The Influence of a New Student Orientation Program on Freshman Student Academic Performance and Retention at a Comprehensive Two-Year Community College

by

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Abstract

This study examined the differences in first-year students at a selected community college who participated in a new student orientation program. The study compared academic success, attrition, and retention of new students who participated in the freshman orientation course at a community college to those who did not participate in the program. Data were derived from records of first-year students over during the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 semesters. Fall data represented the freshman enrolling for the first time in the fall semesters of 2010 and 2011.

The research tracked students enrolled in the fall into the subsequent second and third semester. Results of this study found that a significant relationship does not exist between community college students enrolling in a freshman orientation course, in the fall semester and retention for second semester. However, a significant relationship does exist between community college students enrolling in a first-year orientation course in the third semester and their GPA at the end of the semester.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In the United States, approximately two out of three high school students enroll in postsecondary education after high school graduation (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009). This number is hopeful considering that in the world's other developed nations, only one out of every two young people will attend college (Education at a Glance, 2004). When the same groups of students are compared; however, the American dropout rate far exceeds the average. Colleges and universities have been engaged in the problem of student retention for many years. In 2001, approximately 45% of students enrolled in community colleges stopped attending their first year, and approximately 25% of students enrolled in four-year colleges or universities stopped attending their first year (ACT, Inc., 2001). By 2008, across community colleges, the average first-to-second-year retention rate was 54%; among four-year institutions, the rate averaged 73% (ACT, Inc., 2008).

In a separate study, researchers detected that 45% of those initially enrolled in a public community college had stopped attending three years later and only 16% had completed a degree (Berkner & Choy, 2008). Community college students are at risk of not remaining enrolled in college but Hossler (2005) showed that most colleges and universities do not study the effects of retention programs. The problem of how student retention affects community colleges remains unanswered. Research on retention is contradictory and inconclusive (Bean, 1985; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Jones, 1986; Spady, 1970). Many of the studies that exist have

methodological problems and use different definitions for similar terms or the same definitions for dissimilar terms (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987).

Not much research is available in general, and especially on community colleges (Bean, 1980; Halpin, 1990; McArthur, 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolinak, & Terenizine, 2004; Spady, 1971). While there has been some studies of nontraditional students at four-year schools, no comprehensive models for community colleges exist (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Derby & Smith, 2004; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Limiting exploration even further, research from four-year schools cannot be generalized to community colleges (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolinak, & Terenizine, 2004; Schuetz, 2005; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004; Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

There are couple of reasons student retention is important: (1) colleges must retain students to be financially secure, and (2) to support its academic programs (Lingrell, 2005). It is also important that student's collegiate experiences are positive so they may reach their academic goals and become productive members of the workforce (Fike & Fike, 2008). State and federal government is considering using institutional retention rates in a national system of higher educational accountability and a number of states already use institutional retention in their accountability systems (Baily & Alfonso, 2005; Ewell, 2011; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007).

The issue of student retention in higher education has been grounded in student involvement theory in what is known as student departure theories (Astin, 1975, 1984, 1985; Bean, 1980, 1984; Bean & Metzner 1985; Spady 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). While Tinto (1975) recognized the role that individual characteristics play in student persistence, he believed that given different characteristics, previous experience, and commitments, it is the individual's integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his

continuance in that college. Astin (1985) indicated that an involved student is one who devotes extensive energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students.

One retention approach often used by community colleges is providing help through orientation programs (Braxton & McClendon, 2002; Karp, 2011; O'Gara, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2006; Tinto, 1975; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Retention research has highlighted the importance of orientation programs as a way to maintain or increase student persistence by helping students integrate into the institution (Hossler, 2005; Carini, Kuh & Klien 2006; Patton, Morelon, Whitehead, & Hossler, 2006).

Academically, orientation programs address a multitude of issues. These include teachings on effective study skills and test taking strategies, increasing the visibility of tutoring centers on campus, and providing small forums for students to connect with faculty in meaningful ways (Barefoot, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, few orientation programs are evaluated accurately to conclude whether or not they have achieved the intended outcome of student retention (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007).

Some studies have shown the impact of orientation (Barefoot, Warnock, Dickinson, Richardson, & Roberts, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tobolowsky, 2005; Tobolowsky, Cox & Wagner, 205; Upcraft 2005). Studies have found that students who participated in an orientation program had greater attrition and retention rates, higher grade point averages, higher number of credit hours completed at the end of the first college year, and greater satisfaction with faculty than those students who did not participate in an orientation program (Barefoot, Warnock, Dickinson, Richardson, & Roberts, 1998; Cuseo, 1991; Carni, Kuh & Klein, 2006;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tobolowsky, 2005; Tobolowsky, Cox, & Wagner, 2005; Upcraft, 2005).

This study examines whether first year students participating in freshman orientation — a required orientation program at a community college — achieved more success in academic performance, retention, and attrition than those who did not participate in freshman orientation.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of research at the community college level to show whether orientation programs are achieving desired results (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Smart, Kuh & Tierney, 1997; Tinto, 1993, Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). Most retention research focuses on traditional four-year colleges and universities rather than community colleges (Astin, 1993; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Deil-Amen, 2011; Mohammadi, 1994; Tinto, 1987; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Braxton (1997) and Mohammadi (1994) suggested that it is difficult to generalize university retention definitions and measures to community colleges.

The two-year community college in this study has offered an orientation course since 1968 (College Catalog, 1968–69). The freshman orientation course, known as the Freshman Academy, is a mini-term (8 weeks), one credit-hour, two contact-hour course designed to introduce first-year students to the two-year public community college experience. The instructors who teach the course were interviewed and selected to participate in a year-long program to learn how to teach the newly designed freshman orientation course. The orientation course was revised to satisfy the college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

Wild and Ebbers (2002) indicated that retention research and theory is well established, but there is relatively little research on theory specific to community college student retention that can inform institutional policy and practice. Traditional persistence theories, such as Tinto's

Theory of Student Departure (1975, 1993), are largely based on research involving traditional age students attending four year institutions (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Such research is often assumed to be applicable to community students (Karp 2011), but has been applied to community college students with mixed findings (Deli-Amen, 2011; Schuetz, 2005). A review of the literature reveals a gap in the research on first-year programs at community colleges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of student success in a freshman orientation course at a two-year community college in Alabama. The specific student success indicators were grade point average and retention. These indicators were used to compare first-year students who participated in the orientation during their first semester with first-year students who did not participate in the orientation during their first semester. Although similar research has been conducted (Zeidenberg, Jenkins & Calgano, 2007), a gap existed between first-year student participation in orientation and retention and GPA at community colleges.

Zeidenberg, Jenkins and Calgano (2007) conducted research at a Florida Community College and found a significant relationship between students enrolling in orientation and completing a credential. However, this study only examined the percentage of these students who returned in the following two semesters. Previous research has mainly focused on the relationship between participation in orientation and student success without controlling certain confounding variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and placement test scores. Most of the research investigating the relationship between community college student success and orientation present qualitative findings.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of freshman orientation on first semester college students' cumulative grade point average?

2. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their second semester?

3. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their third semester?

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study concerns the representativeness of the sample. Although the researcher would like to adequately represent the overall community college population in the United States, accessibility to colleges restricted the demographics of the sample. Only one college served as the population in this study and therefore, the results are not generalizable to the community college population. Another limitation is that the sample represents only first-year students enrolled in a fall semester. First year students enrolled in college for the spring or summer were not included in the study.

Another limitation of this study is that by only measuring from fall to the subsequent spring and return the following fall semester, there was no control for students that drop out and return at a later date. Lastly, a limitation is that only two years of data were analyzed. Students enrolled before fall 2010 and after fall 2011 were not included in the study.

Definition of Terms

Academic Performance: The level of success determined by the cumulative grade point average and ratio of completed courses between the groups studied.

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): representing nearly 1,200 two-year, associate degree–granting institutions and more than 13 million students, AACC is the primary advocacy organization for community colleges at the national level and works closely with directors of state offices to inform and affect state policy.

Associate of Arts (AA) degree: is received after completion of a two-year full-time curriculum from a community college. The AA curriculum is usually general, covering the social sciences or humanities and is intended to prepare students to transfer to bachelor's degree programs in a wide variety of fields. The AA degree corresponds to the first two years of a four-year baccalaureate degree program.

Attrition: The diminution in numbers of students resulting from lower student retention.

Community Colleges: Publicly supported institutions offering comprehensive programs and career-related, remedial, and freshmen and sophomore studies, along with community services. The highest degree offered is the associate degree in arts or science.

Credit Hour: Standard measuring unit for college work that leads to a degree or certificate.

Dropouts: Students who discontinue their enrollment for an infinite period of time and do not re-enroll into college/university to continue their education.

