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An Evaluation of Student Perceptions of Academic Advising in a RN/BSN Distance Educational Nursing Program

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An Evaluation of Student Perceptions of Academic Advising in a RN/BSN Distance Educational Nursing Program

by

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Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

An Evaluation of Student Perceptions of Academic Advising in a RN/BSN Distance Educational Nursing Program

Over the past decade, RN/BSN programs have gained popularity across the nation with an emphasis upon structural flexibility and/or adult student learning principles. Research has shown a positive association between advisement and decreased attrition rates for this unique student body. The purpose of this research was to determine from the perception of students enrolled in a RN/BSN educational program, the importance of advisement in relation to three elements: functions, outcomes and advisor style. It was also the purpose to determine if these three elements had either been provided, achieved or employed, respectively, by their advisors. An evaluative design was used to study student perspectives. Data were collected using two Likert-type questionnaires which were piloted to establish reliability and validity. Statistical analysis included percent and median measures of central tendency and Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA. The sample technique of multistage sampling was used with the primary unit chosen by simple random

selection consisting of 7 of the 9 geographical areas of the nursing program under study. Three specific courses within each of the randomly chosen areas comprised the secondary unit resulting in a sample of 323 students. The sample population was found to be homogenous in relation to age, educational background and stage of progress in the nursing program ($p > .05$). Analysis revealed that all aspects of an advisor's style were perceived by students to have been employed by their advisors and all were considered to be important. None of the advisement outcomes were perceived to have been achieved nor were they considered as being important. It was significant that some of the functions and outcomes provided/achieved were not perceived as being important by students from higher educational backgrounds ($p > .05$). It was the conclusion of this study that RN/BSN students rated the three elements of academic advisement in accord with characteristics of adult learners as purported within constructs of adult learning theory. These findings are, therefore, significant to the practice of nursing that RN/BSN programs provide advisement in a manner conducive with adult learner student needs and values as a viable means to decrease potential student attrition rates.

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DEDICATION

To my mother whose strong demeanor encouraged me for over half a century and special friend, Muffin, who doggedly stayed by my side for 16 years throughout my academic career.

Acknowledgments

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According to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), academic institutions have been required to incorporate within their mission a responsibility to provide students with individual academic advisement that is consistent in nature and advisors are to make "appropriate academic decisions" (Handbook of Accreditation, 1988, p. 68). The professional accreditation body for nursing education, the National League of Nursing (NLN), has mandated that if a nursing program is a component of an academic institution, its philosophy must be congruent with the parent institution to which it belongs (National League for Nursing, 1982). The program proposed for study, the Statewide Nursing Program (SNP) founded in 1981, and its parent institution, California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) founded in 1960, are both WASC and NLN accredited (CSUDH Catalog, 1992) and the program has announced adherence to both WASC criteria and NLN mandates by stating that, "...The Program's philosophy and goals are congruent with the mission and goals of..." the parent academic institution (Self-Study, 1990, p. 3).

Academic advising within the RN/BSN nursing program is somewhat more complex than for other "traditional" forms in type of advisement, student population served and structure of delivery. For example, advising is conducted primarily by telephone by nine Coordinators who are full-time tenure-track faculty assisted by approximately 35 part-time non tenure-track Associate Coordinators who also instruct SNP courses throughout the State of California (e.g. SNP Class Schedule, 1992).

Students matriculate with divergent backgrounds in education, nursing practice and length of time absent from formal academic studies. The majority of students who have graduated from diploma schools of nursing have not had prior exposure to formal (college/university) educational processes or requirements. The structure of delivery differs in that classes convene at two week intervals for 4-hour sessions and students may choose to sit for a class offered at any one of the 242 classroom sites within California. Because all course materials are designed and approved by the full-time faculty, there is consistency of content regardless of where the classroom site is located throughout the state (Self-Study, 1990). Also, each course (2, 3, 4 or 5 academic credits) is divided into individual unit modules and students have the

choice option to complete an entire course with the same instructor/class site or divide course unit modules/ instructors/class sites within the State.

Because of these multiple factors, advisors play an integral and strategic role to provide accurate and consistent advisement. Also, because students may perceive their needs to be different than what an advisor believes to be of import (Arklie & Caty, 1986), advisors should determine from a student's perspective whether their needs have been met. The provision of these aspects of advisement may be a crucial contingency factor affecting student retention or attrition as well as their ultimate academic success or failure (Beeman, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate academic advisement from the perspective of students receiving advisement within a RN/BSN distance type of educational program as it pertains to elements of functions, style and outcomes. In particular, it focused upon evaluating the degree to which students perceive these specific elements of advisement to have been provided, employed or achieved by their advisor and to what degree they consider these elements to have been important to them.

Justification of the Study

A review of the literature shows that over the past decade, RN/BSN programs have gained popularity across the nation with an emphasis upon structural flexibility and/or adult student teaching-learning styles (Arlton & Miller, 1987; Arndt & Huckabay, 1980; Beeman, 1990; Creasia, 1989; Demarest, Harris & Vance, 1989; Hamilton, 1992; Highfield, 1988; Holbert & Thomas, 1988; Kelly, 1985; Kozier, Erb & Blais, 1992); Lawler & Rose, 1987; Lenberg, 1985; Lysaught, 1985; Rice, 1992). Research has shown a positive correlation between advisement, especially individualized, and decreased attrition rates for this unique student body (Beeman, 1990; Inouye, 1991; Murdock, 1987). Inouye (1991) found from a sample of 149 inactive RN/BSN students of the CSUDH-SNP that 48.6% were of the belief that if they had received advisement, they would have remained in the program. Studies, however, evaluating adult learners have been limited (Russell, 1990) especially those pertaining to RN/BSN student perceptions of advisement and focusing upon students enrolled in a distance type of nursing program has been non-existent.

Because of this program's flexible delivery and complex student body with focus upon adult teaching and learning principles, the growing popularity of RN/BSN

programs emphasizing these principles and the lack of studies addressing advisement needs of these students from their perspective, this researcher contends the need to conduct an in-depth evaluative study. This paper will focus upon evaluating academic advisement from a student's perception within the California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), RN/BSN Statewide Nursing Program (SNP).

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following questions are asked:

1. Is there a significant difference in relation to age, stage of progress in the program or level of education among RN/BSN students participating in the study?
2. Is there a difference in relation to age and advisement perspectives of RN/BSN students beginning the program from those students mid-way and those nearing exit?
3. Is there a difference in relation to educational level and RN/BSN student advisement perspectives?
4. From a RN/BSN student perspective, what advisement functions have been provided?
5. From a RN/BSN student perspective, what aspects of advisement style have been employed?

6. From a RN/BSN student perspective, what outcomes of advisement have been achieved?
7. Is there a difference in the average number of advisement sessions for RN/BSN students in relation to age, stage of progress in the Program or educational level?
8. Is there a difference in the amount of time spent in each advisement session for RN/BSN students in relation to age, stage of progress in the Program or educational level?
9. From a RN/BSN student perspective, what aspects of advisement are least important?
10. From a RN/BSN student perspective, what aspects of advisement are most important?

In order to answer the first research question pertaining to age, stage of progress within the program and educational level differences of students participating in the study, data were gathered from the Demographic Collection Tool (see Appendix E). Questions two through eight relating to whether aspects of advisement had been provided, employed or achieved were answered from data collected on Part One of the Academic Advisement Questionnaire (see Appendix F). The last two questions asking students to rate the importance of specific aspects of advisement, were answered from data gleaned on Part Two of the Academic Advisement Questionnaire, (see Appendix F).

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this research, the following terms are operationally defined:

RN/BSN Student: California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), Statewide Nursing Program (SNP) student enrolled in either Professional Nursing Relations (BSN 340), Health Assessment (BSN 380) or Leadership in Nursing Practice (BSN 480) courses.

Distance Type of Nursing Program: A program that offers classes extramural to a home campus. Students enrolled in the nursing program sit for classes offered at 242 classroom sites throughout the State of California rather than at the CSU Dominguez Hills home campus (e.g. CSUDH Catalog, 1992, pp. 52-130).

Geographical Areas: The CSUDH-SNP consists of nine geographical locations throughout the State of California and are known as Areas: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H and J. Each Area contains a hub office housing one full-time faculty member serving as Coordinator/Assistant Chair for that Area. One or more Associate Coordinators are assigned to each area contingent upon logistical needs.

The geographical breakdown for the nine Areas is as follows: (e.g. SNP Class Schedule, 1992, pp. 8-18).

A Eureka-Modesto

B Oakland-Monterey

C San Luis Obispo-Bakersfield

D Santa Barbara-Bishop

E Los Angeles

F Dominguez Hills-Long Beach

G Pomona-San Clemente

H San Diego-North County

J Fontana-Imperial Valley

Advisor: An Area Coordinator who is a full-time tenured or tenure-track CSUDH-SNP faculty member or an Associate Coordinator who is a part-time CSUDH-SNP member under the supervision of the Area Coordinator.

Academic Advisement: Contains three elements: (1) advisement functions (SNP Class Schedule, 1991, p. 5), (2) advisor style and (3) advisement outcomes (Peterson, 1970).

Advisement Functions: "To assist in completing a Program of Study following a discussion of (student) educational goals and previous experience... (and) the creation of a plan for degree completion that is compatible with the student's available time, fiscal and academic resources" (SNP Class Schedule, 1991, p. 5).

Advisor Style: "The manner, rapport, knowledge, availability and amount of contact with advisees"

(Peterson, 1970, p. 15)

Advisement Outcomes: "The effects of advisement-the interpersonal relation which may develop between advisor and advisee" and the (overall) satisfaction with advisement outcome (Peterson, 1970, p. 15) including progression toward graduation (SNP Class Schedule, 1991, p.5).

Ethical Considerations

The proposal for this research was submitted and approved by the University of San Diego Committee on Protection of Human Subjects. It was also submitted to the CSU, Statewide Nursing Program Research Evaluation Committee and approved to use the program's RN/BSN students as research subjects.

Any physical or psychological discomfort experienced by subjects voluntarily entering this study would be minimal. Ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity included: (1) informing subjects that participation in the study is voluntary; a cover letter attached to each questionnaire explicating confidentiality and anonymity (see Appendix A); (2) ensuring privacy by providing subjects an envelope to deposit and return their completed forms to the researcher; (3) using code numbers on both demographic and advisement tools; (4) code numbers used for statistical analysis; (5) signed consent forms

separately kept from advisement tools in a locked file with no attempt to identify any respondent and; (6) dissemination of results provided and explicated in group data format only. Also, students enrolled in the researcher's area (Area H) were not included in the sample population to prevent any psychological discomfort and/or to avoid any social desirability-set answers that could skew results.

Risks and Benefits of Subjects

Potential risks and management. Potential risks could be that subjects: (1) feel compelled to enter the study through implication either because their Instructor and/or a Coordinator faculty member asked for volunteers and/or (2) may be linked with the signed consent form and their responses to the advisement questionnaires.

The negative impact of these risks could be that subjects: (1) would not enter the study under their own volition and/or (2) would not feel comfortable expressing or discussing their perceptions of advisement with their advisors, especially if any of their responses were negative.

Risk management procedures to prevent these potential risks and/or negative impacts were that the researcher: (1) provided each potential subject a Consent to Act as a Research Subject form (see Appendix A)

attached to each set of questionnaires to read and sign stating full understanding of the explications and verification that participation is voluntary with anonymity and confidentiality preserved and (2) adhered to the warrants described and ensured in the consent form.

Potential benefits. A potential benefit of this research is that RN/BSN students have a choice opportunity to input their perspectives of academic advisement within the SNP distance type of nursing program. Whether or not advisement functions, style or outcomes were negatively or positively rated, the findings could determine which specific aspect(s) was (were) lacking, provided, employed or achieved. Results could also delineate any differences among RN/BSN students in relation to age, stage of progress in the Program or educational level and their advisement perspectives.

The program has the potential benefit of gleaning evaluative findings from this research with the opportunity to correct any weaknesses and/or maintain strong points of advisement found. Findings could also be generalized to other academic programs with adult student populations. Results from this study could afford these institutions insight as to the desires and/or needs of these unitque students and offer advisement accordingly.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The review of literature has provided an historical and statistical overview of the CSUDH Statewide Nursing Program whose elements of academic advisement from the perspective of their RN/BSN students were studied in this research. It also included strategies utilized in the national recruitment and retention of nursing students in general and RN/BSN students specifically. Theoretical concepts of adult teaching-learning principles and their relation to aspects of adult academic advisement were presented.

Background of the Statewide Nursing Program

Evolution

Upon request from the California State University Chancellor's office, the Statewide Nursing Program evolved in 1978 under the auspices of a committee comprised of 15 CSU nursing chairpersons (Self Study, 1990). The primary goal of the program was to offer employed Registered Nurses who desired a baccalaureate in nursing science (BSN) degree, an instructional delivery system that removed "artificial barriers of time, place and pace of learning" (Self Study, 1990, p. xiv).

In 1980, a decision was reached by The Consortium Advisory Committee of the CSU Academic Senate, the CSU Academic Senate, the California Post-Secondary Education Commission and the CSU Chancellor to house the newly formed SNP within the CSU Consortium and BSN courses were first offered in the Spring 1981 semester at Long Beach, California (Self Study, 1990).

