTHER

5. What was your primary housing arrangement during your first academic year?
____ RESIDENCE HALL
____ OFF-CAMPUS PRIVATE APARTMENT/HOUSE
____ LIVING WITH PARENTS, LEGAL GUARDIANS, RELATIVES
____ OTHER

6. What was your high school grade-point average?
____ ON A 4-POINT SCALE

7. What is your current college cumulative grade-point average?
____ ON A 4-POINT SCALE

8. Did you receive financial aid in this year?
____ YES
____ NO

9. Please indicate your estimated family's annual income.
____ UNDER $20,000
____ $20,001 TO $35,000
____ $35,001 TO $50,000
____ $50,001 TO $75,000
____ $75,001 AND ABOVE

*please turn the page over ...*

**10.** What is the highest educational attainment of either of your parents?

___ LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
___ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
___ SOME COLLEGE
___ COLLEGE GRADUATE
___ GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

**USE A RATING SCALE IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LEAST* LIKELY TO ENROLL AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *MOST* LIKELY TO ENROLL:**

**11.** Will you enroll for courses next semester at OU? **1 2 3 4 5**

*FOR Q.12:*

**Brand identity** *refers to what OU wants to be known for.* **The mission of OU is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research and creative activity and service to the state and society.**

**Relationship with OU's service providers** *refer to the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services.*

**Total employee commitment** *refers to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students.*

**USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LEAST* IMPORTANT AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *MOST* IMPORTANT FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

**12.** Based on your understanding, how much importance do you think OU places on:

A) ITS BRAND IDENTITY AS STATED IN ITS MISSION STATEMENT ? **1 2 3 4 5**
B) THE RELATIONSHIP OF ITS SERVICE PROVIDERS TO STUDENTS? **1 2 3 4 5**
C) TOTAL EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT? **1 2 3 4 5**
D) QUALITY OF ITS ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS? **1 2 3 4 5**
E) FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO PROMOTE ITS BRAND IDENTITY? **1 2 3 4 5**
F) MAKING EDUCATION AFFORDABLE TO THE STUDENT? **1 2 3 4 5**

**USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LOWEST* VALUE AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *HIGHEST* VALUE:**

**13.** How would you rate:

A) THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VALUE YOU PLACE ON YOUR COLLEGE EDUCATION AND IN GETTING YOUR DEGREE? **1 2 3 4 5**

B) YOUR DEDICATION TO OU IN TERMS OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES? **1 2 3 4 5**

*FOR Q.14:*

**Brand identity** *refers to what OU wants to be known for.*

**Relationship with OU's service providers** *refer to the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services.*

**OU's total employee commitment** *refers to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students.*

**Goal commitment** *refers to how important you value your college education and getting your degree.*

**Institutional commitment** *refers to your dedication to OU in terms of your participation in academic and social activities.*

**USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LOWEST* VALUE AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *HIGHEST* VALUE:**

14. Based on your perception, how do the following affect your goal commitment and institutional commitment?

| | | EFFECT ON YOUR GOAL COMMITMENT? | EFFECT ON YOUR INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT? |
|---|---|---|---|
| A) | OU'S EMPHASIS ON ITS BRAND IDENTITY | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B) | YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OU'S SERVICE PROVIDERS | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| C) | OU'S TOTAL EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| D) | OU'S QUALITY OF ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| E) | OU'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO PROMOTE ITS BRAND IDENTITY | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| F) | OU'S EMPHASIS ON MAKING EDUCATION AFFORDABLE TO THE STUDENTS | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

**USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LOWEST* VALUE AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *HIGHEST* VALUE:**

15. How would you rate:

A) YOUR ABILITY TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR ACADEMIC WORK AND THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR ACADEMIC WORK? 1 2 3 4 5

B) YOUR ABILITY TO AND WILLINGNESS TO FIT IN ON CAMPUS AND YOUR LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE EXTENT OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES? 1 2 3 4 5

*please turn the page over ...*

*FOR Q.16 & 17:*

**Brand identity** *refers to what OU wants to be known for.*

**Relationship with OU's service providers** *refer to the professionalism of services provided to students on campus and students' satisfaction with those services.*

**OU's total employee commitment** *refers to overall dedication of faculty and staff to OU and students.*

**Academic integration** *refers to your ability to keep up with your academic work and the level of satisfaction with your academic work.*

**Social integration** *refers to your ability to and willingness to fit in on campus and your level of satisfaction with the extent of your participation in social activities.*

**USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LOWEST* VALUE AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *HIGHEST* VALUE:**

**16.** Based on your perception, how do the following affect your academic integration and social integration?

| | | EFFECT ON YOUR ACADEMIC INTEGRATION? | EFFECT ON YOUR SOCIAL INTEGRATION? |
|---|---|---|---|
| A) | OU'S EMPHASIS ON ITS BRAND IDENTITY | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B) | YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OU'S SERVICE PROVIDER | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| C) | OU'S TOTAL EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| D) | OU'S QUALITY OF ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| E) | OU'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO PROMOTE ITS BRAND IDENTITY | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| F) | OU'S EMPHASIS ON MAKING EDUCATION AFFORDABLE TO THE STUDENTS | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Q. 17 & 18: USE A RATING SCALE, IN WHICH 1 REPRESENTS THE *LEAST* LIKELY AND 5 REPRESENTS THE *MOST* LIKELY:**

**17.** Based on your perception, how would the following affect your intention to come back to OU next year?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A) | YOUR LEVEL OF ACADEMIC INTEGRATION | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B) | YOUR LEVEL OF YOUR SOCIAL INTEGRATION | 1 2 3 4 5 |

**18.** What is your likelihood of coming back to OU next semester? 1 2 3 4 5

**19.** Give the reasons for why you are coming back or not coming back to OU.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D

ANALYSIS OF MISSION STATEMENTS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The purpose of this analysis is to assist the researcher in categorizing the mission statements of public institutions of higher education basing on relevant brand identity attributes. The ultimate goal of this exercise is for the researcher to identify and select institutions with high, moderate and low emphases on brand identity, to carry out her research.

PLEASE BASE YOUR RESPONSES ON WHAT IS EXPLICITLY STATED ONLY.

Directions: After reading each mission statement, please rate your response to the following question, on a scale of 1 to 5:

| *0* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *None* | *very low low* | | *moderate* | *above moderate* | *high* |

---

Name of institution: _____ Completed by: _____

As stated in the mission statement, what is the level of emphasis on:

a) the institution's commitment to services to student?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

b) staff and faculty commitment to achievement of the institution's goals?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

c) the quality of its programs?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

d) the institution's commitment of financial resources to achievement of its objectives?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

e) the tuition fees?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

f) the philosophy (specific beliefs, values and philosophical priorities) of the institution?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

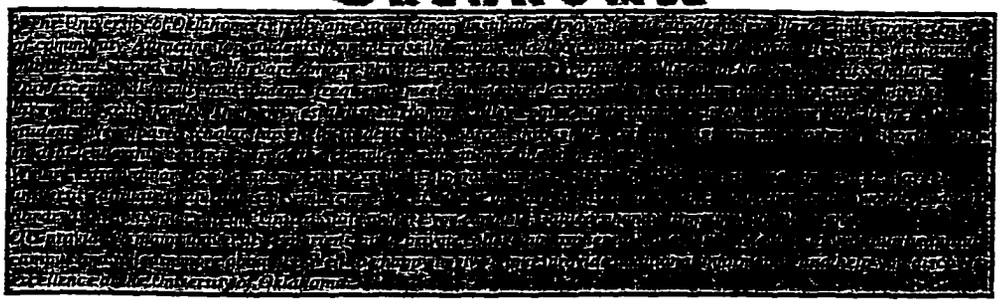
g) the specific location served by the institution?

*0 1 2 3 4 5*

Thank you very much for your kind assistance.

Appendix D

OKLAHOMA



**The mission of the University of Oklahoma is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research and creative activity, and service to the state and society.**

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



**The Mission**

Oklahoma State University, a modern comprehensive land grant university, serves the state, national and international communities by providing its students with exceptional academic experiences and by conducting scholarly research and other creative activities that advance fundamental knowledge. New knowledge is disseminated to the people of Oklahoma and throughout the world.

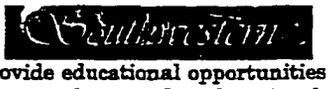


Northwestern Oklahoma State University is a regional university located in Alva, Oklahoma. Northwestern enrolls about 2,000 students each semester and offers bachelor's degree programs in nearly 40 areas of study. Master's degrees are available in education and behavioral science.

Northwestern emphasizes personal attention to its students' academic needs. Small classes and a dynamic, respected faculty allow each student to receive individual attention. organizations, to athletics and campus media.

***NSU MISSION***

Northeastern State University is a comprehensive regional university governed by the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges within a state system coordinated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Its mission is to provide undergraduate and graduate education leading to bachelor's degrees, master's degrees in selected areas, and a doctoral degree in Optometry. NSU is committed to becoming recognized as one of America's outstanding undergraduate public universities. Programs are offered on the main campus in Tahlequah, OK as well as the NSU Muskogee, OK campus and OSU - Tulsa (formerly UCT).



The Mission of Southwestern Oklahoma State University is to provide educational opportunities in higher education that meet the needs of the state and region; contribute to the educational,

economic, and cultural environment; and support scholarly activity. Major areas of study, the general education curriculum, and participation in student activities/organizations provide opportunities for students to obtain skills, knowledge, and cultural appreciation that lead to productive lives and effective citizenship.

Rogers State University

The mission of Rogers State University is to prepare students to achieve professional and personal goals in dynamic local and global communities. Rogers State University provides traditional and innovative learning opportunities and is committed to excellence in teaching and student service.

## Southeastern Oklahoma State University

The purpose of the University is to expose its students to the patterns of thought that civilization has produced through the centuries. This includes examining in detail the way people look at the world and why they look at the world the way they do, focusing on its past, its present, and its future, as well as its laws, its institutions, and its people. In doing so, the University must insure that its students are not bound by what soon will be the past. Students should encounter teachers, courses, and an intellectual atmosphere which presents viable options to the way humankind views the world.

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

The mission of the University of Central Oklahoma is to provide quality undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education opportunities leading to intellectual, social, and disciplinary growth necessary for students to achieve professional and personal goals in an ever-changing global environment.

## ECU

East Central University fosters an environment in which community, students and faculty interact to educate and prepare students for life in a rapidly changing and culturally diverse society. Within this context, East Central has identified five areas of importance in formulating the mission of the university:
1. academic programs; 2. educational support programs; 3.educational enrichment opportunities; 4. special community/regional services; and 5. professional development and research opportunities.

## CAMERON UNIVERSITY

Cameron University is a multi-purpose university whose mission is to offer appropriate educational programs to the people living in its service area of the eleven counties of Southwest Oklahoma. One of Oklahoma's seven regional universities, Cameron is the higher education center of Southwest Oklahoma offering associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs. The university recognizes that the educational process includes the development of the intellectual, cultural, social, physical, moral, and occupational capacities of persons who participate in its programs and activities. The university desires to assist its students and other persons living in its service area in acquiring the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that will enable them to lead creative, productive, and self-fulfilling lives.

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT
Conducted under the auspices of the
University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus

THE CONCEPT OF AN INSTITUTION'S BRAND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST

This first year in college can a challenging experience for you. One of the challenges you may face as a freshmen is academic and social integration on campus, which may be influenced by many factors not within your control. This research is designed to further explore some of these factors that affect your intent-to-persist.

My name is Christine Cobb and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Oklahoma. I especially request your assistance in completing the enclosed questionnaire regarding your perception of OU's brand identity. In this study, brand identity refers to what OU wants to be known for. Intent-to-persist refers to your intention to complete a degree here at OU.

This study is being conducted because I am genuinely interested to find out if freshmen have a knowledge of OU's brand identity, and whether it has any impact on freshmen's intent-to-persist. This research will have significant impact on you as a student as OU implements strategies to improve its delivery of student services.

You are invited to participate in this project on a voluntary basis. There are no penalties if you choose not to participate. The information you provide will remain strictly confidential and the data will be reported in aggregate form only. No names and no individual answers would be mentioned. The data will be destroyed at the end of this research. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Research Administration at 405-325-4757 or irb@ou.edu.

As a token of my appreciation for your efforts, there will be two winners who will each receive a book voucher, each worth $50. To participate in this draw, please provide your email mail address on this consent form and return it with your survey form. The drawing will be witnessed by a member of my dissertation committee during the last week of Spring semester. You will be notified by me through email by the end of Spring semester if you are successful in the drawing.

I sincerely request your cooperation, as one of the selected participants, to be a part of this very important research. However, if you choose not to participate, I would appreciate if you could return the blank forms. If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact me at (405) 325 3680 or via email at chriscobb@ou.edu. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this project.

Christine Cobb
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership, University of Oklahoma

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CONSENT STATEMENT

I, _____ agree to participate in this research project. I am aware of what the project entails and understand I have the liberty to discontinue if I so choose.

_____ _____
Signature Date

_____ Please print your email address to entitle you to the $50 book voucher drawing.

*The University of Oklahoma*

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

January 25, 2001

Ms. Christine Tin Cobb
13518 Vixen Lane
Oklahoma City OK 73131

Dear Ms. Cobb:

Your research application, "The Concept of Brand Identity in Relation to Students' Intent-to-Persist," has been reviewed according to the policies of the Institutional Review Board chaired by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor and found to be exempt from the requirements for full board review. Your project is approved under the regulations of the University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify me and obtain prior approval from the Board for the changes. If the research is to extend beyond 12 months, you must contact this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or informed consent form, and request an extension of this ruling.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wyatt Sedwick

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D.
Administrative Officer
Institutional Review Board

SWS:pw
FY01-157

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
Dr. David Tan, Education

1000 Asp Avenue, Suite 314, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-0430 PHONE: (405) 325-4757 FAX: (405) 325-6029

**David Tan**

**From:** david mair [dmair@ou.edu]
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2001 9:12 AM
**To:** pjwolfe@ou.ou.edu
**Cc:** dtan@ou.edu
**Subject:** Christine Cobb's Research Project

Ms. Cobb has my permission to survey English 1213 classes (approximately 50 sections) for her dissertation research.