First-year student: This term denotes all first-time students (excluding dual enrollment classes) enrolling at a rural community college in the Southeast in the fall semester. Those who have prior credits, excluding dual enrollment, are exempt from the study.

Freshmen Academy: A required newly revised student orientation program offered at the community college in this study. Freshmen Academy serves as an entry system for new students and provides an opportunity for them to learn more about campus resources, to identify

opportunities for individual growth (study habits, time management, stress management), and to meet more people who are in positions to help them.

Freshmen Student: Any high school or GED graduate who is attending the community college for the first time who has earned six or fewer previous college academic credit hours.

Grade Point Average: The total number of quality points resulting from letter grades of A through F obtained in college courses divided by the total number of course credits completed. For the purposes of this study, grade point average will be determined at the end of the semester.

Non-Persister: student who leaves college without earning a degree and never returns.

Orientation Programs: Programs that are offered under various titles at various colleges and universities with the primary purpose of integrating first-time college students into the college or university environment.

Persistence: The act of will individually required in order to continue in the pursuit of a desired goal. Any action taken by a student to associate with an institution may be understood to be evidence of incipient persistence.

Persister: A student who remains enrolled in college until degree completion.

Retention: Students returning to the institution following their first semester of enrollment, as well as for subsequent semesters. Retention results when the institution is successful in supporting student persistence. Every action taken by the institution to enhance the probability of students' re-enrollment may be understood either as support or hindrance of continuous enrollment.

Stop-Out: A student who appears to drop out, but returns to the original institution after a period of time has passed

Student Departure: The point at which a student chooses to leave his/her institution.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided the introduction of the study, discussed the research problem, described the purpose of the study, explained the significance of the study, listed the primary research questions, detailed the limitations study, and defined key terms. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study, which includes the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the research findings. Chapter 5 summarizes the study and provides conclusions, implications, and areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature will reveal that the research on the retention theories and orientation programs are based on traditional four-year colleges and universities. Therefore, there is a need to conduct research at the community college level to determine if taking a freshman orientation course has an impact on first year students' academic success, attrition and retention.

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Zeidenberg, Jenkins and Calgano (2007) conducted research at a Florida Community College and found a significant relationship between students enrolling in orientation and completing a credential. However, this study only examined the percentage of these students who returned in the following two semesters. Previous research has mainly focused on the relationship between participation in orientation and student success without controlling certain confounding variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and placement test scores. Most of the

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Wang and Grims (2001) suggesteed institutions must not only assess intervention programs by utilizing traditional student outcome measurements, but also by identifying the various stages at which students decide to leave college. By identifying these stages, institutions can implement effective orientation programs that appropriately address the problems that prevent students from having a successful college experience.

The Community College

Community colleges have established themselves as the vehicle for redirecting the careers of seasoned workers, for offering general education to all types of students, and for providing workforce development and training by establishing relationships with the business sector and of course developmental education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Community colleges have an open door admissions policy; having an open door policy has allowed traditionally underserved populations and students who would not otherwise have attended college to attend college.

According Vaughan (2004), the two-year community college's mission is the source from which all of its activities flow. The mission of the community college is to provide education for individuals, many of whom are adults, in its service region (American Association for Community Colleges, 2011). Most community college missions have basic promises: to serve all sectors of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students; to provide a comprehensive educational program; to serve its community as a community-based institution of higher education; and to provide lifelong learning. Historically, local community colleges have continually met the higher education needs of each generation (Boggs, 2012).

Significant growth in the community college sector occurred in the 1960s as a growing number of new colleges began opening their doors. With this steady growth, community colleges continued meeting the demands of increased enrollment by providing more programs and services, enrolling over five million students by the 1990s (American Association of Community Colleges, 2011). The challenge for community colleges today is preserving this open-door philosophy, while at the same time providing effective programs and services for all populations. To be true to their mission, community colleges must serve all segments, but not all members of society (Vaughan, 2004).

While community colleges throughout the country have seen exceptional enrollment growth, the challenge has been identifying the changing characteristics of students (Miller, Pope, & Steinmann, 2005; Mullin & Phillipe, 2009; Schroeder, 2003; Zeidenberg, 2008). Because of community colleges' convenient locations, open access, and low cost, community colleges tend to enroll students who are older, African American or Hispanic, a first-generation college student, a single parent or having children at home, and more academically, economically, and

socially disadvantaged than compared to a typical four-year college student (Bragg, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Feldman, 1993; Fike & Fike, 2008; Schmid & Abell, 2003). For example, nearly 30% of community college students are Black or Hispanic as compared to 20% of students enrolled in four-year public and private postsecondary institutions (Hom & Nevill, 2006; Miller, 2005). Approximately one-fourth of community college students come from families earning 125% or less of the federal poverty level as compared to one-fifth of four-year college students (Hom & Nevill, 2006).

Community college students have a mixture of obstacles to degree completion, including the need to work, family responsibilities, and low levels of academic groundwork. A 2008 national study on community college students found that over half of community college students (62%) attend on a part-time basis while 56% of community college students work more than 20 hours per week, and 33% spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008).

The same 2008 survey found that most community college students spend a significant time commuting to school, with 93% commuting at least one hour per week and 21% commuting 6 to 20 hours per week. Entering first-year students at community colleges are more likely to need at least one remedial course than are their peers at four-year colleges, and they are more likely to need to spend a longer period of time taking such courses (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2006; Wirt 2004).

In 2009, a longitudinal study (Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, 2009) was completed using a national sample from the 2003–2004 academic year. Findings demonstrated that community college students are different from students who attend four-year institutions. When compared to four-year students, community college students were more

likely to be: African American or Hispanic; financially independent, first-generation college students; less academically prepared; working full or part-time; delaying enrollment into college following high school; receiving less financial aid; and earning a lower GPA during the first year of college. This study showed 34% of students who attended a community college were African American or Hispanic, compared to only 19% of students who attended a four-year university. This study also showed 72% were the first in their family to attend college, 57% worked more than 20 hours a week, and 56% did not attend college full-time.

Alabama Two-Year College System

In 1963, the Alabama Legislature passed new taxes in education, creating public two-year colleges in the state. A single system governed by the State Board of Education was passed at the insistence of Governor George Wallace, the Father of Alabama Community Colleges. By the end of 1964, the Alabama Community College program had expanded to 11 junior colleges and 24 trade schools (which were elevated to technical college status in the 1980s); by 1987, there were 41 publicly controlled two-year colleges under the direct governance of the Alabama State Board of Education (Katsinas, 1994).

Over the years, a dual system of primarily African-American trade schools and primarily White junior and technical colleges merged into a single system. In 1982, the Alabama Legislature created the Department of Postsecondary Education, thus separating itself from the State Department of Education and creating the position of Chancellor.

The community college in this study is part of a statewide community college system that provides comprehensive higher education and workforce training programs and services under the State Board of Education. In 2005, this institution was merged with a technical college retaining its Historically Black College/University (HBCU) status. Since the merger, the current

trends in enrollment and ethnic background are approximately 65% female enrollment versus 35% male enrollment. Ethnic categories are approximately 80% Black; 12% White and 8% Other; enrollment ranges from 2,400–4,000. The average age of students is 18–65 with about 40% of incoming freshman enrolled in one or more developmental courses (English, mathematics, or reading).

Today, Alabama's community college system includes 21 comprehensive community colleges and 4 technical colleges: Marion Military Institute, one of five junior military colleges in the nation; Athens State University, the system's only upper-division institution offering baccalaureate degrees; and extensive workforce development initiatives, including AIDT and the Alabama Technology Network (Alabama Community College System, 2009). The Alabama Community College System thrives because these institutions are centers of educational opportunity open to all seekers.

In 2010, the system served over 93,000 full-time and part-time students. Admission is open to anyone with a high school diploma, a GED certificate, home schooling certificate of completion, scores from the Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), or high school students approved for dual enrollment. Students may take courses for credit and earn degrees or long or short certificates as well as transfer credits to four-year colleges and universities. The Alabama Two-Year College System also provides noncredit instruction leading to industry certifications and other workforce credentials.

National Focus and Initiatives

National efforts focusing on community colleges have been gaining momentum since 2003, beginning with the Lumina Foundation's 2004 "Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" initiative, which was the first significant effort to improve student community

college completion. According to Achieving the Dream (2012), community colleges are a vital component in returning the U.S. to its place as a global leader in higher education degree attainment. The Lumina Foundation and participating partner organizations provided funding support through grants with the expectation that community colleges participating in the initiative would maintain a high degree of access for historically underrepresented groups (Achieving the Dream, 2012).

