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Improving College Retention By Identifying
Factors Influencing Student Success

by

Maryjane Felter Leonard

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
San Diego State University and the University of San Diego
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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October 2008

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Influencing College Retention by Identifying Factors Influencing Student Success

by

Maryjane Felter Leonard

Ed.D. in Educational Technology

San Diego State University and the University of San Diego, 2008

Too many high school graduates are failing to complete higher education programs necessary to achieve the American dream. At a time when more Americans need a degree, it's becoming more difficult to get one—particularly for low-income and minority students. Are students ill prepared to meet the challenges of college level studies due to inadequate secondary school educational program, or do colleges need to reassess their teaching programs to meet the needs of this incoming generation of students? This study was carried out in three phases in a mixed methods research design using a series of student and instructor surveys and personal interviews. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to explore student and instructor perceptions of factors leading to success or failure in completion of college level degrees. Descriptive statistical and quantitative analysis of surveys completed by 27 instructors and 75 students were used in this study. Additionally, qualitative methods were used to analyze data gathered during 5 student interviews. The results of the study suggest that many students need adult support and interactive collaborative learning environments to successfully complete a college degree.

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by

Maryjane Felter Leonard

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Jack, and my children, Mary Jo, Joseph, Jimmy, Christine, Janie, Dianne, Ann-Marie, Theresa and Katie. I could not have made this journey without your constant support and encouragement.

It is also dedicated to the thousands of college students whose dreams remain deferred.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the U.S., bachelor's degree holders can expect to earn twice as much as high school graduates who enter the work force. Those who enter college but fail to graduate realize only slight gains over their contemporaries holding only a high school diploma. The declining number of college graduates represents a huge national problem. Who will fill the vacancies in the industry work force? Who will teach the nation's children and provide medical care for their families? As other national economies mature and college graduation rates increase, the external pressure on the U.S. job market increases. Advances in technology have made "outsourcing" of some white collar jobs more economical for many industries that can draw from the growing international labor pool of English-speaking college graduates willing to work for a fraction of the salaries expected by American graduates (Cary, 2004). Too many American high school graduates are failing to complete the higher education programs necessary to achieve the American dream. Are students ill prepared to meet the challenges of college level studies due to inadequate secondary school educational programs or do colleges need to reassess their teaching programs to meet the needs of this incoming generation of students?

Today's incoming college freshmen are adolescents and members of the Gen Y generation. They were born during a baby bulge demographers locate between 1979 and

1994. At 60 million strong, more than three times the size of Generation X, they're the biggest population of new students to hit the American education system since the 72 million baby boomers.

Traditional students in today's incoming college freshmen population are adolescents and members of the Gen Y generation. Adolescence is a pivotal developmental period in which youth begin to form an enduring sense of personal identity and agency about themselves. Self-efficacy is a key belief underlying adolescents' motivation to act intentionally (Bandura, 1986, 1995). Pajares tells us that it is commonly accepted that students' beliefs about their academic ability are vital forces to their success or failure in school. Nearly 20 years of research has revealed that self-efficacy beliefs of teachers as well as students are strong determinants and predictors of academic success. The way students perform is greatly influenced by how well they think they can perform and by how well their teachers think they can perform. This is especially true for adolescent learners (Hoy, Demerath, & Pape, 2001; Pajares, 2000; Urdan & Pajares, 2001; Wentzel & Battle, 2001; Zusho & Pintrich, 2001). Discounting other outside influence, the implication is that self-efficacy facilitates school engagement. In practice this means that students need to have both the will and the skill to be academically competent. They need to be equipped with efficacy beliefs as well as knowledge and skills (Alfassi, 2003) and they need instructors who believe in their ability to perform.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Although the United States as a nation seems to be making progress on high school completion and acceptance into higher education for all youth, a recent report on California

colleges indicates a large number of students fail to attain any form of credential (Cary, 2004). During the last decade and for the first time in history, the graduation rate of incoming freshmen to colleges and universities in the United States is declining—with the sharpest declines realized by low income students. This trend is extremely alarming to many educators. The “baby boomers” are moving from the work force into retirement. Only about 17% of American high school freshmen are getting bachelor's degrees within 10 years. When the data is disaggregated, the picture is much worse for low-income students. By age 24, 75% of students from the top-income brackets have earned a degree. At the same age, less than 9% of low-income students have earned one. The U.S. competitive economy is making new and greater demands. Ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education or training while only 40% of today's Americans have any form of postsecondary credentials (U.S. Department of Education, 2007.).

In answer to this concern, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has made higher education reform a priority. Speaking at a regional summit on higher education in June 2007, Secretary Spellings stated, “At a time when more Americans need a degree, it's becoming more difficult to get one—particularly for low-income and minority students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, n.p.). In past years, the U.S. investment in higher education yielded a tremendous return. For many years, American colleges and universities were the envy of the world and have provided generations of citizens the ability to pursue the American Dream. However, recent data show the U.S. has lost its number one position in higher education throughout the world. According to Secretary Spelling, by 2012, there will be 3 million more jobs requiring a bachelor's degree and, the U.S. will not have the college graduates to fill them.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify factors influencing college retention that will serve as a framework for new educational programs aimed at meeting the needs of today's population of incoming college students. Due to successful government and industry sponsored high school programs many more low income students are being accepted into our colleges and universities. Higher education is a key factor in successful pursuit of the American Dream and a means to stop the poverty cycle in the United States. Educators must take up the challenge to reform the classroom learning environment to address the learning styles and motivation of the Gen Y adolescents sitting before them.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The United States is in the midst of an economic crisis that may take many years to resolve. The U.S. unemployment rate unexpectedly jumped to a 5-year high of 6.1%, according to figures released in September 2008 suggesting a bleak picture of the world's largest economy (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Industry will be offering employment for only the most qualified applicants. At the same time industry is selecting only the most qualified job applicants, an increasing number of students in higher education degree and certificate programs are dropping out of school. Students who drop out of college before completing a degree or obtaining a certificate will find it more and more difficult to find employment. Today's educators must redesign educational programs to meet the needs of today's students.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Academic Self-efficacy—Defined as students’ beliefs in their ability to successfully perform academic tasks.

Attrition—Refers to permanent departure from an institution, either voluntarily as dropouts or transfers, or involuntarily as dismissals as a result of inadequate grade performance.

Cultural capital—Defined as a non-material resource or socially-valued knowledge of “high brow” culture and cultural cues, which develops in youth, at home, and is further cultivated in secondary institutions and ultimately reinforced and reproduced in college.

Digital Divide—Refers to the gap between those who benefit from digital technology and those who do not.

Generation Y—Individuals born during a baby bulge that demographers locate between 1979 and 1994.

Retention—Refers to student reenrollment on the same campus and graduation with a certificate or degree from the campus of enrollment.

Self-efficacy—Defined as students’ beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events in their lives.

Traditional students—Traditional students are typically characterized as those aged younger than 24, who attend 4-year institutions, live in campus residences, and enroll in a full-time schedule of classes.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 of the study presents the introduction, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the definitions of terms, and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of recent and relevant literature.

Chapter 3 presents the research questions, methodology used in the study, including a description and rationale of the sample, the data collection procedures, a description of instrument development, the methods of analysis of the data and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations.

References and Appendices conclude the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to identify factors influencing student success and retention—meaning successful completion of a college baccalaureate degree at a 4-year college or university or an associates degree from a community college. Over the past 20 years, the gap in access to higher education between low-income students and higher income students has consistently decreased. Unfortunately, the gap in degree completion rates between these same students is increasing. Many studies identify lack of academic preparedness as the main contributor to college attrition rates—a factor having a disproportionate impact on low-income students. While more and more low-income students are accepted into post-secondary education programs, fewer are able to meet the academic rigor and obtain a degree. According to Tinto (2008), the open door to higher education has become a revolving door for many low-income students. Many institutions have recognized the problem of under-prepared incoming freshmen and have tried to address the problem with additional first semester orientation courses aimed at teaching basic academic skills. For many low-income students, these add-on classes have the effect of applying a band aid when a tourniquet is needed. Few institutions have realized that the core of the solution may be to redesign the entire first year educational experience to address the needs of the ever increasing population of academically under-prepared students.

College retention is increasingly recognized as a serious problem for the United States. It not only represents a significant financial impact to the national economy but there are far reaching social implications for the underprivileged who have been told that education is the key to achieving the American Dream. This generation of college students is unique. It is the first generation raised in an atmosphere bombarded by the influences of technology. Designers of new educational programs must consider all the factors contributing to the uniqueness of the adolescent Gen Y student.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM

A 2004 report from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development indicates the U.S. has lost the international lead in education. For the first time in history, our forward momentum in education is slipping. During the last decade, the U.S. has lost its first place position in the developed world regarding college attainment rates. Compared with 12 other first world nations, U.S. students rank last in college completion (Cary, 2004). The overall completion numbers for all students are down, but they are even worse for traditionally under-represented students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The American dream of limitless opportunities, social mobility and economic success is often linked to higher education, but an increasing number of U.S. college students fail to get the degree that can make this dream come true. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, has made higher education reform a pressing issue. To that end, she has appointed a committee to address the issues of improving affordability, accessibility, and accountability for American colleges and universities to help more Americans acquire the post-secondary education they need (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

In the U.S., bachelor's degree holders can expect to earn twice as much as high school graduates who enter the work force. Over a work life, earnings for a worker with a bachelor's degree compared with one who had just a high school diploma increase by about \$1 million for non-Hispanic Whites and about \$700,000 for African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Those who enter college but fail to graduate realize only slight gains over their contemporaries holding just a high school diploma. The declining number of college graduates represents a huge national problem. As other national economies mature and their college graduation rates increase, the external pressure on the U.S. job market increases (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Advances in technology have made "outsourcing" of some white collar jobs more economical for many industries that can draw from the growing international labor pool of English-speaking college graduates willing to work for a fraction of the salaries expected by American graduates (Cary, 2004).

According to Secretary Spelling, by 2012, there will be 3 million more jobs requiring a bachelor's degree and, the U.S. will not have the college graduates to fill them. Over a 10-year period, the total potential value of the jobs outsourced to other countries could total more than \$1.5 trillion (Figure 1).

THEORIES ON STUDENT RETENTION

Several widely used theoretical models on student retention have been used over the years to explain why students drop out of college before completing a degree or stay to graduate. These models have been geared toward the traditional student. Tinto's (1987)

Figure 1. Value of outsourced jobs.

“Theory of Student Departure” states that incoming college students arrive with specific intentions concerning college attendance and future goals. These students are equipped with personal, family and academic skills which help them to adjust, or not adjust, to college life as they interact with instructors, fellow students and other members of the college community. If a student has positive interactions it is easier to adjust to the new environment. Continuing positive interactions lead to assimilation and integration promoting retention. Negative interactions have the reverse impact and can lead to isolation and alienation, eventually leading the student to withdraw (Astin, 1985; Pascarella, 1985), just as a lack of social integration can produce suicide in society (Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Tinto (1987) also mentions centrality of the group to which the student belongs as a key factor in commitment to the institution. If students feel programs established for them are marginal to the institution, and they don’t “fit” into the mainstream, their commitment to the institution may be lessened and make them more likely to leave (Ruddock, Hanson, & Moss, 1999).

Astin's "Theory of Involvement" (1985) emphasizes the importance of students' backgrounds. His theory looks at students' characteristics before entering college and addresses their positive encounters with new ideas and people as well as their engagement with other educational institutions. Astin's theory centers on five aspects: (a) involvement requires the investment of psychological and physical energy in objects; (b) involvement is a continuous concept; (c) involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; (d) the amount of learning or development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement; and (e) the educational effectiveness of any policy or practice is related to its capacity to induce involvement in students (Astin, 1984, 1985). In the 20 years since the development of Astin's theory, there has been a growing demographic diversity in the undergraduate student body in American colleges and universities. One result of this increased diversity is an ever increasing number of "first-generation" college students who come from families where neither parent has any college experience. Models like Astin's formerly used to assess college retention do not consider the dynamics of the issues facing first-generation college-goers. Recent studies clearly indicate that first-generation students, as a group, find it more difficult to transition from high school to college than many of their peers. Besides the usual anxieties from the dislocation experience, these student frequently experience additional cultural, social, and academic transitions (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

Pascarella's "General Model for Assessing Change" (1985) looks at the impacts to student success of a supportive institutional environment, constructive interaction with faculty, staff and other students and the student's effort to learn. Tinto (2007) asserts the benefits of this model of education where classrooms have been reorganized to promote

shared, collaborative learning environments. Students work in groups and become active and responsible for each other's learning. Such learning environments reduce alienation and promote inclusion while easing cultural, social and academic transitions.