David Mair, Director of First-Year Composition

Table 1
Demographics of Sample

| | Sample | % | Sample Mean | sd | Population | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Total*** | 669 | | | | 3,420 | |
| ***Age*** | | | 18.69 | 0.79 | | |
| 17 | 10 | 1.5% | | | | |
| *18* | 271 | 40.5% | | | | |
| 19 | 341 | 51.0% | | | | |
| 20 | 27 | 4.0% | | | | |
| 21 | 6 | 0.9% | | | | |
| 22 and older | 14 | 2.1% | | | | |
| ***Gender Breakdown*** | | | 1.51 | 0.50 | | |
| Male | 326 | 48.7% | | | 1615 | 47.2% |
| Female | 343 | 51.3% | | | 1805 | 52.8% |
| ***Ethnic Background*** | | | | | | |
| White | 507 | 75.8% | 1.58 | 1.20 | 2,547 | 74.5% |
| Black | 61 | 9.1% | | | 240 | 7.0% |
| Hispanic | 25 | 3.7% | | | 132 | 3.9% |
| Native American | 28 | 4.2% | | | 259 | 7.6% |
| Others (including Asian-American/Pacific Islander/ non US Citizen or non Permanent Residents) | 48 | 7.2% | | | 242 | 7.1% |

Table 1 (cont'd)
Demographics of Sample

| | Sample | % | Sample Mean | sd | Population | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Primary Housing Arrangement*** | | | 1.33 | 0.47 | | |
| On campus residence | 448 | 67.0% | | | | |
| Off campus private apartment/house | 221 | 33.0% | | | | |
| ***High School GPA*** | | | 3.71 | 0.40 | 3.52 | |
| <=1.00 | 23 | 3.4% | | | | |
| >=1.10 but <=2.00 | 63 | 9.4% | | | | |
| >=2.01 but <=3.00 | 199 | 28.7% | | | | |
| >=3.01 but <=4.00 | 384 | 57.4% | | | | |
| ***Current college cumulative GPA*** | | | 3.37 | 0.53 | | |
| <=2.50 | 117 | 17.5% | | | | |
| >=2.51but <=3.00 | 135 | 20.2% | | | | |
| >=3.01 but <=3.50 | 225 | 33.6% | | | | |
| >=3.51 but <=4.00 | 192 | 28.7% | | | | |
| ***Receipt of financial aid*** | | | 1.52 | 0.50 | | |
| Yes | 324 | 48.4% | | | | |
| No | 345 | 51.6% | | | | |

Table 1 (cont'd)
Demographics of Sample

| | Sample | % | Sample Mean | sd | Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Estimated family income*** | | | 3.43 | 1.30 | |
| Under $20,000 | 70 | 10.5% | | | |
| $20,001 to $35,000 | 95 | 14.2% | | | |
| $35,001 to $50,000 | 163 | 24.4% | | | |
| $50,001 to $75,000 | 160 | 23.9% | | | |
| $75,001 and above | 181 | 27.1% | | | |
| ***Highest educational attainment of either parent*** | | | | | |
| less than high school graduate | 17 | 2.5% | 3.70 | 1.04 | |
| high school graduate | 70 | 10.5% | | | |
| some college | 182 | 27.2% | | | |
| college graduate | 229 | 24.2% | | | |
| graduate or professional school | 171 | 25.6% | | | |

Table 2

Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the following brand identity attributes

| | | n | Mean | sd |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q12D | Quality of programs | 669 | 4.22 | 0.79 |
| Q12A | Vision of OU's brand identity as reflected in OU's misssion statement | 669 | 4.00 | 0.81 |
| Q12C | Total employee commitment | 669 | 3.87 | 0.78 |
| Q12B | Brand-customer relationship | 669 | 3.85 | 0.86 |
| Q12E | Commitment of financial resources | 669 | 3.75 | 0.99 |
| Q12F | Making education affordable to the students | 669 | 3.47 | 1.12 |

Table 3
ANOVA TEST
Dependent Variable - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:
Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students .
Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity
Q12F - making education affordable to the students

| Variable | Q12B | Q12E | Q12F | f | Levene's test of equality of error variance - Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gender | ** | | | 0.011 | * |
| high school GPA | | ** | | 0.012 | * |
| receipt of financial aid | | | ** | 0.006 | * |

** p<0.05

* p > 0.05

Table 4

Correlational Analysis between student characteristics and students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:

Q12A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement

Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12C - total employee commitment

Q12D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity

Q12F - making education affordable to the student

| Variable | Q12A | Q12B | Q12C | Q12D | Q12E | Q12F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| age | -0.003 | 0.002 | -0.025 | 0.032 | -0.010 | 0.017 |
| gender | 0.065 | 0.112 ** | 0.041 | 0.020 | -0.750 | -0.011 |
| ethnic background | -0.024 | 0.068 | 0.000 | -0.060 | 0.028 | 0.005 |
| primary housing arrangement | -0.460 | 0.021 | 0.021 | -0.048 | 0.029 | 0.059 |
| high school GPA | 0.043 | -0.023 | -0.022 | 0.006 | -0.046 | -0.054 |
| current college cumulative GPA | 0.086 ** | 0.063 | 0.059 | 0.010 | -0.007 | 0.001 |
| receipt of financial aid | 0.024 | 0.075 | 0.041 | 0.007 | 0.021 | 0.080 ** |
| estimated family income | 0.032 | -0.018 | -0.141 | 0.075 | 0.057 | 0.028 |
| highest educational attainment of either parent | 0.037 | 0.009 | -0.109 | 0.046 | 0.008 | 0.085 ** |

** $p<0.05$

Table 5

Students' ratings of their goal and institutional commitment

| | | n | Mean | sd |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q13A | Goal commitment * | 669 | 4.73 | 0.59 |
| Q13B | Institutional commitment ** | 669 | 3.97 | 0.96 |

* - Goal commitment referred to how important students valued their college education and getting their degree.

** - Institutional commitment referred to students' dedication to OU in terms of their participation in academic and social activities.

Table 6

SIMPLE REGRESSION

Dependent Variables - Student's perception of the effects of the following brand identity attribute on their: goal commitment (Q13A); institutional commitment (Q13B)

Independent Variables - Q14A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement
Q14B - the relationship of its service providers to students
Q14C - total employee commitment
Q14D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
Q14E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity
Q14F - making education affordable to the students

| Variables | | Q14A | Q14B | Q14C | Q14D | Q14E | Q14F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q13A | Goal commitment | ** | | ** | ** | | ** |
| Q13B | Institutional commitment | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |

** $p<0.05$

Table 7

MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Dependent Variables - Student's perception of the effects of the following brand identity attribute on their: goal commitment (Q13A); institutional commitment (Q13B)

Independent Variables - Q14A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement
Q14C - total employee commitment
Q14D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

| | Variables | Q14A | Q14C | Q14D | Semi Partial Correlation | Zero order Correlation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q13A | Goal commitment | | | ** | 0.110 | 0.179 |
| Q13B | Institutional commitment | ** | | | 0.171 | 0.356 |
| | | | ** | | 0.073 | 0.269 |
| | | | | ** | 0.178 | 0.335 |

** $p<0.05$

Table 8

Students' ratings of their academic and social integration

| | | n | Mean | sd |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q15A | Academic integration * | 669 | 3.80 | 0.83 |
| Q15B | Social integration ** | 669 | 3.85 | 1.00 |

* - Academic integration referred to the students' ability to keep up with their academic work and the level of satisfaction with their academic work.

** - Social integration referred to their ability to and willingness to fit in on campus and their level of satisfaction with the extent of their participation in social activities.

Table 9

SIMPLE REGRESSION

Dependent variable - Students' perception of the effects of the following brand identity attributes on their: academic integration (Q15A); social integration (Q15B)

Independent Variables -Q16A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement
Q16B - the relationship of its service providers to students
Q16C - total employee commitment
Q16D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
Q16E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity
Q16F - making education affordable to the students

| Variables | Q16A | Q16B | Q16C | Q16D | Q16E | Q16F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q15A Academic integration | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| Q15B Social integration | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |

** $p<0.05$

Table 10

MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Dependent variable - Students' perception of the effect of the following brand identity attributes on their: academic integration (Q15A); social integration (Q15B)

Independent Variables - Q16A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement
Q16C - total employee commitment
Q16D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
Q16E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity
Q16F - making education affordable to the students

| | Variables | Q16A | Q16C | Q16D | Q16E | Q16F | Semi Partial Correlation | Zero order Correlation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q15A | Academic integration | | ** | | | | 0.120 | 0.247 |
| | | | | | | ** | 0.087 | 0.162 |
| Q15B | Social integration | ** | | | | | 0.192 | 0.372 |
| | | | | ** | | | 0.124 | 0.298 |
| | | | | | ** | | -0.108 | 0.182 |

** p<0.05

Table 11

SIMPLE REGRESSION

Dependent variable - Students' perception of their academic integration (Q17A) and social integration (Q18A) on their intent-to-persist

| | Variables | Q17A | Q17B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q18 | Intent-to-persist | ** | ** |

** $p<0.05$

Table 12A

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant brand identity attributes with student characteristics

Q12A - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on its brand identity

Q12B - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12F - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on making education affordable to the students

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Financial Aid Status | Controlling for Parents' educational level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Current cumulative GPA & Q12A | **0.086** | - | - |
| Gender & Q12B | **0.112** | - | - |
| Financial Aid status & Q12F | 0.080 | - | **-0.3000** |
| Parents' educational level & Q12F | 0.085 | **-0.301** | - |

Table 12B

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant brand identity attributes with goal commitment (Q13A)

Q12 A to12E : Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:

Q12A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement

Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12C - total employee commitment

Q12D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Q12A | Q12B | Q12C | Q12D | Q12E |
| Q12A & Q13A | 0.137 | - | -0.9822 | -0.9180 | -0.9000 | **-0.9827** |
| Q12B & Q13A | 0.147 | 0.4406 | - | **0.4520** | 0.0871 | -0.2228 |
| Q12C & Q13A | 0.097 | **-0.9180** | -0.8857 | - | -0.5047 | -0.8788 |
| Q12D & Q13A | 0.158 | -0.1855 | -0.8825 | -0.6212 | - | **-0.8931** |
| Q12E & Q13A | 0.129 | **0.4289** | 0.1163 | 0.3461 | 0.2403 | - |

Table 12C

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant brand identity attributes(Q12A to Q12F) with institutional commitment (Q13B)

Q12 A to 12F : Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:

Q12A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement

Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12C - total employee commitment

Q12D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity

Q12F - making education affordable to the students

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Q12A | Q12B | Q12C | Q12D | Q12E | Q12F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q12A & Q13B | 0.178 | - | **-0.9740** | -0.8900 | -0.8683 | -0.9735 | 0.8648 |
| Q12B & Q13B | 0.144 | 0.4155 | - | **0.4536** | 0.1018 | -0.2068 | 0.2672 |
| Q12C & Q13B | 0.186 | 0.1744 | **-0.8775** | - | -0.4804 | -0.8674 | -0.4045 |
| Q12D & Q13B | 0.264 | -0.0893 | -0.8674 | -0.5786 | - | **-0.8774** | -0.5623 |
| Q12E & Q13B | 0.133 | **0.3543** | -0.1089 | 0.3290 | -0.2218 | - | 0.3409 |
| Q12F & Q13B | 0.125 | -0.0785 | -0.8799 | -0.5418 | -0.5445 | **-0.8898** | - |

Table 12D

Partial Correlation Analysis of goal commitment (Q13A), institutional commitment (Q13B) and academic integration (Q15A)

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Q13A | Controlling for Q13B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q13A & Q15A | **0.197** | - | -0.0786 |
| Q13B & Q15A | **0.196** | -0.0922 | - |

Table 12E

Partial Correlation Analysis of goal commitment (Q13A), institutional commitment (Q13B) and social Integration (Q15B)

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Q13A | Controlling for Q13B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q13A & Q15B | 0.138 | - | **-0.1393** |
| Q13B & Q15B | **0.460** | 0.1458 | - |

Table 12F

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant student characteristics and brand identity attributes with academic integration (Q15A)

Q12A to Q12F : Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:

Q12A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement

Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12C - total employee commitment

Q12D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity

Q12F - making education affordable to the students

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Current cumulative GPA | Controlling for Gender | Q12A | Q12B | Q12C | Q12D | Q12E | Q12F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gender & Q15A | 0.111 | **0.1699** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| current cumulative GPA and Q15A | **0.315** | - | 0.2770 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Q12A & Q15A | **0.175** | - | - | - | -0.1095 | -0.1509 | -0.0335 | -0.0510 | -0.1515 |
| Q12B & Q15A | 0.234 | - | - | **0.2348** | - | 0.2253 | -0.2787 | 0.1718 | 0.2163 |
| Q12C & Q15A | **0.163** | - | - | 0.1478 | -0.0805 | - | 0.0919 | 0.0038 | 0.0089 |
| Q12D & Q15A | 0.145 | - | - | **0.7480** | -0.0904 | -0.0924 | - | -0.0428 | -0.0984 |
| Q12E & Q15A | **0.151** | - | - | 0.1477 | 0.0675 | 0.1422 | 0.1482 | - | 0.1419 |
| Q12F & Q15A | **0.157** | - | - | 0.1489 | -0.0473 | 0.0081 | 0.0988 | 0.0080 | - |

Table 12G

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant student characteristic variables with social integration (Q15B)

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Parent's highest educational level | Controlling for Living on/off campus | Family income |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| living on or off campus & Q15B | -0.104 | -0.1318 | - | **-0.2545** |
| family income & Q15B | 0.156 | 0.5110 | **0.5128** | - |
| parents' highest educational attainment & Q15B | 0.112 | - | **0.1742** | -0.1736 |

Table 12H

Partial Correlation Analysis of significant brand identity attributes with social integration (Q15B)

Q12 A to Q 12 F : Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on:

Q12A - its brand identity as stated in its mission statement

Q12B - the relationship of its service providers to students

Q12C - total employee commitment

Q12D - the quality of its academic and non-academic programs

Q12E - its financial resources to promote its brand identity

Q12F - making education affordable to the students

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Q12A | Q12B | Q12C | Q12D | Q12E | Q12F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q12A & Q15B | **0.164** | - | -0.0605 | -0.2023 | -0.0165 | -0.0032 | -0.0706 |
| Q12B & Q15B | 0.208 | **0.2348** | - | 0.2005 | 0.2111 | 0.1677 | 0.1218 |
| Q12C & Q15B | 0.163 | **0.3794** | 0.0058 | - | 0.0560 | 0.0804 | -0.2290 |
| Q12D & Q15B | 0.254 | **0.4230** | 0.0379 | 0.0091 | - | 0.0792 | -0.3719 |
| Q12E & Q15B | 0.122 | **0.1891** | 0.1116 | 0.1744 | 0.1821 | - | 0.1465 |
| Q12F & Q15B | 0.109 | **0.7467** | 0.2906 | 0.4857 | 0.4828 | 0.3239 | - |

Table 12 I

Partial Correlation Analysis of academic integration (Q15A), social integration (Q18) and students' intent-to-persist (Q18)

| Corresponding Variables | No control of covariates | Controlling for Q15A | Controlling for Q15B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q15A & Q18 | **0.118** | - | -0.0935 |
| Q15B & Q18 | **0.249** | -0.2845 | - |

Table 13A
Students' comments on why they are coming back to OU

| Comments | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional commitment | 267 | 21.3% |
| Quality of programs offered | 201 | 16.0% |
| Personal reasons | 186 | 14.8% |
| Overall image of the institution | 176 | 14.0% |
| Goal commitment | 115 | 9.2% |
| Social integration | 111 | 8.8% |
| Affordable costs | 73 | 5.8% |
| Academic integration | 46 | 3.7% |
| Quality of faculty & service staff | 43 | 3.4% |
| Physical environment | 38 | 3.0% |
| Total number of positive comments | 1256 | 100.0% |
| Overall number of positive and negative comments | 1371 | |
| Percentage of positive comments | | 91.6% |

Table 13B
Students' comments on why they are not coming back to OU

| Comments | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Personal reasons | 40 | 34.8% |
| Difficulty with academic integration | 26 | 22.6% |
| Costs | 16 | 13.9% |
| Difficulty with social integration | 13 | 11.3% |
| Non availabiliy of programs offered | 10 | 8.7% |
| Overall image of the institution | 6 | 5.2% |
| Lack of institutional commitment | 3 | 2.6% |
| | 1 | 0.9% |
| Total number of negative comments | 115 | 100.0% |
| Overall number of positve and negative comments | 1371 | |
| Percentage of negative comments | | 8.4% |

FIGURE 1



PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Q12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