Additional goals were to increase the percentage of students who accomplish the following: successfully complete the courses they take, advance from remedial to credit-bearing courses, enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses, enroll from one semester to the next, and earn degrees and/or certificates (Rutschow, Richburg-Hayes, Brock, Orr, Cerna, Cullinan, & Martin 2011). This multi-year, national initiative emphasizes the creation of a culture of evidence for community college student success, which purports that programs and policies must be based on data about factors that relate to student retention and success.

The onset of the economic recession in 2007 set in motion many challenges for higher education. Over the years that followed, postsecondary institutions faced shifts in enrollment patterns, uncertainties regarding financial aid practices, and cuts in state support of public institutions (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center [NSCRC], 2012). At the same time, national discourse centered on community colleges as central in the efforts to ensure a lasting economic recovery and to regain a global competitive edge.

Community colleges were placed at the center of the discussion focused on improving student outcomes. In President Obama's (2009) first address to a joint session of Congress, he asked every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or career training in order to raise the proportion of college graduates to the highest in the world by 2020. Obama

also later called on community colleges to increase education attainment levels by 50% over a 10-year period. The 2009 American Graduation Initiative (AGI) further articulated the role of community colleges in responding to the economic crisis with increased goals for college completion rates (Boggs, 2010).

As part of the American Graduation Initiative, the government is starting to engage in discussions on student success rates. In the past few years, federal interest in community college performance has increased markedly. The Obama administration has established an ambitious access goal of matching global attainment rates, which means 60 percent of a young adult-aged cohort will have a college credential by 2025. Reaching this goal will fall disproportionately on the nation's community college sector (Ewell, 2011). This assertion and the $2 billion dollars in allocated funding through the 2010 Heath Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation (HCEAR) Act heightened the expectations placed on community colleges.

Six national organizations (including the AACC, Association of Community College Trustees, Center for Community College Student Engagement, League for Innovation in the Community College, National Organization for Staff and Organizational Development, and Phi Theta Kappa) responded to this call by signing a statement of commitment to promote the development and implementation of policies, practices, and institutional cultures that will result in increased completion rates (AACC, 2010). Most recently, there has been increased attention to accountability measures through the introduction of the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The VFA reflects a considerable effort among community college leaders to collaboratively establish better measures for assessment.

The premise behind these efforts is that the current metrics do not fully account for the multiple missions of community colleges in serving an array of constituents. Similarly, non-

traditional student populations enter community colleges with a wide range of objectives, many of which do not include goals for degree attainment. The economic climate prompted surges in postsecondary enrollment (NSCRC, 2012), which has only added to the difficulties in defining student outcomes with more diverse student populations and more complex enrollment patterns.

Accountability

Beginning in the 1980s, higher education institutions faced growing pressure to improve student learning outcomes and to provide greater accountability to their constituents (Zumeta, 2011). Astin (1991) indicated that legislative and executive branches of state governments are the driving forces behind the accountability movements in higher education. Astin reported that interest in higher education accountability can be traced back to A Nation at Risk (1983). The circulation of this publication prompted many reports that were critical of higher education (Astin, 1991).

Community colleges are expected to meet certain accountability standards by relying on data to support or improve programs and services that impact student success (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Wellman (2001) suggested that states create publically accessible accountability systems, which use quantitative and qualitative indicators of institutional performance. This would allow interested persons to compare institutions in terms of performance. Jenkins (2007) noted that comparing institutional performance is problematic since student characteristics and definitions of accountability indicators may differ across institutions. According to Hagedorn (2004), the formulas and discussions presuppose that retention exists in one variety; that is, students either remain at an institution or do not.

Institutions of higher education have had the added pressure of maintaining competitive retention and graduation rates. According to Tinto (2006), the federal government considered

using institutional retention rates in a national system of higher educational accountability and a number of states already used institutional retention in their accountability systems.

Former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings (2006) created the Commission on the Future of Higher Education in 2006. The Commission's final report acted as a catalyst for the accountability movement in higher education. Universities responded by voluntarily creating accountability strategies.

According to Boggs (2009), community colleges found it difficult to frame appropriate accountability measures. Boggs (2009) indicated that community colleges need a process through which they communicate data that paints the most accurate portrait of the sector and its unique role in American higher education.

The Cross-State Data Work Group emphasized that community colleges need to expand the definition of success to recognize the mission of the community college and embrace the notion of open door institutions (Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, & Kleiman, 2011). Furthermore, arguing that the federal Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) is flawed when measuring community college success, the Group recommended community colleges include part-time students and extend the tracking of graduates from four to six years (Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, & Kleiman, 2011). Boggs agreed that IPEDS does not account for the typical community college student attending part-time. Therefore, success measurements according to IPEDS do not reflect favorably on community colleges (Boggs, 2009).

Retention

Retention research has been one of the most widely studied topics in higher education over the past 30 years (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). According to Braxton, Brier and Steele (2007), retention is closely related to the issues of student departure, and persistence and attrition.

Researchers have recognized the significance of reporting retention and attrition rates for community colleges (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto 1975); yet, the research addressing community colleges is insufficient (Bailey, 2004, Pascarella, Pierson, Wolinak, & Terenizine, 2004; Schuetz, 2005; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). The majority of the research on retention and student departure focuses on four-year universities (Astin, 1993; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Deil-Amen, 2011; Mohammadi, 1994; Tinto 1987; Webb, 1988; Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

In discussing student retention, one of the problems associated with the topic is how to define and measure retention by each institution (Wild & Ebber, 2002). According to Noel-Levitz (2000), retention is an institutional performance indicator. It is a measure of (1) how much student growth and learning takes place, (2) how valued and respected students feel on your campus; and (3) how effectively your campus delivers what students expect, need, and want. The academic study of retention is more in-depth and has many variations. In order to gain an understanding of the issues in the study of retention, one must grasp a few basic terms.

The National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that *retention* is an institution's success in progressing students through an educational program. *Persistence* is a student's success in remaining in an institution. Retention differs from persistence, in that persistence focuses on the students' success, while retention refers to an institution's ability to keep a student (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2009).

Another definition included Crawford's (1999) which indicated that retention is the maintenance of continued enrollment of two or more semesters, specifically from Fall to Spring term, and/or completion of a degree/certificate or transfer to a four-year college. This study adheres to this definition since many community college programs only span two semesters.

According to Wyman (1997), retention is the percentage of entering students graduating or persisting in their studies at an institution. Sydow and Sandel (1998) offer that retention is enrollment in a subsequent semester, completing two-thirds of the courses and achieving at least a 2.0 grade point average.

A student who remains enrolled in college until degree completion is a *persister*. A student who leaves college without earning a degree and never returns is a *non-persister* (Hagedorn, 2005). According to Derby and Smith (2004), they considered students successful if they completed a degree in two years. They considered students to be dropouts if they completed less than three semesters in two years, averaged three or more courses per semester, had a GPA of 2.0 or higher, and reenrolled after no more than three semesters off. They considered students persistent if they averaged three or more courses per semester within two years without completing a degree.

Vincent Tinto (1987) uses the term *student departure* to describe retention. According to Tinto, a *dropout* is a student who leaves before achieving his or her academic goals and never returns. Tinto argues that anyone who returns to school is no longer a dropout and that the only time someone is formally a dropout is at the demise of the student. A *stop out* is a student who appears to drop out, but returns to the original institution after a period of time has passed (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2009).

Attrition is another term to describe retention. Attrition is a measure of the number of students who have left their studies at the institution in a nominated period, making allowance for students who leave studies because of finishing a program of study and graduating. Students can withdraw from studies prior to completion for a range of reasons other than for lack of academic potential — including difficulties in balancing study and other commitments, financial

problems, and various disadvantages. Attrition rates are the opposite of retention rates (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

Regardless of the technical definition used for retention, a positive relationship has been shown to exist between retention and college grade-point average. Early retention studies demonstrate that students with higher grade point averages are retained at a higher rate than are students with lower grade-point averages (Cohen, 1977). Tinto synthesized research on attrition and concluded that academic performance is the single most important factor in predicting retention in college. This conclusion is also supported by Ammons (1971), Astin (1972), Blanchfield (1971), Coker (1968), Grieve (1969), Mock and Yonge (1969), and Pedrini and Pedrini (1978).

Adding to the research connecting academic success and retention, several studies have shown that a relationship exists between grades and test scores, both indicators of student success, and retention (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Pascarella, 1980). Academic performance has become a widely accepted measure of student success in higher education.

The Importance of Studying Student Retention

Colleges and universities have faced the problem of student retention for many years. In 2001, approximately 45% of students enrolled in community colleges stopped attending their first year, and approximately 25% of students enrolled in four-year colleges or universities stopped attending their first year (ACT, 2001; Barr, 2005; Braxton, 2004). By 2008, across community colleges the average first-to-second-year retention rate was 54%; among four-year institutions the rate averaged 73% (ACT, 2008). In a separate study, researchers found that 45% of those initially enrolled in a public community college had stopped attending three years later and only 16% had completed a degree (Berkner & Choy, 2008).