When considering retention theories, Perrakis (2003) discusses the particular issues facing disadvantaged students lacking in the cultural and social capital resources required to successfully integrate into college life. These students often see colleges and universities as sources of stress, and they must develop skills to overcome the feelings of isolation and exclusion. Their only resource is their commitment to succeed despite the odds against them. For community college students in particular, the first 15 weeks are crucial. If a student's feelings of isolation continue through most of the first semester, there is little likelihood they will return for the next semester (National On-Campus Report, 2005). Von Destinon's (1988) study suggests that commitment to and from the family is a "double edged sword" for some student populations. Strong understanding and emotional support creates a strong positive influence upon student retention. Unfortunately, if family needs threaten or remove that support there is a direct negative impact on student persistence.

A more recent study focusing on community college students found that they were more at risk of dropping out because of their lack of preparation and firm connection to the school. Based on the literature concerning student retention that equates student satisfaction with caring and concerned faculty, one department in the Atlantic Cape Community College initiated an intense academic advisement outreach program. The Arts and Humanities Department was selected as the pilot for the outreach initiative. At the end of the semester, surveys were sent to students majoring in the arts and humanities as well as to students in the general population. The results of the study revealed a higher retention rate for the next

semester and a stronger sense of connection to the institution from the students in the arts and humanities department than the general student population (McArthur, 2005).

DEFINING THE STUDENT POPULATION

Today's incoming college students come from a very unique population. They are first and foremost adolescents—a term that has been redefined in recent years. In addition to being adolescents, they are members of the Y Generation.

Characteristics of Adolescent Learners

Adolescence is a period of development shaped by biological unfolding and physical development. It spans the second and into the third decades of life. This period of human development is greatly influenced by societal and cultural norms and expectations (Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2004; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2005). Society's expectations for adolescents have dramatically changed during the last century. In the early 1900s, children and teenagers were expected to enter the workforce as soon as they were able. Today, most American adolescents stay in school until they are at least 18 years old, one quarter move on to college, further delaying the assumption of adult roles until the 20s, and a growing number live in the family home through their late 20s. Adolescents in their late teens who were once considered old enough to work full time and make adult decisions are now considered too young and inexperienced to begin careers (Zusho & Pintrich, 2001).

The transition into adolescence is often marked with a decline in academic achievement. Adolescents are often less interested in learning and put less value on education (Anderman, Urdan, & Roeser, 2005; Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2001, 2004). Confidence in their abilities to perform well in school may also decline during this timeframe. Emotional

and social support from parents, peers and teachers as adolescents begin high school and college is a key component of academic success. Parents provide their adolescent students with academic resources through their involvement in school-related activities. In the classroom, teachers can promote learning by the delivery method employed to present the lesson and the instructional activities used to reinforce the subject matter (Wentzel & Battle, 2001).

During the period of adolescence individuals are faced with intellectual, biological and psychological changes that lead to reassessment of their relationships with their parents, peers and teachers (Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2004). Studies have shown that parents can provide the main source of interpersonal support and have a great influence on academic accomplishment. They transmit family goals and values influencing social and academic development. These same studies indicate that during the adolescent years, a teacher's influence can either promote or derail academic achievement. Teachers transmit academic goals and values and have a much stronger influence on academic development than peers. While teacher influence plays an important role in development of academic self-efficacy, it plays a secondary role in overall all emotional development (Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2004). An adolescent's relationship with his or her peers depends greatly on the acceptance/rejection factor. Peer relationships develop because of the growing need for support and guidance from members of their society with similar goals and values (Anderman et al., 2005; Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2004; Wentzel & Battle, 2001). Many students entering college from low-income neighborhoods have been raised in single-parent homes. Adolescent overall emotional well-being is most often linked to the adolescent's relationships with parents and peers. These parent and peer relationships help

establish an identity to guide life choices and meet life challenges. Parents, in particular, provide the foundations of beliefs about meaning, value and capabilities of self or self-efficacy which are a key factors in human agency-the capacity to make things happen through personal actions (Hoy et al., 2001).

According to Wentzel and Battle (2001), it is very possible that teachers have a significant and unique impact on adolescents' emotional well-being in the more defined area of students' academic self-efficacy. Teachers who construct learning situations in which competition, social comparison and norm-referenced evaluations are valued are setting the stage for some students to develop low perceptions of academic competence and self-efficacy (Harter, 1996). Literature suggests that teacher-student interaction can provide positive learning environments to promote academic achievement (Urdu, 1999; Urdu & Pajares, 2004). These positive learning environments would teach students needed learning strategies, frequently link new work to recent successes, reinforce effort and persistence, stress peer modeling, help students make facilitative attributions and create personally important goals (Margolis & McCabe, 2004).

Characteristics of Generation Y

Generation Y students are the sons and daughters of the baby boomers. Born between 1979 and 1994, at 60 million strong, they are three times the size of Generation X and the largest population entering the halls of higher education since the 72 million baby boomers. They are sometimes known as Echo Boomers or the Millennium Generation. Although the echo boom rivals its parents' generation in size, it is different in almost every other way (Lower, 2008). Two-thirds are not Caucasian. One-fourth reside in a single-parent household,

and three-fourths have working mothers. While their parents are still mastering Microsoft Windows 98, many of these students began tapping away at computers in nursery school (Akande, 2008; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Koch, 2008). Eighty-one percent of 18- to 25-year-olds surveyed in a 2007 Pew Research Center poll said getting rich is their generation's most important or second-most-important life goal (Jayson, 2007). However, Jack and Suzy Welch (2007) suggest that Gen Y may be getting a bad rap. While teaching in two different MBA programs, their encounters with students indicate students are more interested in work-life balance and community service than being rich (Welch & Welch, 2007).

The results of the same Pew telephone survey of 579 young people describe the “millennial” generation as growing up in the constant presence of their parents’ digital cameras recording every small milestone in their lives. Psychologists agree it is very natural for humans to seek attention. This generation of adolescents revel in it. Since infancy, they have become accustomed to being noticed and showered with awards and accolades. Like most typical young people, they are extremely optimistic and believe anything is possible. The American Dream is within their grasp. Even among those from lower income families, there is a belief that fame and fortune can happen to anyone no matter the economics of their upbringing. Money is by far their most important problem; 30% cite financial issues as their number one concern. College and education was the second-biggest concern at 18%, and careers and jobs were third at 16% (Jayson, 2007).

In an annual survey of college freshmen by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles, 2005 data show that money is much more on students’ minds than in the past. The percentage who say it is “essential” or “very important” to be “very well off financially” grew from 41.9% in 1967 to 74.5% in 2005; “developing a

meaningful philosophy of life” dropped in importance from 85.8% in 1967 to 45% in 2005.

The same was true for high school seniors in 1976 compared with those in 2005. “Monitoring the Future,” a study conducted annually by the University of Michigan, found striking differences in responses to the question “How important to your life is having lots of money?” In 1976, 15.4% of 3,009 respondents thought it was “extremely important,” compared with 25% of 2,587 young people in 2005. And in 2005, only 5.6% thought having lots of money was “not important,” down from 11% in 1976. Studies also show that Generation Y prefer directness over subtlety, and action over observation. They often feel overwhelmed and crunched for time (Erikson, 2008)

Life in the U.S. is far more expensive today than it was for the boomers. Monetary realities are much less favorable for Gen Y than what their parents experienced. There is a greater disparity between rich and poor. Costs for basics such as housing, insurance and education are continually on the rise while income growth is slowing—especially for the middle class (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Many young people today are earning more than their parents did at the same age, but their money is buying less (Akande, 2008). They are concerned about economic security, and they will have a very difficult time doing as well as and achieving the level of success as their parents.

Influence of the Digital Divide

Many of today’s adolescents have grown up with an unprecedented access to technology and new media. It started in 1970, when Pong (the revolutionary video arcade game) was introduced. Since then, children have voraciously consumed a steady diet of digital games, music videos, and the world wide web feeding their insatiable appetite for

more. In more recent years, they have been riding the wave of leading edge technology (Koch, 2008). Live chats, instant messaging, smart mobs, blogs, wikis, modding, and more are part of their daily life (Akande, 2008). While these terms are common to Generation Y, they may be foreign to their parents and instructors who may be struggling to understand and master these new technologies. To many Generation Y students, technology is a friend relied on for study, work, play, relaxation and communication. These are the students who fill the seats in lecture halls and classrooms, and they have become an increasing presence in the entry-level workplace.

The term “Digital Divide” refers to the gap between those who benefit from digital technology and those who do not. It has taken researchers a whole decade to figure out the real issue is not so much about access to digital technology but about the benefits derived from it (Luger & Maynard, 2007; Trotter, 2007). Designers of technology are looking at the upper-to-middle classes as the market for their technology “solutions.” Therefore, individuals who are well off have high-quality access to all the digital technology money can buy while the poor do not. Profit motive is the driving force. The poor are ignored because the assumption is that designing solutions for them will not be profitable. As a result the poor are frequently provided access only to low-quality digital technology further widening the digital divide (“Digital Divide,” 2008; “Practice & Research,” 2007).

Influence of Technology

In the development of education, technology is no longer assigned a supportive role, rather it has become an integral part of the development and shaping of new forms of education completely based on technology (Serdiukov, 2001). A 2001 brochure published by

the International Reading Association identified several information and communication technologies including the Internet, e-mail, presentation software, word processors and Web-editors as redefining the nature of literacy. Today's high school graduates began their secondary school careers in literacy using paper, pencil and book technologies. Many will finish their high school careers proficient in the skills demanded by a wide variety of technologies including: word processors, presentation software, instant messaging and e-mail ("On the Way," 2008). According to the brochure, students must be proficient in this new form of literacy in order to be fully literate in today's world (International Reading Association, 2001).

In October 2008, the governing board of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) announced that technology literacy will become part of the Nation's Report Card beginning in 2012. The test will measure students' proficiency with technology in addition to reading, math, science, history, writing, and other subjects. This will be the first time on a national level that students' technology literacy will be assessed. Despite the concern of business representatives and policy makers, currently, only a few states have adopted the use of tests available through National Technology Standards (NETS), and by the end of eighth grade, the No Child Left Behind Act requires that students demonstrate technological literacy ("On the Way," 2008).

In her 2003 study, Lau determined that through the use of multimedia technology and innovative instructional techniques, faculty members can provide positive learning environments supporting student retention. While the individual college student determines the success or failure of college retention, cooperative and collaborative learning in the

classroom provides the motivation for students to become actively involved in their own learning process improving the likelihood of continued retention (Lau, 2003).

Initial response from students and instructors indicates information communication technologies (ICT) are instrumental in increasing student engagement and promoting learning transfer leading to student success. Unfortunately, many instructors resist taking this step into the 21st century. They prefer the more controlled environment of the traditional classroom where the instructor lectures and the students take notes—hoping they have identified the important points for the next test. Over the past 20 years, despite many efforts at the national, state and local levels to promote the use of technology in the classroom, the current research indicates the impact on teaching and learning has been minimal. In 1998, a survey of K-12 classrooms conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that 84% of fulltime instructors have access to at least one computer and the internet in their classrooms. Despite this increased access, only 20% of these teachers report feeling well prepared to integrate technology into their teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

During a 2-year study at Louisiana State University, faculty and students in the College of Education participated in a research project to understand their perceptions and use of technology in the classroom. Students and faculty were surveyed to discern awareness, expectations and capabilities in using technology in the classroom. Results indicated that both faculty and students are generally computer literate with almost all owning a personal computer; strongly preferring a combination of traditional and computer supported teaching methods; and believe that computer-based technology in the classroom is very important to students' future competitiveness in the job market. However, faculty's perceptions of their

proficiency in using technologies were significantly higher than students' perceptions of these skills (Summers & Vlosky, 2001).

In a 2001 report on a Delphi survey of 29 faculty senate leaders, the results indicated that faculty in higher education will be more inclined to use technologies if they are involved in the decision making process. Additionally, faculty members recognize the need for students to be trained in technology use in the corporate world. These demands will continuously be a force pushing educators to become more technologically capable and diverse (Rice & Miller, 2001).

In January 2004, Jankowska presented the results of a web-based survey on usage of information and communication technologies by college professors at the University of Idaho. The results of this survey confirmed previous findings that unawareness of the range of databases, the lack of knowledge about electronic resources, lack of time, lack of training and instruction were critical obstacles to effective use of electronic resources and services by faculty (Jankowska, 2004).