Funding

Initial monetary support for the program was provided by numerous health care agencies with primary funding provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation who contributed $2.3 million toward the Spring 1982 start-up funding support fees (Self Study, 1990). Secondary to lobbying efforts conducted by professional organizations, especially the California Nurses Association, the Statewide Nursing Program was included in the California State Budget Act and beginning with the Fall 1988 semester, the program's tuition was in accord with other CSU student fees rather than the higher Consortium per unit fee (Self Study, 1990).

In March 1985, additional funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation afforded the SNP to develop and implement a Master of Science in Nursing Degree Program offering four role preparations (Self Study, 1990).

Because internal operating costs were not in conjunction with rising student tuition fees, the CSU Consortium was discontinued July 1, 1987. Since it was the desire of the Chancellor to procure and retain the mission of the SNP, it was relocated to the CSU, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) campus (Self Study, 1990). Following relocation, the School of Health was established at CSUDH commencing with the 1990-91 academic year. The organizational structure of the School consists of the Division of Nursing with its Statewide Nursing Program, the Department of Clinical Sciences and the Department of Health Sciences. The Division of Nursing has an Undergraduate Nursing Science Department and a Graduate Nursing Science Department.

Accreditation Status

Secondary to transferring the SNP administrative offices from the CSU Consortium campus in Long Beach to the CSU Dominguez Hills campus, it was necessary for the SNP to procure National League of Nursing to re-evaluate the program's accreditation status.

Following a visit in November, 1990 from the Board of Review for Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs, the National League of Nursing voted to grant accreditation to

the baccalaureate and master's degree programs in nursing retroactive to the 12 month period prior to the date of the accreditation site visit.

Demographics

There have been approximately 3,000 students eligible to enroll each semester. Since students may sit out semesters in order to take general education units, about 2,200 students take courses during a term (Self Study, 1990).

According to Statewide Nursing Program statistics (SNP Stats, 1992), data compiled from September 1988 to May 1991 pertaining to enrollment (see Appendix A) showed that the average age of students was 37.5 with more females (96%) enrolled than males. It also showed that the majority of students held associate degrees (82%) as compared to Diplomas in Nursing and/or other degrees. More students had a full time occupational status (75%) with 83% being employed in hospital settings. Seventy four percent of the students anticipated a change of position within five years related to procuring a BSN degree with 71% anticipating a salary increase. Students stated that the reasons for selecting the Statewide Nursing Program versus other RN/BSN programs were of convenience due to class location (84%), time of day

classes were offered (80%) with 59% preferring the beginning/ending dates of courses. Other factors for choosing the Statewide Nursing Program were attributed to acceptable cost (72%) and 39% of the students felt courses offered were the ones they needed. Personal reasons identified by students for choosing the SNP in lieu of other RN/BSN programs were due to time preferences (78%), job limitations (50%), children (35%), transportation (23%) and 27% stated other home situations as viable factors.

Faculty Members

There are 13 full-time and 219 part-time faculty members within the Statewide Nursing Program. Faculty and Associate Coordinators serve as academic advisors specializing in either undergraduate or graduate student advisement. Academic advisement is viewed by the University as part of the full-time faculty member role and based upon the advisement load, additional assigned time for advising is allocated by the Director. Eleven of the full-time faculty hold doctorate degrees and two have completed a substantial portion of a doctoral program. The aggregate academic preparation of the 219 part-time faculty include: 224 bachelor's degrees, 233 master's degrees and 55 doctorates (Self Study, 1990).

Philosophy

In relation to adult teaching-learning principles within the program, the faculty maintains the philosophy reciprocal relationship wherein faculty and students teach and learn together" whereby instructors assume a facilitator role within the teaching-learning process and that "...the registered nurse-learner is a self-directed, internally and externally motivated individual who brings multiple personal, professional, academic and life experience to the learning situation" (Self Study, 1990, p.2).

National Status of Nursing Student Enrollment

Generic and RN/BSN Students

Between 1974 and 1985, there was a significant 1.7% national decline in the number of students enrolled in generic BSN, ADN and diploma nursing programs culminating in 1988 with a 32% decline (Astin, Green, Korn & Schalit, 1986; Youngkin, 1990) while the number of students enrolled in RN/BSN programs increased (Arlton & Miller, 1987). In a 1986 survey of all NLN accredited BSN programs, 75% reported to have RN/BSN tracts and students enrolled in these constituted 25% of their total nursing student population (Arlton & Miller, 1987). In 1990, the Statewide Nursing Program listed its RN/BSN student body

eligible to register for classes to be approximately 3700 which was a 25% increase in head count from the previous academic year (SNP Factsheet, 1990).

A continual decline in generic student enrollment has been projected to persist so that by 1990 the nursing profession could lack half the number of nurses required (Naylor & Sherman, 1987) and be short 59% needed at the baccalaureate level (Demarest, Harris & Vance, 1989). Because of this decline, many nursing programs have been forced to close, faculty positions phased out (Bliesmer & Eggenberger, 1989; Brider, 1985) and some schools lowered their GPA entry requirement in an attempt to increase enrollment (Brider, 1985).

Factors Affecting Student Enrollment

Several explanations for decreased enrollment have been offered. In a study conducted by Naylor & Sherman (1987), survey responses collected from 226 deans of nursing schools representing the Midwest, North Atlantic, Southern and Western areas of the country were collected. When asked to respond to the inquiry, "list the primary reasons for the changes in enrollment" (p. 1601), 158 replied that applicants were not academically qualified; 160 identified financial constraints; 67 reported ineffective recruitment measures; 53 stated a

negative public image of nursing exists; 51 believed faculty teaching capabilities were deficient and 48 said that clinical facilities were not available. Smith (1990) found similar results after surveying non-returning generic nursing students at Texas Woman's University. From a total population of 227, 117 respondents ranked the following factors as having the most impact upon their attrition from the nursing program: (1) 35 (29.9%) were not satisfied with class scheduling; (2) 34 (29.0%) lacked sufficient financial support; (3) 34 (29%) found their working hours interfered with studies; (4) 32 (27.4%) were not satisfied with program requirements; (5) 31 (26.5%) had demanding work responsibilities and; (6) 28 (23.9%) believed they had poor academic advisement.

Medicare's innovative payment plan of Diagnosis Related Groups (DRGs) in 1983 (Kozier, Erb & Blais, 1992) and the feminist movement beginning in the 1970's, have also been linked as contributing factors for the decline in nursing school enrollment (Lowry, 1992). Because DRGs have shortened the number of patient hospital confinement days, the amount of care and nursing acuity hours required to deliver that care have been reduced, thus creating a tighter job market (Kozier et al. 1992). Although the feminist movement has provided females the option to seek

a career outside the home and a choice to enter fields previously dominated by males (Lowry, 1992), the latter has had a negative impact upon nursing practice (Kozier et al. 1992). As an example, in a retrospective survey spanning the years 1966-1986 of four year academic institutions, it was found that in 1986, "for the first time" more females rated a preference to enter medicine rather than the profession of nursing (Green, 1987, p. 1612).

Even though student enrollment in BSN generic programs increased 5.8% in 1989 ("Nursing Enrollment", 1989) and during 1991, junior colleges reported to have had "the heaviest influx" of ADN applicants in years ("Times Change", 1991, p. 99), the cumulative consequences of past deficits will have a negative impact for some time to come (Youngkin, 1990). One result of this impact has been a serious shortage of registered nurses for 58% of hospitals throughout the United States (Graham & Sheppard, 1990). According to Kozier et al. (1992), other factors besides decreased student enrollment have also contributed to hospital shortages. Some of these include: a wider focus of practice choices among nurses that have enticed them to leave hospitals in favor of home health care; homeless shelters; hospice agencies and other places of

employment extramural to the more traditional acute care setting (Kozier et al. 1992). Severe state educational budget cuts across the country have also been a factor affecting hospital shortages ("Times Change", 1991). After conducting a survey of the nation's 618 schools with undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing found that 2300 prospective students were unable to be admitted because of the lack of instructional dollars ("Nursing Schools", 1991).

Student Recruitment and Retention

It has been suggested that in order to prevent a possible shortage of over 600,000 baccalaureate or above educated nurses by the turn of the century, educational systems should employ creative recruitment and retention strategies that fit the needs of their students (Bliesmer & Eggenberger, 1989; Naylor & Sherman, 1987). The NLN has reported that one reason nursing programs with RN/BSN tracts have been the most successful in recruitment and retention has been because they were designed to meet the needs of their student population (Zusy, 1986).

Strategies of Student Recruitment and Retention

Literature revealed a number of strategies proposed by both generic and RN/BSN nursing programs in an effort

to increase recruitment and decrease attrition. Some of the methods cited have included: (1) providing students with factual and objective information pertaining to program specifics (Arklie & Caty, 1986; Bliesmer & Eggenberger, 1989) and the realitites of nursing practice (Bliesmer & Eggenberger, 1989); (2) flexible curricula (Creasia, 1989; Kozier et al. 1992) such as videotape or telecourse program delivery (Kozier et al. (1992); (3) sessions to enhance success in academic skills such as memorization techniques and efficient organization of time (Marshall, 1989); (4) tuition reimbursement and financial grants (Naylor & Sherman, 1987; News, (1989); (5) program marketing via the media (Sullivan, Printz, Shafer & Schultz, 1988); (6) accelerated BSN (ABSN) programs (Feldman & Jordet, 1989); (7) credit for challenge exams (Arlton & Miller, 1987); (8) weaving adult learning principles within the philosophical tenets of the program (Creasia, 1989; Lowenstein & Bradshaw, 1989); Rendon, 1988 and (9) supporting students by providing advisement (Arklie & Caty, 1986; Beeman, 1988; Demarest, Harris & Vance, 1989; Hudepohl & Reed, 1984; Hughes, 1988; Thurber, Hollingsworth, Brown & Whitaker, 1989).

Because demographics showed that returning RN/BSN students range between the 30-40 age group with subsequent

family and employment commitments (Kozier et al. 1992; Rice, 1992; SNP Stats, 1992), the trend has been among this population to choose flexible academic programs that offer part-time versus full time enrollment (Rapson, Perry & Parker, 1990; Rice, 1992). Studies also showed the strongest impetus for RN/BSN students to pursue and persist with an academic degree has been contingent upon whether the program fostered adult learning principles and if advisement was provided (Beeman, 1988; Creasia, 1989; Lange, 1986; Lowenstein & Bradshaw, 1989; Thurber et al., 1989).

Academic Advisement

Historical Overview

Academic advisement, provided by knowledgeable faculty advisors, has been considered to be an important service extended to students for over 115 years with Johns Hopkins as the first nationally recorded university to have such a service in 1877, followed by Harvard in 1889 (Thurber, et al., 1989). Because societal expectations were heeded regarding the welfare of students enrolled in academic institutions, the majority of universities and colleges implemented academic advisement by the 1920s (Thurber et al., 1989). In recent years, academic advisement has been structured within the majority of

educational systems (Thurber et al., 1989) and has become so popular that California State University, "the largest university system in the country" (Self-Study, 1990, p. xiii), proclaimed in 1990, that, "Faculty spend more time...advising and counseling students" in relation to "researching and seeking funds than their counterparts across the country" (Faculty Spend, 1990, p.1).

Student Retention and Success

Even though the advisor role has often been an under estimated component of faculty work load units (Van Ort & Putt, 1985), educational systems have equated the provision of academic advisement with student retention and success (Seidl & Sauter, 1990); Thurber et al., 1989). Advisors have played a pivotal part in retention and success by balancing student needs and desires with institutional policy and procedures (Van Ort & Putt, 1985).

Numerous variables correlated with student success have been cited in the literature. Some of these have included: (1) a student-institutional fit; (2) a student-advisor compatability and; (3) whether students perceive that the institution is responsive and capable of fulfilling their needs (Lange, 1986; Seidl & Sauter, 1990; Thurber, et al., 1989). Advisement that provides a

supportive atmosphere and a "consistent" quality has been recognized not only as a means to assist students in successfully completing a program (Student Handbook, 1987, p. 3), but also as a significant symbol that the institution is cognizant of their needs and desires (Thurber et al., 1989).

Adult Student Advisement Needs

When RN/BSN students return to the learner role as adults, their academic needs have not been equivalent with those of generic students (Beeman, 1988; Creasia, 1989; Lawler & Rose, 1987; Lowenstein & Bradshaw, 1989). Beeman (1988), Seidl and Sauter (1990) and Rice (1992) noted that in order for advisement to be beneficial for adult students, the style used should differ from that employed for non-adult students. Specifically, it was found that an authoritarian style of advisement has been resented and subsequently rejected (Beeman, 1988; Bigge, 1982; Lawson 1975). Utilizing a consultant style whereby advisement has been provided in a non-threatening manner and students perceive advisors as their advocates has been reported to be more successful (Rice, 1992).

Lange (1986) stated that advising adult students has entailed more than providing them with a current or projected program of study plan. Their needs oftentimes

have required a caring attitude (Rice, 1992) encompassing assistance with realistic time management and role expectations and whether these have interfaced in a compatible manner with their whole-life style (ie. family-school-employment) committments (Rice, 1992; Seidl & Sauter, 1990). Because of these unique needs, it has been recommended that advisement should expand its function beyond purely academic concerns to incorporate problem solving strategies that deal with adult student issues (Seidl & Sauter, 1990; Rice, 1992).