While it has been difficult to measure the impact of leaving college on the individual student, differences in earning and employment rates have been estimated by researchers. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) college attendance persuaded the individual's long-term occupation choice, earnings, intellectual development, moral development, values, and attitudes, as well as the overall lifestyle of the individual's children. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey (2007) reported that increased levels of education resulted in lower unemployment rates and higher earnings with additional ramifications for higher education, the workforce, and the economy.

Retention affects a college's accounting process, views of the college's quality, and its enrollment stability (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). After students are initially recruited, admitted, and registered, an institution must retain them for financial stability and to support its academic programs (Lingrell, 2008).

Wyman (1997) studied retention statistics at 16 community colleges in South Carolina. Using Astin and Tinto to develop his theoretic base, he found that colleges must increase per-student expenditure on instruction and academic support at a quicker rate than the growth of area mean income if they wanted to increase retention rate.

Kim, Rhoades, and Woodard (2003), studied graduation rates at 142 public research universities. This study showed there is a positive linear relationship between sponsored research expenses and student graduation. The researchers noted that their results were consistent with the theories of Tinto, Astin, Bean, and Pascarella. While research is not part of the community college mission, this study is part of the body of research on the relationship between expenses and retention until graduation.

Student retention rates are often used as a accountability measure of institutional

effectiveness (Astin, 1993). According to Cohen and Brawer (2003), two major national associations addressed the importance of institutional assessment for community colleges: the American Association of Community Colleges and the League for Innovation in the Community College. These two associations also offered indicators and definitions that can project institutional effectiveness of community colleges (Alfred, Ewell, Hudgins, & McClenny, 1999; Doucette & Hughes, 1990). These associations also claimed that institutional effectiveness needs to be documented so that the public, students, and the professional community can better understand how institutions use their resources to meet their respective missions.

It is also important that students' academic experiences are positive so they may reach their academic goals and become productive members of the workforce (Fike & Fike, 2008). The average weekly earnings for someone who has earned a bachelor's degree is $304 higher than someone who has some college but no degree. Additionally, the unemployment rate increases from 2.2 percent to 3.8 percent for the same populations respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007).

In a 2004 report on community colleges, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that 61% of schools offer noncredit occupational, professional, or technical training (Government Accountability Office, 2004). The GAO also prepared a report advocating more integration of community colleges and one-stop career centers. The Workforce Investment Act established One-Stop Career Centers to provide a full range of support to help with the unemployed under one roof. The centers offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). As the report states,

> Through a variety of outreach, relationship building, and data collection efforts, community colleges have come to understand the specific training needs of key industries

in their region and use this 5 information to keep programs current or develop new ones to address these needs. (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008, p. 3)

Academic Success

In higher education, student success outcomes are often measured by retention and academic performance. According to Wild and Ebbers (2002), how student retention is defined and measured is a problem for community colleges.

Tinto (1975) reported with respect to grade performance, many studies have shown it to be the single most important issue in predicting student retention in college. Pascarella and Chapman (1983) agreed that academic integration, which is predicted by GPA, was a major factor in retention. Academic performance can have positive or negative effects on self-efficacy. First semester grades play a critical role in persistence (McGrath & Braunstein, 1997). Astin (1993) indicated that GPA, despite its limitations, appears to reflect the student's actual learning and growth during the undergraduate years, thus making it appropriate for measuring academic success.

Ishler and Upcraft (2005) noted that one predictor of first-year student retention is the grades students earn in the first year. The researchers definition of first-year success is the (1) successful completion of courses with an acceptable grade point average, (2) continued enrollment into the second year, and (3) development of higher-order intellectual skills necessary to become an educated person, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and reflective judgment (Ishler & Upcraft, 2005).

Schroeder (2005) emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships between faculty and student service personnel indicating that students who take full advantage of all institutional resources for learning foster their learning and development. This being so,

Schroeder noted that historically, transactions between academic affairs and student affairs have usually occurred on the lower end of the continuum. Additionally, he found that research conducted by Kollins (2000) indicated that collaboration at the community college level was more promising. Additionally, Cutright (2002) noted that over the past two decades, there has been a dramatic growth in campus-based partnerships between academic and student affairs to address the needs of first-year students (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005).

Lotkowski, Robbins, and Noeth (2004) reported through their research that retention programs could be improved if they are designed to integrate both academic and non-academic factors stating that the strongest relationship to retention occurs when all of the academic and the key-nonacademic factors are combined.

Retention Models

Retention has been major issue for the community college, as the past several decades of research have steadily shown attrition rates to be significantly higher when compared to students attending four-year institutions (Schuetz 2005; Summer 2003). To help understand retention and attrition, researchers have developed models for improving student retention, examined factors affecting student retention initiated programs, and made suggestions for colleges to achieve the goal of retaining students (Braxton, Brier, & Steele, 2007; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 2006).

Persistence, attrition, retention, and attainment studies have been based on the work of Astin (1993), Bean and Metzner (1985), Spady (1970), and Tinto (1975, 1993). The concepts of academic and social integration (Spady and Tinto), student interactions (Pascarella & Terenzini), student involvement (Astin), and student satisfaction (Bean) have emerged and been refined over the years to create the conceptual foundations for studying the persistence, retention, development, learning, and achievement of college students.

Most retention research focuses on traditional four-year colleges and universities rather than community colleges (Deil-Amen, 2011; Halpin, 1990; Mohammadi, 1994, Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Braxton, Brier and Steele (2007) suggested that it is difficult to generalize university retention definitions and measures to community colleges. Bailey and Alfonso (2005) found that limited research had been conducted for community college retention. Hossler (2005) observed that most colleges and universities do not conduct studies of the efficacies of retention intervention programs.

Hagedorn (2005) identified four basic types of retention: (a) institutional retention rates measured fall to fall, (b) retention within a college system, (c) retention by student major, and (d) retention by course. Retention rates are statistics that indicate the percentage of students retained by colleges over a selected period of time, typically fall to fall. This type of calculation is commonly referred to as the institutional retention method for tracking and reporting because it identifies the total number of first-time, full-time students enrolled in a fall cohort for the entire institution and tracks them to determine how many enroll in the fall semester of the following year.

Community college retention research has not been based on theoretical models. Wild and Ebbers (2002) suggested that retention theories should be more comprehensively understood regarding their application to community colleges. The authors further noted that retention research based on retention theories for community colleges was extremely limited.

The History of Retention

In 1951, Durkheim's original 1897 research was published. This research analyzed the social factors involved in suicide. Durkheim's proposed concept contrasted two extremes. Durkheim suggested that a person may be weakly integrated into society; Durkheim labeled this

egoism. By comparison, Durkheim applied the term altruism to overly integrated persons. Durkheim (1951) proposed that either condition could result in an individual committing suicide.

According to Durkheim (1951), suicide is more likely to occur when individuals are insufficiently integrated into society. Durkheim (1951) suggested that suicide attempts increase when individuals are not morally integrated or collectively affiliated with others in society. Durkheim (1951) initiated this suicide research under the assumption that more Protestants committed suicide than did Catholics. Durkheim (1951) stated that Protestants' free inquiry contrasted with Catholics unquestioning acceptance of rituals and beliefs (Pescosolido & Georgianna, 2005). Durkheim's observations of societal changes in the 19th century led to this conclusion (Pescosolido & Georgianna, 2005). Durkheim (1961) also learned that suicide rates tended to cluster within specific geographical areas and formed patterns.

Durkheim (1961) concluded that suicide patterns emerged in geographical areas because those areas were not socially integrated and lacked religious order. Durkheim (1961) further noted that people were less likely to attempt suicide if their religious beliefs and their family relationships were well integrated. Spady (1970) was the first researcher to apply Durkheim's analysis to student attrition.

The most widely studied retention theory is Tinto's theory of integration (1975, 1987, 1993). This theory builds on Durkheim's (1951) and Spady's (1970) theories that suggest that when an individual is unable to integrate and gain acceptance into society, suicide may result. Applying this theory to a collegiate environment, Tinto (1975) suggested that if a student is unable to integrate and gain acceptance in higher education, the result will be departure from the academic environment. Tinto points to the level of integration completed by a student prior to

and during enrollment as a predictor of retention. The less integrated and committed students are, the higher the probability is that they will withdraw.