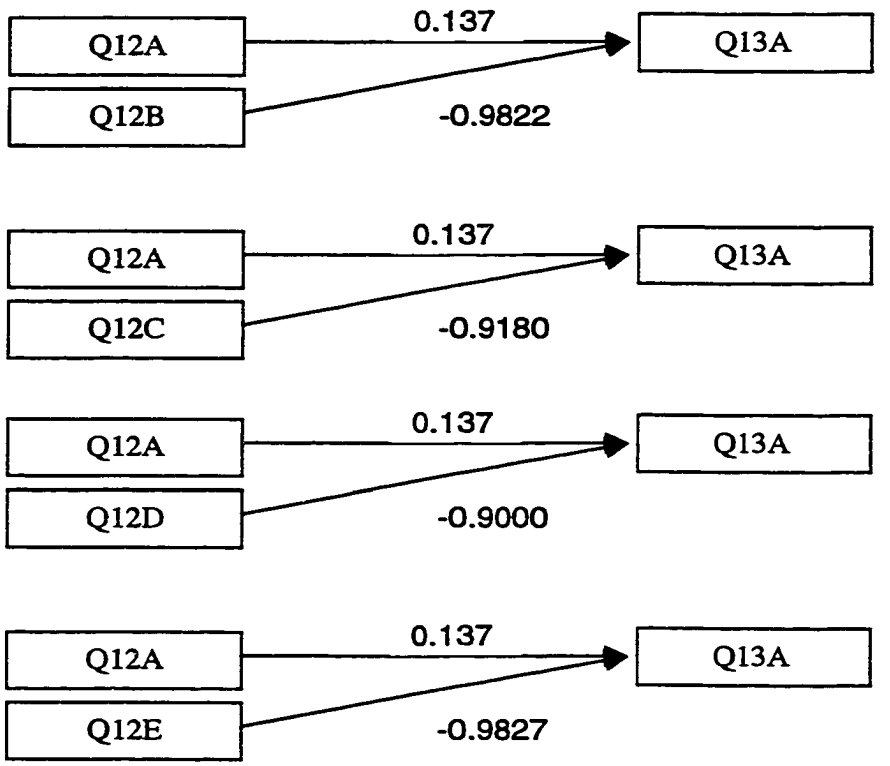


FIGURE 2

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

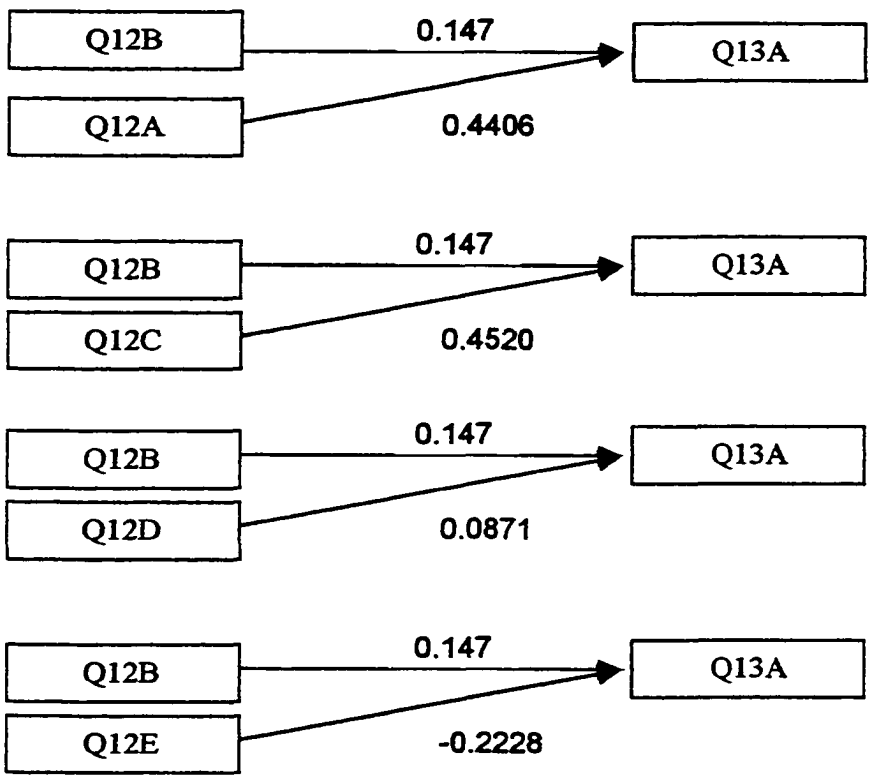


FIGURE 3

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

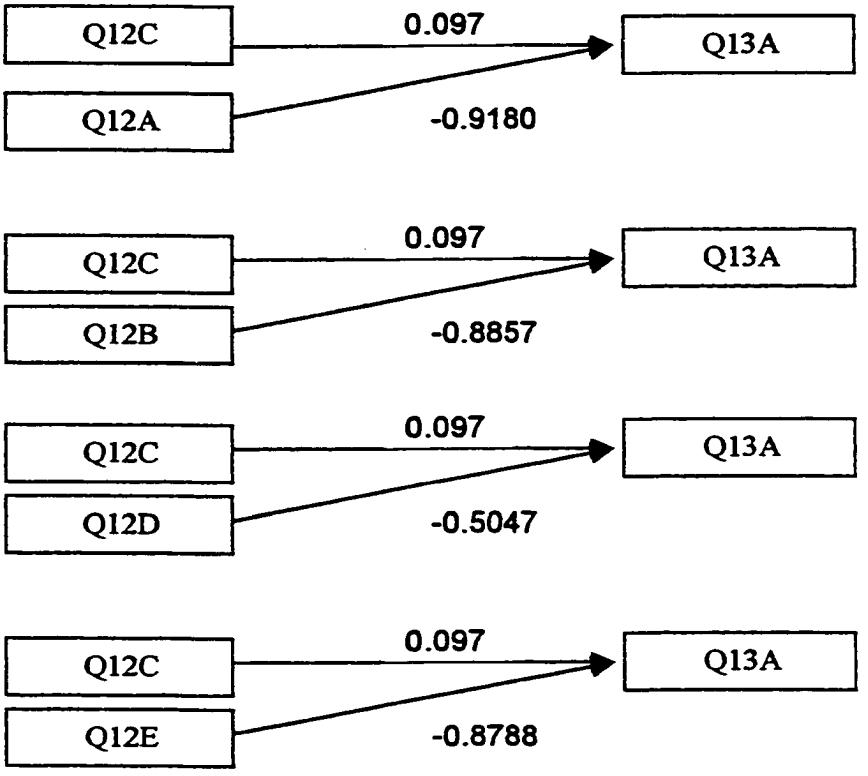


FIGURE 4

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

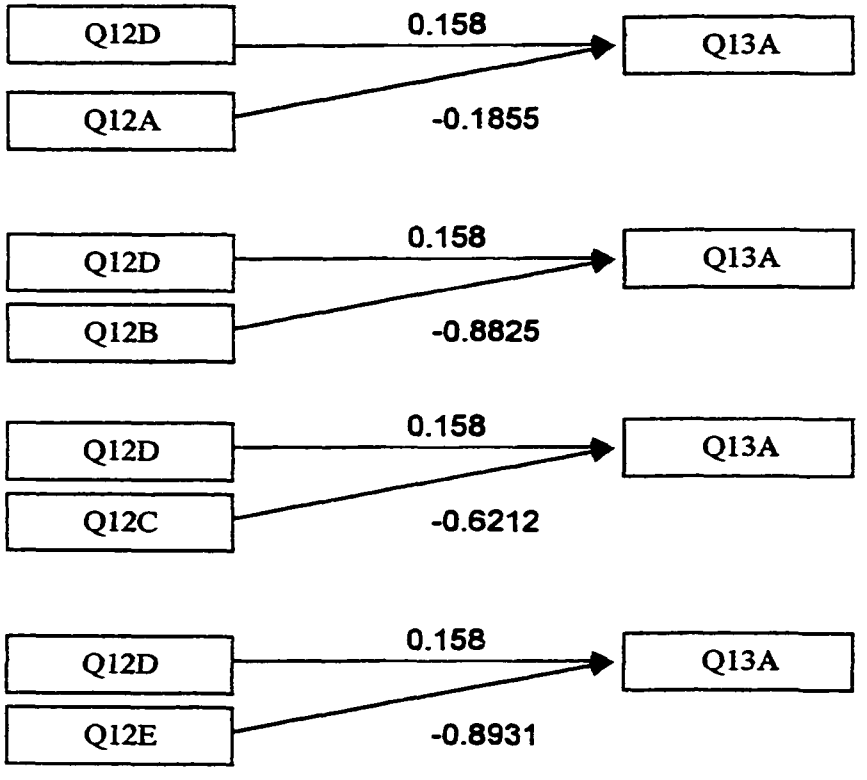


FIGURE 5

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

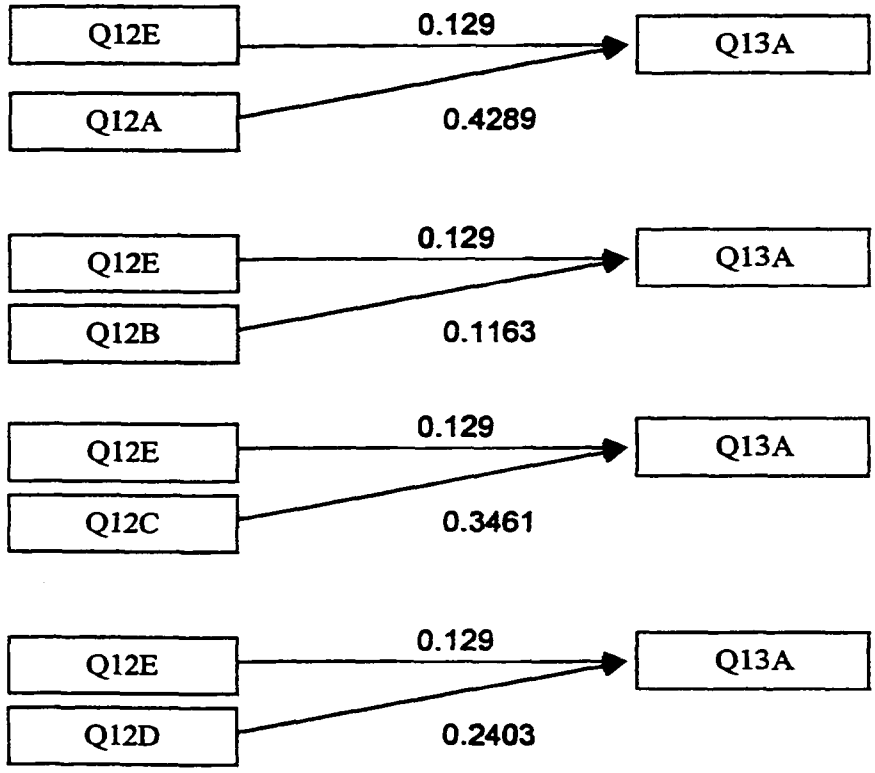


FIGURE 6

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

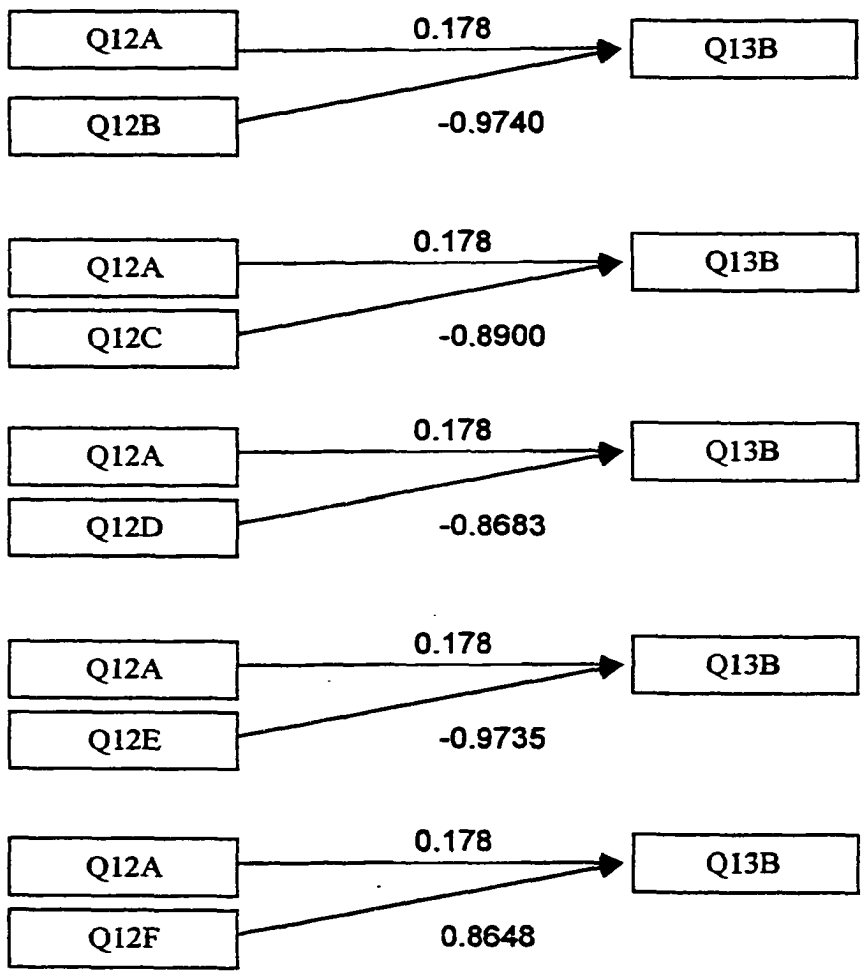


FIGURE 7

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

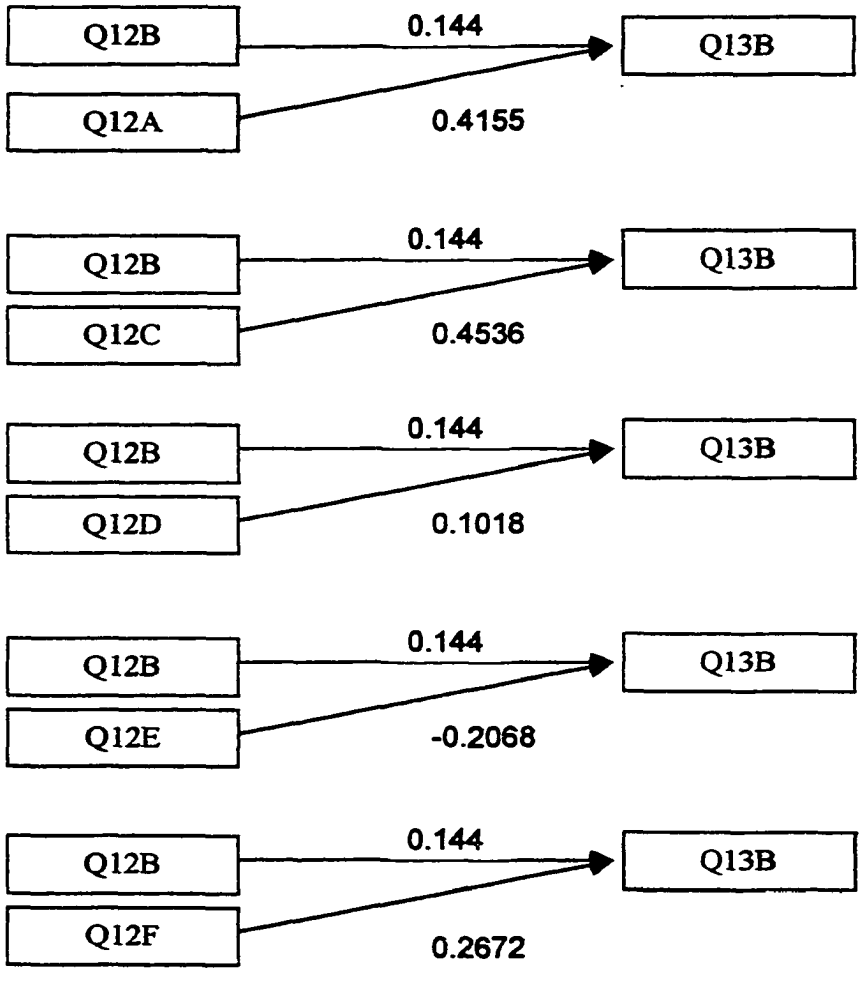


FIGURE 8