Adult Teaching-Learning Principles

Futurist scholars have projected that as a result of the "baby boom" during the 1960s and 1970s, the 1990s will be known as the "era of the adult" (Best & Eberhard, 1990). They have also predicted that these adult students will have an urgent need to access academia in order to not only maintain and update skills but to survive in the more complex society of the future (Best & Eberhard, 1990). Because of this, they have given the caveat that educational institutions and educators must be prepared to provide a delivery system that is consistent with adult teaching-learning principles (Benjamin, 1989; Best & Eberhard, 1990). They have described this type of system as "active" versus "passive" learning whereby

students have increased autonomy in relation to flexible scheduling and self directedness (Benjamin, 1989, p.8). In order to accomplish these tasks, it has been recommended that educational systems align their mission with what societal trends have expected and demanded of institutions in the future, namely, "to deliver their services with ease and speed" (Benjamin, 1989, p. 12). Seidl and Sauter (1990) have documented that returning RN/BSN students will place their share of pressure upon academia to provide their educational needs within the framework of adult teaching-learning principles.

Theoretical Constructs

Knowles (1984) has identified basic principles unique to adult students within an academic learning environment that some educators have incorporated into their curricula (Lewis & Cobin, 1985; Lowenstein & Bradshaw, 1989; Rice, 1992). His theory has stemmed from "andragogy" which is interpreted as "the art and science of helping adults learn" in contrast to "pedagogy" which has focused upon children in the learner role (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Based upon theories of adult development, andragogical learning differs from pedagogical learning in that adults: (1) are more independent and self directed than children; (2) incorporate past experiences into the

learning process; (3) are motivated to learn contingent upon specific developmental task or current social role; and (4) are motivated if what is to be learned has immediate and pragmatic application (Beeman, 1988; Kozier, 1992; Linares, 1989). The theory also assumes that adult students are "creative, accountable and responsible" (Lewis & Cobin, 1985, p. 262; Linares, 1989) as evidenced by a self directed motivation (Knowles, 1970; Linares, 1989; Seidl & Sauter, 1990).

Application of Constructs

The four constructs unique to adult teaching-learning principles: self directedness, past experience as a resource, developmental task/social role motivation and pragmatic/immediate application have been found to be interdependent (Kozier et al., 1992).

Self directedness has been defined as the ability to direct one's learning experience, pace of study (Rice, 1992) and secondary to an internal locus of control, not seeking or requiring as much structure as would non-adult students (Linares, 1989). It has been suggested that self directedness may be fostered if academic institutions provide flexible learning environments such as: offering alternative designs and delivery options in the form of off-campus classes and televised courses to accommodate

adult learners who are unable to attend traditional programs (Kozier et al., 1992), student authored learning contracts that focus upon the learner's desires or needs (Williams, 1983), negotiable assignment due dates and role choices within clinical performance settings (Rice, 1992).

An atmosphere of respect and trust on the part of the faculty has been implicated as a necessary component to encourage and maintain self directedness as well as to support the past experiences of students as being viable resources (Creasia, 1989; Rice, 1992). A seminar versus lecture-type classroom format with instructors assuming a facilitator role has also stimulated self directedness and the increased use of past experiences as learning resources by students (Rice, 1992).

Studies have shown that adults more often develop a readiness to learn when confronting the need to achieve a specific developmental life phase task (Havighurst, 1972; Williams, 1983). This in turn may necessitate adults to return to school so as to acquire the necessary skills needed to function within the new phase of life and also to explain their desire to learn only that which is relevant and pragmatic (Linares, 1989; Rice, 1992). In order to nurture this type of motivation, it has been suggested to emphasize theoretical application prior to

problem oriented techniques and skills during the learning process (Rice, 1992; Williams, 1983).

Review of Literature Summary

In summary, the review of literature has shown that between 1974 and 1988, there was a sharp decline in the number of students entering generic nursing programs (Youngkin, 1990). The aftermath of this 14 year decline has resulted in a current nursing shortage among 58% of the acute care hospitals in the nation (Graham & Sheppard, 1990). Studies have determined that during this same time frame, enrollment figures of RN/BSN programs steadily increased (Arlton & Miller, 1987; Youngkin, 1990) and several factors for this discrepancy have been implicated. It was discovered, for example, that contributing to low enrollment among generic programs have included such variables as: a tight job market, the feminist movement, student financial constraints, class scheduling not conducive with student working hours, and poor or complete lack of academic advisement (Inouye, 1991; Kozier et al., 1992; Naylor & Sherman, 1987; Smith, 1990).

As reported by the National League of Nursing, the main factor affecting the success of RN/BSN programs has been the desire of these programs to meet specific needs of students (Zusy, 1986). This has been accomplished in

part by: (1) offering curricula with flexible delivery (Kozier et al., 1992) (2) incorporating adult principles within the teaching-learning process (Hamilton, 1992) and (3) providing academic advisement (Beeman, 1990; Inouye, 1991; Lowenstein & Bradshaw, 1989; Thurber et al., 1989). Literature reveals that academic advisement has been nationally valued by both students and educational institutions for more than a century (Thurber, et al., 1989). It has been equated with student retention and success (Seidl & Sauter, 1990) and symbolizes to students that the school is cognizant and responsive to their needs (Thurber et al., 1989). Since RN/BSN demographics show an age range between 30 and 40 (Rice, 1992), in order for advisement to benefit these students, constructs of adult teaching-learning principles need to be incorporated such as a caring attitude and a non-authoritarian and non-threatening style of presentation (Beeman, 1988; Rice, 1992; Seidl & Sauter, 1990). It has also been recommended that academic advisement provided to adults should encompass problem solving strategies to deal with adult student issues such as realistic role expectations (Seidel & Sauter, 1990; Rice, 1992).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This research used an evaluative approach to study RN/BSN student perspectives of academic advisement received from advisors within the CSUDH, Division of Nursing. An evaluative design was chosen since this typology has been shown to be an effective means of determining positive and negative outcomes of existing programs, services or procedures (Borg & Gall, 1983; Polit & Hungler, 1989). The evaluation was specifically summative versus formative in nature according to Scriven's (1967) distinction. That is, the study was conducted after the development of the service [advisement] with reliability/validity of tools and generalizability of results being controlled (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Design

Data were collected from RN/BSN students enrolled in the Fall, 1991 semester of Professional Relations in Nursing Practice (BSN 340), Health Assessment (BSN 380) and Nursing Leadership (BSN 480) courses from 7 randomly chosen geographical areas encompassing 22 classroom sites throughout the State of California. These three courses respectively represented a beginning, mid-way and final

required course in the curriculum. They were purposely selected to ascertain if academic advisement perspectives differed among students entering the program, mid-way through the program or nearing exit from the program.

Initially, each Area Coordinator advisor was contacted by the researcher to obtain information pertaining to the number of BSN 340, BSN 380 and BSN 480 courses they would be offering in their specific geographical Area during the Fall, 1991 semester and the names, addresses and phone numbers of instructors slated to teach these courses. These instructors were then sent a packet containing a cover letter that explicated: (1) the nature of the research (2) voluntary participation in the study and (3) process to administer the questionnaires to students and their return to the researcher (see Appendices B and C). A pre-paid postage envelope was provided with each packet to return completed and uncompleted questionnaires to the researcher.

Setting and Time Frame

The setting for data collection took place at 22 Statewide Nursing Program classroom sites offering BSN 340, BSN 380 and BSN 480 courses within Areas: A, B, C, D, E, F and G representing a geographical span from Eureka to San Clemente, California. The time frame to collect data

was three months beginning October 8, 1991 and ending on January 4, 1992.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

It was assumed that subjects entering the study did so under their own volition and understood the "Consent to Act as a Research Subject" form explicating implied legalities (see Appendix A) and that they completed the questionnaires to the best of their ability by providing honest replies. It was assumed that instructors of the BSN 340, BSN 380 and BSN 480 courses participated in the study voluntarily (see Appendix B) and followed instructions as prescribed by the researcher in relation to administering, collecting and returning the questionnaires (see Appendix C). It was also assumed that after piloting the data collection tool for content validity by a panel of Area Coordinator advisor experts, those question items remaining were adult learning focused.

Limitations

Original estimation of sample size was calculated to be about 500 but in actuality was smaller than desired with only 323 students enrolled in the three BSN courses during fall, 1991 semester. Several reasons contributed

to the low enrollment such as state educational budget cuts and the aftermath of the Desert Storm War. The budget cuts directly affected Dominguez Hills campus by losing $6.2 million for program and operating costs (Inside Dominguez Hills, 1991) which necessitated the nursing program to cut 109 units that semester. Also, because many students were either themselves or had family members serving in the Desert Storm War, they were forced to sit out the semester thus decreasing enrollment rates.

Another limitation that may have affected sample size was the policy of the program's Research and Evaluation Committee prohibiting students to complete tools pertaining to research endeavors during class session times. In accord with this policy, questionnaires were completed after class sessions had ended and, therefore, may have contributed to a lower return rate than otherwise may have been obtained if completed during class time.

Lastly, since 97% of the total student population participating in the study was female, a male opinion pertaining to academic advisement was proportionately unrepresented. Because a male perspective may differ from females, the lack of male input for statistical analysis was considered to be a limitation.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The total population of students enrolled in the CSUDH SNP, RN/BSN Program representing the nine

geographical Areas (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J) throughout the state of California was 2,362 for fall 1991 semester (L. Destate, personal communication, June 16, 1992). Using multistage sampling, the primary unit chosen by a simple random selection technique, consisted of 7 of the 8 geographical Areas which were: A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Seven of the eight Areas were arbitrarily chosen as a means to increase sample size. Secondary to human subject ethical implications, the researcher's Area (H) was excluded from the accessible population resulting in a target population of 2,044 students. All BSN 340, BSN 380 and BSN 480 courses within each of the randomly chosen Areas comprised the secondary unit. One of each of the three courses within the 7 Areas was randomly selected so that 21 courses with 323 students representing 14% of total courses and 53% of total sudents were included in the sample. Enrollment breakdown for these courses were: 110 students in the BSN 340 classes, 135 students in the BSN 380 classes and 78 students in the BSN 480 classes.

Data Collection Tools

The demographic collection tool consisted of seven closed ended inquiries (see Appendix E). It was devised by the researcher to glean information needed to answer the first three research questions asking if the

variables of age, stage of progress in the program or educational level affect RN/BSN student advisement perspectives. Question #4 (semester/year began program) and question #7 (projected graduation date) were included to control for possible erroneous data. If students were taking the BSN 340 class out of sequence (at the end of academic coursework rather than at the beginning), it could affect the validity of data collected in response to the second research question seeking to determine if advisement perspectives differed contingent upon stage of progress in the program.

The tools, entitled, Academic Advisement Questionnaire Part One and Academic Advisement Questionnaire Part Two (see Appendix F), were used to answer the remaining research questions pertaining to student perceptions of advisement. Both tools were adapted from the 90 item College Advisement Survey (CAS) questionnaire which was developed by Peterson (1970) for the purpose of determining college students' perception of advisement. The CAS was based on a conceptual model of advisement containing aspects of: Functions of Advisement, Style of the Advisor and Outcomes of Advisement. Questions used from the CAS relating to functions, style and outcomes of advisement were chosen in accord with their specific

congruence with the definition and goals of advisement within the nursing program and CSUDH in general. From 31 items identified on the CAS as being functions of advisement, 11 were chosen, 13 were chosen from 29 items identified as advisor style and 9 were chosen from 30 items identified as outcomes of advisement.

Permission to use the CAS tool was sought. Efforts, however, to contact or locate the author in order to obtain this were unsuccessful.

Data collected to answer research questions #4, #5 and #6 to determine the degree to which students perceived the three elements of advisement (functions, style and outcomes) to have been provided, employed or achieved, respectively, were measured on a 33 item Likert scale (see Appendix F, part one). The degree to which students perceived the importance of these aspects of advisement were measured on a 32 item Likert scale (see Appendix F, part two) in order to answer #9 and #10 research questions.

Two closed ended questions to determine the total number of advisement sessions and length of time spent in each (see Appendix F, part one, #34 and #35) were included to answer #7 and #8 research questions. Rationale for the inclusion of these research questions was to ascertain if a consistency/discrepancy factor existed with these variables in relation to the three elements of advisement.

In order to glean answers to #9 and #10 research questions in a qualitative manner, two open ended questions were also used to determine the overall opinion of what aspects of advisement have been the most and least important to students (see Appendix F, part two, #33 and #34).

Reliability and Validity

During the months of September and October 1991, a pilot study was conducted to establish reliability and validity of the data instruments. Area Coordinator advisors served as expert panel members and completed a Content Validity Index (CVI) tool rating the relevance of each item on the preliminary questionnaires. Each item was rated on a 4-point ordinal scale and only those that received a 3 or 4 by the members were considered content valid and included in the final questionnaires.

The questionnaires were also piloted to 10 RN/BSN students who were at various stages of progression in the program and who would not be participating as subjects in the final study. Questionnaires were found reliable for internal consistency at 0.94 as measured by Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Peterson (1970) found the CAS tool to have test-retest reliability for stability over time at 0.70 or above and split-half reliability for internal consistency at 0.80 or more.