After Tinto's groundbreaking work in 1975, several other studies focused on integration of college students. Such studies include Pascarella and Terenzini's (1983) which examined the integration differences in males and females. Pascarella and Terenzini (1980, 1983) also found that high academic ability often compensates for lower levels of social integration. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979, 1983) also conducted a study examining the relationship between background characteristics of students and their choice to withdraw or persist. Findings concluded that a relationship does exist between certain demographic variables, such as ethnicity, gender, and age and a student's persistence. According to Tinto (1987) decisions to withdraw are more a function of what occurs after entry than what precedes it.

Student Attrition and Suicide Theory

Spady (1970) was the first researcher to apply Durkheim's (1951) analysis to student attrition through the Explanatory Sociological Model of the Dropout Process (see Figure 1). Spady (1970) highlighted that social and academic integration affected student persistence, and suggested that interactions between students and the academic and social systems in colleges best explained departure decisions. Spady (1970) noted that a student's background characteristics determined his or her institutional, social, and academic relationships. Spady (1970) identified unique value systems and social structures in colleges, and asserted that a student could leave a college's social system in the same manner one can exit society through suicide.

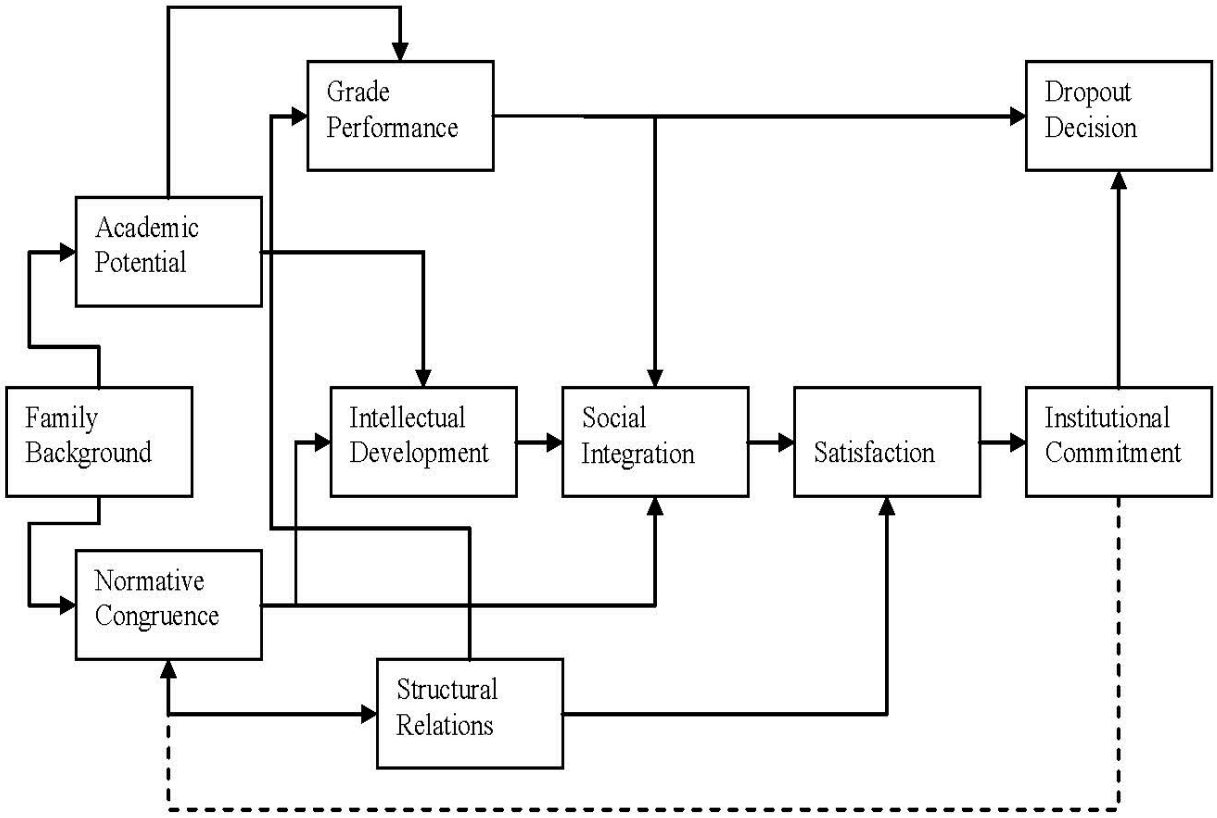


Figure 1. Spady's Explanatory Sociological Model of Dropout Process

While Spady acknowledges dropping out of college is much less drastic than ending one's life, there are parallels between the social conditions that cause both outcomes. According to his theory, there are two major social components of Durkheim's version of social integration. The first involves the two ways to have success in the academic system. Actual grades are extrinsic rewards, while intellectual development is an intrinsic reward. In the social system, one achieves success when attitudes and interests are compatible with the academic environment. Spady (1970) terms this condition as normative congruence. He acknowledges that operationalizing this term is difficult and causes problems in assuming direct causal connections.

The second major component is what Spady (1970) calls friendship support. This describes how closely a student has established relationships with others in the system, whether they are fellow students, personnel, or faculty. Together, these two connect his model to Durkheim's theory. The original model Spady (1970) developed contains five independent variables: grade performance, intellectual development, normative congruence, friendship support, and social integration. The first four variables influence the fifth, all of which link indirectly through two intervening variables to the dependent variable, dropout decision. Those two variables are satisfaction and institutional commitment.

In Spady's (1971) next major paper, he tested. Using a sample comprised of 683 freshmen at the University of Chicago, he surveyed students about their perceptions of environmental and social influences. He then combined the results with GPA and retention data from the institution. After applying the model to a longitudinal study, he revised it by adding variables and changing the relationships. Spady (1971) added structural relations as a factor and made friendship support a subset of it. This was because he found friendship support to be directly dependent on elements in both the family background and normative congruence clusters (Spady, 1971).

The major revisions in the model occurred because Spady (1971) found several differences based on gender. He changed some of the directional arrows and the paths to connect variables. He found that for men, grade performance was the most important factor for determining attrition, and institutional commitment and social integration were on a secondary level. Their focus was on meeting formal standards set by faculty and they were willing to tolerate the environmental conditions imposed on them. Women, conversely, based their

dropout decision primarily on institutional commitment and secondarily on academic performance (Spady, 1971).

Reactions to subjective social criteria indicated that females would not remain in an unsatisfying college environment. The longer the students' tenure in college, however, achievement and persistence became tantamount. Ultimately, the study found formal academic performance is clearly the dominant factor in accounting for attrition among both sexes (Spady, 1971). There was also a connection from institutional commitment back to normative congruence. Spady (1970) found this important because it reflects the cyclical nature of the model. He suggested that the process can have an effect on the individual, thus causing the student to change attitudes and interests.

Educational Attainment Model

According to Sewell and Hauser, educational attainment refers to the number of years completed in higher education. Sewell and Hauser (1972) created a model which utilized 11 independent variables that were expected to have direct or indirect effects on students' educational attainment, including: (a) father's educational attainment, (b) mother's educational attainment, (c) father's employment, (d) household income, (e) intellectual ability, (f) grades earned in high school, (g) teachers' support, (h) parental support, (i) friends' future plans, (j) one's college plans, and (k) one's career choice. The authors determined that teacher support and average household income were not significantly related to educational attainment, but the other nine variables accounted for 54% of the variance in educational attainment (Sewell & Hauser, 1972). As noted by the authors, the best predictors of educational attainment were plans for college and grades earned in high school.

Tinto's Student Integration Model

Expanding the work of Durkheim (1951) and Spady (1970), Tinto (1975) developed a similar model of student retention which is referred to as the Student Integration Model (Reay, 2012; Summers, 2003) (see Figure 2). Tinto agreed that social conditions affecting a student's decision to drop out of a college resembled those resulting in one's suicide within society. In the process of developing his model, he delved deeper into the types of suicides and related them to the different types of attrition. Tinto (1975) wrote that not all types of dropout are the alike. He felt the absence of distinction has caused attrition estimates to be higher than the actual dropout rate and led to inconsistent findings.

