

**REFLECTIVE ESSAY**

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## Abstract

As I've learned from Tinto (1993) during the class, I must consider myself belonging to at least one community within the university. This involvement must also feel significant to me (Tinto, 1993). Social integration within the university and the inauguration of the academic structure are significant to my retention and completion of my higher educational goals. The school must match my academic needs. I must think highly of the university. I must have relationships with my peers, instructors and the organization. If I do not have direct relationships, at least have the perceptual feeling of fitting in (Tinto, 1975). I wish this class were the first class attended within the program. I would have had a much better understanding of why I felt so alone and overwhelmed. At least this study was within my first year of higher education and I am ready to add social integration for myself to better succeed (Noyens et al., 2018) As an introvert, I would have never joined an honor society. To me, it seemed like adding one more fake thing for me to participate with, an equivalent of social media. A waste of time. This class has taught me that I should find a group to call my own for educational events, mentoring and sharing experiences. I have applied to Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education. I believe it will help me develop the confidence I need to "transition into a self-directed learner in the dissertation stage." I have heard and read that the "self-directed learner" portion of the dissertation stage is the most isolating part of the process.

### Academic and Social Integration

I have found additional student support services in the honor society and will reach out to more if needed such as, admissions department, and reach out to instructors more as I need to and not be so quiet and shy. I will begin to write down names of current peers in the classes and pay attention to students in the discussion "chats" and know who is in the program with me. I have always been the overachiever who has never needed help. Whatever has challenged me, I could be strong and get through it on my own. During this class I have needed support from my instructors often. I was frightened and embarrassed to send that single email to explain my challenges. I almost dropped one of my courses. To my surprise and delight, I was understood and encouraged to continue ahead and not drop either course. Reaching out paid off. No one wanted to see me fail. My instructors made me feel like I belonged in the class and was just going through some trying times. One instructor reminded me that sometimes things are difficult. Sometimes things are serene. This was simply my time for tough circumstances. Both instructors reached out to me multiple times to make sure things were okay and applauded my achievements during hard times. I am excited to begin the process to create my dissertation committee next (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2014). I was very happy to learn in this class that I will not be alone and the words "defend my dissertation, does not actually mean that I will have to be defensive.

At this time in my journey, I do plan to gain employment and have gone down to the minimal credits each semester to stay a full time student, but only a single class per term. I have decided to take less classes, but not take any breaks. Borgen and Borgen, (2016) found that taking breaks from classes is not helpful in continuing or making decisions in higher education. My motivation for the first year was to achieve as much as possible in the shortest

amount of time due to the lack of ability to work. My motivation was the strongest in the first year just as Rizkallah & Seitz (2017) found it would be in their study. I want to enjoy the rest of the doctoral process. Before I lose momentum, I should find a way to ensure my retainment and not sabotage myself. I am not finding sufficient time to document my studies as I initially planned. Three classes at a time was too nerve-wracking and I was fearful for every deadline. A friend of mine reminded me to smell the roses of my higher educational achievements and not rush through. Look around for opportunities to create art and spend time with my family. I have to remember to incorporate myself into school and not let school be all I have. I need to remind myself that I am a, “human being as a conscious, creative and active creature allows concluding that it permeates all spheres of public life” (Lisetskii et al., 2015). I have to enjoy everything and not only focus on the studies. I will lose interest and not have determination for the long run. Another friend told me not to get stuck in any rabbit holes, but enjoy digging. This was a gracious reminder to keep an open mind and not try to rush the subject of my dissertation. Let it come to me. Do not force it.

As I just emailed a resume tonight for a director of research in the field of instruction and technology at a local God honoring university, I have to remain in faith that the Lord will perform great works with me regardless where I am. He will use my skills, knowledge and bring wonderful opportunities my way so I can flourish during my studies and after my attainment of a doctoral degree. My job is to continue to “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established” (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Proverbs 16:3). I also need to remember that when I am stuck or lonely, that God is forever with me even when my peers are in their own studies, the teachers and other administrators are helping others. I will be thankful for them, have patience and not worry. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for

the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Matthew 6:34). Finally, my favorite verse, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Philippians 4:6-7). The conventions for my stewardship of my profession have already been written. I simply need to follow them.

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