A study conducted by Cronin, Foster and Lister (1999) addressed issues in science, engineering and technology (SET) subjects concerning the use of technology in SET curriculum. The study revealed that fast-paced lectures requiring students to take copious notes are particularly unpopular. According to the survey, most SET students wanted more opportunities for interactive teaching/learning, clearer links between subjects and more realistic practical problems underlining the need for faculty to be technologically savvy (Cronin et al., 1999).

According to *eSchool News*, at least half of the nation's higher-education classrooms will be equipped with digital projectors, control systems, audio or video conferencing

equipment or other audio-visual technology within the next five years. While some professors warn that the invasion of technology at universities could shift learning from the classroom with professors to computer screens at the kitchen table (Clayton, 1998), other educational experts argue that the only way to meet the continuing demand for higher education is to embrace technological advances with open arms.

Enhancing curriculum with a dynamic learning environment enriched by technology can go a long way towards providing an educational environment to better serve the Generation Y students—especially those placed in developmental or remedial coursework. Unfortunately, there are still many barriers to the integration of technology and Web-based instruction into the curriculum. There is a learning curve associated with working with new technology. Innovations take time, and faculty are already pulled in many directions by their institutions to conduct research and publish findings. It is not realistic to assume new technologies can be incorporated into the curriculum process as just another activity (O’Leary, 2000). Further research is needed to develop a framework for instructors to design effective adaptable multimedia learning environments compatible with students’ learning preferences, strengths, weaknesses, and behaviors leading to more efficient learning (Cradler, 1994). In addition, many institutions may not have the existing technology infrastructure (or the funds to build it) necessary to support high tech educational multimedia tools.

The typical college student of the 21st century will be academically independent and better prepared to discuss academic subject matter than students educated in the traditional classroom environment of the 20th century. They will be self-motivated and more articulate (Ben-Jacob, Levin, & Ben-Jacob, 2000). It has been 8 years since the beginning of the millennium and this prediction of a new vision in education and a new generation of learners.

Unfortunately, many high school graduates from low income communities still continue on to higher education lacking these skills. Recent evidence indicates the importance of the social network in reference to technology use. When the local schools, churches and businesses lack web sites and Internet use as a means of communication, Internet content may seem irrelevant in the personal lives of many urban poor (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Lack of technological expertise is becoming a major contributor to the rising college attrition rates.

In 2000, Tinto expressed concern about the possible negative impact of high tech classrooms on the cooperative group work at the heart of learning communities. Designed to accommodate large audiences where students sit in rows of seats facing a large screen in the front of the room, they discourage personal interaction. Comparing the university campus to an archeological dig presents a viewpoint on what is important to the institution. The value system of ancient cultures was often expressed by the physical layout, size, and elaborate quality of the buildings. The physical layout of many university campuses has a lot to say about institutional values. How close are the faculty offices to the classrooms? How do locations of the two support student-teacher interaction (Tinto, 2000b)?

HIGHER EDUCATION—INCLUSION VERSUS EXCLUSION

For many years, according to the U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, institutions of higher education have placed more value on exclusion than inclusion. For some popular colleges selectivity is a sign of quality (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Unfortunately too many low income students enter college academically under-prepared and lacking the cultural capital required for successful assimilation into college life. These students who begin their college careers lacking in the academic and social skills possessed by

their more affluent peers are less likely to complete their degree programs (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

Perrakis (2003) defines “cultural capital” as a non-material resource or socially valued knowledge of culture and cultural cues developed in youth in the homes of well educated, well-to-do members of society. This intangible resource expands in secondary institutions and plays a significant role in acclimation and inclusion into college life. Students with increased cultural capital feel more entitled to a higher education, are more likely to experience academic success, and are more persistent because of their inherent feeling of entitlement. Many institutions of higher education perpetuate this class structure in their exclusion practices (Berger, 2002). For many low income students, the lack of cultural capital influences their perceptions of inclusion and belonging and prevents them from integrating into the college scene. Although these students are equally motivated to succeed as their more affluent peers, the feeling of isolation can undermine their ability to persist (Perrakis, 2003).

For the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic population shift in the type of students entering college campuses. The movement from the traditional college student (white, middle to upper income, campus resident) population to a non-traditional college student (low-income, multicultural, commuter) population is evident. In addition to pursuing college degrees, non-traditional students must deal with social and cultural issues on campus. Cooperative learning helps overcome many of these issues and increases student involvement and satisfaction leading to increased student retention (Lau, 2003).

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Fortunately, community colleges have never ascribed to this “exclusion” way of thinking. Instead of rejecting students, they are welcomed in to higher education to earn degrees and complete advanced workforce training. Opportunity is not just reserved for the privileged (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Institutions of higher learning in the U.S. must increase efforts to meet the demands of shifting national demographics and the rise of the global knowledge economy demanding the education of more students to higher levels than ever before. Thirty-two of our 50 states do not have enough traditional students in the education pipeline to achieve levels of international competitiveness. Ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education or training, but not enough of our citizens, especially people of color, are being equipped to seize these opportunities. Only 9% of low-income students earn a college degree by age 24, compared with 75% of students from wealthier families. Only 10% of Hispanic students earn a bachelor's degree by age 29. Of the total U.S. population, only 40% have any form of postsecondary credential (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

In California, gaining admission to community college is easy and the fees—roughly \$600 a year for a full program—are the lowest in the nation. Many low income students can usually get the fees waived indicating that cost is not a barrier for any qualified student wishing to pursue a college degree. However, a recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California indicates only 15% of full-time community college students transfer to a 4-year college to finish their bachelor's degrees. Additionally, the report states poor preparation in high school requires many students to take basic skills courses before they begin college-level course work leading to a degree. According to Community College Chancellor, Mark

Drummond, 90% of newly admitted students cannot do college math and 75% cannot read or write at college level. In addition, many low-income students are the first family member to begin pursuing college degrees. These students frequently arrive on campus without any idea of what college work requires. This fact calls for closer coordination and collaboration between high schools and the local community colleges and 4-year institutions (Schrag, 2006).

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

Although some institutions of post-secondary education have embraced the need for change many are still looking for solutions to declining retention rates.

Creating Community Within the Classroom

Unless institutions develop academic programs to address the needs of under-prepared low-income students, there is no long-term solution to the problem of retention. Several recent studies on the impact of learning communities and collaborative pedagogy indicate academically under-prepared students were significantly more engaged in a variety of activities including classroom work and student/faculty interaction than similar students on their campuses who were not members of learning communities (Tinto, 2000b; Tinto & Russo, 1994). Additionally, students in the learning community programs were more apt to persist to the next academic year than their non-participating peers. Students who were interviewed indicated the learning community was a “safe place to learn.” They felt more comfortable about expressing themselves in class and exchanging ideas. This was significantly important for students whose first language was not English. These ESL students indicated the collaborative learning environment helped them overcome their fear of speaking out in class.

Additionally, attending class with the same group of students several times a day increased their comfort level in speaking and providing feedback (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

According to Tinto (1997a), the college classroom is the center of the educational activity structure of colleges and universities. The interactions that occur in the classroom are a major feature of a student's educational experience. For many non-traditional students, the classroom may be the only place where students and faculty meet. The "traditional college student" has been defined as unmarried, younger than 24, residing on campus at a 4-year institution, and enrolled in a full-time schedule of classes. The non-traditional student frequently has multiple obligations outside the college, lives off campus and commutes to classes. For these students, academic and social interaction occurs in the classroom. According to Tinto (1997a), despite the obvious importance of the classroom activity, little has been done to explore how the classroom experience impacts the student's persistence. Many institutions of higher education do not recognize the classroom as the centerpiece of their efforts to promote student retention. Instead, these efforts are assigned to the realm of Student Affairs. Tinto's study at Seattle Community College where the classroom experience was altered through the use of learning communities and adoption of collaborative learning strategies indicated significant positive student satisfaction and persistence (Tinto, 1997a). An earlier study at the University of Washington with incoming freshmen concluded collaborative learning communities enabled students to develop small supportive communities of peers that helped bond them to the broader social communities of the college and engaged them more fully in the academic life of the institution (Tinto, 1993). Additionally in 1997, Tinto expressed his concerns that universities will not meet the needs of both their students and faculty unless they become learning organizations "consciously constructed to promote their

own learning and that of their students and faculty” (Tinto, 1997b, p. 2). As learning organizations, we would do better by adopting educational community among our students and faculty and reorganizing our classrooms by developing communities of learning—promoting shared, collaborative learning experiences within the classrooms where students learn together rather than apart (Tinto, 1997b).

In 2000, Tinto continued his theme on the value of learning communities and improved retention when he listed four significant outcomes of his research. First, students in learning communities developed self-supporting groups extending beyond the classroom. Students in a learning community spent more time together outside of the classroom than students in stand alone classes. Second, students in learning communities were more involved in the learning process, spent more time together which created a bridge to social interaction out side of class. Third, from the students’ perception, the learning experience was enriched—they “learned better together.” Fourth, students in learning communities persisted at higher rates than students in traditional curriculum programs leading to higher retention rates for the learning community students (Tinto, 2000b).

Tracking

In 1996, the University of Florida (UF) adopted a “tracking” program aimed at improving graduation rates. Results from student surveys in the mid 1990s revealed a high level of student satisfaction with the academic programs but a low level of satisfaction with the university’s bureaucratic processes. The study also revealed that many upper division students were enrolled in some of the basic required courses, usually completed in the first 2 years. It is a common practice at most public universities to have two admission decisions.

First, students must gain admission to the university; second, they must qualify to move into upper division and be accepted into their major.

Not declaring a major upon admission has the benefit of allowing undecided students to investigate different options. Unfortunately it also presents the possibility for students to miss required prerequisite courses necessary for enrollment in upper division courses and the probability of taking additional classes to complete their degrees (Capaldi, Lombardi, & Yellen, 2006; Tinto, 2006). Students at UF are required to choose a major upon admission, putting them on a specific “track” towards graduation. With the understanding that many students are undecided about a specific profession, there are three “proto-majors” available to choose: undecided science, undecided social science, and undecided humanities. Incoming students are given information on how various majors align with their interests and talents. Based on this information, most students do not find it difficult to select a major.

The tracking program systematically arranges, by semester, the courses required to complete a specific major for the next 4 years. Students receive reports at the beginning of each semester documenting their progress towards degree completion. If a student gets “off track” academic advisors help students develop a plan of action to get them back on track. This may require taking summer classes if the student wants to graduate in the 4-year timeframe. Tracking requires the full support of the faculty and the administration. Based on student needs, the system dictates the number of sessions and when courses will be offered. In order to get the program implemented, the provost’s office provided funding to increase sections as needed to meet student demands. Recognizing the benefit of this student-centered approach to education, the Florida legislature provided \$5 million to the effort (Capaldi et al., 2006).

The 5-year results speak for themselves. Four-year graduation rates rose from 43% to 53% (Figure 2) and 6-year graduation rates rose from 70% to 78% (Figure 3). In 1998, when the program was in full implementation, 92% of students expressed satisfaction with the registration and advising process. In addition, there was a dramatic reduction in the add-drop rates (Capaldi et al., 2006; Tinto, 2006).

Figure 2. Four-year graduation rates.

Figure 3. Six-year graduation rates.

When the data is further disaggregated to consider ethnicity, Asian students showed the highest improved graduation rates experiencing a 16% increase for 4-year graduates and a 13% improvement for 6-year graduates. Hispanic students achieved similar rates of improvement with a 13% increase in 4-year graduates and a 9% increase in 6-year graduates over the 5 years measured. Black student graduation rates improved 9% for both 4- and 6-year graduates while white student graduation rates during the same period improved 8% for the 4-year graduates and 7% for the 6-year graduates (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Four-year graduation rates by ethnicity.

Figure 5. Six-year graduation rates by ethnicity.