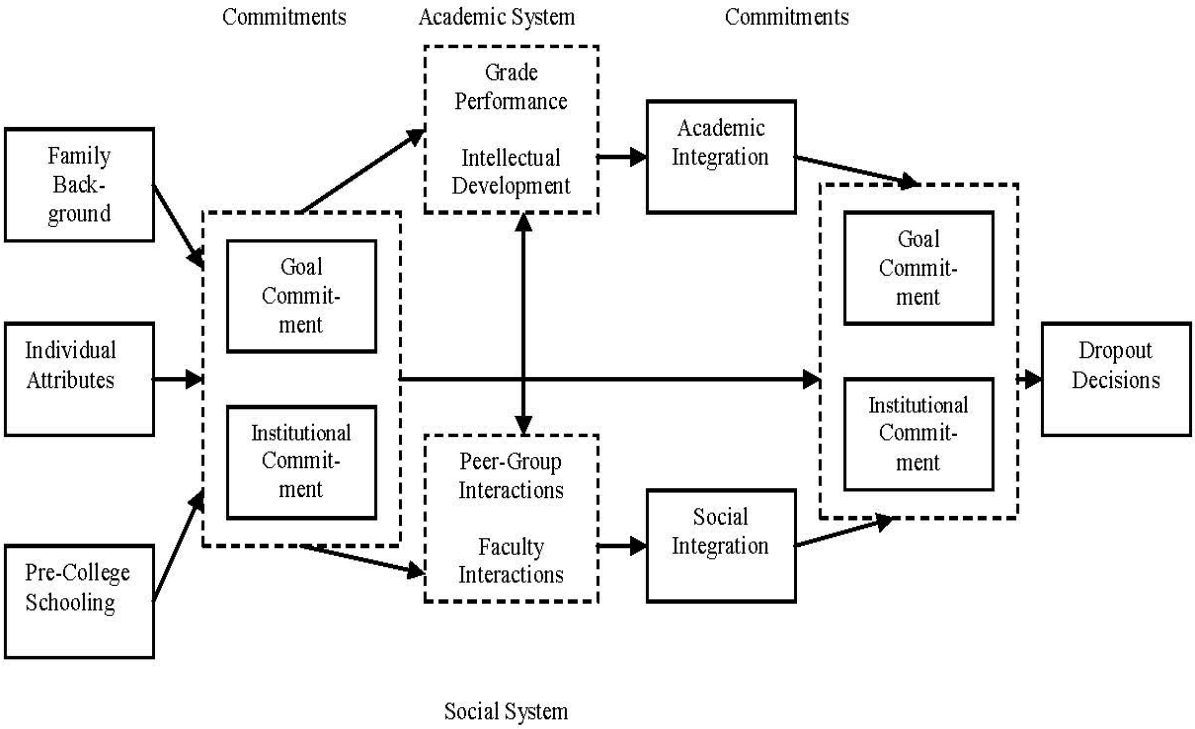


Figure 2. Tinto's Student Integration Model

The first way Tinto (1975) characterizes withdrawal is between involuntary and voluntary. The first is usually due to academic failure. The last is due to absence of consistency between the student, the intellectual climate of the college or university, and the social system. Tinto (1975) argues that academic dismissal can also happen when students are fully socially integrated. This would only be the case when a student participates to such an extent that extracurricular activities and social dealings take importance over academic interests. Withdrawal, permanent and temporary dropouts and transfer were also identified as voluntary attrition. Withdrawal is due to conflict between the student and the institutional environment and social system. This is likely to result in permanent or temporary dropout or transfer but it is not due to lack of academic performance.

Tinto (1975) theorized that the more students feel integrated into the institution, both socially and academically, the less likely they are to drop out. When students matriculate, they bring with them individual social and academic background characteristics and experiences, different educational goals, and varying levels of interest in the college. Within time, students interact with the social and academic systems of the school to integrate into the environment. The level of integration influences the decision to exit or persist.

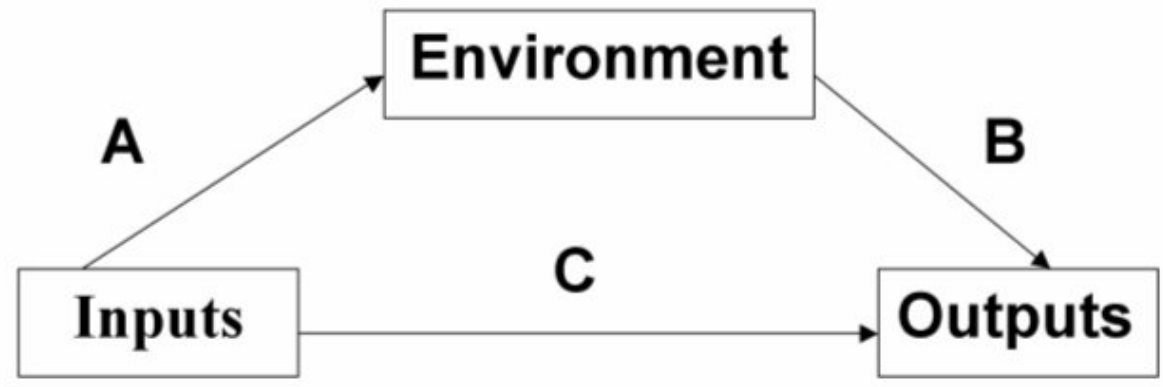
This model is one of the most tested in experiential studies, with mixed results. Several studies have deep-rooted Tinto's claims that integration predicts retention (Halpin, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Terenzini, Lorang, & Pascarella, 1981; Torres & Solberg, 2001) although many have found no basis for that construct plus several others in the model (Bean, 1980; Cabrera, Stampen, & Hansen, 1990; Derby & Smith, 2004; McCubbin, 2003; Nora, Attinasi, & Matonek, 1990).

In addition, research has shown that at two-year colleges, integration has a different effect on the predictive ability of the model (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983). Academic integration had a much greater influence than social integration. Halpin (1990) tested it on freshmen at a community college and discovered that integration predicted persistence, thus finding utility in Tinto's model. Halpin hypothesizes that may be because students are already integrated into the community and do not need to fill belonging needs in an unfamiliar dormitory or campus environment.

Astin's Input-Environment-Output Model

Astin (1977, 1993) Inputs Environment Outputs (IEO) model attempts to categorize institutional variables that impact student outcomes. Educators and researchers are regularly asking what changes occur to the institutional environment that influences student outcomes or persistence, Astin's (1977, 1993, model provides a conceptual framework for addressing the research questions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Astin's Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) Model



Following Tinto's (1975) conceptualization, this model provides a framework for examining student inputs and college environment, with outcomes measured as academic

achievement, retention, and graduation rates. According to Astin (1993), failure to control for incoming variables will result in an inaccurate determination of the college environment as a predictor of student persistence. The basic purpose of the [I-E-O] model is to assess the impact of various environmental experiences by determining where students grow or change differently under varying environmental conditions.

Inputs denote to the characteristics of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution; *environment* denote to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed; and *outcomes* denote to the student's characteristics *after* exposure to the environment (Astin 1993). Astin also distinguishes student precollege characteristics, including academic preparedness, demographics and student attitudes and behaviors as inputs. The environmental phase focuses on a treatment or intervention program implemented by an institution. In the case of this study, this is the first-year experience course. Finally, as part of the model, outcomes can be categorized as academic, attitudinal, cognitive, or developmental (Astin, 1993).

According to Astin (1993), in order to determine how and when students change in their pursuit of a college education, administrators must control for inputs to find the resulting impact of a particular action in the environment. In a review of related research on college students since 1967, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) developed the following concept: "[V]irtually all of the studies done to date shed useful light on the extent to which students *change during the college years*, but change *during* college is not the same as change *due* to college" (p. 85). As such, this study incorporated Astin's (1993) I- E-O model to control for student inputs in an effort to determine the impact a first-year experience course (environment) has on student outcomes.

Pascarella's Attrition Model

Pascarella (1980) developed a model of student attrition which stressed the importance of informal contacts between students and their faculty members (see Figure 4). Pascarella's (1980) model seeks to recognize the effect of student-faculty nonclassroom contact on educational outcomes and institutional persistence. To achieve this, the model takes into account a student's background characteristics, college experiences, and institutional factors.