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

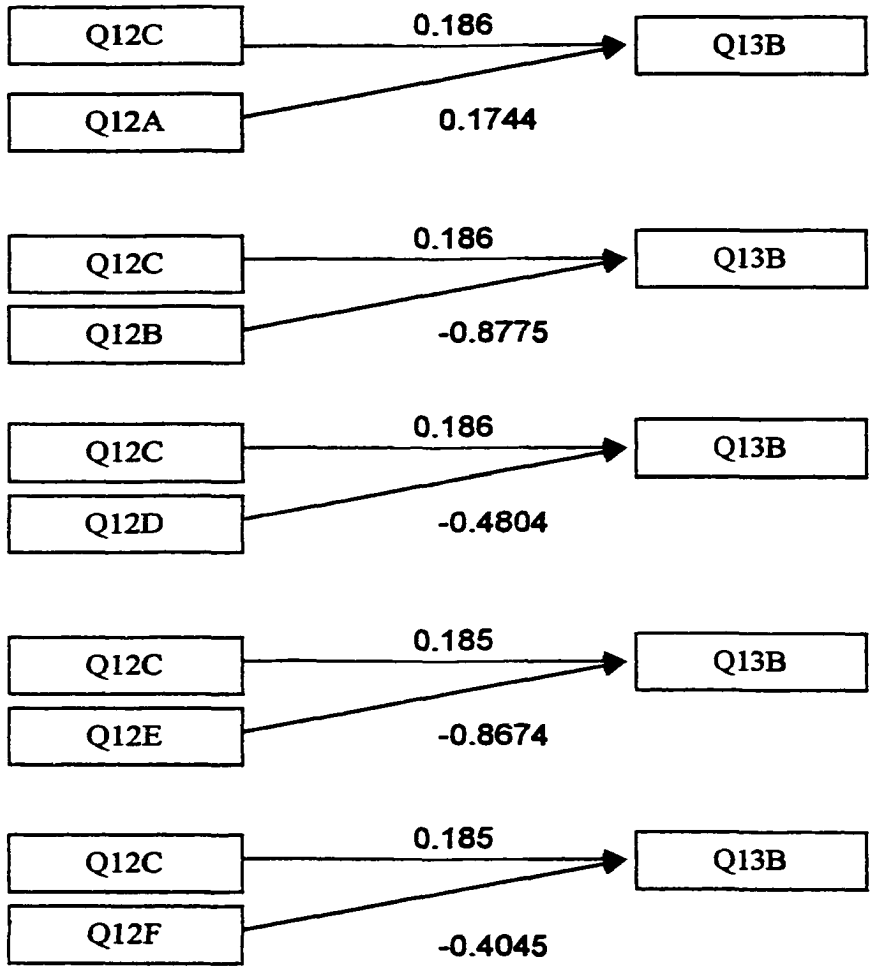


FIGURE 9

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

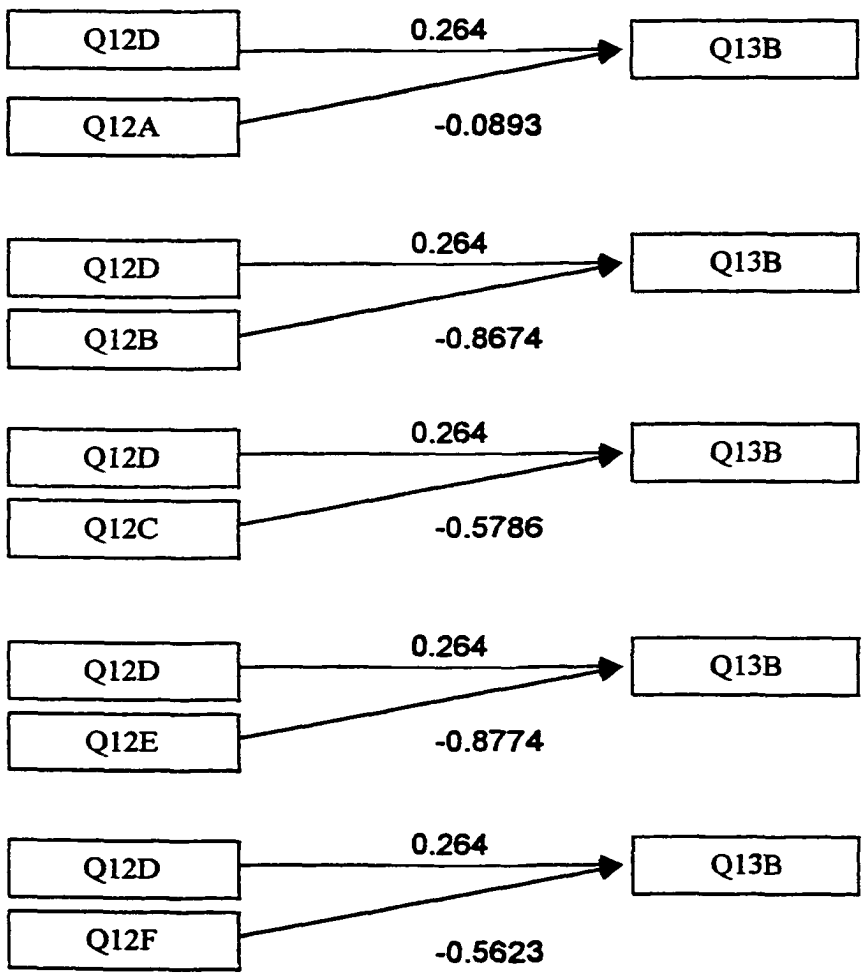


FIGURE 10

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

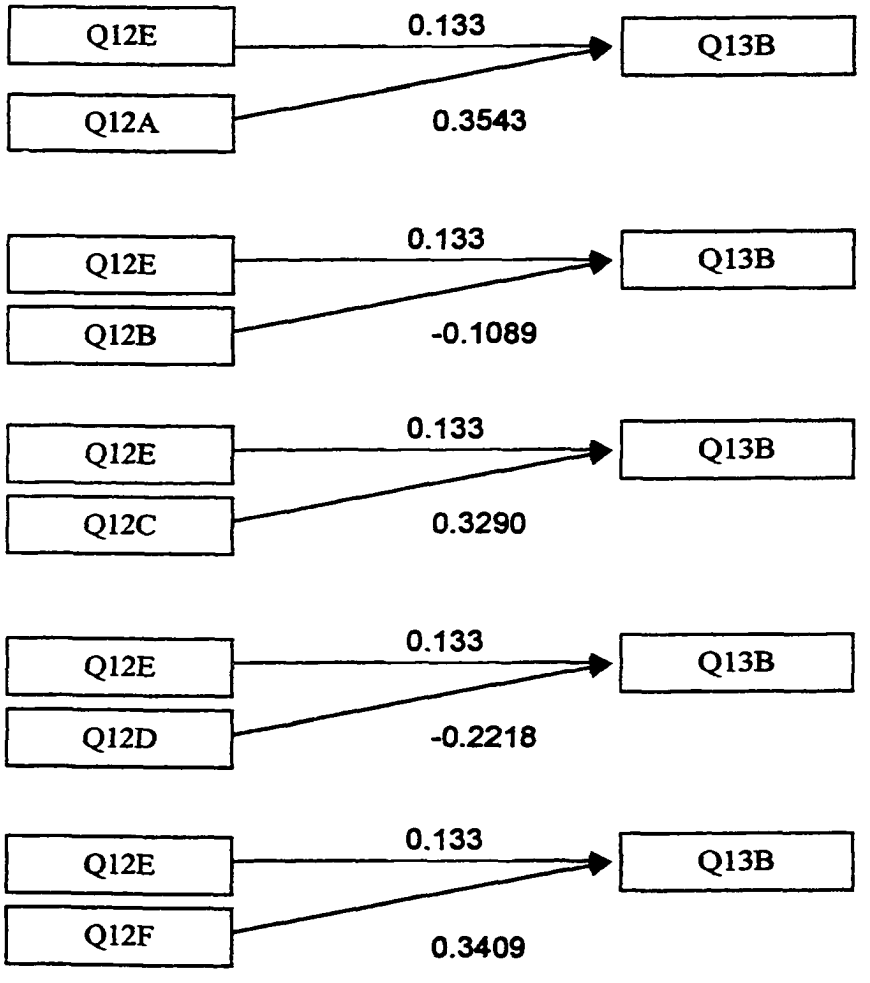


FIGURE 11

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

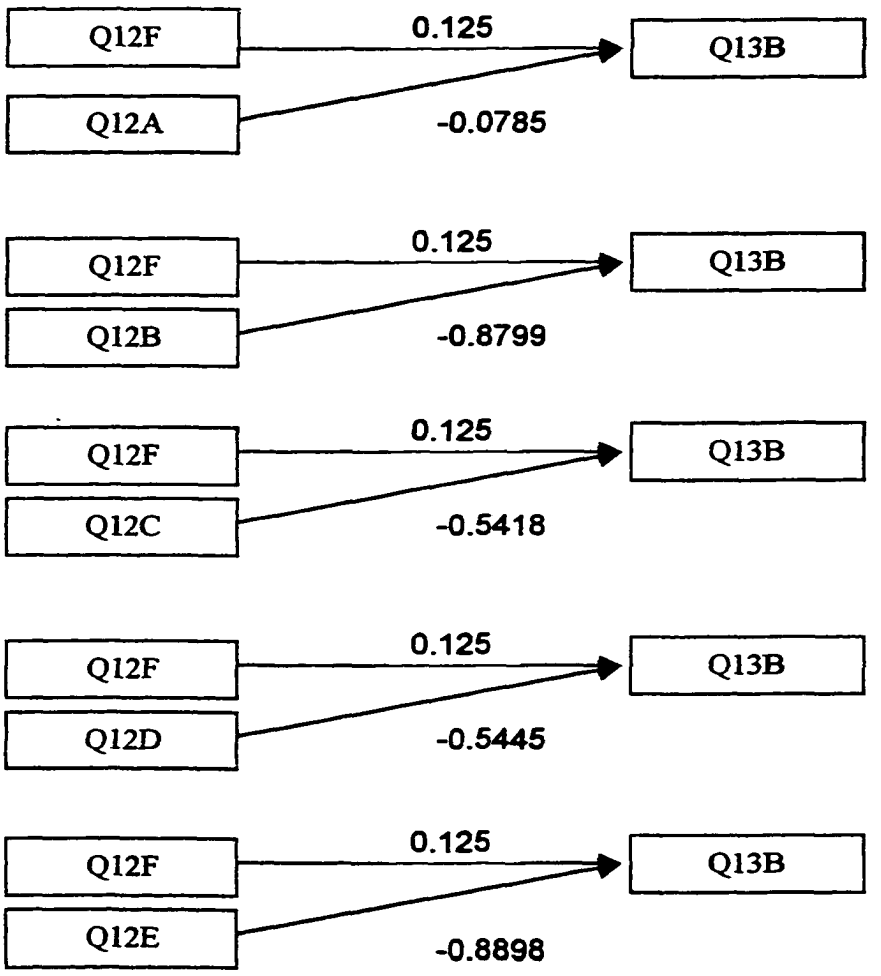


FIGURE 12

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B), AND ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

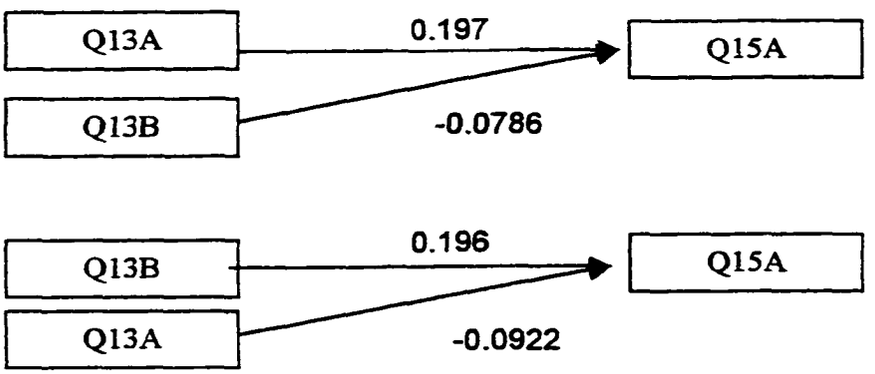


FIGURE 13

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B), AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

