Student retention is an important measure of student success, as it contributes to students’ timely graduation. Identifying students who persist from semester to semester and understanding the reasons why they drop out, stop out, or transfer, can help institutions sharpen recruiting efforts, refine marketing methods, and identify needed improvements in student services and in teaching/learning processes (Heverly, 1999). Non-returning students are those who leave the university before successfully completing a degree program. The purpose of this study was to examine responses of non-returning students based on demographics for Spring 2017 and Fall 2017.

Research Questions:
1) What are the non-returning reasons among students by colleges and by gender?
2) Was there any difference of students’ perception of connection with TAMUC campus by college, gender or level?
3) Was there any difference of students’ perception of preparedness of success academically by college, gender or level?
4) Was there difference of students’ perception of overall satisfaction with A&M-Commerce by college, gender or level?

Methodology
Students, who were enrolled in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 but not in Spring 2017 and Fall 2017, respectively, were asked to complete a web based survey which consisted of 37 open and closed-ended questions assessing commonly cited reasons for student early departure. Out of 3536 non-returning students surveyed, 456 responded to the survey, for a response rate of 13% as of 09/28/2017. The response was recorded using Qualtrics and then utilized to make data driven decisions.

Results
The above graphs show a comparison in response rate based on gender, level, and college. The maximum response rate is recorded from Non Degree seeking students (5%). Females responded more than the males (63%). By drilling down to level, graduate students have higher response rate compared to undergraduate students (61%). The current study returned valuable information which helps to better understand whether and why non-returning students transferred to a different school. This research endeavor can assist A&M-Commerce in making evidence-based improvements in academic programs and services provided to students with the intention to improve retention rates. By looking closer at the quantitative data, it was observed that top reasons for non-returning were as follows:
1) Job and Financial reasons 2) Personal and Family reasons 3) University-related reasons 4) Academic reasons

For 34% of the female population at A&M-Commerce, think difficulty in balancing life and academics and unsatisfactory quality of instruction (29%) form the top academic related reasons to not return. However, the male population think that they are not doing well on academic front (38%).

Both male and females (33%) think that the fees and tuition were more than they expected. Additionally, the male respondents (33%) said that they did not receive enough financial aid and hence did not return to A&M-Commerce.

When it comes to Job/Employment related reasons, both males and females have the same opinion. They think that scheduling conflict between job, studies and financial issues prevented them from returning to A&M-Commerce (51%).

The top university related reasons for the female and male population to not return was inadequate student support services (counseling, tutoring, etc.). Moreover, 32% of the females disliked the location/campus and 15% of males think that lack of personal fit at A&M-Commerce is the reason not returning.

Colleges with low response rate stated that difficulty in balancing life and academics was the most important reason to not return to A&M-Commerce (37%). However, students from colleges with high response rate agreed that they were unsatisfied with the quality of instruction at A&M-Commerce (27%) along with some other reasons for not returning.

Conclusion:
The result of these findings were passed on to the department heads in order to take necessary action about department specific issues. Financial Policy Changes such as scholarship awards diversification, financial aid process evaluation and one time debt/loan wash initiative are in progress. The survey help in gathering meaningful insights which were in line with the “We Care” initiative. Moreover, findings were passed on to the department heads in order to take necessary action about program specific issues. Action items such as increase in course section caps, adding more course sections, allocation of resources towards maximum utilization of classrooms in order to incorporate new class schedules, and also the utilization of retention funds for financial assistance were initialized. Recent implication included a new wait list process to enroll for classes beginning Spring 2018. For example, the College of Business informed students that if they find a class that is full, and would still like to register, they will be added to the class waiting list. When the wait list reaches 15 students, the specific department would be notified and a new section will be created. Post that, the department would review the wait list and make necessary adjustments to accommodate the students. In the view of hurricane Harvey, the counselling center at Texas A&M-Commerce conducted “Hurricane Harvey Impact session” to support, accommodate and provide resources during the time of crisis.