Introduction and Background
Student retention is essential to positive graduation rates; hence it is imperative that an institution make every possible effort to assist students in successful completion of their chosen degree. Student retention remains one of the most critical policy issues for higher education (Longden, 2006). Non-returning students are those who leave the university before successfully completing a degree program. The purpose of this study was to examine students response about general and primary reasons for not returning in Spring 2017 and Fall 2017.

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 students early departure.

Demographics
Out of 3536 non-returning students surveyed, 456 responded to the survey; for a response rate of 13% as of 09/28/2017. Approximately, 55% of respondents were White, followed by 19% African-American, 14% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 2% Unknown. A total of 4% of respondents were international students who are not African-American, 14% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 2% Unknown. A total of 4% of respondents were international students who are not African-American, 14% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 2% Unknown.

Results
Similar to past research (e.g. Kraska, 2008), results suggest that financial reasons, low academic success, lack of motivation or drive, and personal reasons play important roles in preventing students from returning to campus. 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 not returning were as follows:
- Job and Financial reasons
- Personal and Family reasons
- University-related reasons
- Academic reasons

The previous response was popular among general and primary reasons for not returning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Reasons</th>
<th>55.00%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Related</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job and 1st related</td>
<td>7.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Related</td>
<td>2.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Related</td>
<td>3.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the total responses, about 16% cited issues related to A&M-Commerce such as environment, location, student services, tutoring, advising, etc., as contributing to their decision not to return. In addition, a total of 15% chose Academics and a total of 31% chose Finances as a reason to not return to A&M-Commerce. Hence, a combined total of 62% cited university related reasons.

Among all the responses recorded, the most popular ones were "Difficulty balancing life and academics" at 32% and "Not doing well academically" at 29%. Although "Not doing well academically" was among the top Academic related reasons, as seen in the graph above, the majority of students indicated difficulty in balancing life and academics as one of the reasons for not returning to campus.

Primary Academic Reasons

Out of all the responses, 59% of respondents indicated that home and personal responsibilities interfered with their attendance or completion at A&M-Commerce. Physical or mental health problems came at a distant second with 22% of respondents. Similarly, 22% of respondents cited marriage or becoming a parent as their decision to not return.

Primary Personal Reasons

A total of 45% of the respondents indicated that inadequate student support services like counseling & tutoring were a primary reason for not returning to A&M-Commerce. Among the listed options, Lack of personal fit at A&M Commerce constituted 20% of the total response.

Other Findings

Undergraduate Program

The previous word cloud was obtained to understand specific reasons for non returning students at undergraduate level. The most common words in the textual entry questions among the undergraduate students included " PSU student, health and pregnancy. While common reasons like these continue to exist, one of the uncommon reasons that stood out was the impact of hurricane Harvey.

Graduate Program

Among the graduate population at Texas A&M Commerce, the most common words noted were job, degree and online course. The qualitative data (text entry questions) reflected the same results previously reported. However, qualitative data further enhanced the results by reflecting detailed explanation of why a student is not returning due to job or personal reasons.

Conclusion and Implication

The result of these 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, add 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. Moreover, the findings were shared with the financial aid department to evaluate the financial aid process. 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.