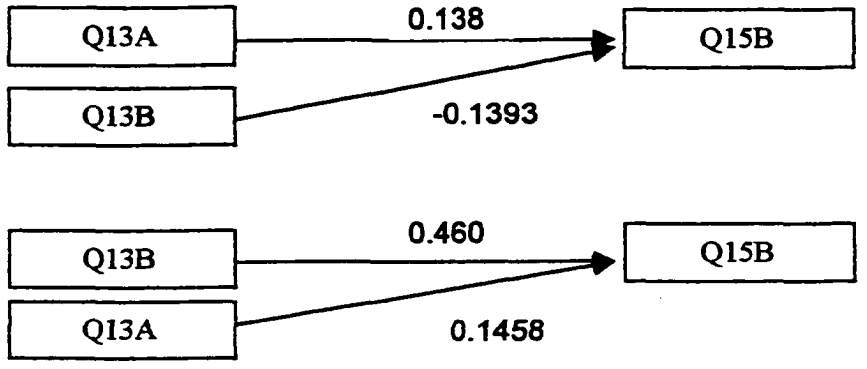


FIGURE 14

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

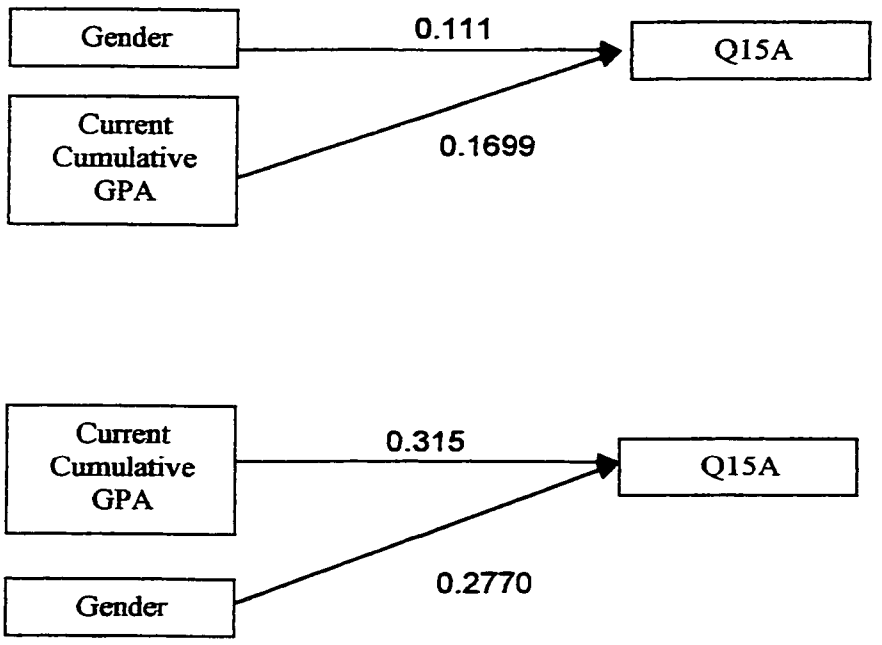


FIGURE 15

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity

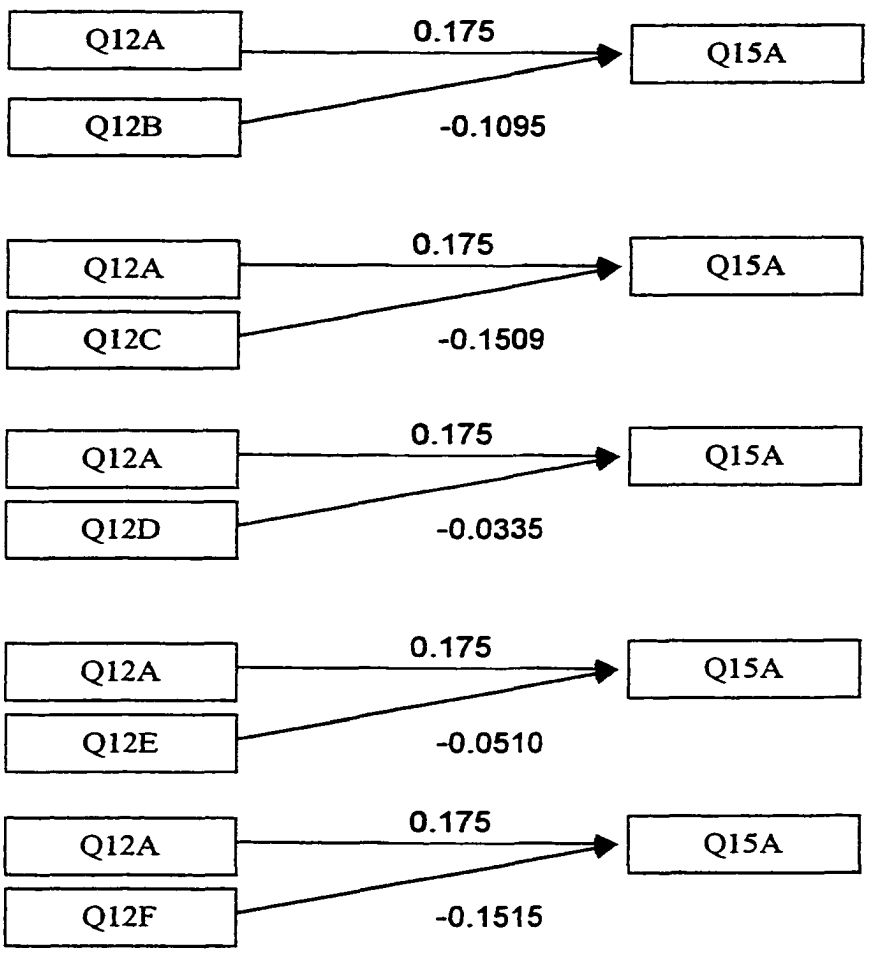


FIGURE 16

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

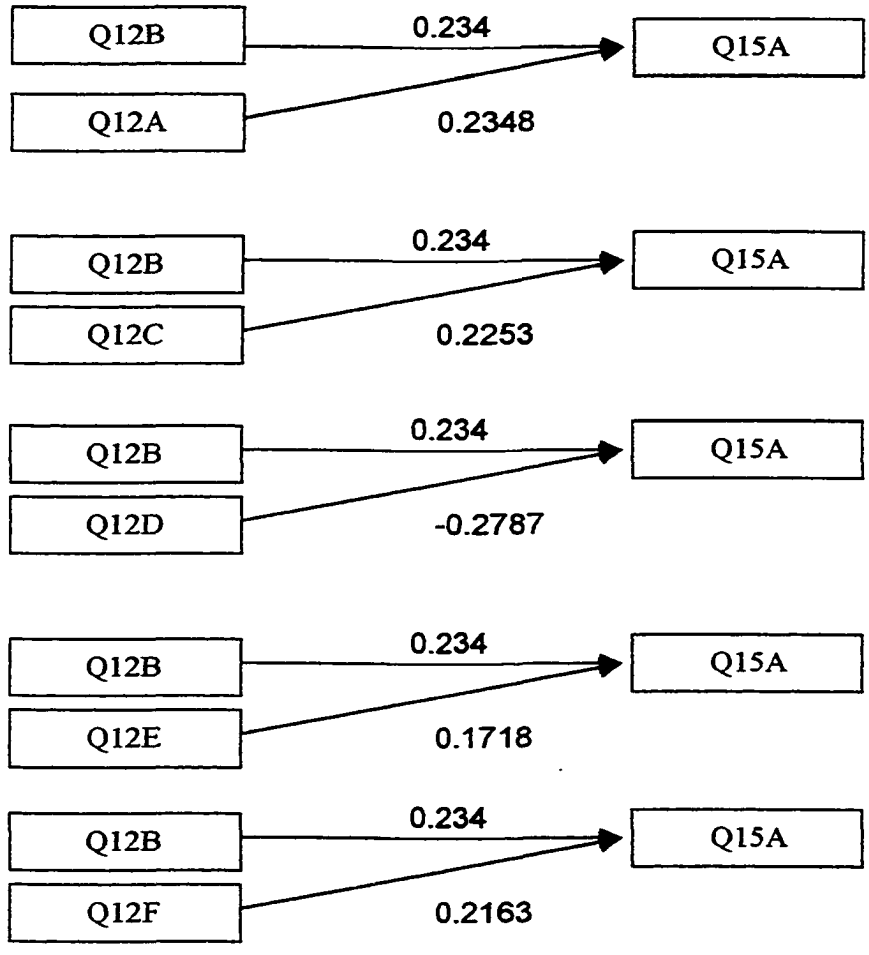


FIGURE 17

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

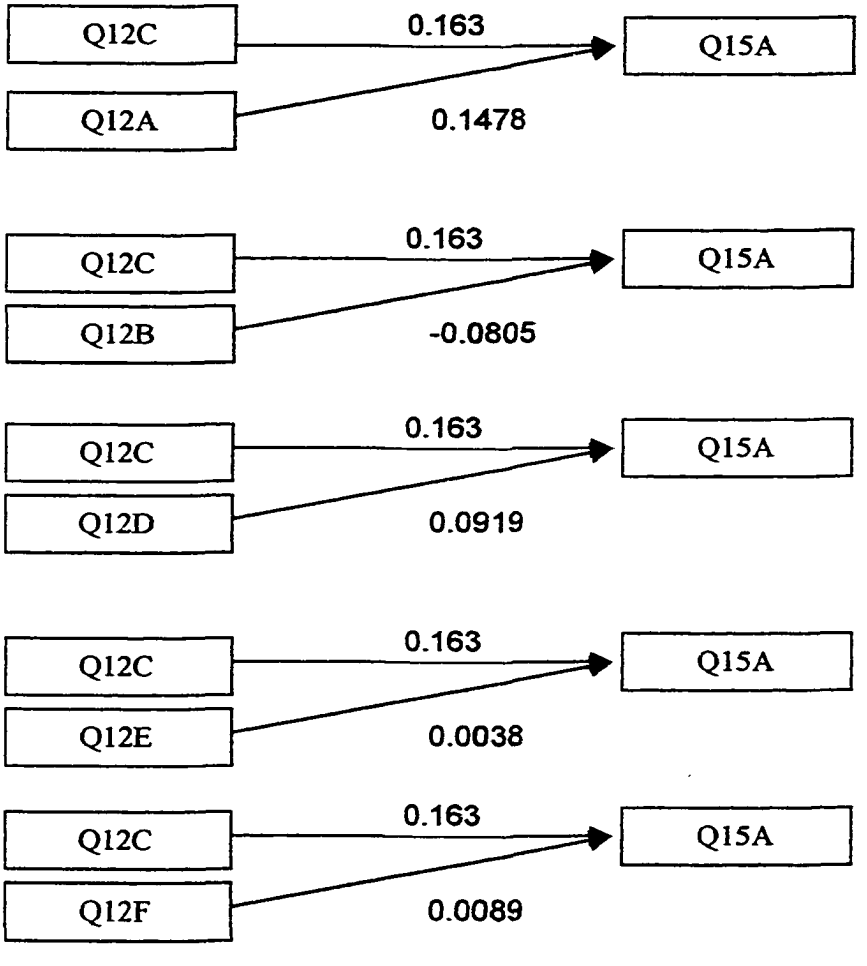


FIGURE 18

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

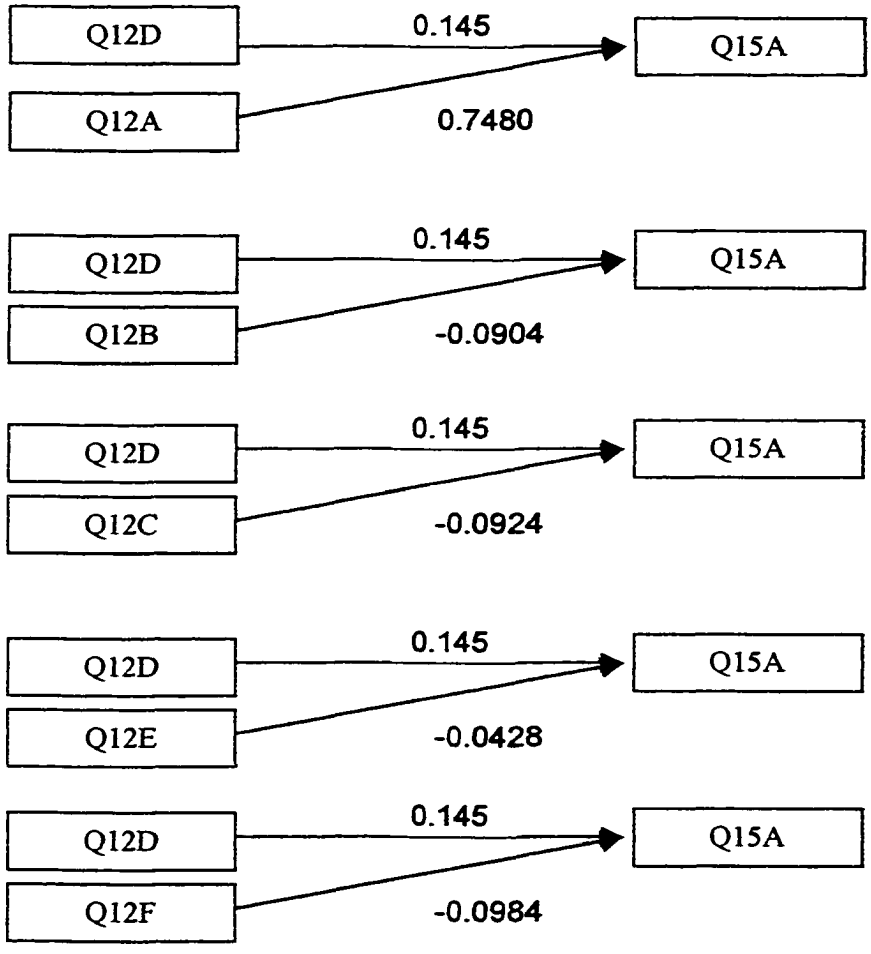


FIGURE 19

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

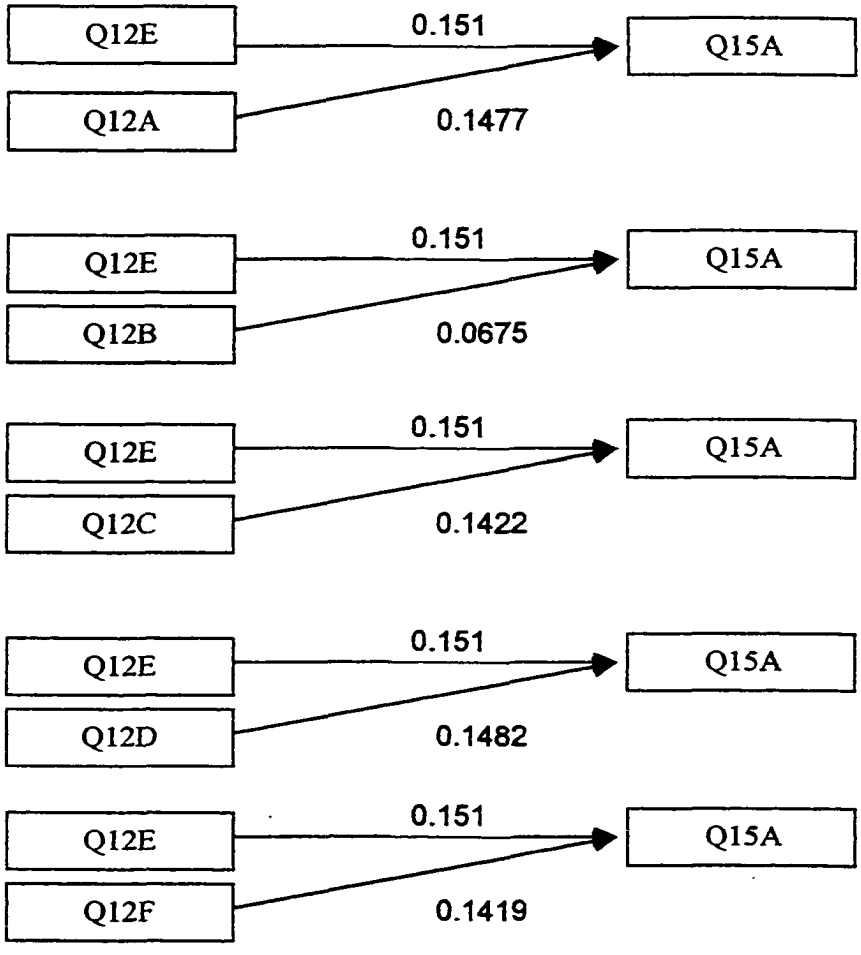


FIGURE 20

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

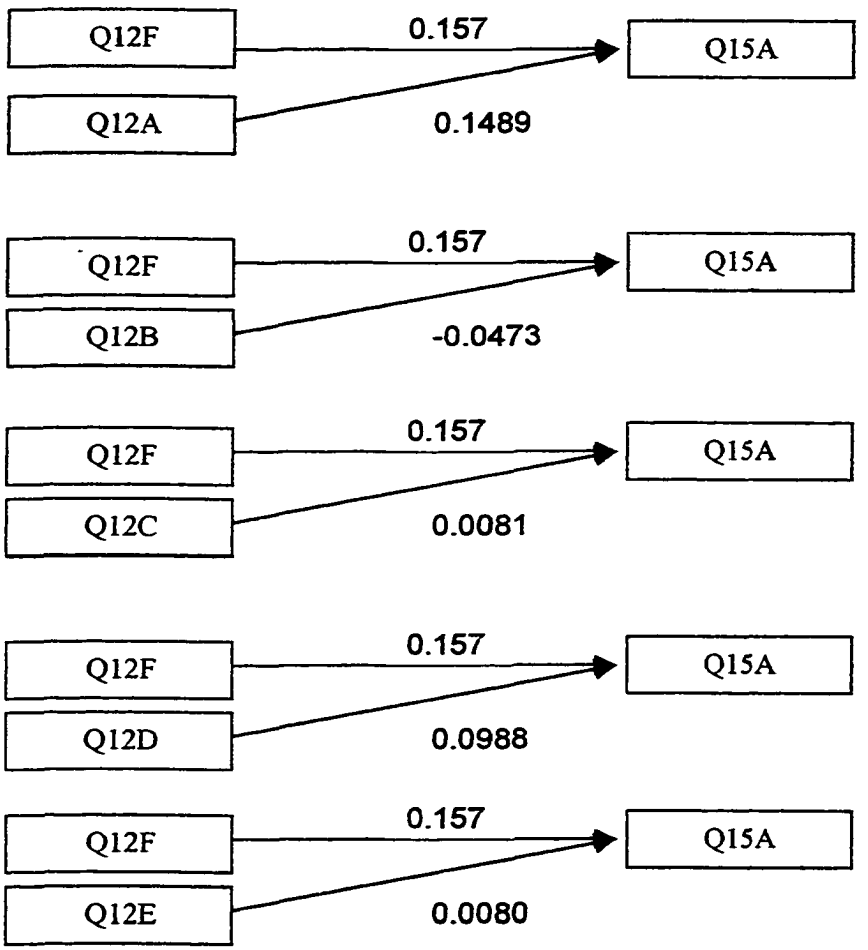


FIGURE 21

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

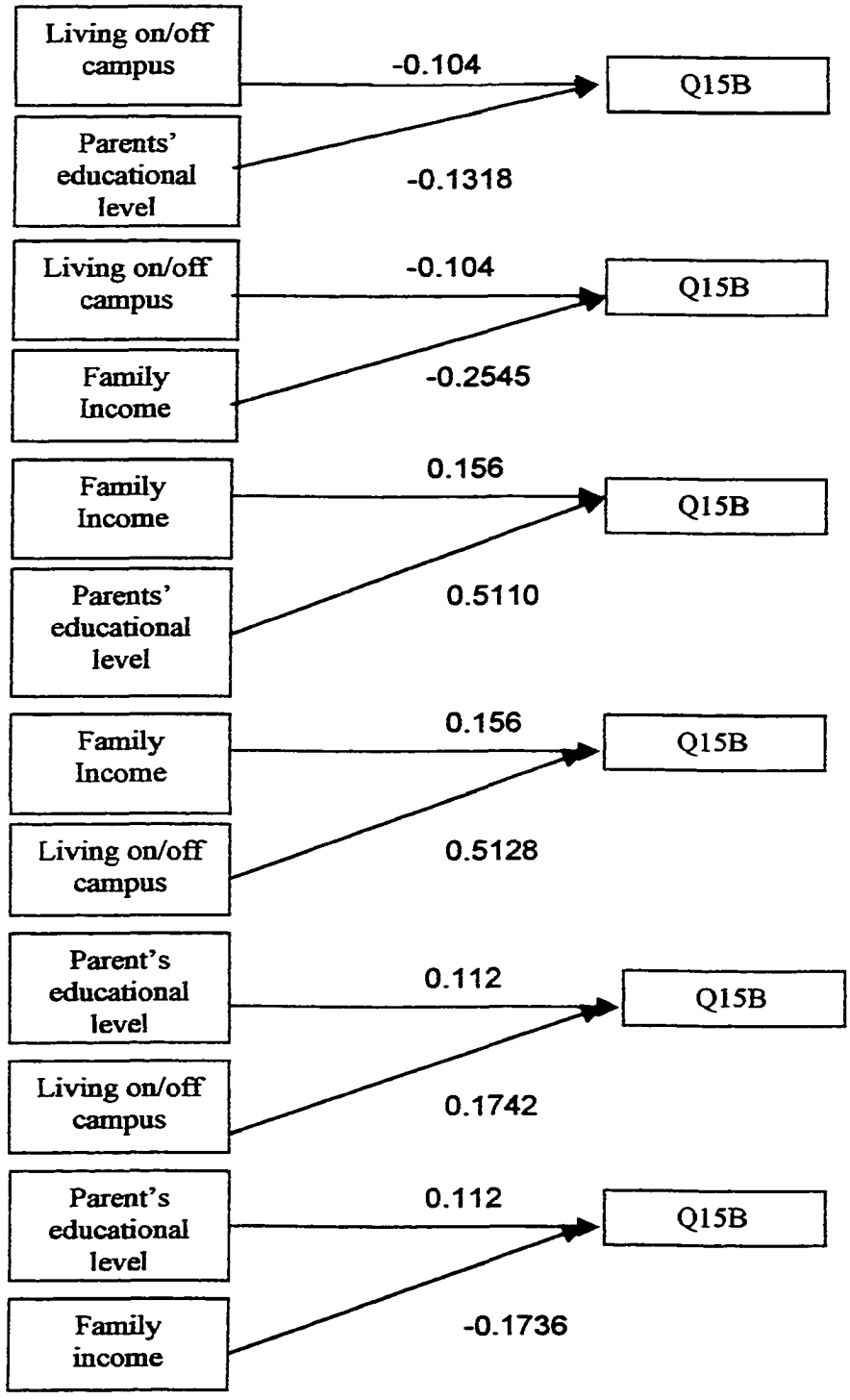


FIGURE 22

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

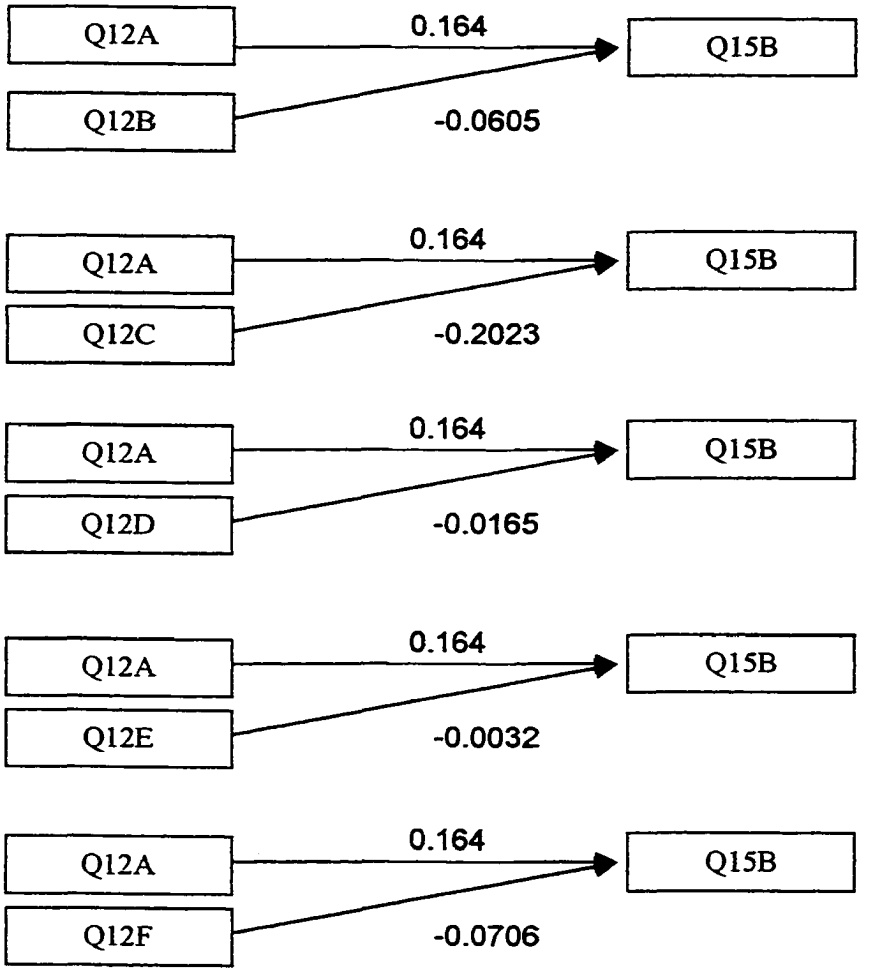


FIGURE 23

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

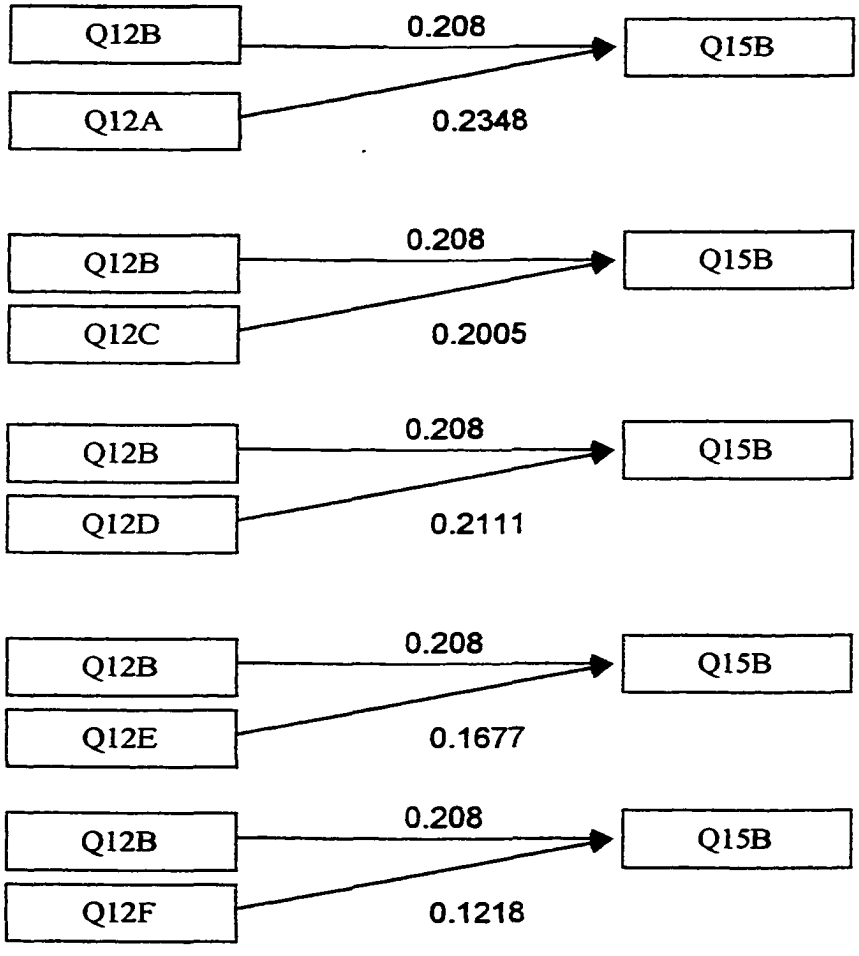


FIGURE 24

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

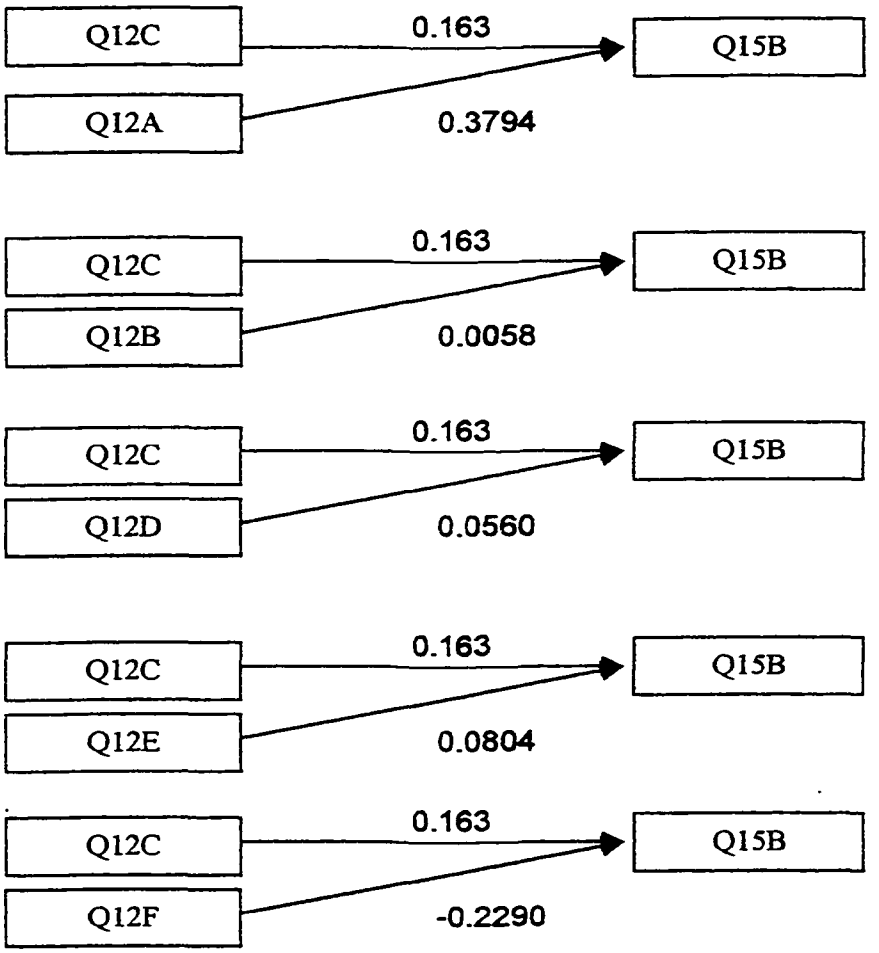


FIGURE 25