While some concerned with declining retention rates blame students for making poor choices and lack of motivation, the University of Florida's tracking program indicates significant improvement can come from within the institution by initiating systematic academic advising. Institutional commitment to provided the courses students need when they need them is a key to improved graduation rates (Capaldi et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

Too many low-income, first generation college goers are entering our colleges and universities academically and socially under-prepared to successfully meet the challenges of higher education. They lag far behind their more affluent peers in rates of 4-year degree completion. Unless institutions of higher learning find ways to address the academic needs of these students, there is no long-term solution to college retention and improved graduation rates. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) suggest small learning communities as a possible solution to improve retention through increased academic and social engagement. Their study of 19 institutions found students enrolled in learning communities were more likely to persist to the following academic year. Additionally, the study showed the learning community environment heightened the students' perception of themselves as learners and increased their academic efficacy to succeed (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

The local community college is the entry point to higher education for most high school graduates from low-income families. For this reason, according to Derek Bok (2008), we need a national effort to provide the resources—to students and instructors alike—required to address the substantial learning needs of students and enable faculty to acquire new skills to help their students learn in the settings in which they meet. Institutions of higher learning must be learning organizations promoting educational community by adopting new

modes of organization in curriculum, pedagogy, academic work, and assessment (Tinto, 1997b). Curriculum and academic work must consider the unique attributes of the Generation Y generation of students and shifting population demographics bringing an ever increasing student population of ESL students into our college and universities. Identifying the social and learning needs of this new student population is key to bringing the United States back to a first place world ranking in college graduation rates and also the means to meet the demands of our national economy for a increasing college educated work force.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contribute to student success and college retention. To achieve this goal, the study followed a three-phase mixed methods approach providing between-subjects and within-subjects data analysis (Cone & Foster, 1994). Quantitative research methods using SPSS Version 16 were used to analyze the data collected from the majority of questions on the Student and Instructor surveys. Qualitative research methods were used to analyze data collected during the personal student interviews, to allow more in depth understanding of the students' perceptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Additionally, qualitative research methods were employed to analyze several open ended questions on both student and instructor surveys.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors influence college retention from the instructor's perspective?
2. What factors influence college retention from the student's perspective?
3. Does participation in a small learning community influence college retention?

OVERVIEW

The study was carried out in three phases in a mixed methods research design using a series of student and instructor surveys and personal student interviews. For Phase I of the study, the instructor and the initial student surveys were distributed at the end of spring

semester 2008 providing a between-subjects data analysis (Cone & Foster, 1994). Three hundred initial student surveys were distributed at two local community colleges and a large state university. A total of 75 completed surveys and consent forms were returned and used in the study. One hundred fifty instructor surveys were distributed at the same institutions. A total of 27 completed surveys and consent forms were returned and used in the study.

Personal interviews with student participants who completed the initial surveys and volunteer alumni from a high school small learning community conducted over the following 3 months constituted Phase II of the study. Fourteen students who completed the first survey indicated willingness to participate in a personal interview. These students were contacted by email to schedule an interview date. Four of these students replied via email and interviews were scheduled. Two additional interviews were scheduled with volunteer alumni from the high school small learning community. With permission of the participants, these interviews were audio taped to allow for deeper analysis. A follow-up student survey for students who completed the initial survey was distributed in fall 2008 for the third and final phase of the study allowing within-subjects data analysis (Cone & Foster, 1994). Follow-on surveys were distributed via email to 37 students who completed the first survey and indicated willingness to participate in a follow-on survey in the fall. Nine completed student follow-on surveys were received and used in the study. The study attempted to identify factors influencing college retention. The researcher will share results of the study with participating institutions for future academic program and curriculum development efforts aimed at improving college retention rates.

SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the student survey study were college students at local San Diego community colleges and a local state university. These institutions draw students from all areas of the San Diego metropolitan area and a wide range of high school scholastic experiences are represented among the population of students. The researcher recruited 76 students for Phase I of the study. With the exception that many of the participants may come from the Hispanic population, this population of college students is somewhat representative of the college student population of many larger metropolitan areas. Additionally, they share the common characteristics of adolescents and members of the Gen Y generation. For Phases II and III of the study, volunteer student participants from the first group who completed the first survey were asked to participate in the student interviews and follow-up student survey. Additional student interviews were conducted with alumni from a small high school learning community. There was a purposeful selection of this setting for field work because students represented a typical large metropolitan college student population. Many of these students will be available for follow-up studies in the subsequent years of their college careers.

Participants for the instructor survey were instructors at the same institutions listed above with a primary focus on instructors teaching first and second year college students. The researcher recruited 27 instructors for Phase I of the study. There was a purposeful selection of this target instructor population because reports indicate /the highest drop out rates for college occur during the first 2 years (Cary, 2004).

INSTRUMENTS

For Phase I of the study, the researcher developed two surveys to be distributed to volunteer student participants and one survey for the volunteer instructor participants. These surveys were distributed to participants in the spring of 2008 immediately following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study. Additionally, the researcher developed a series of open-ended questions for Phase II of the study, the student interviews, conducted during the summer and early fall 2008. The follow-on student survey distributed in fall 2008 was a repeat of the student survey administered as part of Phase I with three additional questions focusing on the student's perception of factors supporting or obstructing college retention.

Student Survey

The initial student survey (Appendix A) consisted of two parts. Part one consisted of 20 questions about the students' previous experience in a high school program and their current experience in a college program. The responses to these questions provided qualitative data for the study. Most questions were designed to allow transforming nominal data into ordinal data for quantitative analysis using SPSS version 16. Part two of the student survey asked participants to discuss their travel experiences prior to starting their college program and included a final section on ranking of personal values. Qualitative methods were used to analyze the responses to these questions.

Gates Formative Feedback Study

The Gates Formative Feedback Study (Appendix B) administered to the students at the same time as the initial student survey consisted of 22 questions on students' perceptions

of their high school experience. Questions were designed to get a deeper understanding of the students' interaction with instructors during high school. Respondents selected one of five preset multiple choice answers for each question based on a Likert-type scale of 5-point classification from a low of "Strongly Disagree" to a high of "Strongly Agree." Answers are assigned a value from 1 to 5 with 1 representing the lowest ("Strongly Disagree") and 5 representing the highest ("Strongly Agree"). Numerical values were inserted into an SPSS data file for descriptive statistical analysis.

Instructor Survey

The instructor survey (Appendix C) consisted of 13 questions. Questions 1 through 5 were used to define the instructors' experience level and current teaching workload. Questions 6 through 12 investigated the instructors' interaction with students and defined the instructors' perceptions of the students' skills with technology use and their confidence in the students' ability to successfully complete a college program. Question 13 asked the instructors to rank in order of importance, from their perception, reasons students are dropping out of college. The responses to the instructor survey provided additional qualitative data for the study. Similar to the student survey, some nominal data were transformed into ordinal data for SPSS analysis.

Interview Questions

There were five open-ended questions (Appendix D) for the personal student interview sessions. Based on the flow of the discussion for each main question, participants were asked for clarification and to provide details and examples. There were three additional questions on the student follow-up survey (Appendix E).

Some questions on the student and instructor surveys allowed analysis using a quantitative research methodology comparing means, frequency distributions and percentages as well as ANOVA, while analysis of other survey questions applied qualitative research methodology. Comparison of means on questions about students' perceptions of interaction with instructors and instructor accessibility allowed the researcher to quantify any differences between students who are successfully pursuing their degrees and students who are at risk or struggling. Frequency distributions provided data analysis on the number of students enrolled in courses taught in large and small classroom environments as well as the frequency of personal interaction with the instructor. Percentage results provided analysis of student demographics. The researcher used SPSS version 16.0 as a tool to run the statistical tests for analysis.

PROCEDURES

The researcher used qualitative research methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) for the in-depth personal student interviews to gather information on students' perceptions of their college experiences and academic progress. The researcher was able to do a substantial amount of data gathering by audio taping interviews with student participants. Planned interview questions focused on assessment of students' perception of factors contributing to academic success, identification of obstacles and deterrents to college retention and engagement and personal interaction with instructors.

Based on responses to the planned interview questions, the interviewer responded with appropriate follow-on questions facilitating the in-depth interview outcome. Personal student interviews were conducted via telephone conference at prearranged times convenient

for participants. Student participants were provided planned guiding questions in advance of scheduled interviews to allow time for reflection.

Data from interviews and observations were classified using the categorical aggregation approach (Creswell, 1998). Constant comparative analysis occurred throughout data collection as the researcher attempted to identify emerging themes (Merriam, 1988). An organized documentation system developed by the researcher and the use of member checks helped establish the validity of the research findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used SPSS Version 16 for quantitative analysis of responses to the survey instruments. By assigning numeric values to multiple choice answers the researcher was able to perform one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), establish frequency distributions and determine descriptives for the collected data. The purpose of ANOVA was to determine whether one or more independent variables influenced one or more dependent variables in a predicted manner. Frequency distributions provided in the depth analysis of both student and instructor sample populations required by the researcher to determine if the samples were representative of the larger population of interest.

This was of special concern for the student sample since the researcher was particularly interested in college students falling in a specific age range identifying them as Gen Y adolescents.

LIMITATIONS

Although there was a purposeful selection of this setting for field work because the researcher feels the student and instructor participants represented a typical large

metropolitan college student/instructor population, certain limitations to the study are recognized. Due to the large population of Hispanics in the San Diego metropolitan area, the student population may have a higher percentage of Hispanic students than the metropolitan area of Washington, D.C. where the student population may have a higher percentage of African American students than San Diego. These skewed ethnic student populations will differ geographically throughout the United States. Additionally, the sample size is limited and participants may have had some degree of volunteer bias based on their willingness to participate in scientific research. This willingness to participate in scientific research may be an indication that they are more academically inclined.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter describes results and findings from data gathered through a series of surveys and personal interviews. The participant population was drawn from two local community colleges and a large metropolitan state university. Participants included both instructors and students from these institutions. The purpose of the study was to identify factors contributing to college student success and retention rates. The study was designed to examine the question of college student retention from two perspectives: instructors and students.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviations for the dependent variables were used. Separate analyses of variance were conducted to determine the significance of the study variables in relation to each other.

INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANTS

The sample population of instructors consisted of 27 participants. Frequency distributions were used to define the sample. Nineteen instructors were teaching full time at a community college, two were teaching part time at a 4-year institution and the remaining six taught part time at local community colleges. Eight instructors had 20 or more years of teaching experience at the college level and only three had less than 5 years of experience. Thirty percent had online teaching experience with either fully online courses or hybrid courses where some class sessions meet in a traditional classroom environment on campus

and others are online synchronous or asynchronous sessions. Despite the fact that 16 instructors, almost 60%, professed to having personal interaction with their students at least several times weekly, only 6 indicated their students knew them well enough to ask them for advice. Twenty-two of the instructors indicated they knew most of their students by name.

INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTIONS

More than one-third, 37%, of the instructors did not believe their students would complete an Associates Degree and almost half, 49%, doubted their students' ability to continue on and complete a Bachelor's Degree. Two-thirds of the instructor participants believed the majority of their students, more than 75%, possessed the technical expertise required for today's college students.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine the relationship between the instructors' institution and their perceptions of how well their students knew them (Table 1). Where the independent variable was instructors' institution and the dependent variable was how well students knew them, the results of the ANOVA were significant.

Table 1. Institution and Instructor/Student Relationship

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups	3.143	4	.786	3.129	.035
Within Groups	5.524	22	.251		
Total	8.667	26			

Additional one-way analysis of variance on other possible relationships indicated no significance. Of special note in this study is the lack of significance found when a one-way

analysis of variance was conducted to determine a possible relationship between number of years teaching and the frequency the instructor used technology in the classroom (Table 2). Where the independent variable was number of years teaching and the dependent variable was frequency of technology use in the classroom, the results of the ANOVA were not significant. This outcome, based on the research participant population, is at odds with the results of the study conducted by Senjo, Hass, and Bouley (2007).

Table 2. Frequency of Technology Use in Classrooms

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups	5.603	6	.934	.365	.898
Within Groups	47.357	18	2.631		
Total	52.960	24			

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What factors influence college retention from the instructor's perspective?

Results of the survey question asking instructors to rank, in order of importance, a list of potential reasons students fail to complete a college degree provided a synopsis of instructors' perceptions on significant factors affecting college retention. Thirteen participating instructors, almost 50%, ranked students' personal motivation as the number one reason students drop out of college (Table 3). Financial difficulties (Table 4) and family responsibilities (Table 5) were ranked second and third, respectively.

Table 3. Personal Motivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	13	48.1	48.1	48.1
	2	4	14.8	14.8	63.0
	3	4	14.8	14.8	77.8
	4	5	18.5	18.5	96.3
	5	1	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Financial Difficulties

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	25.9	25.9	25.9
	2	6	22.2	22.2	48.1
	3	6	22.2	22.2	70.4
	4	5	18.5	18.5	88.9
	5	1	3.7	3.7	92.6
	7	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Family Responsibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	18.5	18.5	18.5
	2	7	25.9	25.9	44.4
	3	3	11.1	11.1	55.6
	4	8	29.6	29.6	85.2
	5	1	3.7	3.7	88.9
	7	1	3.7	3.7	92.6
	8	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

The sample population of students consisted of 75 participants. Frequency distributions were used to define the sample based on responses to Part I of the survey. Sixty-three students, 84%, were full time students enrolled in three or more classes. Fifty-three students attended the 4-year institution and 22 attended local community colleges (Figure 6). Most students attended classes with enrollment of 50 or less (Figure 7). All but 13 students anticipated graduating within the next 5 years (Figure 8). Almost two-thirds of the participants were employed at least part time. Twenty percent had full time employment—working between 30 and 40 hours a week (Table 6, p. 48).