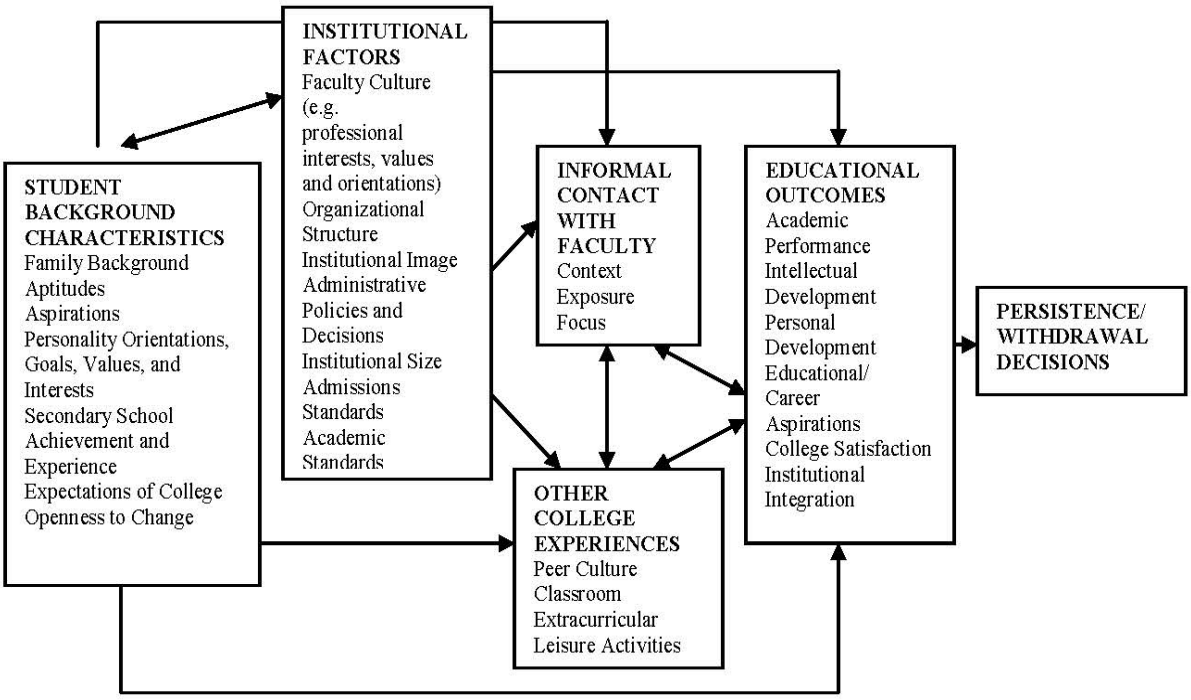


Figure 4. Pascarella's Conceptual Model for Research on Student-Faculty Informal Contact

The model hypothesizes that the students bring with them individual differences based on their unique backgrounds. During the college exploration process, the students interact with the institutional environment. Those with the backgrounds that best fit the environment apply for admission, are accepted, and then enroll.

The distinctive individual characteristics of the students affect the college environment, and therefore will influence the students' social, academic, and extracurricular experiences.

These experiences influence the amount of informal faculty contact, which together lead to educational outcomes. The educational outcomes directly determine the students' decision to persist or withdraw.

Pascarella (1980) acknowledges that although the students' experiences influence the amount of contact with faculty, so too does the institution itself. Factors such as culture, size, residency, reward structure, policies, and advising programs contribute to the faculty's willingness to spend time interacting with students outside of the classroom.

The Synthetic Causal Model of Student Attrition

Bean (1982) developed the Synthetic Causal Model of Student Attrition based on academic factors, student intent, objectives, expectations, and external and internal environmental factors. This model of persistence identified four classes of variables: student characteristic variables, institutional variables, environmental variables, and attitudinal outcome variables, all of which directly or indirectly effect departure decisions. The students' levels of satisfaction with the institution have been tied to the level of institutional commitment and ultimately, the likelihood of departure (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005).

Bean presented a revised model of student departure and concluded that students' peers played an important role in socialization while informal faculty contact played less of a role, students played a more active role in their socialization than previously thought, and college grades seemed more the product of selection than socialization.

Non-traditional Undergraduate Attrition Model

Bean and Metzner (1985, 1996) and Stahl and Pavel, 1992 focused specifically on non-traditional student persistence primarily at community colleges. These authors developed the Non-traditional Undergraduate Attrition Model. Bean and Metzner (1985) addressed non-

traditional student experiences in higher education. These authors argued that other theoretical models relied on social integration into the college community and that, since most non-traditional students are not socially integrated into the college, another model was needed. As indicated by Bean and Metzner (1985), the chief difference between the attrition process of traditional students and non-traditional students is that non-traditional students are more affected by the external environment than by the social integration variables affecting traditional student attrition.

Bean and Metzner (1985) proposed that social integration and family responsibilities influence retention. Currently, the Non-traditional Student Retention Model (see Figure 5) is the most often used model in the community college setting (Ishitani & DesJardins, 2002). Bean and Metzner (1985) suggested that non-traditional students' decisions to stop attending are based on four sets of variables: (a) outside variables that influence a student's academic performance; (b) grade point average; (c) the intent to leave, and (d) environmental variables.

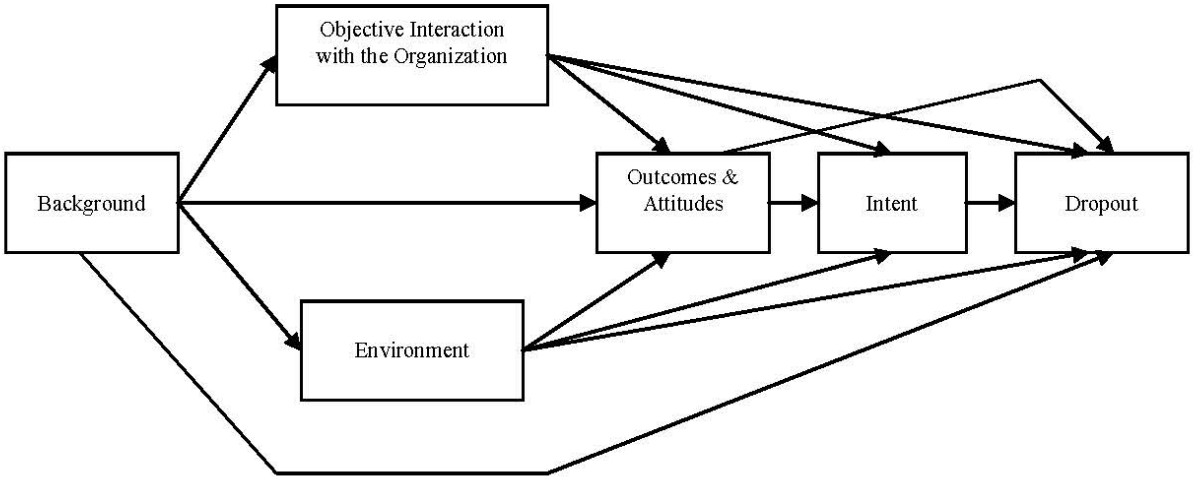


Figure 5. Bean and Metzer Attrition Model

Theory of Student Departure in Commuter Colleges and Universities

Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) indicated that only a few of Tinto's original propositions were strongly supported in studies at commuter colleges and universities and offered an alternative theory. Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) used empirical findings from organizational, psychological, economic, and sociological perspectives to develop this new theory.

In the Theory of Student Departure in Commuter Colleges and Universities (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004), each element influences a student's institutional commitment and decision to remain enrolled at a commuter institution. The initial level of institutional commitment affects student perceptions of the commitment of the college or university. Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) suggested that the more a student perceives that his or her college or university is committed to the welfare of its students, the more the student will socially integrate into the college or university.

Wild and Ebbers (2002) noted that retention research based on retention theories for community colleges was extremely limited. According to Deil-Amen (2011), frameworks that originated with traditional residential students in mind most readily discount the experiences of more than half of our undergraduate population – two-year college students and four-year commuting students who enroll in college while remaining in their communities of origin.

The Theory of Student Departure in Commuter Colleges and Universities (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004) was used because it accounts for the characteristics of community college students and their similarities with commuting students. To more fully understand this model, it is necessary to define student-entry characteristics, external environment variables, and

internal campus environment variables.

Student-entry characteristics include factors such as academic ability, gender, family background, and socialization needs (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). These characteristics affect whether or not a student stops attending college, commits to college upon admission, and adjusts to campus or external environments (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004).

External environments may positively or negatively influence a student's decision to initially enroll or remain enrolled. Commuter students attending community colleges or universities usually balance multiple commitments on and off campus (Astin, 1975; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Deil-Amen, 2011). Consequently, support or discouragement from colleagues, family, and friends and the community surrounding the college serve as external environmental influences on students at commuter colleges.

The internal campus environment is also an important model element. Students attending commuter institutions face unique time constraints and devote much of it to academic pursuits, connecting with faculty, or completing degree requirements (Tinto, 1993). Commuter students also spend time traveling to and from a campus. Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) referred to these rushed activities as "buzzing confusion" (p. 76). Psychological, sociological, organizational, economic, and academic theoretical perspectives have been identified and used as relevant factors in the internal campus environment (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004).

Community College Retention Models

Sanford's Person-Environment Theory

Sanford's Person-Environment Theory (1966) is the heightening of non-traditional, two-year college students through institutional and social engagement. The Person

Environment Theory involves three general concepts that enhance students growth and development: readiness, challenge and support. According to Sanford (1966), individuals could not change until they were willing to do so. He observed that in order for a student to grow, they must be presented with environmental challenges.

Implicit in his concept is the idea that a social compact between students, faculty, and the institution must be in effect to create an environment whereby the student commits to learning new things and whereby the college provides the appropriate developmental support mechanisms learning assistance centers, for example-for academic success (Chaves 2006).