Statistical Analyses

The demographic tool collecting data pertaining to personal, academic and nursing practice variables was analyzed by percentage, median and frequency distribution measures of central tendency. ANOVA determined if the sample differed in relation to age, stage of progress in the program or educational level. Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA and chi-square tests determined if differences existed between the age, stage of progress in the program or educational level of students and their perspectives of advisement. A Pearson *r* statistic analyzed correlations found between the stage of progress in the program, educational level of students and their advisement perspectives. ANOVA determined differences in the perception of overall satisfaction with advisement in relation to age, stage of progress in the program or level of education of students. Chi-square analysis was used to determine if differences existed as to age, stage of progress in the program or educational level of students and the number of advisement sessions or time spent in each session. In order to ascertain which aspects of advisement were considered to be more important than others, a median measure of central tendency and qualitative analyses were used. All data were analyzed using SPSS programs and all inferential statistical results were reported at the 0.05 level of significance.

Chapter 4

Results

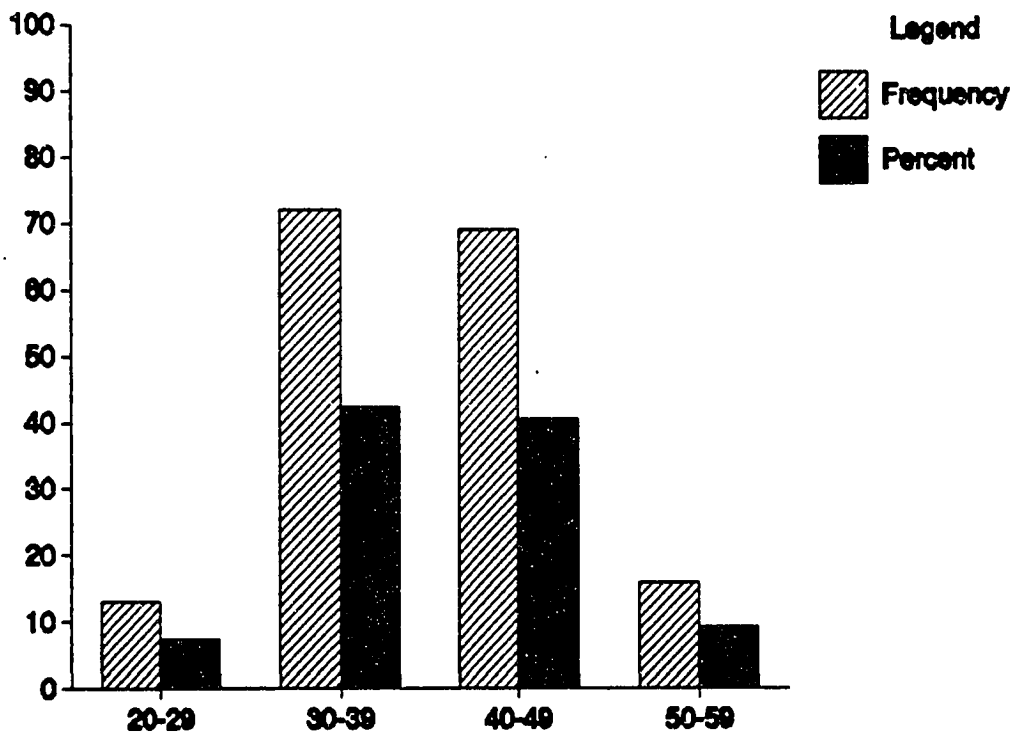
From a total of 323 distributed questionnaires, 172 were returned which represented a 53% response rate. Out of 110 questionnaires sent to students enrolled in BSN 340 courses, 58 were returned, 60 out of 135 questionnaires sent to students in BSN 380 courses were returned and 54 out of 78 questionnaires sent to students in BSN 480 courses were returned. From the seven geographical Areas, there were 30 questionnaires returned from Area A, 30 from Area B, 24 from Area C, 31 from Area D, 11 from Area E, 20 from Area F, and 26 from Area G.

Age, Gender and Educational Level of Students

The population was comprised of 166 females (96.5%) and six males (3.5%) ranging in age from 20-59 with a mean of 39 (see Figure 1). Out of 171 responses, a majority of 123 (71.7%) had Associate Degrees in Nursing, 36 (21%) held Diplomas in Nursing and 12 (7.3%) had degrees in fields other than nursing (see Figure 2). Among the students who participated in the study, ANOVA revealed that neither their ages $F(146, 1.33) = 0.15$, $p > .05$ were significantly different nor their levels of education $F(148, 1.11) = 0.33$, $p > .05$.

Figure 1

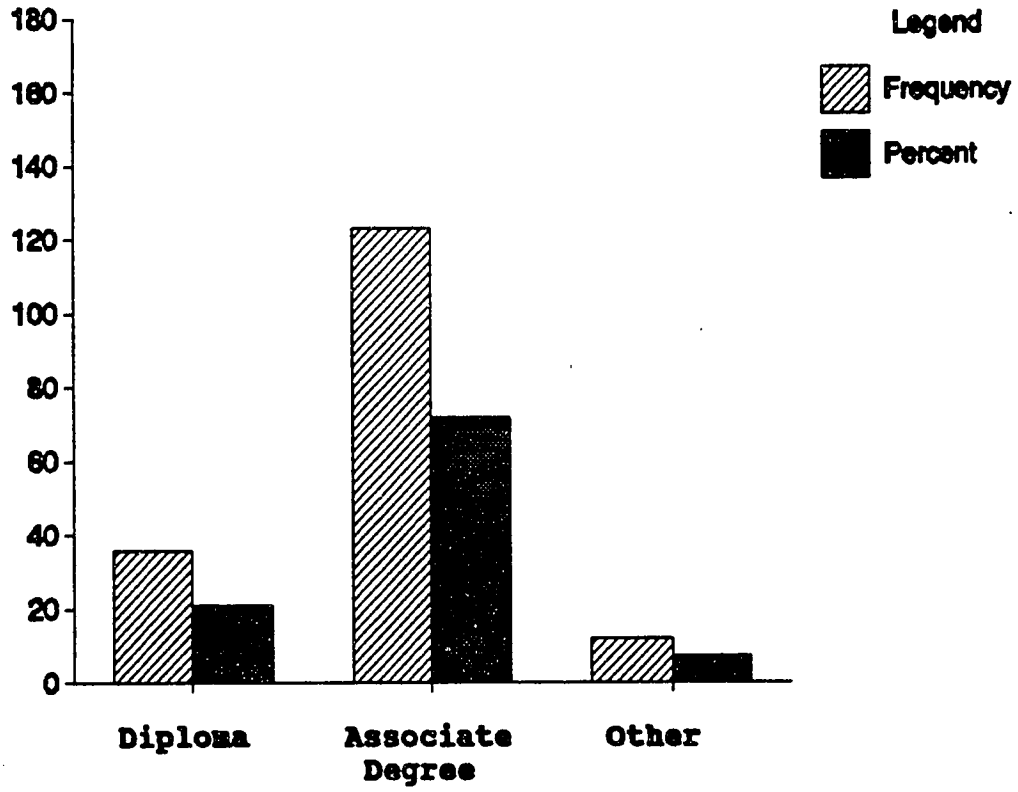
Ages of RN/BSN Students



$p > .05$

Figure 2

Educational Level of RN/BSN Students



$p > .05$

Stage of Progress in the Program and Projected Graduation Years of Students

Out of 171 responses, there were 57 students (33.1%) in the BSN 340 courses, 60 students (34.9%) in BSN 380 courses and 54 (32.0%) in BSN 480 courses (see Figure 3). Using an ANOVA, there was no significant difference in the stage of progress within the nursing program among the students $F(148, 2.05) = 0.005$, $p > .05$. Their projected years of graduation from the program ranged from 1991 (5.3%) to 1998 (0.6%) with the majority of 76 (45.5%) to be 1992 graduates (see Figure 4).

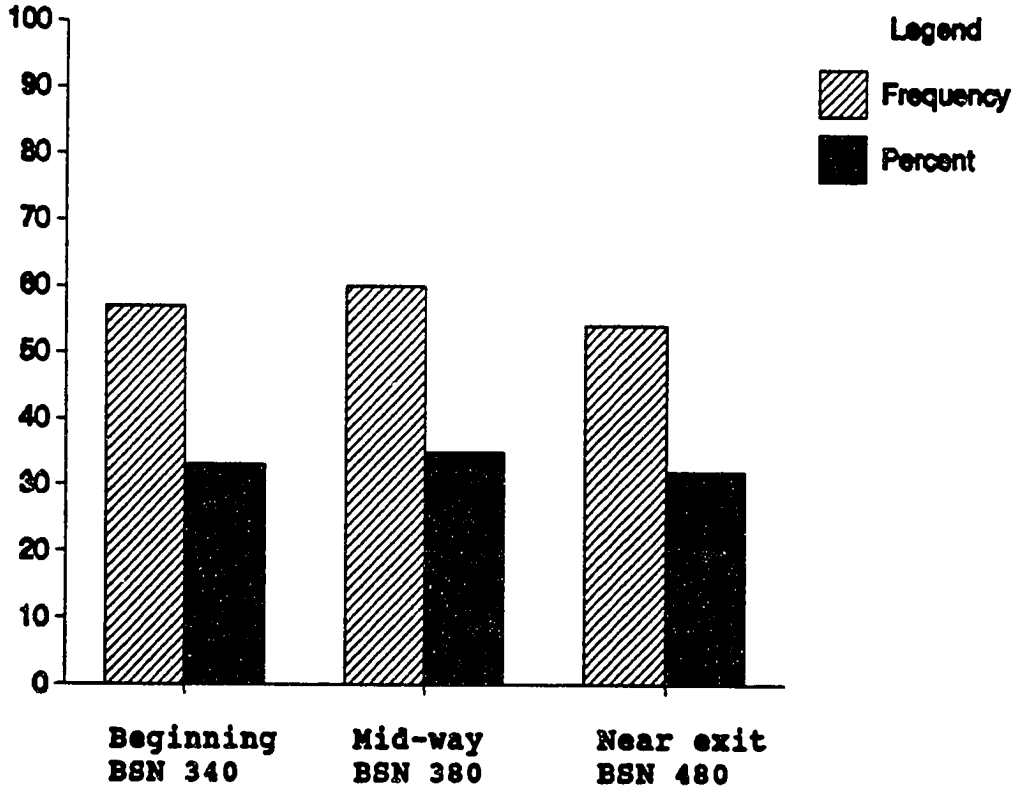
Age of Students and Advisement Perspectives

There was no significant difference $F(139, 0.54) = 0.65$, $p > .05$ between age and responses to the question asking if students believed they had, overall, received satisfactory advisement (see Table 1). Using a chi-square test, findings revealed no significant difference among age groups of students and the average number of advisement sessions with their advisor χ^2 (12, $N = 167$) = 8.95, $p = .05$ (see Table 2) or the length of time spent in each session χ^2(15, $N = 155$) = 17.24, $p = .05$ (see Table 3).

A Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA showed no difference among ages of students when compared to the enrolled course $F(166, 0.38) = 0.76$, $p > .05$. That is, there was approximately the

Figure 3

Stage of Progress in the Nursing Program of RN/BSN Students



$p > .05$

Figure 4

Projected Years of Graduation of RN/BSN Students

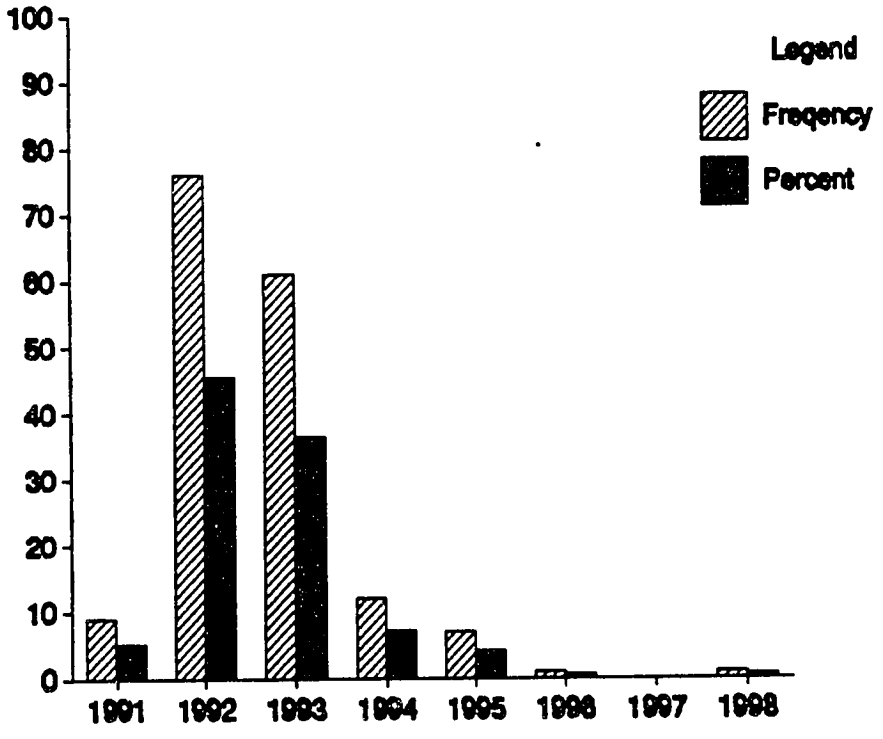


Table 1

Age of Students and Overall Satisfaction with Advisement

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P Value
Between Groups	3	.9671	.3224	.5439*	.6531
Within Groups	139	82.3896	.5927		
Total	142	83.3567			

*p> .05

Table 2

Age of Students and Average Number of Advisement Sessions

	Number of Sessions				
	7 or More	5-6	3-4	1-2	0
Age					
20-29	01	0	05	04	02
30-39	04	7	21	27	12
40-49	06	12	20	24	6
50-59	00	02	07	06	01
Total	11	21	53	61	21

Chi Square = 8.95

p> .05

Table 3

Age of Students and Average Amount of Time Spent in Each Advisement Session

	Minutes					
	60 or more	45	30	20	10	Less than 10
Age						
20-29	1	1	0	3	3	4
30-39	2	3	11	19	8	22
40-49	2	0	11	21	11	17
50-59	0	3	3	5	1	4
Total	5	7	25	48	23	47

Chi Square = 17.24

$p > .05$

same age distribution in relation to the stage of progress in the nursing program (see Table 4).