Figure 6. Current enrollment status.

Figure 7. Class size.

Figure 8. Degree completion date.

Table 6. Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30-40 hours/week	15	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Part time < 30 hours/week	34	45.3	45.3	65.3
	Not working	26	34.7	34.7	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Part II of the initial student survey asked participants to assign a ranking on a scale of 1 to 9, from most important to least important, to a list of commonly identified values. Fifty-seven of the respondents rated family as first or second in importance (Table 7). Religion and health were rated next in importance while wealth was at the bottom of the scale in importance indicating this sample of the Gen Y population values wealth far less than the respondents in the 2005 annual survey of college freshmen by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles. The data from that survey show that money is much more on their minds than in the past. The percentage who say it is “essential” or “very important” to be “very well off financially” grew from 41.9% in 1967 to 74.5% in 2005.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Results of the student survey analysis indicated students’ perceptions on instructor accessibility, interest and mentorship. Although 19 participants attended classes in very large classroom environments of more than 150 students, all but one student felt their instructor was accessible. Almost 70% of those surveyed said at least one adult at their institution was interested in their success and could give them personal advice.

Table 7. Family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	38	50.7	53.5	53.5
	2	19	25.3	26.8	80.3
	3	3	4.0	4.2	84.5
	4	4	5.3	5.6	90.1
	7	2	2.7	2.8	93.0
	9	1	1.3	1.4	94.4
	10	4	5.3	5.6	100.0
	Total	71	94.7	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.3		
Total		76	100.0		

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine the relationship between the students' class size and their perceptions that at least one adult at their institution was interested in their success (Table 8). Where the independent variable was class size and the dependent variable was adult interest, the results of the ANOVA was significant.

Table 8. Student and Adult Interest in Success

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups	2.254	4	.563	2.880	.029
Within Groups	13.693	70	.196		
Total	15.947	74			

Additional significance was identified when conducting ANOVA to determine a relationship between the time of day students attended class, the independent variable, and their perception that a least one adult at their institution could give them personal advice, the dependent variable (Table 9).

Table 9. Student and Personal Advice

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between Groups	2.928	2	1.464	7.672	.001
Within Groups	13.739	72	.191		
Total	16.667	74			

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine possible relationships between the students' current enrollment status, employment status, when they attended classes and their expected degree completion date (Table 10). Where the independent variable current enrollment status and the dependent variables were employment status, time of class attendance and degree completion date. The ANOVA was significant for the relationship between the students' current enrollment status (4-year versus community college and full-time versus part-time) and expected degree completion date.

Table 10. Factors Relative to Completion

		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Employment status	Between Groups	1.797	3	.599	1.131	.342
	Within Groups	37.590	71	.529		
	Total	39.387	74			
Attend Class	Between Groups	2.855	3	.952	.996	.400
	Within Groups	67.812	71	.955		
	Total	70.667	74			
Degree Completion Date	Between Groups	50.986	3	16.995	5.177	.001
	Within Groups	202.987	69	2.942		
	Total	253.973	72			

Further one-way analysis of variance on other possible relationships indicated no significance.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What factors influence college retention from the student's perspective?

Results of the survey question asking students to rank, in order of importance, a list of potential reasons students fail to complete a college degree provided a synopsis of students' perceptions on significant factors affecting college retention. This question was included in the follow-up student survey conducted in the fall 2008. Fourteen participants responded to the follow-up survey; one did not provide an answer to this question. According to the respondents, the most frequent factor cited as contributing to other students' failure to complete a degree was financial difficulty. Seven of the 13 students who responded felt financial difficulties were the reasons other students were dropping out. When the students were asked to rank in order of importance a list of potential factors contributing to their success as a student, the majority cited personal motivation as the most important factor. All of the 14 participants responded to this question and more than 70% identified personal motivation as the number one contributor to their success (Table 11).

Table 11. Personal Motivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	10	71.4	71.4	71.4
	2	3	21.4	21.4	92.9
	3	1	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Data gathered during the five personal student interviews identified parental support as the main factor influencing continued success. All five interviewees recognized the support and encouragement of their parents as the main motivation to continue pursuit of a college degree. Four of the respondents were the first family member to pursue a college degree. These students expressed the ongoing difficulties they face dealing with the administrative details of college attendance: registering for classes, choosing the right courses to complete their plan of study and balancing work schedules and availability of the classes they need. All four indicated access to an adult mentor at their institution would help overcome some of these difficulties.

All five respondents felt involvement in a learning community would contribute to their continuing success. The first time college goers, in particular, indicated that involvement in a learning community would be especially helpful.

One of the interviewees discussed her decision to leave a 4-year institution in favor of a local community college because she felt alienated and was “unable to develop a level of trust with people—which would have made it easier.” Another respondent said that she felt “overwhelmed” in the very large classes. “I felt like just a number not an individual.”

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Does participation in a small learning community influence college retention?

The final question on the follow up survey gave students a brief description of a community of learning and asked the following question: “In your opinion as a student, based on the description, do you agree that being part of a learning community would improve the college retention rates?” Students were asked to respond in a Likert-type scale of 5-point

classification from a high of “Strongly Agree” to a low of “Strongly Disagree.” Answers were assigned a value from 1 to 5 with 1 representing the highest (“Strongly Agree”) and 5 representing the lowest (“Strongly Disagree”). Seventy-nine percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that participating in a learning community would improve college retention rates (Table 12). Complete results of frequency analysis are found in Appendix F.

Table 12. Learning Community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	6	42.9	42.9	42.9
	Agree	5	35.7	35.7	78.6
	Neutral	3	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

CONCLUSIONS

Both instructors and students perceive personal motivation as the most important factor influencing student success and retention. Additionally, student responses indicate strong belief that interactive communities of learning within the institution would prove beneficial to student involvement and inclusion. Indications are, for most students, the journey to degree completion would be much easier with increased student-to-instructor and student-to-student interaction.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The changing demographics of the United States have caused a significant change in the demographics of the current population of students enrolled in classes at many of our colleges and universities. The population of adolescents from which the current enrollment is drawn is unique. They are known as “Generation Y”—born into the world of video games, cell phones and hi-tech gadgetry. It has been a decade since the first of their generation entered our campuses, and many educators are coming to the realization that traditional programs of higher education are not working for these students. More and more students come from low-income environments and are the first in their families to attend college. While an increasing number of financial aid programs have helped to eliminate affordability as an obstacle to higher education, the lack of cultural capital is a contributing factor to attrition rates.

At a time when the demand for qualified college graduates is on the rise the graduation rate at many of our colleges and universities is decreasing. The declining number of college graduates represents a huge national problem. As other national economies mature and their college graduation rates increase, the external pressure on the U.S. job market increases. Add this to the current economic crisis and it is evident educators need to implement change.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify factors contributing to student success and college retention from two perspectives—instructors and students. Based on a review of the current literature in higher education, different approaches to student retention in the past have been geared to the traditional student. The current population of college students is becoming less and less traditional. Considering the perceptions from the viewpoints of the key players, the students and their instructors, should help establish a consensus concerning the obstacles facing this new generation of college students and provide guidelines for new educational programs designed to meet their needs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study results are based on a series of surveys completed by instructors and students in order to achieve a more global view.

Instructor Perspective

What factors influence college retention from the instructor's perspective?

Although some studies indicate lack of experience using technology is an issue in college student success, the instructor participants in this study did not believe it was an issue for their students. From the instructors' point of view, lack of personal motivation on the students' part has the greatest impact on their ability to succeed.

Although only one of the instructors surveyed identified academic ability as the main factor contributing to student attrition, more than one-third, 37%, of the instructors did not believe their students would complete an Associates Degree and almost half, 49%, doubted their students' ability to continue on and complete a Bachelor's Degree. Based on the review

of the current literature in higher education, the instructor's belief in a student's ability to succeed academically significantly influences the student's belief in his ability to successfully perform academic tasks (Alfassi, 2003; Anderman et al., 2005; Bandura, 1995; Margolis & McCabe, 2004; Parjares, 2000; Urdan, 1999; Urdan & Pajares, 2004; Wentzel & Battle, 2001).

Unexpected Results

Question #15 on the instructor survey asks, "How often do you incorporate technology into your curriculum?" Of the 25 participants who answered this question, 18 answered "every class session." There were 12 instructors with more than 10 years teaching experience. Nine of these instructors indicated they used technology every class session. Of the three who answered infrequently, one taught classes in dance and one taught classes in body building, leaving just one instructor who taught a more traditional text book based course. Of the seven instructors with 10 or less years teaching experience, two indicated infrequent use of technology. One of these instructors taught automotive classes, a more "hands on" and less traditional form of class. Five of the instructors taught online or hybrid classes. Three of these instructors had more than 10 years teaching experience—in fact, two of them had 20 or more years of teaching experience. This outcome, based on the current survey population, does not support the results of the studies conducted by Senjo et al. (2007) and Jankowska (2004) which indicated that instructors with more than 10 years teaching experience were less likely to incorporate technology into their curriculum than instructors with less than 10 years teaching experience.

Student Perspective

What factors influence college retention from the student's perspective?

Does participation in a small learning community influence college retention?

Fourteen students completed the follow-up survey in the fall of 2008. The survey was a duplicate of the survey distributed in the spring 2008 with three additional questions (Appendix E):

From your viewpoint as a student: Assign a number from 1 to 8 (1 is most important and 8 is least important) reasons students are dropping out of college.

From your viewpoint as a student: Assign a number from 1 to 8 (1 is most important and 8 is least important) factors that have contributed to your success as a student.

In your opinion as a student, based on the description below, do you agree that being part of a "learning community" would improve the college retention rates?

Some institutions are developing small communities of learning where students enroll together in several classes that are tied together by a unifying theme rather than enroll in separate stand alone classes. Students in these communities of learning are in class together for 11 to 18 hours a week. In addition to sharing the curriculum these students are required to share the experience of learning. They participate in cooperative learning activities that call for them to be interdependent learners - (e.g., the learning of the group depends on the learning of each member of the group). In this way, students experience a form of interdisciplinary learning that requires active involvement with their peers. (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, n.p.)

These three questions are key to the study. Student responses to reasons causing other students to leave college before completing a degree differed from factors influencing their own retention. Financial difficulty was named as the number one reason fellow students were dropping out followed by personal motivation ranking second. However, student responses to the question identifying factors contributing to their personal academic success identified personal motivation as the number one factor. Only one student selected financial support as

the main factor contributing to her success. Of the 14 respondents, 50% indicated academic ability was ranked either second or third in importance to their current success. Of particular interest is the almost unanimous agreement on the benefits of a learning community to promote student retention from the perspective of the 14 respondents to the follow-up survey and the five students who participated in the personal interviews.

Unexpected Results

For this student sample population, wealth was at the bottom of the scale in importance, indicating that these Gen Y students value wealth far less than the respondents to the 2005 annual survey of college freshmen by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles. These students consider family and religion far more important than wealth. Although ethnic background was not a question on the surveys, based on the geographical location of the research, an assumption could be that many of these respondents have Hispanic origins where family and religion are highly regarded.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many concerned educators agree with U.S. Department of Education, Secretary Spellings' (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) belief that higher educational institutions should be less exclusive and more inclusive in support of the demographical change in the U.S. population. Two-thirds of the Gen-Y generation population is not Caucasian (Lower, 2008). For many, English is a second language. Tinto's "Theory of Student Departure" states that incoming college students arrive with specific intentions concerning college attendance and future goals (Tinto, 1987). These students are equipped with personal, family and academic skills, which help them adjust to college life. This is frequently not the norm for the

increasing population of first time college goers. Unfortunately, too many low-income students enter college lacking the cultural capital required for successful assimilation into college life. They begin their college careers lacking in the academic and social skills possessed by their more affluent peers and are less likely to complete their degree programs (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Some institutions think the problem can be solved with adding a course, such as Freshman Seminar. While these courses provide some initial support, they do very little to reshape the current educational experience of first semester freshmen. If U.S. colleges and universities want to improve retention rates they must consider the make up of the student population currently sitting in their classrooms and design academic programs to meet their needs.

DESIGNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS THAT WORK— CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITIES

It has been more than 10 years since Tinto (1997a) expressed his belief that the classroom should be the centerpiece to promote student persistence. This concept is especially important for students who commute to college, and who tend to have multiple obligations outside the classroom. For commuter students, the classroom may be the only place where students and faculty meet. In 2007, Engstrom and Tinto reiterated this belief and stressed its importance to the academic success of low-income students. Altering the classroom experience to develop learning communities and collaborative learning strategies is imperative to the integration of these students. Learning communities and collaborative learning strategies require greater investment in the learning process for both students and instructors. The more students invest and get involved in learning, the more they learn—the greater the student involvement; the greater likelihood they will persist (Tinto, 1997a).

Learning community students described the environment as a safe place to learn where they were free to express themselves and learn from each other. Attending classes in the same room with many of the same students increased students' comfort level. This was especially important for students whose first language was not English. Many of these students were anxious and afraid to speak out in class because they doubted their language proficiency. Students felt validated as learners with an increased confidence in their ability to succeed. This validation as a learner made them more committed and motivated to continue their studies.

Nearly 20 years of research has revealed that self-efficacy beliefs of teachers as well as students are strong determinants and predictors of academic success. The way students perform is greatly influenced by how well they think they can perform and by how well their teachers think they can perform. This is especially true for adolescent learners (Pajares, 2000). Self-efficacy is a key belief underlying adolescents' motivation to act intentionally. Pajares (2000) tells us that it is commonly accepted that students' beliefs about their academic ability are vital forces to their success or failure in school. The collaborative environment integral to a learning community promotes academic self-efficacy.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS REQUIRE INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT

If students feel programs established for them are marginal to the institution, and they don't "fit" into the mainstream, their commitment to the institution may be lessened and make them more likely to leave (Ruddock et al., 1999). In the more than 20 years since the development of Astin's theory (1984, 1985), there has been a growing demographic diversity in the undergraduate student body in American colleges and universities. One result of this

increased diversity is an every increasing number of “first-generation” college students who come from families where neither parent has any experience or ties to an institution of higher learning and commitment to a particular institution relies heavily on their personal perceptions of belonging.

Pascarella’s “General Model for Assessing Change” (1985) considers the impacts to student success of a supportive institutional environment, constructive interaction with faculty, staff and other students and the student’s effort to learn. Tinto (2000b) asserts the benefits of this model of education where classrooms have been reorganized to promote shared, collaborative learning environments. Napoli and Wortman (1998) identify the principal determinants of educational goals and institutional commitment as student characteristics and interactions with social and academic environments. Taken together, these researchers agree both social and academic factors influence retention.

The educational body of literature validates the concepts of collaborative learning environments and learning communities as beneficial to support student retention, particularly for the non-traditional college student (Lau, 2003; Tinto, 2008). Unfortunately, without greater institutional support and recognition for these new modes of instructional design, students will continue to feel marginalized.

SUMMARY

It has been more than two decades since educators like Tinto, Pascarella and Astin began addressing the issues of student retention in an effort to help institutions and instructors of post secondary education initiate changes in policy geared to correct the problem. It has been more than a decade since they expanded their research to address the

particular issues for the non-traditional students, some of whom are first time college goers. Tinto, for one, began to look at specific issues facing Mexican Americans and other ethnic ESL student populations. Tinto and Goodsell-Love's (1993) study, suggests that the issues of social membership, particularly for young students, are more important than academic membership. The results of their study supported some basic tenets of the collaborative pedagogy surrounding learning communities. First, collaborative or shared learning enables students to develop a support network of their peers which helps them integrate into the larger academic life of the institution. Second, collaborative learning brings a richness of perspectives to the learning process. Integrating the students' experiences into the collaborative learning atmosphere expands and enriches the learning beyond that of a single faculty member. Third, students participating in a learning community perceived their learning to be richer, and their overall GPAs were higher. Finally, the learning community environment provided the conduit for the nonresidential students to become involved despite their numerous obligations outside of college (Tinto & Goodsell-Love, 1993).

As the U.S. prepares to meet the challenges of a possibly unprecedented economic crisis, educators must address the educational crisis influencing college retention and graduation rates. As more of the baby boomers move into retirement, more college graduates are needed to fill the positions they leave behind. Tinto (2005) sums it up nicely: "We need a national effort that provides community colleges and the faculty who teach students in those colleges with the resources they need to address the substantial learning needs of students and to enable faculty to acquire the skills to help their students learn in the settings in which they meet" (p. 115).

This study indicates that instructors don't doubt their students' ability to learn, but they do doubt their motivation to learn and their ability to stay the course and graduate. The academic body of knowledge indicates that a student's motivation to learn is directly influenced by his involvement in the learning process and integration into the academic environment. Learning communities within larger institutions can provide the opportunities for involvement and integration into campus life.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High schools need to work more closely with the local community colleges and universities to develop curriculum supporting the development of basic skills in English and Math required to pass entrance competency exams. Add-on classes during the first year of college often discourage students by adding additional time to degree completion date expectations (Tinto, 2008). If passing these competency exams were a prerequisite for high school graduation, students would avoid the perception of taking a step backward when they need to see forward momentum towards degree attainment. A freshman in a traditional 4-year degree program is looking at completing a minimum of 120 credit hours in order to graduate. If three of four courses in their first semester are "remedial," they end the first semester with only 3 credit hours towards degree completion (Capaldi et al., 2006). This could discourage even the most dedicated student.

In California, high school students, 16 and older, have the opportunity to enroll in Regional Occupational Program (ROP) courses which prepare them for success in continuing education and a changing workplace. Some ROP classes provide college credit or meet the University of California A-G college preparation requirements. Students receive a certificate

of completion when they meet the class core requirements. College course credits can be transferred to the student's college transcript. Students taking these courses can earn a full semester's worth of college credit and satisfy college preparation requirements. Through these ROP courses, students have the opportunity to identify potential majors and school-to-career options and have the added benefit of getting a jump start to completing the 120 credit hour requirement to complete a degree (California Regional Occupational Program, 2008). High schools taking advantage of ROP programs provide students opportunities to get ahead and improve their chances of completing a degree.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Even at the best public institutions, only about 42% of students complete a degree within 4 years. At 6 years the graduation rate for these same institutions increases to 71%. This indicates that almost 30% of students who met the requirements and were accepted into these competitive institutions failed to complete a degree program. Many of these institutions have very selective acceptance criteria, granting admission to a very small percentage of applicants. Once an institution deems an applicant "qualified," there should be some process of ownership in the student's success.

Initiation of "tracking" programs similar to the program adopted at the University of Florida (UF), focuses the institution on student success and degree completion where students' needs come first. UF improved their 4-year graduation rates from 43% to 51% and their 6-year graduation rates from 70% to 76% when they fully implemented the tracking program. In addition, the add-drops were significantly reduced providing better planning for the administration. To achieve such results the administration needed complete cooperation

of the faculty to be available to teach critical courses when the students needed them in their program. Instructors agreed to arrange their schedules to meet the needs of the students not their own preferences (Tinto, 2006). This kind of institutional focus can ensure improved retention rates.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An investigative study by Ruddock et al. (1999) isolated academic performance as a predictor of college retention. The study considered the perspective of “Stayers” and “Leavers” and their reasons for remaining in or departing from a particular institution. The study surveyed 747 students who returned for the next fall semester and 746 students who dropped out. Almost half of the students who dropped out were having academic difficulty, but the academic difficulty did not seem to be related to a lack of academic preparedness. What kind of programs are needed to help students who are having academic difficulty?

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- Identify early in the semester students having academic difficulty
- Provide training for faculty, TAs , academic advisors, etc., to spot and intervene on behalf of the students
- Provide programs early in the semester to help students who appear to be having academic difficulty
- Get the parents involved—in many cases they provide the main support and encouragement for their children

Recommendations for Researchers:

- Identify institutions with successful programs that have demonstrated improved retention rates
- Study the faculty at these institutions in terms of attitudes/cultures toward grading philosophy on gatekeeper courses, etc. (Ruddock et al., 1999).

- Identify relationships between faculty attitudes and grading philosophies and improved retention rates
- Study administrators at institutions with successful retention programs to determine relationships between attitudes/cultures and improved retention rates

What kinds of programs are needed to help educate college faculty in the development of collaborative learning environments to enrich the learning experience for today's diverse student population?

Faculty need guidance in understanding the Millennial Generation. These students need someone to provide structure, direction and praise much more than previous generations (Crone & MacKay, 2007). Getting these students engaged in the learning process and understanding the commitment required to be successful. According to McGlynn (2008), instructors must create a learner-centered classroom. This requires a shift from seeing the classroom as teacher-driven and content-centered to seeing the classroom as student-centered and process-driven (McGlynn, 2008).

Recommendations for Practitioners:

Provide faculty with training in implementing:

- Coordinated Studies Programs which link series of courses having a main theme
- Supportive Peer Groups for students
- Shared Learning experiences

Can programs be designed to accommodate the social and cultural differences and commonalities of multiple ethnicities?

Recommendations for Researchers:

- Identify existing programs that accommodate social and cultural differences within the classroom. From the students' perceptions, are these programs useful in

improving retention rates? From the instructor's perception, are these programs successful?

Learning Centers have been proven to help students from disadvantaged socioeconomic and educational backgrounds adjust to the educational environment and achieve their full potential. Frequently, these students are juggling the responsibilities of work, family and school. Some learning centers provide resources to help these students deal with competing demands (Lau, 2003).

Social and Professional Organizations—extracurricular activities and peer-group interactions can help the younger students integrate smoothly into the new learning environment. It is important for administrators to focus on development and implementation of academic and social programs promoting students' educational growth (Lau, 2003).

What measurements are being used to assess college retention rates and do they really reflect reality?

Some literature suggests there is a flaw in the method the federal government uses to assess graduations rates. The current reporting process takes the number of full-time students (12 hours or more per semester) who begin college in one fall semester and calculates the graduation rate as a percentage of those students who graduate 4 or 6 years later. It measures only those students who begin in the fall, excluding students who start in summer or spring semesters. It does not account for any of the part-time students taking less than 12 units per semester. Transfer students are completely misrepresented. Students who enroll in one institution as freshmen in the fall, but transfer to another institution to complete their degree, are counted as drop outs from the first institution and not counted at all in the graduation rates for the institution from which they actually earn a degree. In addition, full-time students

under the minimum federal definition would require 10 semesters not 8 to complete a 120-hour program (Capaldi et al., 2006). Percentages for Associates Degrees from community colleges use the same process but have a completion deadline of 3 years or less (New England Board of Higher Education, 2003).

Recommendations for Practitioners:

Institutions need to develop more accurate methods of tracking successful students

Degree seeking students need “unique identifiers” to account for their successes in degree completion, regardless of which institution awards their degree.

Recommendation for Researchers:

More research is needed to determine methods to develop “unique identifiers” for the current student population allowing degree seeking students to be differentiated from the other student population.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY AND COLLEGE STATUS

Student Survey and College Status

This survey is part of my dissertation on improving college retention and students' perceptions of high school and college experiences. To help describe your student/instructor interaction this survey investigates your personal and academic experience to date. Please complete all sections. Your name and the school names will not be used in the actual public or private reports. After analyzing the responses, you may be chosen for an optional personal interview and optional follow-up survey. Thank you for your time!

Part I

1. What year did you graduate from high school?

2005

2006

2007

2008

Prior to 2005 please indicate year _____.

2. Were you an participant of a small learning community while attending high school?

Yes

No

3. Following your graduation from high school did you enroll and begin classes in a higher education program within a year?

Yes

No

4. Are you currently enrolled at a college or university?

Yes

No

5. If your answer to # 4 is "Yes", when do you plan to complete your degree? Fill in year _____

6. If your answer to # 4 is "No", why did you stop attending classes
(explain) _____

7. Do you feel that at least one adult at your college or university knows you well?

Yes

No

8. Do you feel that at least one adult at your college or university is interested in your success?

Yes

No

9. Do you feel that at least one adult at your college or university can give you advice and help with personal problems?

Yes

No

10. I am currently

A full time student at a four year college/university full time - 3 or more courses

A full time student at a Community College - 3 or more courses

A part time student at a four year college/university – less than 3 courses

A part time student at a Community College – less than 3 courses

Attending a trade school – explain _____

Not attending any form of higher education

11. I attend classes

During the day

During the night

Both

12. What do you consider the best college course you have taken to date?– Name of course _____

13. Explain what you liked best about the course named above _____

14. Approximately how many other students attended class with you? _____

15. Do you feel that the instructor was accessible? – Explain why or why not _____

16. Do you feel that the instructor was interested in how well you were doing in this course? – Explain why or why not _____

17. I am currently

Working full time 30-40 hours/week.