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :

12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
12C – total employee commitment
12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
12F – making education affordable to the students

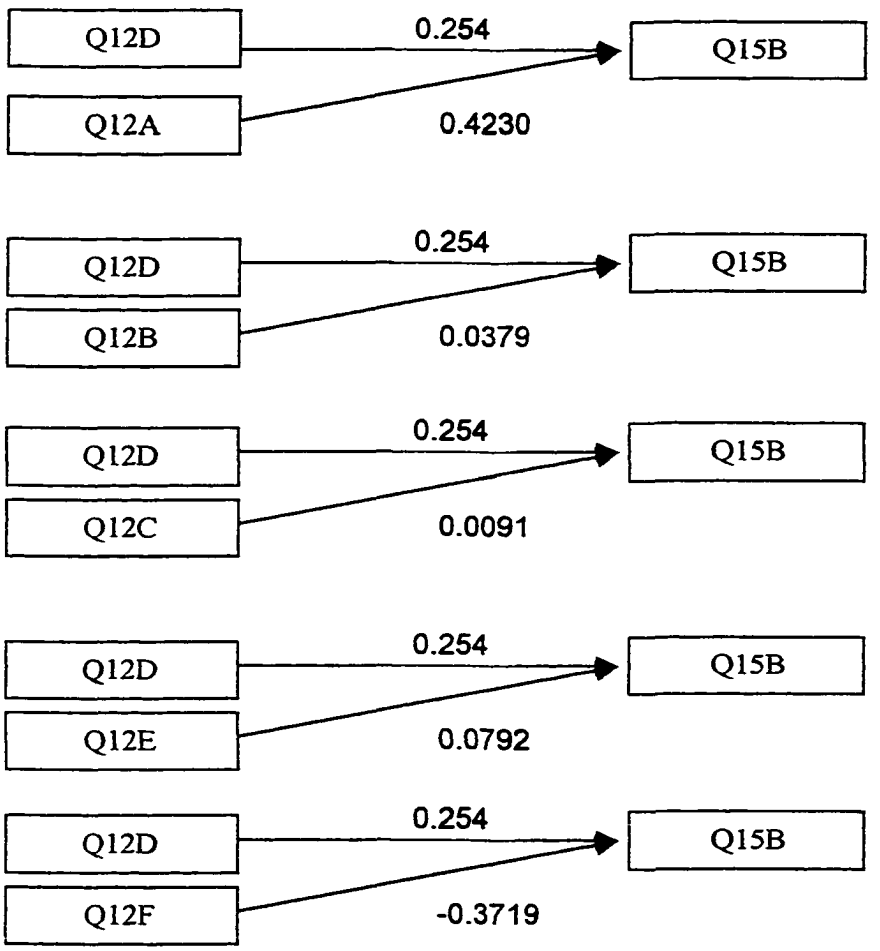


FIGURE 26

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

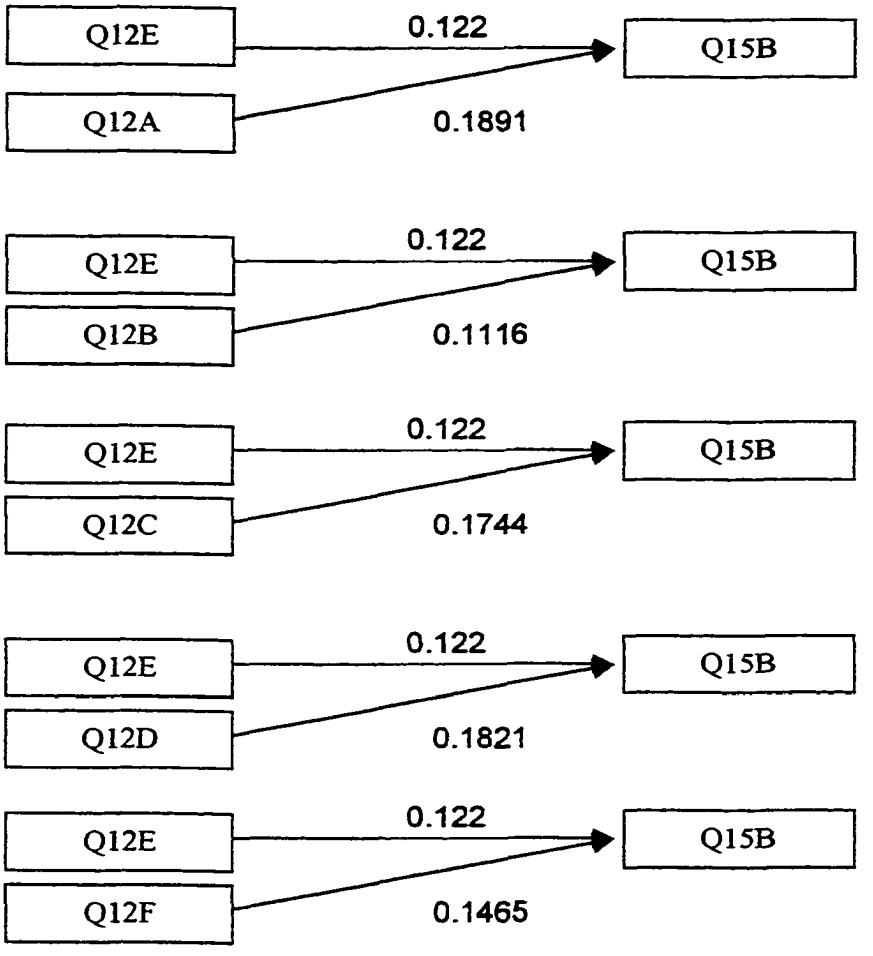


FIGURE 27

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTES AND STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

Q 12 - Students' perception of the importance placed by OU on :
- 12A – its brand identity attributes as stated in its mission statement
- 12B – the relationship of its service providers to students
- 12C – total employee commitment
- 12D – the quality of its academic and non-academic programs
- 12E – its financial resources to promote its brand identity
- 12F – making education affordable to the students

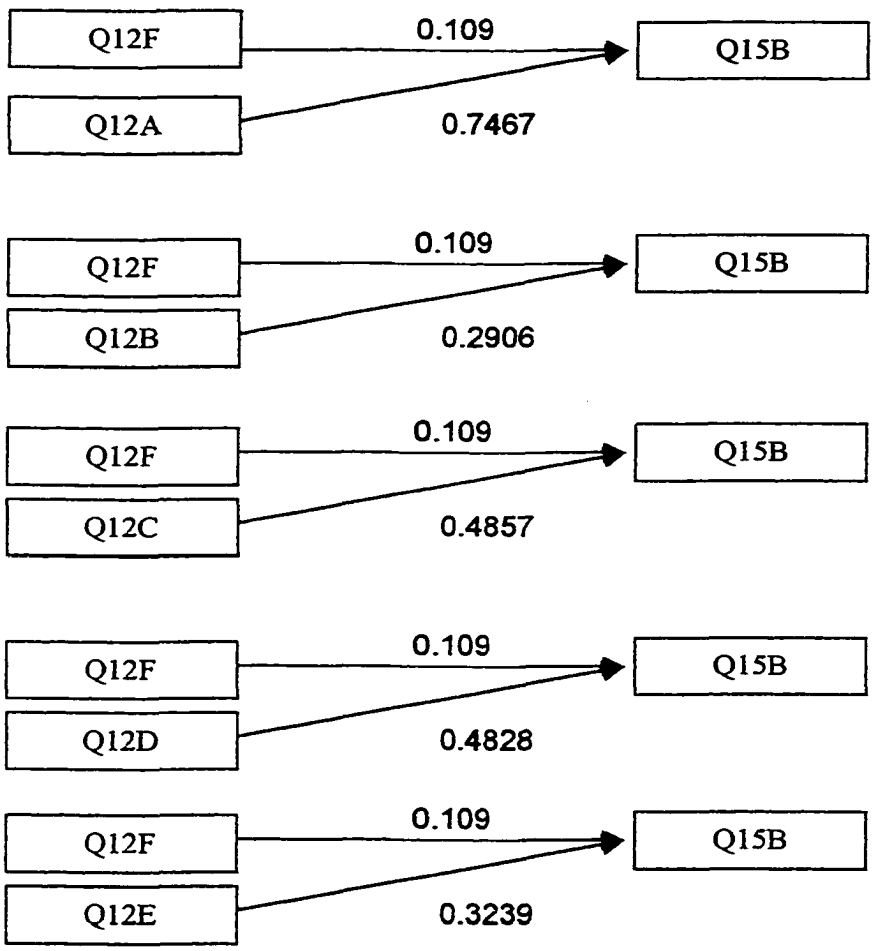


FIGURE 28

PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF CROSSED COMBINATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A), SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B), AND STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST (Q18)