Stage of Progress in the Program and Student Advisement Perspectives

The criteria for this information was the specific course the student was taking. Those enrolled in BSN 340 were classified as beginning students, those in BSN 380, were considered to be mid-way students and those in BSN 480 were students nearing exit [graduation] from the RN/BSN program.

An ANOVA showed no significant difference $F(139, 0.86) = .46$, $p > .05$ between stage of progress in the program and responses to the question asking if students believed they had, overall, received satisfactory advisement (see Table 5). A chi-square statistic showed no significant difference between the stage of progress in the program and the average number of advisement sessions $\chi^2(12, N = 169) = 14.53$, $p > .05$ (see Table 6) or amount of time spent in each session $\chi^2(15, N = 156) = 18.07$, $p > .05$ (see Table 7). A Pearson r analysis, however, revealed a relationship between the independent variable, stage of progress in the program, and both of these dependent variables. There was a significant correlation ($p < .05$) between the average number of advisement

Table 4

Age of Students and stage of Progress in the Program

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P Value
Between Groups	3	.6922	.2307	.3840*	.7647
Within Groups	166	99.7549	.6009		
Total	169	100.4471			

*p> .05

Table 5

Stage of Progress in the Program and Overall Satisfaction with Advisement

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P Value
Between Groups	3	1.8356	.6119	.8626*	.4622
Within Groups	139	98.5980	.7093		
Total	142	100.4336			

*p> .05

Table 6

Stage of Progress in the Program and Average Number of Advisement Sessions

	Number of Advisement Sessions				
	7 or More	5-6	3-4	1-2	0
Stage of Progress in the Program					
Beginning (BSN 340)	01	06	19	19	10
Mid-Way (BSN 380)	05	03	21	22	08
Near Exit (BSN 480)	05	12	13	19	05
Total	11	21	53	61	23

Chi Square = 14.53

p> .05

Table 7

Stage of Progress in the Program and Average Amount of Time Spent in Each Advisement Session

	Minutes					
	60 or More	45	30	20	10	Less than 10
Stage of Progress in the Program						
Beginning (BSN 340)	02	00	15	06	06	19
Mid-Way (BSN 380)	02	05	05	19	07	18
Near Exit (BSN 480)	01	02	12	14	10	11
Total	05	07	25	48	23	48

Chi Square = 18.07

p> .05

sessions and amount of time spent in each one with students beginning and ending the program. Students in BSN 340 courses had less the number of advisement sessions (r = +.14) and shorter lengths of time in each (r = +.12) than students in BSN 480 courses. There were no significant differences (p > .05) between the stage of progress in the program, age or previous educational level of students as shown by a Kruskal-Wallis One-way Analysis of Variance.

Educational Level and Student Advisement Perspectives

There was no significant difference $F(139, 0.86)$ = .46, p > .05 between educational level and responses to the question asking if students believed they had, overall, received satisfactory advisement (see Table 8). No significant differences were found between educational level and either the average number of advisement sessions χ^2 2, N = 169) = 15.04, p > .05 (see Table 9) or time spent in sessions χ^2 15, N = 156) = 11.00, p > .05. (see Table 10). However, there was a significant correlation (p < .05) between number of sessions and minutes spent in advisement and educational level of students. It was found that the higher the educational level the fewer the number of sessions (r = -.13) and less time spent during sessions (r = -.13).

Table 8

Educational Level of Students and Overall Satisfaction with Advisement

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P Value
Between Groups	3	.7213	.2404	.8635*	.4618
Within Groups	139	38.7053	.0183		
Total	142	100.4336			

*p> .05

Table 9

Educational Level of Students and Average Number of Advisement Sessions

	Number of Advisement Sessions				
	7 or More	5-6	3-4	1-2	0
Educational Level of Students					
Diploma	02	05	08	13	08
ADN	07	14	42	43	15
Other	02	01	03	05	00
Total	11	21	53	61	23

Chi Square = 15.04

p> .05

Table 10

Educational Level of Students and Average Amount of Time Spent in Each Advisement Session

	Minutes					
	60 or More	45	30	20	10	Less than 10
Educational Level of Students						
Diploma	00	02	02	09	06	13
ADN	04	05	20	36	16	32
Other	01	00	03	03	01	03
Total	05	07	25	48	23	48

Chi Square = 11.00

p> .05

A chi-square analysis found four questions relative to the educational level of students and their advisement perspectives to be significant. One question pertained to a function of advisement (assisted me to select classes) χ^2(2, N = 140) = 7.22, $p < .05$ and three pertained to outcomes of advisement (encouraged academic studies χ^2(2, N = 127) = 6.92, $p < .05$); assisted to gain objectives χ^2, N = 131) = 7.15, $p < .05$; and gained my confidence (2, N = 124) = 6.80, $p < .05$ (see Appendix F, Part One, #2, # 26, #29 and # 32, respectively). Pearson r analysis found that students with higher educational backgrounds were less inclined to perceive that is was important for advisors to assist them in selecting classes ($r = +.22$); encourage them in their academic studies (($r = \pm.07$); assist them to gain objectives (($r = +.23$); or gain their confidence ($r = +.22$). A Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA showed no significant difference between educational level and stage of progress in the program F(168, 0.77) = .50, $p > .05$ (see Table 11).

Perspectives of Advisement Functions Provided

A median of 2 (disagree) was found for the following statements on the questionnaire in relation to having had advisement functions provided by an advisor:

#1 Assisted me to complete a Program of Study.

Table 11

Educational Level of Students and Stage of Progress in the Program

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P Value
Between Groups	3	1.6477	.5492	.7796*	.5069
Within Groups	168	118.3523	.7045		
Total	171	119.0000			

*p> .05

#6 Helped to adjust my Program of Study when necessary.

#10 Assisted me to design a plan to meet my educational goals.

#11 Evaluated and encouraged my academic progress.

A Median of 1 (strongly disagree) was found for the following statements on the questionnaire in relation to having had advisement functions provided by an advisor:

#3 Analyzed my past academic experiences when planning a Program of Study.

#4 Assisted me to consider my fiscal resources when planning a Program of Study.

Perspectives of Advisor Style Employed

No median below 3 (agree) was found for the following statements on the questionnaire in relation to the style of an advisor.

#15 Made me feel that our advisement discussions will be kept confidential.

#16 Made me feel at ease with her/him.

#17 Made me feel that my concerns are important to her/him.

#18 Provided me with accurate information.

#19 Helped me find other sources of assistance when unable to provide them herself/himself.

#20 Provided explanations that are clear to me.

#21 Allowed me to make up my own mind.

#22. A confident manner.

#23 Provided sufficient appointments for advisement sessions.

#24 Provided adequate time for advisement sessions.

Perspectives of Advisement Outcomes Achieved

Findings were based on the question asking if students believed they had overall, received satisfactory advisement (See Appendix F, Part One, #33). Results showed that 29 (20%) students did not respond to this question. From 143 responses, there were 38 (27%) who disagreed and 34 (24%) who strongly disagreed with disagree being the median (see Figure 5).

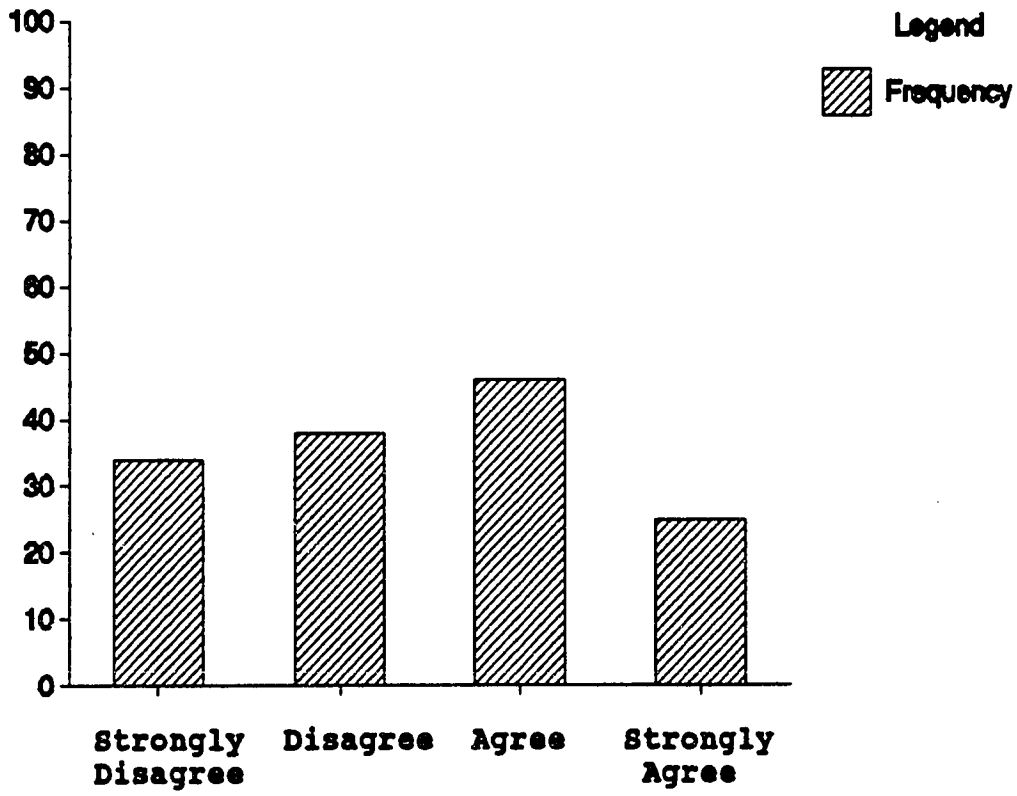
Looking at this question from the variables of age, stage of progress in the program and educational level, there was no significant difference in how students responded so the low median of disagree was not based on those variables. A median of 2 (disagree) was found for the following questions in relation to having had achieved advisement outcomes:

#27 Been an important part of my academic experience.

#28 Helped me to be a more effective student.

Figure 5

RN/BSN Student Perspectives of Advisement Outcomes



#29 Assisted me to see more clearly how to gain my objectives.

#30 Assisted me to gain self-confidence.

#31 Stimulated my thinking.

#32 Gained my confidence.

#33 Overall, provided satisfactory advisement.

Average Number of Advisement Sessions and Average Length of Time Spent in Each Session

Out of 147 responses, 61 (41.5%) students received between 1-2 advisement sessions while only one student (1.5%) received none. The mean was between one and four sessions and the median was between three and four sessions (see Figure 6). Out of 156 responses, the average length of time spent in each advisement session was determined to be between 10 and 20 minutes with 20 minutes as the median (see Figure 7).