Working part time less than 30 hrs/week

Not working at this time

18. List your other responsibilities and how much of your time they require _____

19. Describe your typical day while you were attending high school _____

20. Describe your current typical day while attending college or university _____

Part II

List your travel experiences prior to attending your college or university - How frequently did you travel outside of San Diego? _____

What cities, states or countries did you visit? _____

How long did you stay? _____

Assign a number from 1 to 10 (1 is the most important and 10 is the least important). Use each number only once.

- _____ Career
- _____ Education
- _____ Family
- _____ Freedom
- _____ Friends
- _____ Health
- _____ Religion
- _____ Safety
- _____ Travel
- _____ Wealth

APPENDIX B

GATES FORMATIVE FEEDBACK STUDY

Gates Formative Feedback Study

This survey is part of my dissertation on improving college retention and students' perceptions of high school and college experiences. To help describe your high school learning environment this survey investigates your personal and academic high school experience. Please complete all sections. Your name and the school names will not be used in the actual public or private reports. After analyzing the responses, you may be chosen for an optional personal interview and optional follow-up survey. Thank you for your time!

I. Academic Rigor and Engagement:

My high school teachers believed every student can learn.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

My high school teachers had high expectations for me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The assignments I was given in high school were challenging.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The assignments I was given in high school were interesting.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

My classes in high school prepared me for college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

My classes in high school prepared me for a good career.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Some of the classes I took in high school taught me something about the theme of my school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

In high school, I was able to **show** what I'd learned - for example through projects, presentations, and etc. and not just through paper and pencil tests.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

II. Personalization:

9. There was at least one adult at my high school whom I felt I could trust.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. Adults at my high school wanted the best for me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. When I had a problem with school or a personal problem, there was at least one adult at my high school with whom I could talk about my problem.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. The teachers at my high school knew my strengths and weaknesses as a student.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. Teachers at my high school took the time to help me outside of class.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. There was at least one adult at my high school who said positive and encouraging things to me **frequently**.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. Adults at my high school listened to what students had to say.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

16. At least once a year someone from my high school called or spoke in person to a member of my family about how I was doing in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. Discipline was not a problem at my high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

18. My high school principal spoke to me at least once a year.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I. Advisory:

1. The advisory class at my high school made it easier for me to keep up in my classes.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. My advisory teacher in high school was someone I could go to for help.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The advisory class in high school taught me important lessons that I could use later in life.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I learned a lot about myself and other students through my high school's advisory class.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTOR SURVEY AND STUDENT INTERACTION

Instructor Survey and Student Interaction

This survey is part of my dissertation on improving college retention. To help describe your college environment, this survey investigates your interaction with students and your perception of their ability to successfully complete a college degree. Please complete all sections. Your name, the institution's name, and any student names will not be used in the actual public or private reports. Thank you for your time!

1. How long have you been an instructor? _____.
Name of your current institution _____.

2. I am currently:

A full time instructor at a four year college/university full time - 4 or more courses

A full time instructor at a Community College - 4 or more courses

A part time instructor at a four year college/university – less than 4 courses

A part time instructor at a Community College – less than 4 courses

3. I teach on campus classes

During the day

During the night

Both

4. I teach online classes

During the day

During the night

Both

5. Please list the names of the courses you teach and the number of students in each class:

Name of on campus courses

Number of students

Name of online courses

Number of students

6. Do you feel that you know most of your students by name? _____.

7. What percentage of your students do you feel you know well and would consider you someone they would go to for advice and help with personal problems? _____.

8. How frequently do you have personal interactions (either by email, phone or in person) with these students:

Daily
 Several times a week
 Weekly
 2 or 3 times a month
 1 to 3 times a semester
 Other

9. What percent of your students do you feel will successfully complete:

4 year degree _____
 Associates degree _____

10. Approximately how many hours a week are you available to your students

In Person _____
 By Phone _____
 By email _____

11. How often do you incorporate the use of technology into your curriculum?

Daily
 Several times a week
 Weekly
 2 or 3 times a month
 1 to 3 times a semester
 Other

12. What percentage of your students do you consider have the skills and expertise to use technology?

13 . From your viewpoint as an instructor

Assign a number from 1 to 8 (1 is the most important and 8 is the least important) Reasons students are dropping out of college:

_____ Financial Difficulties
 _____ Family responsibilities
 _____ Personal Motivation
 _____ Academic Ability
 _____ Lack of technological expertise
 _____ Peer Pressure
 _____ Lack of Mentorship/Adult support
 _____ Other _____

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL STUDENT INTERVIEWS

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Personal Student Interviews Guiding Questions

What are the main factors that have contributed to your success in pursuing your college degree?

What are the main obstacles or challenges that you have faced in pursuit of your college degree?

Do you have an adult mentor either at home or at your school who can give you good advice on successful completion of your college degree?

From your perspective, is it helpful to have an adult mentor to help you as you pursue your college degree?

From your perspective, do you think it would be beneficial to have a small learning community of your fellow students to support each other as you pursue your degree?

APPENDIX E

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

STUDENT SURVEY

Additional Questions for Follow-Up Student Survey

From your viewpoint as a student :

Assign a number from 1 to 8 (1 is the most important and 8 is the least important) Reasons students are dropping out of college:

Use each number only once.

- _____ Financial Difficulties
- _____ Family responsibilities
- _____ Personal Motivation
- _____ Academic Ability
- _____ Lack of technological expertise
- _____ Peer Pressure
- _____ Lack of Mentorship/ Adult support
- _____ Other _____

From your viewpoint as a student assign a number from 1 to 8 (1 is the most important and 8 is the least important) Factors that have contributed to your success as a student. Use each number only once.

- _____ Adequate financial support
- _____ Academic Ability
- _____ Personal Motivation
- _____ Parental support
- _____ Expertise with use of technology
- _____ Mentorship and support from an adult other than a parent
- _____ Support from other students and peers
- _____ Other _____

In your opinion as a student, based on the description below, do you agree that being part of a "learning community" would improve the college retention rates?

Strongly Agree _____

Agree _____

Neutral _____

Disagree _____

Strongly Disagree _____

Recent studies have shown that more and more students are dropping out of college during the first two years before completing a degree. Some institutions are developing small communities of learning where students enroll together in several classes that are tied together by a unifying theme rather than enroll in separate stand alone classes. Students in these communities of learning are in class together for 11 to 18 hours a week. In addition to sharing the curriculum these students are required to share the experience of learning. They participate in cooperative learning activities that call for them to be interdependent learners - (e.g. the learning of the group depends on the learning of each member of the group). In this way, students experience a form of interdisciplinary learning that requires active involvement with their peers.

APPENDIX F

FREQUENCY TABLES

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```

Frequencies

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Statistics

	Years Teaching	Institution	Current Status	Teach on Campus	Teach Online	Average Number of students
N Valid	27	27	27	27	27	26
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mean	3.4444	2.2222	2.5185	1.8519	3.5556	3.5385
Median	3.0000	2.0000	2.0000	1.0000	4.0000	3.0000
Mode	2.00 ^a	2.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	3.00
Std. Deviation	1.82574	.57735	.84900	1.02671	.84732	1.17408
Variance	3.333	.333	.721	1.054	.718	1.378
Minimum	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
Maximum	7.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	6.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Statistics

	Know most students by name	Students know you well	Frequency of personal interaction	% of students complete 4 yr	% of students complete 2 yr	Available in person weekly
N Valid	27	27	27	27	27	26
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mean	1.1852	2.4444	2.6296	3.6667	4.1852	3.6538
Median	1.0000	2.0000	2.0000	4.0000	5.0000	3.0000
Mode	1.00	1.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	2.00 ^a
Std. Deviation	.39585	1.39596	1.44510	1.33012	1.33119	1.44062
Variance	.157	1.949	2.088	1.769	1.772	2.075
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
Maximum	2.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Statistics

	Available by phone weekly	Available by email weekly	Frequency Use Tech in class	% of students with Tech expertise	Financial Difficulties	Family Responsibility
N Valid	26	25	25	24	27	27
Missing	1	2	2	3	0	0
Mean	2.9231	4.7200	1.9600	4.7500	2.8148	3.2593
Median	2.5000	5.0000	1.0000	5.0000	3.0000	3.0000
Mode	1.00	6.00	1.00	5.00	1.00	4.00
Std. Deviation	1.74179	1.56844	1.48549	.67566	1.68790	1.99215
Variance	3.034	2.460	2.207	.457	2.849	3.969
Minimum	1.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	6.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Statistics

	Personal Motivation	Academic Ability	Lack of Tech Expertise	Peer Pressure	Lack of Mentorship/Adult Support	Other
N Valid	27	27	27	27	27	27
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.1481	3.7778	6.2593	6.2593	4.5556	6.9259
Median	2.0000	4.0000	7.0000	6.0000	5.0000	8.0000
Mode	1.00	5.00	7.00	6.00 ^a	5.00	8.00
Std. Deviation	1.32153	1.33973	1.25859	1.45688	1.55250	1.99857
Variance	1.746	1.795	1.584	2.123	2.410	3.994
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	8.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Frequency Table

Years Teaching

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 to 4 years	3	11.1	11.1	11.1
5 to 9 years	7	25.9	25.9	37.0
10 to 14 years	7	25.9	25.9	63.0
15 to 19 years	2	7.4	7.4	70.4
20 to 24 years	3	11.1	11.1	81.5
25 to 29 years	3	11.1	11.1	92.6
30 or more years	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Institution

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SDSU	2	7.4	7.4	7.4
Grossmont	17	63.0	63.0	70.4
Cuyamaca	8	29.6	29.6	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Current Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid FT CC 4 or more courses	19	70.4	70.4	70.4
PT 4 Yr less than 4 courses	2	7.4	7.4	77.8
PT CC less than 4 courses	6	22.2	22.2	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Teach on Campus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid During day	15	55.6	55.6	55.6
During night	2	7.4	7.4	63.0
Both	9	33.3	33.3	96.3
Do not teach on campus	1	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Teach Online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	During day	2	7.4	7.4	7.4
	Both	6	22.2	22.2	29.6
	Do not teach online	19	70.4	70.4	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Average Number of students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16 to 25	5	18.5	19.2	19.2
	26 to 40	9	33.3	34.6	53.8
	41 to 65	7	25.9	26.9	80.8
	66 to 100	3	11.1	11.5	92.3
	more than 100	2	7.4	7.7	100.0
	Total	26	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.7		
Total		27	100.0		

Know most students by name

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	22	81.5	81.5	81.5
	no	5	18.5	18.5	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Students know you well

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less Than 10%	10	37.0	37.0	37.0
	10% to 24%	4	14.8	14.8	51.9
	25% to 49%	7	25.9	25.9	77.8
	50% to 74%	3	11.1	11.1	88.9
	75% to 100%	3	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Frequency of personal interaction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	6	22.2	22.2	22.2
	Several times a week	10	37.0	37.0	59.3
	Weekly	4	14.8	14.8	74.1

Frequency of personal interaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2 to 3 times a month	3	11.1	11.1	85.2
1 to 3 times a semester	3	11.1	11.1	96.3
Other	1	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

% of students complete 4 yr

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than 10%	2	7.4	7.4	7.4
10% to 24%	3	11.1	11.1	18.5
25% to 49%	6	22.2	22.2	40.7
50% to 74%	9	33.3	33.3	74.1
75% or greater	5	18.5	18.5	92.6
Don't Know	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

% of students complete 2 yr

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than 10%	1	3.7	3.7	3.7
10% to 24%	3	11.1	11.1	14.8
25% to 49%	3	11.1	11.1	25.9
50% to 74%	6	22.2	22.2	48.1
75% or greater	11	40.7	40.7	88.9
Don't know	3	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Available in person weekly

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 to 5 hours	7	25.9	26.9	26.9
6 to 10 hours	7	25.9	26.9	53.8
11 to 15 hours	4	14.8	15.4	69.2
16 to 20 hours	4	14.8	15.4	84.6
more than 20 hrs	4	14.8	15.4	100.0
Total	26	96.3	100.0	
Missing System	1	3.7		
Total	27	100.0		

Available by phone weekly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 1 hr	7	25.9	26.9	26.9
	1 to 5 hours	6	22.2	23.1	50.0
	6 to 10 hours	4	14.8	15.4	65.4
	11 to 15 hours	3	11.1	11.5	76.9
	16 to 20 hours	3	11.1	11.5	88.5
	more than 20 hrs	3	11.1	11.5	100.0
	Total	26	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.7		
Total		27	100.0		