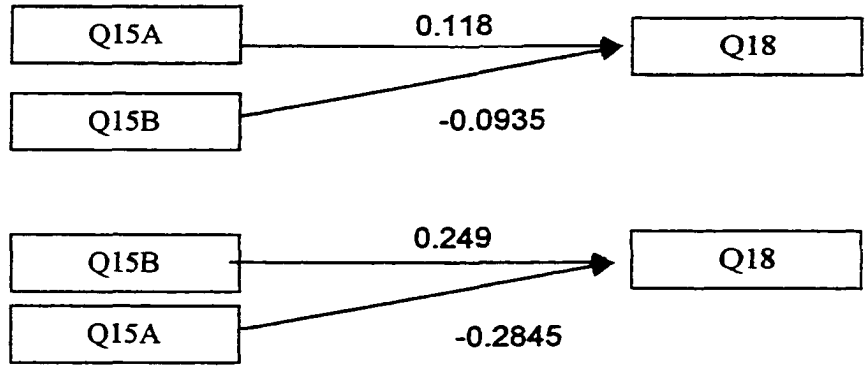


FIGURE 29 – PARTIAL CORRELATION – ALL VARIABLES

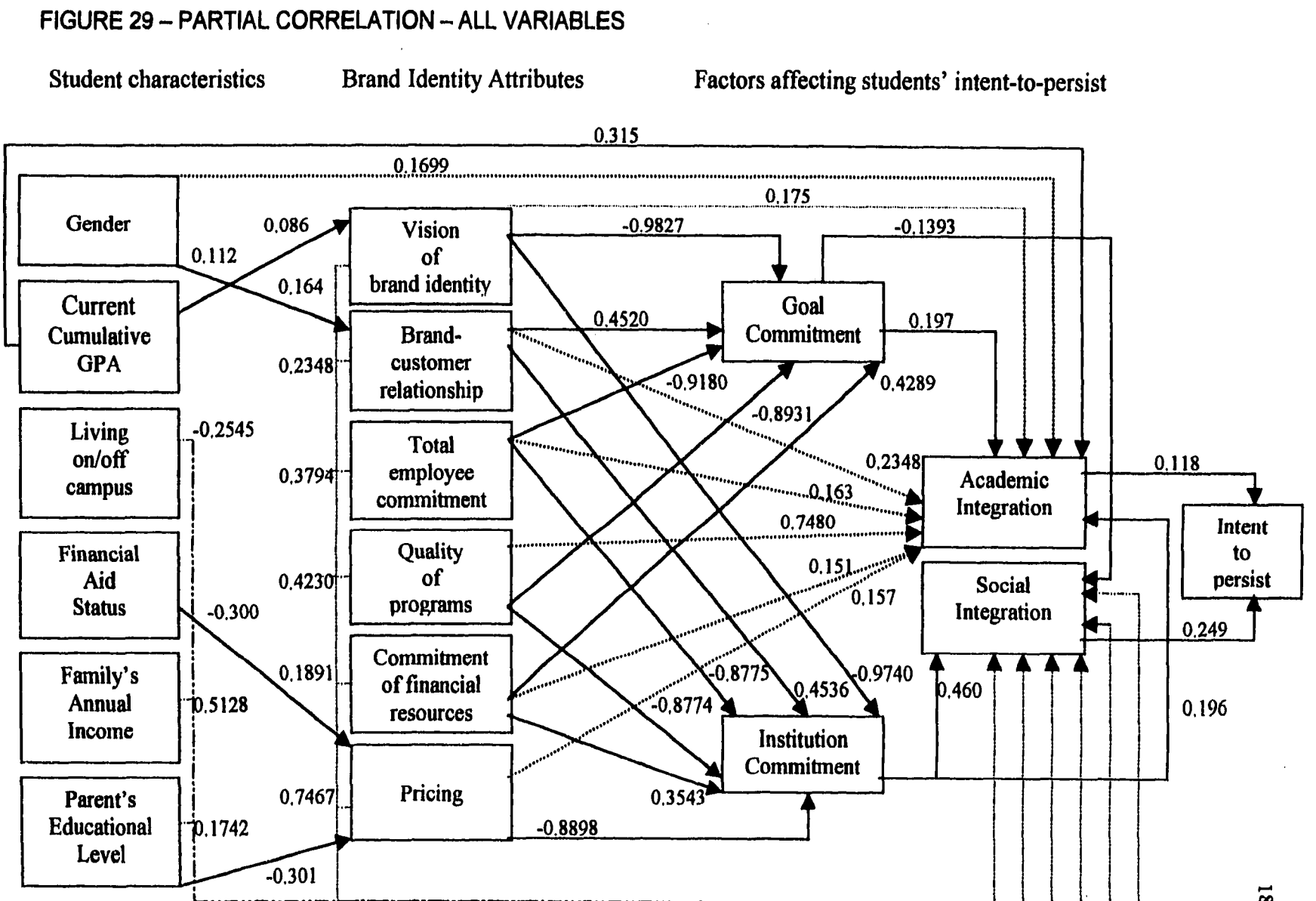
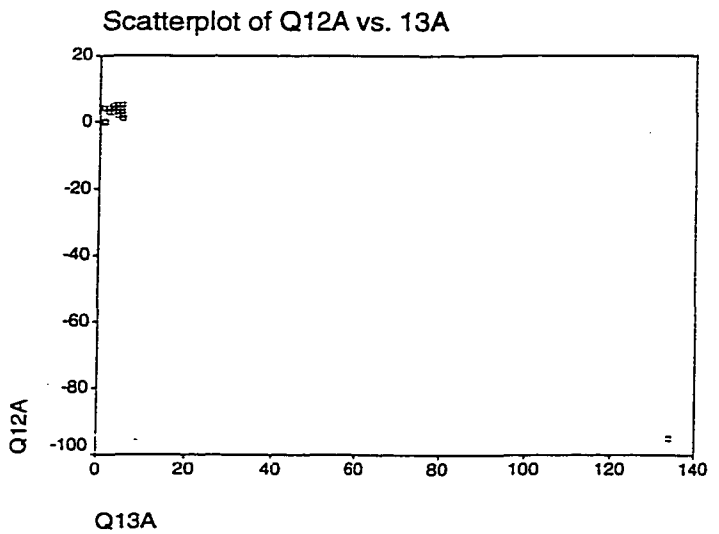


FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF SIGNIFICANT BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTE VARIABLES VS. GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)



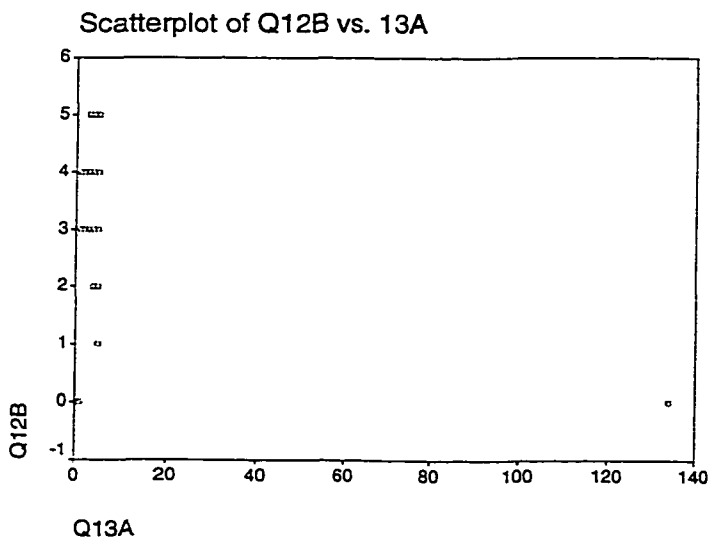
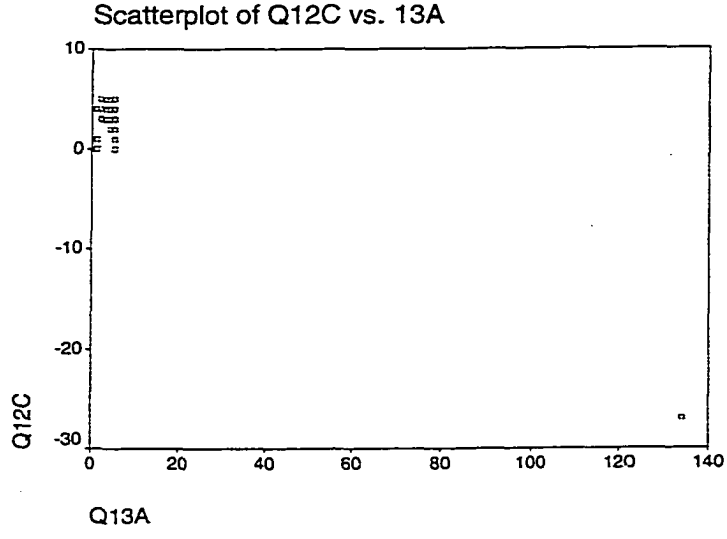



FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF SIGNIFICANT BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTE VARIABLES VS. GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)



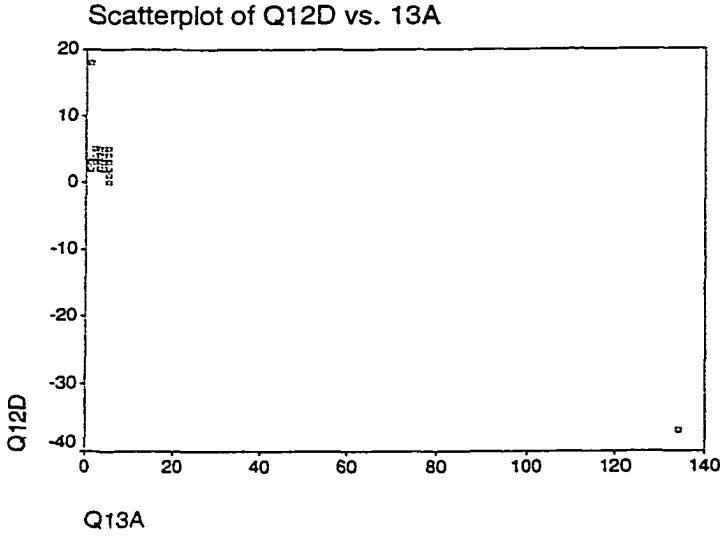



FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF SIGNIFICANT BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTE VARIABLES VS. GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A)

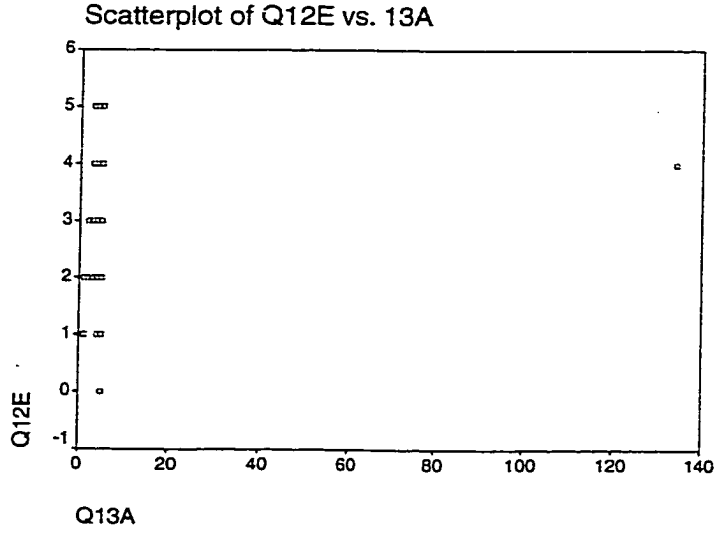
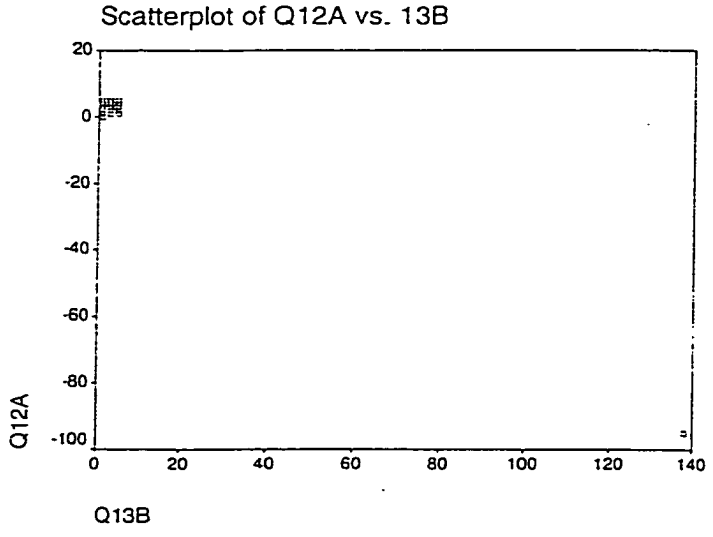
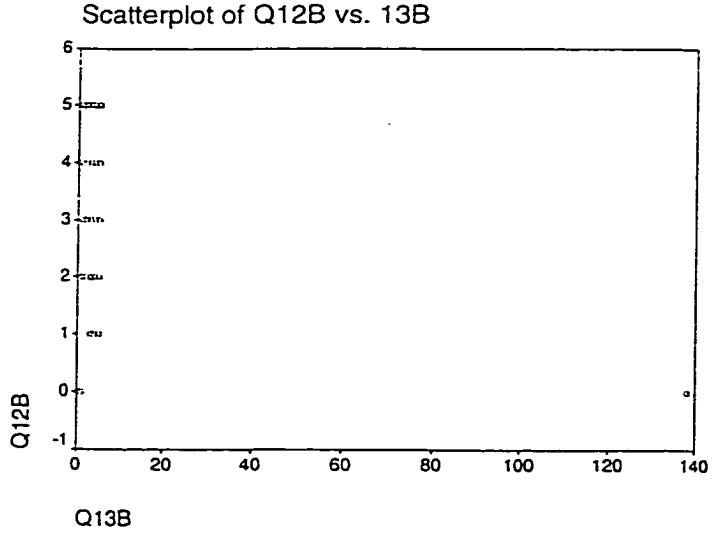


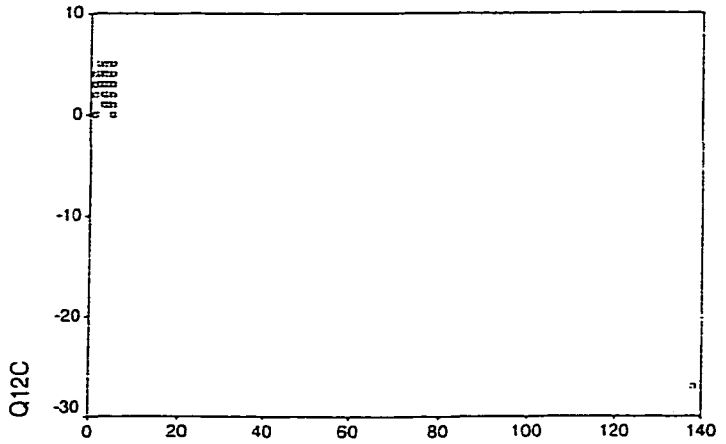
FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF SIGNIFICANT BRAND IDENTITY ATTRIBUTE VARIABLES VS. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B)