Perspectives of Importance of Advisement Functions, Outcomes and Advisor Style

Findings were based on questions from Part 2 of the questionnaire asking students to rate which aspects of advisement were the least and most important to them. There were no responses with a median that was classed as being not important at all (1) or less important (2) rating. Results showed a median of most important (4) for

Figure 6

Average Number of Advisement Sessions of RN/BSN Students

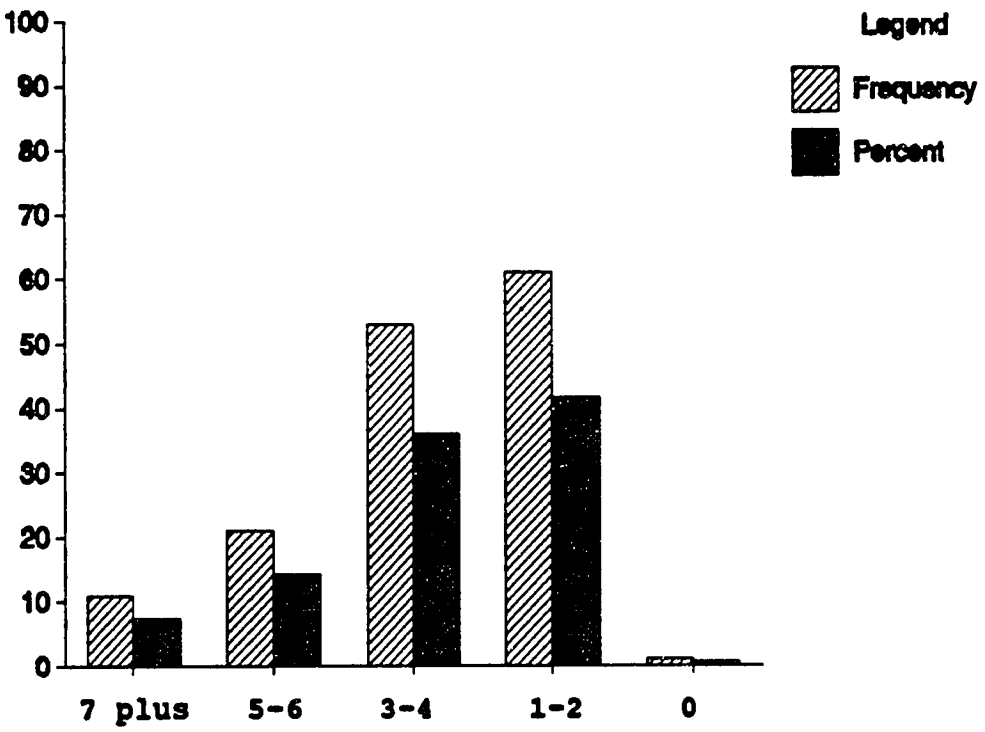
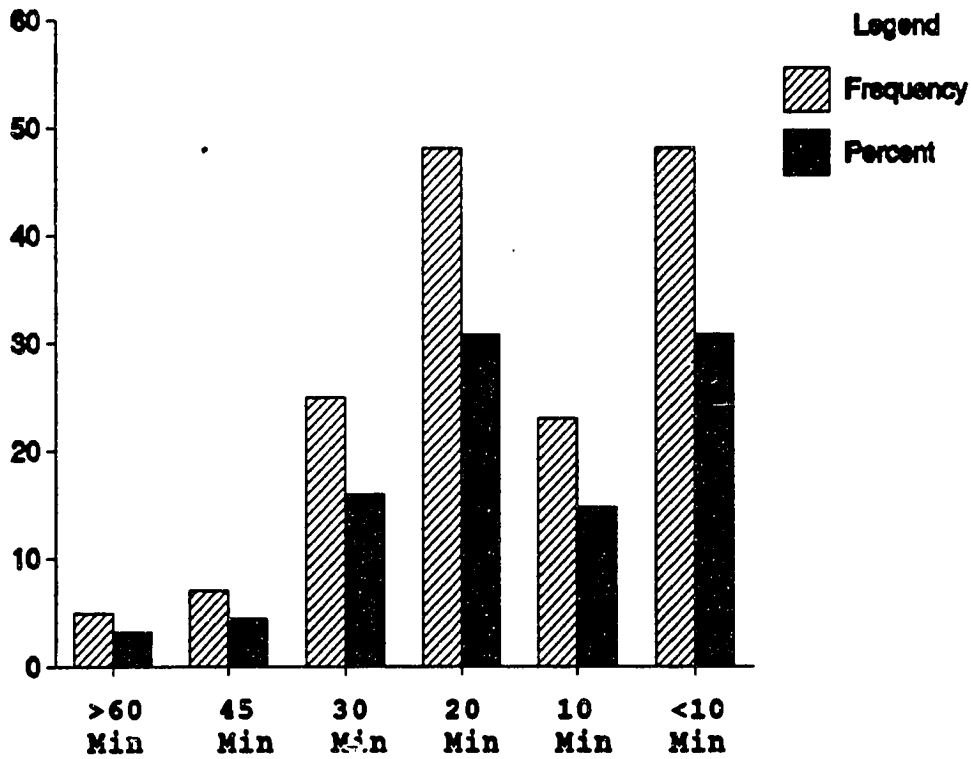


Figure 7

Average Length of Time Spent in Advisement of RN/BSN Students



some of the questions pertaining to advisement functions and style of advisor.

Advisement Functions

Those statements found to be most important in relation to advisement functions were:

#1 Assist in completing a Program of Study.

#3 Analyze my past academic experiences when planning a Program of Study.

#5 Identify assessment options (ie. ACT, CLEP) as academic resources when planning my Program of Study.

#7 Forward a signed Program of Study to Admissions & Records as an initial step for graduation check.

A summary of what aspects of advisement functions were perceived to have been provided/not provided and their importance to students is presented in Table 12.

Style of Advisor

Statements found to be most important in relation to advisor style were:

#12 Convey a genuine desire to assist me.

#13 Convey a patient manner.

#14 Treat me as an individual.

#15 Maintain confidentiality of advisement discussions.

Table 12

FUNCTIONS OF ADVISEMENT PROVIDED/NOT PROVIDED AND IMPORTANCE TO STUDENTS

IMPORTANCE	FUNCTIONS PROVIDED	FUNCTIONS NOT PROVIDED
IMPORTANT	++ ASSESSMENT OPTIONS	COMPLETE PROGRAM OF STUDY
	FORWARD PROGRAM OF STUDY TO A&R FOR GRADUATION CHECK	ANALYZE PAST ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES
NOT IMPORTANT	* SELECT CLASSES	++ ASSIST WITH FISCAL RESOURCES
	COMPLETE PETITION FORMS	ADJUST PROGRAM OF STUDY
	COMPLETE COURSE SUBSTITUTION FORMS	EDUCATIONAL GOAL PLAN
		EVALUATED/ENCOURAGED ACADEMIC PROGRESS

++ = Objective and Subjective Findings

* $p < .05$ = Student Educational Background

#17 Make me feel my concerns are important.

#18 Provide accurate information.

#19 Help find alternative sources of assistance when needed.

#20 Provide explanations that are clear to me.

#21 Allow me to make up my own mind.

A summary of what aspects of an advisor's style were perceived to have been employed/not employed and their importance to students is presented in Table 13.

#22 A confident manner.

#23 Provide sufficient appointments for advisement sessions.

#24 Provide adequate time for advisement sessions.

Outcomes of Advisement

None of the questions pertaining to advisement outcomes received a median of 4 or were ranked most important. A summary of what aspects of advisement outcomes were perceived to have been achieved/not achieved and their importance to students is presented in Table 14.

The following four questions elicited open-ended statements from respondents. Questions #36 and #37 are from the Academic Advisement Questionnaire, Part One (see Appendix F). Questions #33 and #34 are from Part Two of the Academic Advisement Questionnaire (see Appendix F).

Table 13

STYLE OF ADVISOR EMPLOYED/NOT EMPLOYED AND IMPORTANCE TO STUDENTS

	STYLE EMPLOYED	STYLE NOT EMPLOYED
IMPORTANT	++ DESIRE TO ASSIST	NONE FOUND
	CONFIDENTIALITY	
	MY CONCERNS ARE IMPORTANT	
	++ ACCURATE IMFORMATION	
	ASSIST WITH RESOURCES	
	CLEAR EXPLANATIONS	
	ALLOW TO MAKE UP MY OWN MIND	
	PATIENT	
	SUFFICIENT APPOINTMENTS	
	ADEQUATE TIME DURING APPOINTMENTS	
	++ TREAT ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL	
NOT IMPORTANT	MAKE ME FEEL AT EASE	NONE FOUND
	CONFIDENT MANNER	

++ = Objective and Subjective Findings

Table 14

OUTCOMES OF ADVISEMENT ACHIEVED/NOT ACHIEVED AND IMPORTANCE TO STUDENTS

	OUTCOMES ACHIEVED	OUTCOMES NOT ACHIEVED
IMPORTANT	NONE FOUND	NONE FOUND
NOT IMPORTANT	POSITIVE INFLUENCE UPON ACADEMIC CAREER	IMPORTANT PART OF ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE
	* ENCOURAGEMENT	BECOME EFFECTIVE STUDENT
		* CLEARLY SEE HOW TO GAIN OBJECTIVES
		++ GAIN SELF-CONFIDENCE
		++ STIMULATE THINKING
		* GAINED CONFIDENCE IN ADVISOR
		OVERALL SATISFACTORY ADVISEMENT

++ = Objective and Subjective Findings

* $p < .05$ = Student Educational Background

36. Are there any other aspects of advisement not mentioned that HAVE been provided by your advisor(s)?

There were 35 (20%) students responding to this question. Five (14%) students believed their advisor to be "willing" to assist them and 4 (11%) perceived their advisor to be a "professional" and a "role model" for them. Five (14%) stated they either "had no advisor" or had not received any advisement from an advisor. Nine (26%) replied that there were no aspects of advisement not mentioned on the questionnaire that had been provided by their advisor.

37. Are there any other aspects of advisement not mentioned that have NOT been provided by your advisor(s)?

This question was responded to by 40 (23%) students of the sample population. Five (13%) students replied that they desired to have a more "individualized" approach from their advisor with statements such as: "don't think she (advisor) knows who I am", "no one is knowledgeable about me", "no consolation when (my) class was cancelled" and "didn't take personal individualized interest". Ten (25%) students expressed concern that advisors were "not available" as much as they would like them to be and that they received either "vague", "poor" or "incorrect information." Seven (18%) students stated

they had never received any advisement from an advisor and 10 (25%) stated that there were no aspects of advisement not mentioned on the questionnaire that had not been provided, enacted or achieved.

33. Given all aspects of advisement, what three aspects of advisement are MOST important to you?

There were 145 (84%) students out of the total sample population that responded to this question. The three most common occurring responses in the order of their importance were that advisors should: (1) provide accurate information, (2) provide assessment options, and be (3) available when needed. There were 47 (32%) students who considered accurate information most important, 20 (14%) who listed assessment options most important and 18 (12%) who desired more advisor availability. Findings also found 12 (8%) students who stated completing a program of study of import and 9 (6%) who desired advisement on an individualized basis.

34. Given all aspects of advisement, what three aspects of advisement are LEAST important to you?

There were 123 (72%) students that responded to this qpestion. The three most common occurring responses in order of their least importance was for advisement to: (1) assist me to gain self-confidence, (2) stimulate my

thinking, and (3) assist with financial considerations. There were 51 (42%) students who considered gaining self-confidence least important, 42 (34%) who listed stimulate my thinking least important and 21 (17%) who stated assistance with financial considerations least important.

Summary of Results

In summary, responses were gathered on a two part Likert-type questionnaire. Part one of the questionnaire asked students to rate the degree to which they perceived advisement functions, outcomes and advisor style to have been provided, achieved or employed, respectively. Part two of the questionnaire asked students to rate the degree of importance they perceived specific aspects of advisement to be within each of these three broad categories. From 172 (53%) responses, there were no significant differences in either age, educational background or stage of progress in the program among students comprising the sample population ($p > .05$).

When comparing responses of both parts of the questionnaire, a Kruskal-Wallis One-way Anova showed no significant ($p > .05$) difference between advisement perspectives and student age or their stage of progress in the program. However, according to chi-square analysis, there was one advisement function (assisted me to select

classes) and three advisement outcomes (encouraged academic studies, assisted to gain objectives and gained my confidence) found to be significant ($p < .05$) in relation to advisement perspectives and educational background of students.

An ANOVA showed no significant differences ($p > .05$) between age, stage of progress in the program or educational level and the perception of students that they had, overall, received satisfactory advisement from their advisor. Using a chi-square test, there were no significant differences ($p > .05$) between age groups, stage of progress in the program or educational background of students and the average number of advisement sessions or average length of time spent in each session. However, a Pearson r found a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the number of advisement sessions, length of time spent in each session and stage of progress in the program. Students enrolled in BSN 480 courses (exiting program) had more advisement sessions and spent more time in each session than students enrolled in BSN 340 courses (beginning program). Also, a significant correlation ($p < .05$) was found between these two variables and educational background of students in that the higher the educational background, the fewer the advisement sessions and the less time spent in each session.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The literature revealed that multiple variables have been associated with RN/BSN student retention and/or attrition, including academic advisement. The purpose of this study was to determine from the perception of students enrolled in a RN/BSN program, the importance of advisement in relation to three elements: functions, advisor style and outcomes and to determine if these three elements had been provided, employed or achieved, respectively, by their advisors. Data were collected from various classroom sites within the program under study from students enrolled in a beginning, middle or end course of the curriculum. Overall, results indicated that students were more satisfied with their advisor's style than they were with the functions or outcomes of advisement.

Discussion

Age, Gender, and Educational Level of Students

The demographic variables of age, gender and educational level of students comprising the sample population were consistent with those reported in the literature by Kozier et al., (1992), Linares (1989) Rice (1992) and the Statewide Nursing Program (SNP Stats, 1992).

The sample was, therefore, considered to be representative of RN/BSN students.

Stage of Progress in the Program and Student Advisement Perspectives

There were no significant differences when comparing advisement perspectives and stage of progress in the program but there was a strong tendency (p = .0511) for students to believe that it was important for advisors to analyze their past academic experiences when planning a Program of Study. The tendency for this aspect of advisement to be associated with the variable of stage of progress in the program versus age or educational level of students, was probably due to an advisement factor. Prior to enrolling in either BSN 340, BSN 380 or BSN 480 courses, students would have completed a Program of Study with an advisor and, consequently, been aware that redundant content previously taken could be substituted for coursework in the RN/BSN program. Although weak in statistical significance, this finding is consistent with a learning characteristic of adults. That is, it has been shown that adult students desire to incorporate past experiences, including academic, into the learning process (Linares, 1989).