Available by email weekly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 to 5 hours	4	14.8	16.0	16.0
	6 to 10 hours	3	11.1	12.0	28.0
	11 to 15 hours	1	3.7	4.0	32.0
	16 to 20 hours	5	18.5	20.0	52.0
	more than 20 hrs	12	44.4	48.0	100.0
	Total	25	92.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	7.4		
Total		27	100.0		

Frequency Use Tech in class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	16	59.3	64.0	64.0
	Several times a week	2	7.4	8.0	72.0
	Once a week	2	7.4	8.0	80.0
	Monthly	2	7.4	8.0	88.0
	Infrequently	3	11.1	12.0	100.0
	Total	25	92.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	7.4		
Total		27	100.0		

% of students with Tech expertise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	26% to 50%	2	7.4	8.3	8.3
	51% to 75%	3	11.1	12.5	20.8
	76% to 100%	18	66.7	75.0	95.8

% of students with Tech expertise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Don't know	1	3.7	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	88.9	100.0	
Missing	System	3	11.1		
Total		27	100.0		

Financial Difficulties

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	25.9	25.9	25.9
	2	6	22.2	22.2	48.1
	3	6	22.2	22.2	70.4
	4	5	18.5	18.5	88.9
	5	1	3.7	3.7	92.6
	7	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total		27	100.0	100.0	

Family Responsibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	18.5	18.5	18.5
	2	7	25.9	25.9	44.4
	3	3	11.1	11.1	55.6
	4	8	29.6	29.6	85.2
	5	1	3.7	3.7	88.9
	7	1	3.7	3.7	92.6
	8	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total		27	100.0	100.0	

Personal Motivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	13	48.1	48.1	48.1
	2	4	14.8	14.8	63.0
	3	4	14.8	14.8	77.8
	4	5	18.5	18.5	96.3
	5	1	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total		27	100.0	100.0	

Academic Ability

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	3.7	3.7	3.7
2	4	14.8	14.8	18.5
3	7	25.9	25.9	44.4
4	5	18.5	18.5	63.0
5	8	29.6	29.6	92.6
6	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Lack of Tech Expertise

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	3.7	3.7	3.7
5	3	11.1	11.1	14.8
6	8	29.6	29.6	44.4
7	15	55.6	55.6	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Peer Pressure

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	1	3.7	3.7	3.7
3	1	3.7	3.7	7.4
5	4	14.8	14.8	22.2
6	8	29.6	29.6	51.9
7	8	29.6	29.6	81.5
8	5	18.5	18.5	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Lack of Mentorship/Adult Support

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	4	14.8	14.8	14.8
3	4	14.8	14.8	29.6
4	2	7.4	7.4	37.0
5	9	33.3	33.3	70.4
6	6	22.2	22.2	92.6
7	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	3.7	3.7	3.7
	3	3	11.1	11.1	14.8
	4	1	3.7	3.7	18.5
	6	2	7.4	7.4	25.9
	8	20	74.1	74.1	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

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  /ORDER=ANALYSIS.

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Frequencies

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Statistics

	HS Graduation	Small Learning Community	Enroll Higher Ed within 1 yr	Currently Enrolled	Degree Completion Date	1 Adult knows you well
N Valid	75	74	75	75	73	75
Missing	0	1	0	0	2	0
Mean	3.4933	1.9054	1.1600	1.0267	2.5616	1.4933
Median	5.0000	2.0000	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	1.0000
Mode	5.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.78865	.29465	.36907	.16219	1.87814	.50332
Variance	3.199	.087	.136	.026	3.527	.253
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	6.00	2.00

Statistics

		1 Adult interested in your success	1 Adult can give personal advice	Current Enrollment Status	Attend Class	Class Size	Instructor accessible
N	Valid	75	75	75	75	75	73
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mean		1.3067	1.3333	1.6133	1.9333	2.8133	1.0137
Median		1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	1.0000
Mode		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		.46421	.47458	1.02527	.97722	1.49498	.11704
Variance		.215	.225	1.051	.955	2.235	.014
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		2.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	2.00

Statistics

		Instructor interested	Employment status	Teachers believed students can learn	Teachers had high expectations	Assignments challenging	Assignments interesting
N	Valid	74	75	75	75	75	75
	Missing	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.1419	2.1467	3.5467	3.8800	3.2000	3.1067
Median		1.0000	2.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.0000	3.0000
Mode		1.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
Std. Deviation		.33638	.72956	1.00396	.91474	1.03975	.95257
Variance		.113	.532	1.008	.837	1.081	.907
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		2.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Statistics

		Classes Prepared me for college	Classes prepared me for a Good Career	Classes taught me about school theme	Able to show what I learned not just tests	1 Adult I could trust	Adults wanted best for me
N	Valid	75	75	73	74	74	74
	Missing	0	0	2	1	1	1
Mean		3.0933	2.5067	2.8630	3.5541	4.1622	3.9730
Median		3.0000	2.0000	3.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		1.10494	.96385	1.01810	1.08718	.84443	.82716
Variance		1.221	.929	1.037	1.182	.713	.684
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Statistics

		1 Adult to help with personal problems	Teachers knew my strenghts/wea knesses	Teachers helped outside of class time	1 Adult frequently said positive things	Adults listened to students	Once a year school had contact with family
N	Valid	74	74	73	74	74	73
	Missing	1	1	2	1	1	2
Mean		3.5135	3.5135	3.3836	4.0000	3.5000	2.7260
Median		4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	2.0000
Mode		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	2.00
Std. Deviation		1.14967	1.05003	1.15024	.87586	.93998	1.19327
Variance		1.322	1.103	1.323	.767	.884	1.424
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Statistics

		Disipline was not a problem	Principal spoke to me at least once a year
N	Valid	74	73
	Missing	1	2
Mean		3.2432	2.4110
Median		3.0000	2.0000
Mode		4.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		1.07028	1.45139
Variance		1.146	2.107
Minimum		1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00

Frequency Table

HS Graduation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2005	20	26.7	26.7	26.7
	2006	7	9.3	9.3	36.0
	2007	6	8.0	8.0	44.0
	Prior to 2005	42	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Small Learning Community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	7	9.3	9.5	9.5
	no	67	89.3	90.5	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Enroll Higher Ed within 1 yr

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	63	84.0	84.0	84.0
	no	12	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Currently Enrolled

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	73	97.3	97.3	97.3
	no	2	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Degree Completion Date

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2009	29	38.7	39.7	39.7
	2010	20	26.7	27.4	67.1
	2011	7	9.3	9.6	76.7
	2012	2	2.7	2.7	79.5
	2013	1	1.3	1.4	80.8
	Other	14	18.7	19.2	100.0
	Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.7		
Total		75	100.0		

1 Adult knows you well

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	38	50.7	50.7	50.7
	no	37	49.3	49.3	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

1 Adult interested in your success

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	52	69.3	69.3	69.3
no	23	30.7	30.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

1 Adult can give personal advice

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	50	66.7	66.7	66.7
no	25	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Current Enrollment Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid FT 4 yr	50	66.7	66.7	66.7
FT CC	13	17.3	17.3	84.0
PT 4 yr	3	4.0	4.0	88.0
PT CC	9	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Attend Class

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Day	38	50.7	50.7	50.7
Night/Evening	4	5.3	5.3	56.0
Both	33	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Class Size

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Small 20 or less	17	22.7	22.7	22.7
Small 21 to 35	23	30.7	30.7	53.3
Med 36 to 50	9	12.0	12.0	65.3
Large 51 to 150	9	12.0	12.0	77.3
Very Large more than 150	17	22.7	22.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Instructor accessible

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	72	96.0	98.6	98.6
	no	1	1.3	1.4	100.0
	Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.7		
Total		75	100.0		

Instructor interested

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	62	82.7	83.8	83.8
	1.5	3	4.0	4.1	87.8
	no	9	12.0	12.2	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Employment status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30 to 40 hours per week	15	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Part Time less than 30 hours per week	34	45.3	45.3	65.3
	Not working	26	34.7	34.7	100.0
Total		75	100.0	100.0	.

Teachers believed students can learn

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Disagree	12	16.0	16.0	17.3
	Neutral	20	26.7	26.7	44.0
	Agree	29	38.7	38.7	82.7
	Strongly Agree	13	17.3	17.3	100.0
Total		75	100.0	100.0	

Teachers had high expectations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	4	5.3	5.3	8.0
	Neutral	12	16.0	16.0	24.0

Teachers had high expectations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	40	53.3	53.3	77.3
	Strongly Agree	17	22.7	22.7	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Assignments challenging

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	21	28.0	28.0	30.7
	Neutral	19	25.3	25.3	56.0
	Agree	26	34.7	34.7	90.7
	Strongly Agree	7	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Assignments interesting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	17	22.7	22.7	26.7
	Neutral	28	37.3	37.3	64.0
	Agree	23	30.7	30.7	94.7
	Strongly Agree	4	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Classes Prepared me for college

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	9.3	9.3	9.3
	Disagree	15	20.0	20.0	29.3
	Neutral	23	30.7	30.7	60.0
	Agree	24	32.0	32.0	92.0
	Strongly Agree	6	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Classes prepared me for a Good Career

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Disagree	28	37.3	37.3	52.0
	Neutral	24	32.0	32.0	84.0

Classes prepared me for a Good Career

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	11	14.7	14.7	98.7
Strongly Agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Classes taught me about school theme

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	7	9.3	9.6	9.6
Disagree	19	25.3	26.0	35.6
Neutral	27	36.0	37.0	72.6
Agree	17	22.7	23.3	95.9
Strongly Agree	3	4.0	4.1	100.0
Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing System	2	2.7		
Total	75	100.0		

Able to show what I learned not just tests

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	4	5.3	5.4	5.4
Disagree	11	14.7	14.9	20.3
Neutral	10	13.3	13.5	33.8
Agree	38	50.7	51.4	85.1
Strongly Agree	11	14.7	14.9	100.0
Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.3		
Total	75	100.0		

1 Adult I could trust

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.4	1.4
Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	4.1
Neutral	9	12.0	12.2	16.2
Agree	34	45.3	45.9	62.2
Strongly Agree	28	37.3	37.8	100.0
Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.3		
Total	75	100.0		

Adults wanted best for me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	4.0	4.1	4.1
	Neutral	17	22.7	23.0	27.0
	Agree	33	44.0	44.6	71.6
	Strongly Agree	21	28.0	28.4	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

1 Adult to help with personal problems

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	17	22.7	23.0	25.7
	Neutral	12	16.0	16.2	41.9
	Agree	27	36.0	36.5	78.4
	Strongly Agree	16	21.3	21.6	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Teachers knew my strenghts/weaknesses

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	13	17.3	17.6	20.3
	Neutral	16	21.3	21.6	41.9
	Agree	31	41.3	41.9	83.8
	Strongly Agree	12	16.0	16.2	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Teachers helped outside of class time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	8.0	8.2	8.2
	Disagree	9	12.0	12.3	20.5
	Neutral	21	28.0	28.8	49.3
	Agree	25	33.3	34.2	83.6
	Strongly Agree	12	16.0	16.4	100.0

Teachers helped outside of class time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.7		
Total		75	100.0		

1 Adult frequently said positive things

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	1	1.3	1.4	4.1
	Neutral	13	17.3	17.6	21.6
	Agree	37	49.3	50.0	71.6
	Strongly Agree	21	28.0	28.4	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Adults listened to students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	4.0	4.1	4.1
	Disagree	5	6.7	6.8	10.8
	Neutral	27	36.0	36.5	47.3
	Agree	30	40.0	40.5	87.8
	Strongly Agree	9	12.0	12.2	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Once a year school had contact with family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	13.3	13.7	13.7
	Disagree	28	37.3	38.4	52.1
	Neutral	13	17.3	17.8	69.9
	Agree	16	21.3	21.9	91.8
	Strongly Agree	6	8.0	8.2	100.0
	Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.7		
Total		75	100.0		

Disipline was not a problem

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	6.7	6.8	6.8
	Disagree	14	18.7	18.9	25.7
	Neutral	19	25.3	25.7	51.4
	Agree	30	40.0	40.5	91.9
	Strongly Agree	6	8.0	8.1	100.0
	Total	74	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.3		
Total		75	100.0		

Principal spoke to me at least once a year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	33.3	34.2	34.2
	Disagree	24	32.0	32.9	67.1
	Neutral	4	5.3	5.5	72.6
	Agree	9	12.0	12.3	84.9
	Strongly Agree	11	14.7	15.1	100.0
	Total	73	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.7		
Total		75	100.0		