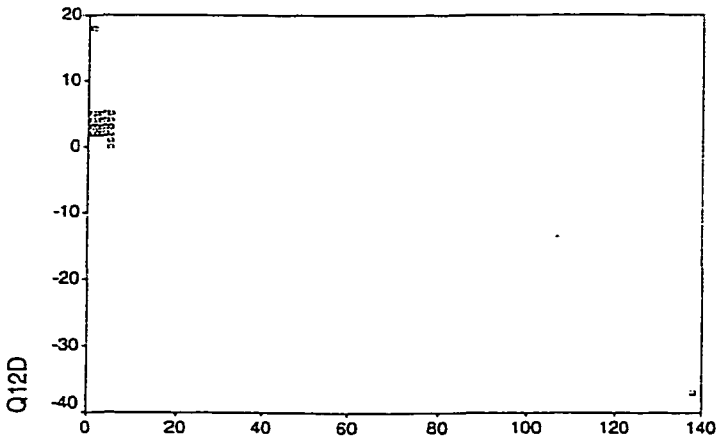


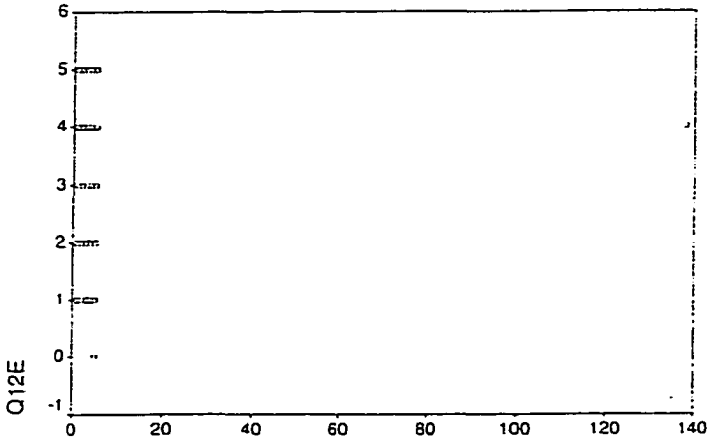
Scatterplot of Q12C vs. 13B




Scatterplot of Q12D vs. 13B



Scatterplot of Q12E vs. 13B




Scatterplot of Q12F vs. 13B

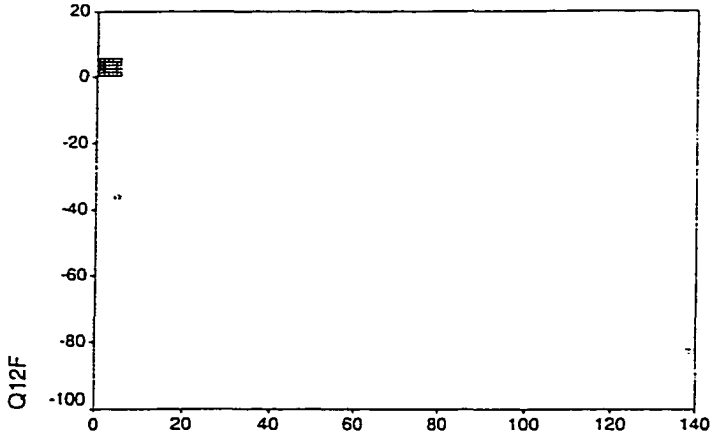
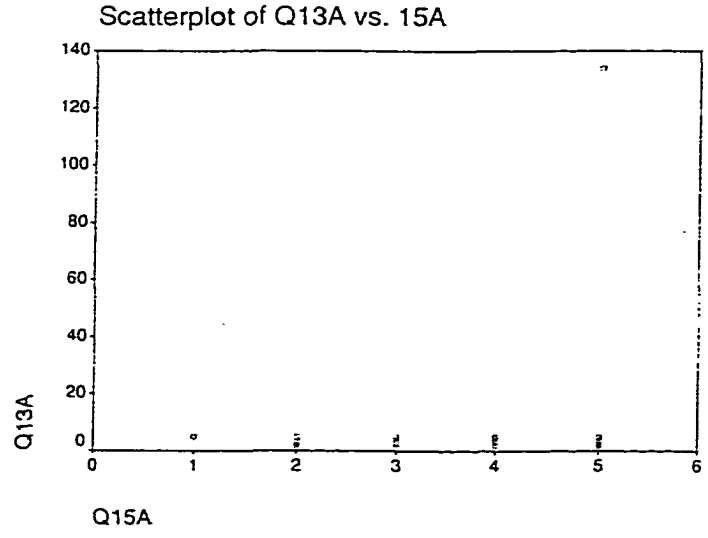


FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B) VS. ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A)



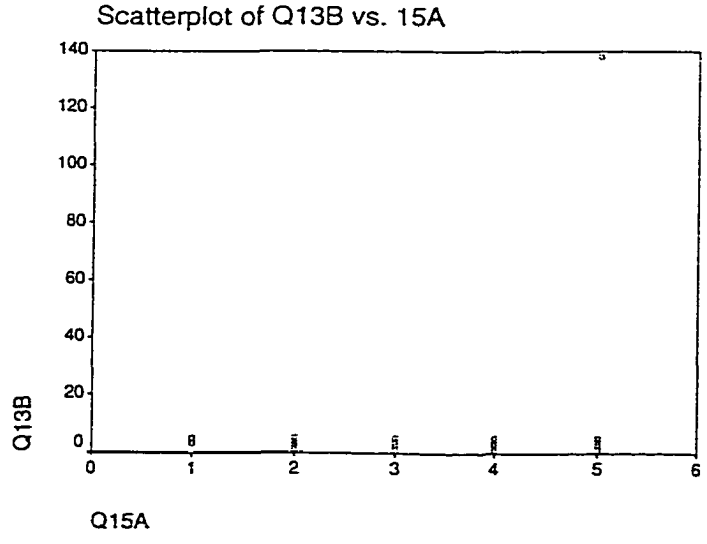
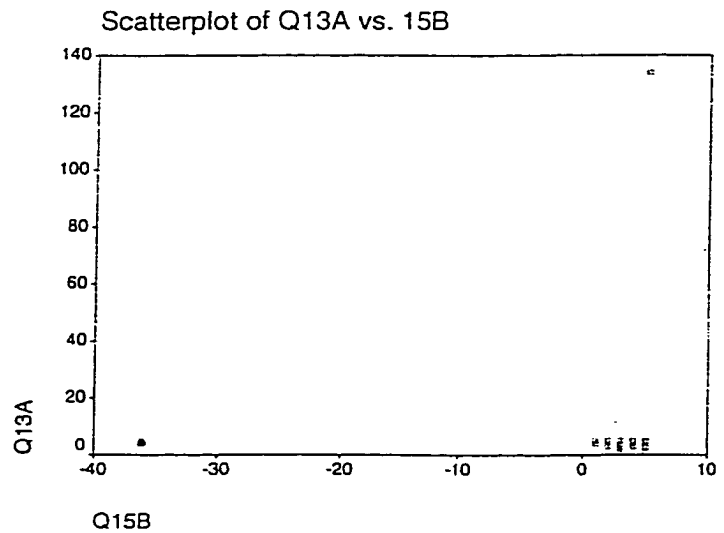



FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B) VS. SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)



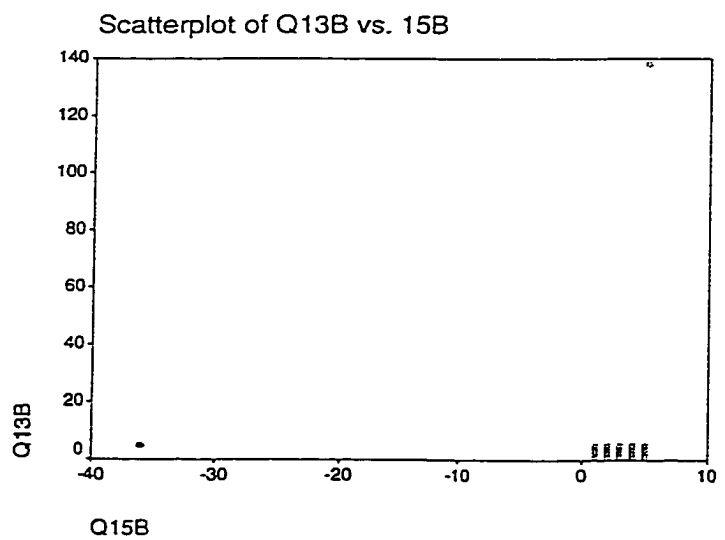
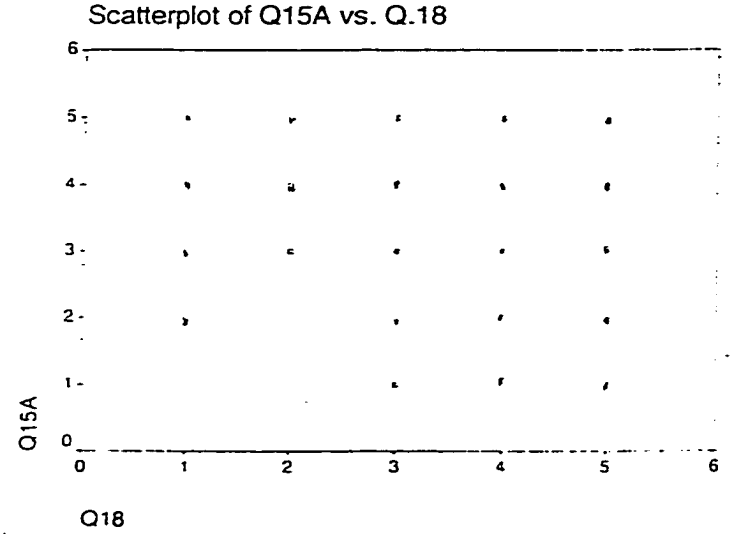



FIGURE 30

SCATTERPLOT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A) AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B) VS. STUDENTS' INTENT-TO-PERSIST (Q18)



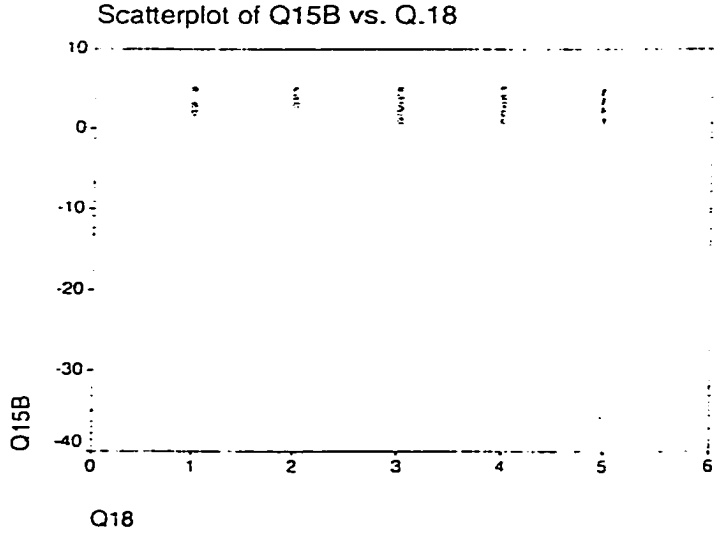



FIGURE 31

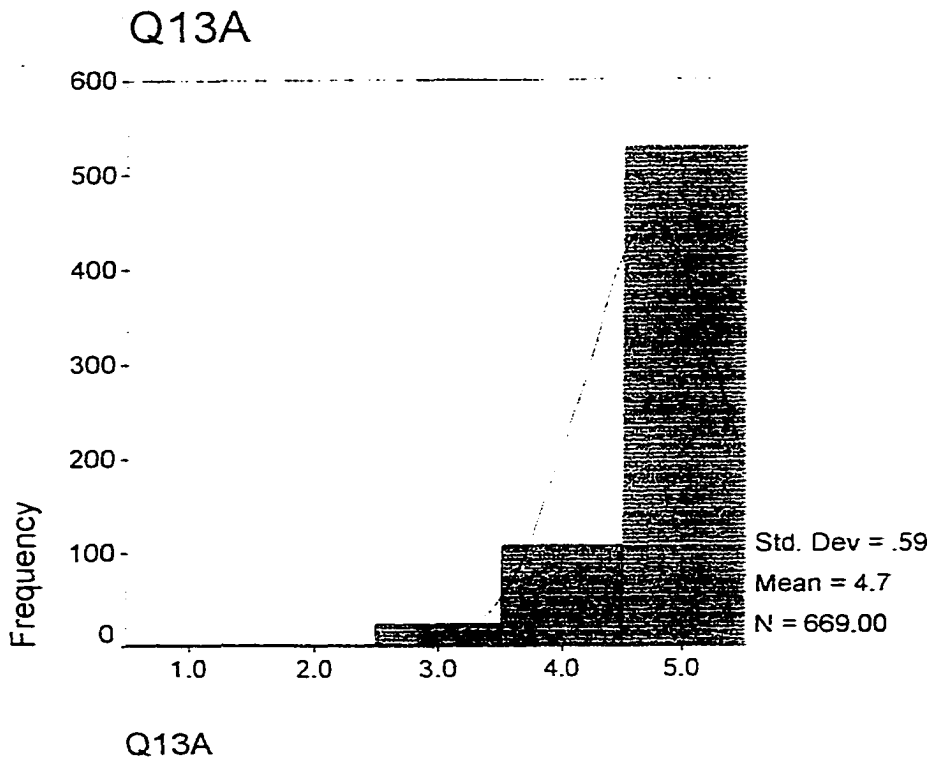
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF GOAL COMMITMENT (Q13A), INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT (Q13B), ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (Q15A) AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION (Q15B)

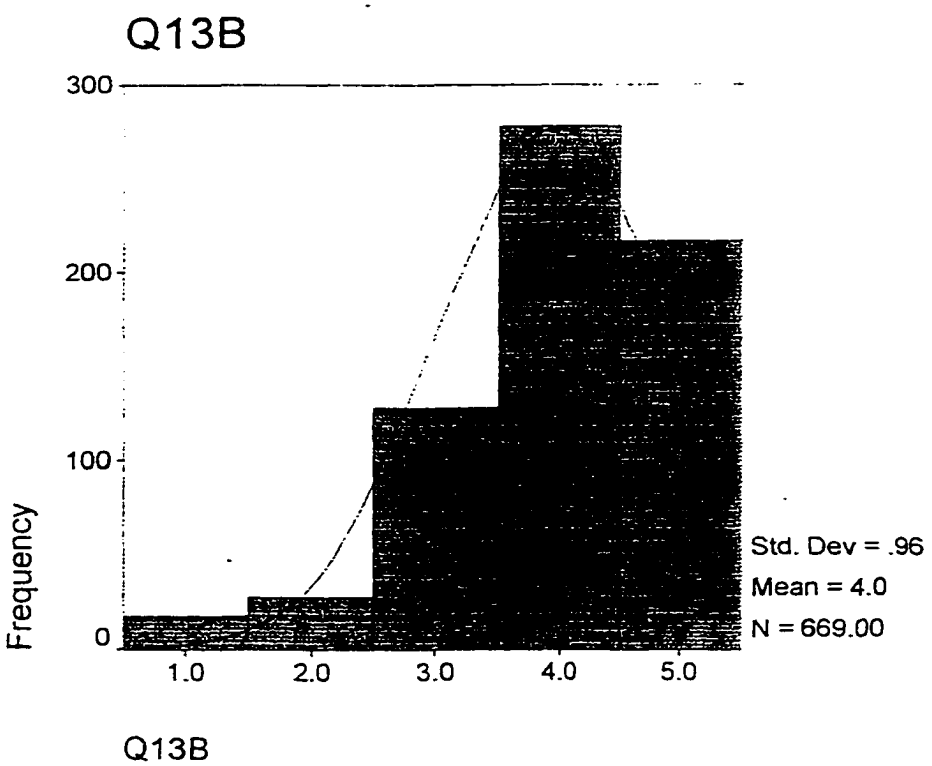
**Statistics**

| | | Q15A | Q15B |
|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 669 | 669 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.80 | 3.85 |
| Std. Error of Mean | | 3.19E-02 | 3.85E-02 |
| Median | | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Mode | | 4 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | .83 | 1.00 |
| Variance | | .68 | .99 |
| Skewness | | -.514 | -.695 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .094 | .094 |
| Kurtosis | | .352 | - 002 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .189 | .189 |
| Range | | 4 | 4 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 |
| Sum | | 2544 | 2578 |

**Statistics**

| | | Q13A | Q13B |
|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 669 | 669 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 4.73 | 3.97 |
| Std. Error of Mean | | 2.30E-02 | 3.72E-02 |
| Median | | 5.00 | 4.00 |
| Mode | | 5 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | .59 | .96 |
| Variance | | .35 | .93 |
| Skewness | | -2.716 | -.949 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .094 | .094 |
| Kurtosis | | 9.211 | .824 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .189 | .189 |
| Range | | 4 | 4 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 |
| Sum | | 3165 | 2655 |


Q13A
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
Frequency
1.0
2.0
3.0
4.0
5.0
Std. Dev = .59
Mean = 4.7
N = 669.00
Q13A


Q13B
300
200
100
0
Frequency
1.0
2.0
3.0
4.0
5.0
Std. Dev = .96
Mean = 4.0
N = 669.00
Q13B