Educational Level and Student Advisement Perspectives

When comparing educational level with advisement perspectives, there were four aspects of advisement found

to be significant and positively correlated with the level of student education. The first aspect was a function of advisement to assist students in selecting classes which was perceived to have been provided but rated as being unimportant. Since two priority functions of advisors have been to enforce the policy of course prerequisite requirements and recommend a manageable semester unit load, it was not surprising that this function was perceived as having been provided. A reason for it to be rated as unimportant by students with higher educational backgrounds may be attributed to their prior academic exposure. Students have stated that since they had experienced course sequencing policies and unit load management in previous academic programs, their knowledge base was sufficient and, therefore, not in need of advisement. If findings were based upon this rationale, it was a false assumption since programs have differed widely in relation to these matters.

The second aspect was an outcome of advisement to encourage students in their academic studies. It was found that although students believed that their advisor had encouraged them, they considered it to be unimportant. A possible explanation as to why encouragement was rated as being unimportant may be that students with higher

educational backgrounds were more astute as to the rigor required to be successful in their academic endeavors. Because of this, they may have been more inclined to be self-directed by taking responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, they would have disregarded an advisor's encouragement as being pertinent to their needs.

The third aspect, an outcome of advisement to assist students to see more clearly how to gain their objectives, was perceived as not having been achieved nor important. Students from higher educational backgrounds may have rated this outcome as not being achieved if they did not share any aspirations with their advisor. If this was the case, then this finding should not be construed as a limitation of advisor capability. Another plausible explanation may be that advisors either directly or indirectly did not pursue this aspect of advisement with students. The correlation between educational level could indicate that students with higher academic degrees may have previously formulated their objectives prior to matriculating into the RN/BSN program. If so, then any intervention by an advisor may have been perceived as unwarranted and, consequently, not important. Also, if their objectives extended beyond the baccalaureate level,

students may have considered that an advisor within a master's program to be a more appropriate contact than their undergraduate advisor.

This finding could be interpreted within the constructs of adult learning theory since it has been associated with the adult characteristic of locus of control with students from higher educational backgrounds. These students would have achieved more academic goals than students with lower academic degrees. This, in turn may have positively affected their locus of control by being more internally motivated as compared to the other students.

The fourth aspect, an outcome of advisement to gain student confidence, was perceived not to have been achieved as well as unimportant. One rationale for students from higher educational backgrounds to not have gained confidence in their advisor may be that as compared with advisors from past academic experiences, they found their advisor lacking in this regard. This finding may also be a result of students simply rating this aspect of advisement solely on the perceived demerits of their RN/BSN advisor. Students who matriculated with higher academic backgrounds would have a greater potential to substitute coursework within the RN/BSN program with classes previously taken. In order to be granted

course substitution, it would be necessary for students to obtain a recommended approval from their Associate Coordinator advisor or a final approval if their advisor was an Area Coordinator. In either circumstance, according to policy, a recommended or final approval should not be guaranteed before an advisor has reviewed the content of the class in question from a course description provided by the student. It is feasible that students may have misinterpreted this policy by equating a request for course substitution with approval. If this was the case, students may have misjudged the competence of their advisor with a no-confidence rating pertaining to this outcome of advisement. On the other hand, the no-confidence rating could also be attributed to false expectations given to students by advisors that a course substitution request would be automatically approved.

It was difficult to discern or rationalize why students with higher educational backgrounds were less inclined to perceive that confidence in an advisor was an important outcome of advisement. Whether of not students believed that the outcome of confidence was achieved, logic would prevail that this aspect of

advisement would be thought of as being vitally significant. In the opinion of this researcher, it should be important to all students regardless of their educational background or presence of self-direction or internal locus of control.

Student Perspectives of Advisement Elements Provided, Employed or Achieved and Their Importance

There were 11 aspects of advisement functions (See Table 12), 13 aspects of an advisor's style (See Table 13) and nine aspects of advisement outcomes (See Table 14) perceived by students as being either provided/ employed/ achieved or important/not important. It appeared that some aspects identified as being important/not important were in accord with the theoretical framework of this study in that they were adult learning focused.

Advisement functions provided and importance to students. Five of the 11 functions of advisement were perceived by students to have been provided with three of the five rated as unimportant. Since all of the functions evaluated were in accord with the advisement policies/procedures of the program, they were within the scope of advisors to provide them. Also, all of the functions with the exception of assisting students with fiscal resources and completing petition and/or course

substitution forms, would have been routinely provided without students specifically requesting them.

Students rated the functions of completing a Program of Study and analyzing past academic experiences as being important but not having been provided. These two functions have been considered important to both students and advisors since they have been utilized to formulate a student's academic data base as a means to provide more accurate advisement. It may be that students were not aware that the title or name of the form their advisor used to devise their study plan was called, a "Program of Study". If this was true, then it is understandable as to why they perceived that this function had not been provided. Likewise, students may not have been aware that an "analysis" of their past academic experiences has been a necessary component to consider in order to formulate an academic data base. It may be, however, that these conjectures are false and students were correct in their perceptions. In this researcher's opinion, it would be prudent for the program to assess whether or not these functions are being provided to students.

The finding that completing petition and course

substitution forms by an advisor was perceived as unimportant is questionable. This finding may be more of an indication that students did not fully understand the language pertaining to these items on the questionnaire. Because these forms have been used, for example, to request a leave of absence from the University or to waive a required nursing or general education course, they have been invaluable to students. As may be the case of students not being aware of the title of the study plan form, it could also be true that they were not aware of the titles of these particular forms as well. In order to help verify this conjecture, findings were shared with 12 students of the researcher who were completing one of the last courses in the program. They were questioned as to why they thought the students in the study rated the completion of these forms by an advisor unimportant. It was their unanimous belief that since they were unaware of the proper titles of these forms, the students in the study were probably also unaware. It is, therefore, this researcher's assumption that these findings do not reflect the true perceptions of students in relation to these two functions of advisement.

It may be that students could potentially benefit

by being more educated as to the functions their advisor provide and the various forms used by advisors. They should be made aware of the names or titles of these forms as well as under what circumstances they should/could be used. This instruction could be accomplished during information meetings which are regulary scheduled by the nursing program and/or during advisement sessions with their advisor.

It was not surprising to find that students considered it important for advisors to provide information pertaining to home-study assessment options (i.e. ACT, CLEP, correspondence and off-campus examinations) in lieu of registering for a traditional type of class. In some instances, these options could not only be less costly but a time management strategy for students by affording them to take more units per semester than would be ordinarily feasible. The importance of this function was prevalent in both objective and subjective findings as gleaned from the data collecting tools.

It can, therefore, be deducted that since independent study has required an individual to be self-directed (Linares, 1989), findings of this research support self-directedness as a viable

construct of adult learning theory. The theory was also supported in finding that students believed their past experiences were important and should be taken into consideration by advisors.

It was also not surprising that students were of the belief that they did not need assistance from their advisor in regard to fiscal resources. The financial aid office has been located on the home campus and general information and phone number to call with inquiries have been provided each semester in the Class Schedule. Students would, therefore, be more inclined to directly contact the home campus regarding financial aid rather than their Area advisor for assistance. However, students may not have been aware that advisors could assist with fiscal resources by providing information pertaining to multiple financial awards and scholarships. This function of advisement may be one that in the future the program may desire to impress upon their students either during information or advisement sessions.

Advisor style employed and importance to students. All 13 aspects of advisement pertaining to the style of an advisor were perceived by students to have been employed with only two rated as being unimportant.

Although students perceived that their advisor had made them feel at ease and had employed a confident manner, they did not rate these aspects as being important. This finding is ambiguous since, in this author's opinion, these specific aspects of advisement are two benchmark variables which have the potential to directly impact upon all aspects of an advisor's style. For example, both objective and subjective results revealed that students were of the belief that their advisor had a genuine desire to assist, gave accurate information and treated them as individuals. It is highly unlikely that if students had perceived that their advisor had not employed any of the aspects of style and these, in particular, that they would have felt at ease. A possible explanation for this finding is that since students perceived these aspects of advisement to have been employed, they were satisfied in this regard and, therefore, rated them as being unimportant.

The construct of individuality has been a major thread woven throughout adult learning theory. This construct is highly supported by both objective and subjective findings that students desired to be treated as an individual by their advisor. The importance of this construct in relation to decreased attrition rates

of RN/BSN students has also been shown in the literature (Beeman, 1990; Inouye, 1991; Murdock, 1987).

Advisement outcomes achieved and importance to students. Students perceived only two of the nine outcomes of advisement as having been achieved and both of these were rated as unimportant. Although at a cursory glance over 75% of the outcomes were not achieved, it is this researcher's opinion that this finding should not be totally interpreted as being unsuccessful advisement. In reality, these findings may be more indicative of students exhibiting characteristics of adults as purported within the constructs of adult learning theory. It has been shown that adult students have been more independent, self directed and possess an internal locus of control (Knowles, 1980; Linares, 1989; Rice, 1992). Therefore, aspects of advisement such as assisting students to gain self-confidence or stimulate their thinking, may not be considered important to some adult students.

Although perceived to have been achieved, students did not believe it was important that advisors have a positive influence upon their academic career. The finding that it had been achieved, however, suggests that advisors were following the policy to achieve an

"interpersonal relation" between themselves and their advisees, as prescribed by the program (see SNP Class Schedule, 1991, p.5). Since it was apparent that students did not value this policy, findings suggest that the program should revisit their goals in relation to outcomes of advisement. This element of advisement should be more aligned with adult learning characteristics which have been shown to be prevalent among these students.

Average Number of Advisement Sessions and Length of Time Spent in Each Session

The correlation that students in the BSN 480 courses had more advisement sessions and spent more time in them than students in the other two courses is what might be expected. Students in the BSN 480 courses would have been nearing exit (graduation) from the program and, therefore, spend more time with their advisor in preparing for this event. For example, they would have had a need to seek assistance from their advisor in order to complete and forward necessary paperwork to the home campus Records Department. They would also have sought advisement as to what general education classes were remaining, especially, specific course numbers at various junior and four year academic institutions.

Even though there were no significant differences between the average number of advisement sessions or the length of time spent in them and the educational level of RN/BSN students, there was a significant relationship. It was found that students who matriculated with higher educational backgrounds did not have as many sessions or spent as much time in advisement as those students with lower educational backgrounds. These findings may be attributed to the opinion of students with higher educational backgrounds that prior exposure to academic processes (registration, sequencing patterns, program of study planning) have resulted in their being more knowledgeable in these matters and, therefore, not needing advisor contact. Likewise, students matriculating from lower educational levels, such as Diploma graduates, who for the most part, have not been exposed to college and/or university academic processes, rated this aspect of advisement as being important.

Conclusions

In conclusion, results of this study show that students are more pleased with their advisor's style than functions or outcomes of advisement. They also

show that students perceive advisors to employ more aspects of style as compared to aspects of functions or outcomes of advisement.

There are implications that some functions of advisement are not being provided and students need to be more informed as to the specific functions their advisors can provide them. It appears that students are not interested in establishing a personal relationship with their advisor nor do they desire advisors to assume a counselor role. It became evident that students want their past academic experiences to be incorporated into the learning process, are self-directed and internally motivated. These results are interpreted as reflecting the constructs espoused by adult learning theory.

In order for RN/BSN students to be advised effectively, advisement should be conducted in a manner consistent with andragogical learning principles. This study indicates that advisement could be more sensitive to the needs and desires of students enrolled in the program in relation to these principles. It is, therefore, respectfully suggested that the program revisit their goals of advisement with the intention of incorporating characteristics of adult learners.

There are several variables which have the

potential to affect RN/BSN student retention and attrition. Although some of these cannot be controlled, advisement is a variable that academia can manipulate to positively effect student retention. If RN/BSN programs do not use advisement as a viable means to affect attrition rates, they may jeopardize not only the survival of their program but educational goals of their students.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are several avenues of study that this researcher recommends to pursue as an outcome of these findings. First, this research should be replicated after the program revises their academic advisement goals by incorporating characteristics of adult learners. A comparative analysis should be conducted to ascertain any changes among student perceptions in relation to the functions, style of an advisor or outcomes of advisement.

Some of the students who participated in the study stated they were unable to respond to all of the questions on the questionnaire because they either did not have an advisor or did not know who their advisor was. In order to increase response rates, it is suggested that these factors be considered as exclusion criteria for future research and only subjects who state they have an

advisor or are cognizant of who their advisor is, should participate in the study.

Second, because studies have shown that the variable of ethnicity affects an individual's locus of control, future replication studies should include analysis of this variable. Since the adult learning constructs of self-directedness and locus of control have been found to be interdependent, a better understanding of adult learning characteristics could be gleaned if ethnicity was studied.

Since males represent a minority group in the nursing profession, there was a disproportionate number of male subjects (3.5%) included in the sample as compared to females (96.5%). A third recommendation, therefore, is to investigate the perceptions of advisement from a male focus. Comparing findings with female perceptions has the potential to discover whether gender differences exist which may contribute to a better understanding of adult learning characteristics.

Future research endeavors could analyze data by a multiple regression equation versus an ordinal scale as used in this study. If this statistical technique was utilized, scores would be analyzed when examining the relationship between the various aspects of advisement

(functions, style and outcomes) and student perceptions.

Lastly, future research should be conducted to determine whether the perception of advisement from an advisor's viewpoint differs from that of students. Findings from this type of an evaluative self-study design could assist RN/BSN programs in providing advisement which is more sensitive to the needs and/or desires of their students.

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Appendix A

Demographics of Statewide Nursing Program Students

AGE AND GENDER	
Average Age	37.5
Females	96.0%
Males	04.0%
EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION	
Associate Degree	82.0%
Diploma	22.0%
Bachelor's Degree	05.0%
Other Degree	13.0
Master's Degree	01.0%
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	
Full Time	75.0%
Part Time	21.0%
Other	04.0%
EMPLOYER	
Hospital	83.0%
Other	17.0%
ANTICIPATE CHANGE OF POSITION WITHIN NEXT FIVE YEARS RELATED TO BSN	
Yes	74.0%
No	26.0%

Demographics of Statewide Nursing Program Students, Continued

ANTICIPATE SALARY INCREASE WITHIN NEXT FIVE YEARS RELATED TO BSN	
Yes	71.0%
No	29.0%
* REASONS FOR SELECTION OF THE STATEWIDE NURSING PROGRAM	
Convenient location of classes	84.0%
Convenient time of day classes offered	80.0%
Cost is acceptable	72.0%
Convenient dates courses begin & end	59.0%
Courses needed are ones offered	39.0%
* PERSONAL CONSTRAINTS WHICH MADE SNP A DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVE	
Time preference	78.0%
Job limitations	50.0%
Children	35.0%
Other home situations	27.0%
Transportation	23.0%

* = Total of percents exceeds 100% because of multiple responses.

Appendix B

Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Dear BSN Student,

Your voluntary participation and honest opinions in this research study are appreciated. It is being conducted for a doctoral dissertation at the University of San Diego, Educational Leadership (EDLD) program.

There should be only a minimal identifiable risk of any physical, social or psychological discomfort expected as a result of your one time participation in this study that should not exceed 20 minutes of your time to respond. The purpose is to glean feedback pertaining to the existent California State University (CSU), Statewide Nursing Program (SNP), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) student advisory system. The results of the study could ultimately serve to outweigh any minimal risks involved to benefit your own and other BSN student advisory needs, wants and desires as a CSU-SNP student.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to ensure confidentiality, all information collected will remain anonymous. Code numbers on the demographic and advisement questionnaires will be used for statistical analysis only and signed consent forms will be separately kept in a locked file and no attempt will be made to identify any respondent. Dissemination of results will be provided and explicated in group data format only to maintain anonymity of participants.

If further explanation is desired as to the this study's purpose or procedure involved, please feel free to call me collect at (619)471-4619. If you voluntarily agree to participate in this research, please sign the consent below and then complete the attached demographic and advisement questionnaires.

I, the undersigned, state that there are no other verbal or nonverbal agreements, including financial, compensatory or otherwise, related to this study beyond those expressed within this consent form. I understand the above explanations and, therefore, voluntarily consent to participate in this project.

Signature of Subject	Location	Date
Signature of Witness	Location	Date
Signature of Researcher	Location	Date

Appendix C

Instructor Letter

DATE: Fall, 1991

TO: CSUDH SNP INSTRUCTORS
BSN 340, 380 & 480 COURSES

FROM: BARBARA A. TRENT
FACULTY COORDINATOR - AREA H
11875 SEMILLON BLVD.
SAN DIEGO, CA 92131-2326
(619) 471-4619

RE: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Dear Instructor,

I am in the process of collecting data pertaining to academic advisement from the perspective of students enrolled in Professional Relations (BSN 340), Health Assessment (BSN 380) and Leadership in Nursing Practice (BSN 480) courses during the Fall 1991 RN/BSN California State University, Statewide Nursing Program.

Classroom sites offering these three courses in each geographical Area throughout the State of California were randomly chosen to be included in the study population.

Your willingness to voluntarily participate is greatly appreciated since potential outcomes of this study could: (1) glean and evaluate divergent RN/BSN student perspectives of academic advising (2) elucidate existing differences between needs, wants and desires of students entering and those exiting the Program (3) provide opportunity for students to evaluate advisement from their perspective and (4) afford students capacity to directly impact upon their Program's structure and governance relating to academic advisement.

Thank you for your support and valued time expended toward this project which is being conducted for my doctoral dissertation at the University of San Diego, School of Education. If I can assist you in any future likewise manner, I would be more than willing to comply.

****

If you consent to participate in this study, please follow the outlined process as explicated on the second page of this cover letter.

Appendix D

Instructor Process Form

EACH PACKET CONTAINS:

1. COVER LETTER EXPLICATING PURPOSE & CONSENT
* 2. INSTRUCTIONS TO ADMINISTER QUESTIONNAIRES
3. ADVISEMENT DATA QUESTIONNAIRES
4. POSTAGE PAID RETURN ENVELOPE

* INSTRUCTIONS TO ADMINISTER QUESTIONNAIRES

- Distribute to each of your students enrolled in BSN 340 or BSN 380 or BSN 480 one set of questionnaires with consent form attached to front of each set

  DO NOT SEPARATE CONSENT FORM FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

- Ask each student to read and sign the consent form prior to completing the questionnaires

- Ask students to place completed QUESTIONNAIRES in the postage paid envelope provided

- Request one student to deposit the envelope in the mail

Please return any uncompleted questionnaires to me

THANK YOU!

Appendix E

Demographic Collection Tool

DIRECTIONS: CIRCLE OR FILL IN RESPONSES

1. AREA OF ADVISEMENT: 1. A 2. B 3. C
   4. D 5. E 6. F
   7. G 8. H 9. J.

2. GENDER: 1. F 2. M

3. AGE: _____

4. SEMESTER & YEAR FIRST BEGAN TAKING COURSES IN THIS PROGRAM:
   1. FALL YEAR_____
   2. SPRING YEAR_____
   3. SUMMER YEAR_____

5. CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN COURSE:
   1. BSN 340 - Professional Relations in Nursing Practice
   2. BSN 480 - Leadership in Nursing Practice
   3. BSN 490 - Management in Nursing Practice

6. CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:
   1. Diploma in Nursing
   2. Associate Degree in Nursing
   3. Other _____

7. PROJECTED GRADUATION DATE:
   1. FALL YEAR_____
   2. SPRING YEAR_____
   3. SUMMER YEAR_____

Appendix F

Academic Advisement Questionnaire

Part One

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER ALL ITEMS

Rate the following items according to the degree to which you perceive academic advisement by your advisor (FACULTY COORDINATOR and/or ASSOCIATE COORDINATOR) has been provided as a RN/BSN student in the California State University, Dominguez Hills-Statewide Nursing Program.

SCALE: 1- STRONGLY DISAGREE

2- DISAGREE

3- AGREE

4- STRONGLY AGREE

NA- NOT APPLICABLE

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM.

ADVISEMENT FUNCTIONS

SCALE	MY ADVISOR(S) HAS (HAVE):
1 2 3 4 NA	1. Assisted me to complete a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	2. Assisted me to select classes
1 2 3 4 NA	3. Analyzed my past academic experiences when planning a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	4. Assisted me to consider my fiscal resources when planning a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	5. Identified assessment options (ie. ACT, CLEP) as academic resources when planning my Program of Study

SCALE	MY ADVISOR(S) HAS (HAVE):
1 2 3 4 NA	6. Helped to adjust my Program of Study when necessary
1 2 3 4 NA	7. Forwarded a signed Program of Study to Admissions & Records as an initial step for graduation check
1 2 3 4 NA	8. Assisted me to complete course substitution forms
1 2 3 4 NA	9. Assisted me to complete petition forms
1 2 3 4 NA	10. Assisted me to design a plan to meet my educational goals
1 2 3 4 NA	11. Evaluated & encouraged my academic progress
	ADVISOR STYLE
1 2 3 4 NA	12. A genuine desire to be of assistance to me
1 2 3 4 NA	13. Been patient toward me
1 2 3 4 NA	14. Treated me as an individual
1 2 3 4 NA	15. Made me feel that our advisement discussions will be kept confidential
1 2 3 4 NA	16. Made me feel at ease with her/him
1 2 3 4 NA	17. Made me feel that my concerns are important to her/him
1 2 3 4 NA	18. Provided me with accurate information
1 2 3 4 NA	19. Helped me find other sources of assistance when unable to provide them herself/himself
1 2 3 4 NA	20. Provided explanations that are clear to me
1 2 3 4 NA	21. Allowed me to make up my own mind
1 2 3 4 NA	22. A confident manner
1 2 3 4 NA	23. Provided sufficient appointments for advisement sessions

1 2 3 4 NA 24. Provided adequate time for advisement sessions

ADVISEMENT OUTCOMES

SCALE MY ADVISOR(S) HAS (HAVE):

1 2 3 4 NA 25. Influenced my academic career in a positive manner

1 2 3 4 NA 26. Provided encouragement in my academic studies

1 2 3 4 NA 27. Been an important part of my academic experience

1 2 3 4 NA 28. Helped me to be a more effective student

1 2 3 4 NA 29. Assisted me to see more clearly how to gain my objectives

1 2 3 4 NA 30. Assisted me to gain self-confidence

1 2 3 4 NA 31. Stimulated my thinking

1 2 3 4 NA 32. Gained my confidence

1 2 3 4 NA 33. Overall, provided satisfactory advisement

****

34. Estimate the total number of advisement sessions (either by telephone or one-to-one) you have had with your advisor(s) by placing an "X" in the space provided.

(1) 7 or more _____ (2) 5-6 _____ (3) 3-4 _____

(4) 1-2 _____ (5) 0-0 _____

35. Estimate the average length of time in each advisement session (either by telephone or one-to-one) you have had with your advisor(s) by placing an "X" in the space provided.

(1) 60 minutes or more _____ (2) 45 minutes _____

(3) 30 minutes _____ (4) 20 minutes _____

(5) 10 minutes ____ (6) Less than 10 minutes _____

****

36. Are there any other aspects of advisement not mentioned that HAVE been provided by your advisor(s)?

37. Are there any other aspects of advisement not mentioned that have NOT been provided by your advisor(s)?

Academic Advisement Questionnaire

Part Two

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER ALL ITEMS

Rate the following items according to the degree to which you perceive aspects of academic advisement as being either important or not important to you as a RN/BSN student in the California State University, Dominguez Hills - Statewide Nursing Program.

SCALE: 1- NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

2- LESS IMPORTANT

3- IMPORTANT

4- MOST IMPORTANT

NA- NOT APPLICABLE

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM.

ADVISEMENT FUNCTIONS

SCALE	ADVISEMENT SHOULD:
1 2 3 4 NA	1. Assist in completing a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	2. Assist in selecting classes
1 2 3 4 NA	3. Analyze my past academic experiences when planning a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	4. Assist considering fiscal resources when planning a Program of Study
1 2 3 4 NA	5. Identify assessment options (ie. ACT, CLEP) as academic resources when planning my Program of Study

SCALE		ADVISEMENT SHOULD:
1 2 3 4	NA	6. Assist in adjusting my Program of Study when necessary
1 2 3 4	NA	7. Forward a signed Program of Study to Admissions & Records as an initial step for graduation check
1 2 3 4	NA	8. Assist in completing course substitution forms
1 2 3 4	NA	9. Assist in completing petition forms
1 2 3 4	NA	10. Assist in designing a plan to meet my educational goals
1 2 3 4	NA	11. Evaluate & encourage my academic progress
		ADVISEMENT STYLE
1 2 3 4	NA	12. Convey a genuine desire to assist me
1 2 3 4	MA	13. Convey a patient manner
1 2 3 4	NA	14. Treat me as an individual
1 2 3 4	NA	15. Maintain confidentiality of advisement discussions
1 2 3 4	NA	16. Make me feel at ease
1 2 3 4	NA	17. Make me feel my concerns are important
1 2 3 4	NA	18. Provide accurate information
1 2 3 4	NA	19. Help find alternative sources of assistance when needed
1 2 3 4	NA	20. Provide explanations that are clear to me
1 2 3 4	NA	21. Allow me to make up my own mind
1 2 3 4	NA	22. Convey confidence
1 2 3 4	NA	23. Provide sufficient appointments for advisement sessions

1 2 3 4 NA 24. Provide adequate time for advisement sessions

ADVISEMENT OUTCOMES

SCALE ADVISEMENT SHOULD:

1 2 3 4 NA 25. Influence my academic career in a positive manner

1 2 3 4 NA 26. Provide encouragement in my academic studies

1 2 3 4 NA 27. Be an important part of my academic experience

1 2 3 4 NA 28. Help me become a more effective student

1 2 3 4 NA 29. Assist me to see more clearly how to gain my objectives

1 2 3 4 NA 30. Assist me to gain self-confidence

1 2 3 4 NA 31. Stimulate my thinking

1 2 3 4 NA 32. Gain my confidence in my advisor

****

33. Given all aspects of advisement, what three aspects of advisement are MOST important to you?

34. Given all aspects of advisement, what three aspects of advisement are LEAST important to you?