Chickering's Identity Development Theory

Chickering's Identity Development Theory (1969) hypothesized that an institution applying this application could have a positive effect on nontraditional students' retention in two-year colleges through institutional activities. Chickering's (1969) Theory of Identity Development designed seven vectors of identity theorizing the task students must go through while developing their identity.

Chickering's seven vectors of identity development are: (1) developing competence, students produce intellectual, manual, and interpersonal competence; (2) managing emotions, students learn to express and control their emotions; (3) movement through autonomy toward interdependence, learn to operate on their own and take responsibility for themselves; and (4) development of mature interpersonal relationships, ability to be intimate and the ability to accept and celebrate distinctive differences (5) establishing identity which refers primarily to a student's age, culture, and gender; (6) developing purpose which occurs when students develop clear vocational goals and persist in their completion; and (7) developing integrity which refers to the development of humanitarian and personalizing values (Chickering, 1969).

Rendon's Validation Theory

The idea of a social compact — derived from Sanford's Person-Environment Theory which, in part, requires a relationship between the student and the institution — along with the idea of identifying and classifying psychosocial developments in students as posited by Chickering's Identity Development Theory, preceded Rendon's (1989) Theory of Validation. The Validation Theory addresses student retention enhancement of nontraditional students attending two-year colleges and proposes that active forms of validation must be provided to nontraditional students to encourage their continued involvement in college life. Rendon's Theory proposes that validation could occur within classrooms as well as within campus organizations (Chaves, 2006).

New partnerships between businesses, colleges and schools have been formed to inspire at-risk, non-traditional students and serve as examples of Rendon's Validation Theory. One example is the Rich's Academy in Atlanta, an award winning program designed to help Black students graduate from high school (Rendon, 1989). Another example is Manual Barriozabal's Texas Pre-Freshman Engineering Program in San Antonio that assists hundreds of students to acquire reasoning and problem solving skills so they can participate in science and engineering programs (Rendon, 1989). A final example of Rendon's Validation Theory is the federally funded, Department of Education's Freshman Year Experience Program that assists non-traditional students to enter college (Rendon, 1989).

Stahl and Pavel (1992) suggested that the Non-traditional Student Retention Model addressed community college attrition because it recognized environmental variables that colleges must consider to improve student retention. This research attempted to validate the Non-traditional Student Retention Model with existing community college data. Stahl and Pavel

(1992) based this research on a sample of students from a large, urban community college and included two purposes: to determine whether the Bean and Metzner model fit such a sample; and, if it did not fit, to develop a modified model appropriate for community college students. Stahl and Pavel found that the Non-traditional Student Retention Model did not initially fit their sample; however, the model proved useful after it was modified.

Retention Studies

Cofer and Somers (2000) analyzed data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (1996) to understand the persistence patters of 7,510 students enrolled in two-year colleges. Logistic regression was used to predict within-year persistence from student background characteristics, aspirations, college experiences, and college costs and subsidy. Cofer and Somers compared their findings to two earlier studies using National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (1987) data to examine within-year persistence. Both of these previous studies focused on the effects of tuition and aid on persistence among distinct samples; Hippensteel, St. John, and Starkey's (1996) sample consisted only of adult students and St. John and Starkey's (1994) sample was focused on traditionally-aged students.

Cofer and Somers' analyses included all students and revealed different results than the two previous studies. Race and income were not significant predictors in Cofer and Somers' research. In this more recent study, students older than 30 years of age were more likely to persist than student aged 22–30, as were dependent students. Students who completed a GED were significantly less likely to persist than those with a high school diploma. Students with a goal of pursuing a college degree or an advanced degree had a higher likelihood of persisting compared to those who did not desire a degree. These results contradicted St. John and Starkey's findings, as students seeking advanced degrees were less likely to persist.

Full-time students also had a higher likelihood of persistence than part-time students. Students with low first year GPAs were less likely to persist than those with higher GPAs. Students attending public institutions and those who had higher amount of grants and loans were all more likely to persist. In contrast, both Hippensteel and associates and St. John and Starkey found higher grant amounts to be a negative predictor of persistence. Lastly, students attending institutions with higher tuition had a lower likelihood of persistence.

Although it was helpful to see the comparisons that Cofer and Somers (2003) made with earlier research, their research had several limitations. The one year timeframe of the of the NPSAS data points restricts the usefulness of the study's results. Within-year persistence is an important outcome, but the NPSAS survey does not provide information on students' experiences during that critical first year. Therefore, one learns very little from the work of Cofer and Somers, Hippensteel and associates (1996), and St. John and Starkey (1994) about college experiences that can facilitate or hinder persistence. Similarly, these analyses include a few institutional factors (i.e., public vs. private), yet not one of these studies utilized multilevel techniques to better assess the institutional effects of these factors and account for the clustered nature of this national dataset.

Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach's (2006) research examining community college persistence using national data from the Beginning Postsecondary Student Survey (1996–2001). Utilizing a sample of 1,080 students who began college at a two-year institution, the study used logistic regression to predict attainment of a degree/certificate or transfer to a baccalaureate institution within six years, measured as a dichotomous successful student outcome. Bailey and associates explored student characteristics, student intentions, and college experiences as predictors.

In terms of background and precollege characteristics, the researchers found that African American students were significantly less likely to attain a degree or transfer than their White peers. There were no other significant effects based on racial identification as Latino, Asian, or selecting "Other" as a racial/ethnic category. Age was also a negative predictor, as students who entered college at age 23 or older were significantly less likely to attain a degree or transfer in comparison to younger students.

Parental education also mattered, as findings revealed that parental education of a bachelor's degree or higher is a significant positive predictor of attainment or transfer. Students with intentions to transfer, in comparison to those who sought to gain job skills, were more likely to attain or transfer. A second identical model added a control for degree aspirations in place of reasons for enrolling (i.e., gain job skills, transfer) and found that both bachelor's and post-bachelor's degree aspirations in comparison to no degree aspirations were significant predictors of success. Other background and precollege characteristics that were examined, but not found to have a significant effect, included gender, income, disability, receiving financial aid, and having received a GED in lieu of a high school degree (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2006).

Alfonso (2006) adds statistical rigor in comparison to previous research by examining a sample of 8,890 students obtained from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) to determine how initially attending a community college, rather than a four-year institution, affects the probability of baccalaureate attainment. NELS followed a nationally representative cohort of 1988 eighth graders for a period of 12 years, with follow-ups in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. In addition to controlling for traditional predictors (e.g., race, gender, social class, parent education level, college major, prior academic achievement), the study also controlled for students' degree aspirations, attendance pathways (i.e., full-time, part-time, interrupted, and delayed enrollment),

and students' self-selection to attend either a community college or a four-year institution.

Alfonso determined that community college students were 29.3% less likely to earn a bachelor's degree than those who began their education at a four-year institution, even after controlling for traditional predictors, educational expectations, and attendance pathways. When adding controls for self-selection, the diminished likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree grew larger (-33.2%) for those who initiated their education at a community college. In terms of descriptive differences, Alfonso found that community college students who aspired to a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to delay enrollment (14.5% vs. 4.5%), to enroll part-time (75.3% vs. 61.9%), to enroll in remedial education (51.4% vs. 22.4%), to experience interrupted enrollment patterns (41.9% vs. 27.9%), and to come from a lower social class than those who matriculated to four-year institutions. All of these factors were related to a lower likelihood of community college students attaining a bachelor's degree. Alfonso's research uses advanced methods to further the literature; however, the sample was not representative of all students enrolled in community colleges as the data were cohort-based.

Craig and Ward (2008) conducted a study comparing earned credits with student persistence at the Community College of Rhode Island. The five-year institutional specific retention study was built on the theoretical framework of Adelman (2006) by linking the number of earned credits to persistence (Craig & Ward, 2008). The findings resulted in four recommended changes in institutional policies and practices aimed at improving student retention: (a) promote informational and assistance programs for high school students, (b) develop identification systems and early intervention strategies for poorly performing students, (c) strengthen academic and career advising and implement student counseling prior to student

entry, and (d) implement and promulgate stricter policies on course withdrawals (Craig & Ward, 2008).

The Origin of Orientation Programs

The first student orientation course taught for first-year students was taught in 1882 at Lee College in Kentucky (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). In 1888 Boston College followed by offering orientation courses (Gardner, 1986). In 1911 Reed College was the first institution to offer a scheduled orientation course that met weekly and was offered for credit (Gardner, 1986). Other institutions, such as the University of Michigan and Oberlin College, began to offer similar orientation courses in the early 1900s. The offering of orientation courses fluctuated from institution to institution throughout the years.

Dwyer (1989) noted the different concerns about these early orientation programs. Some addressed adjustment problems in general, others attempted to teach the first-year student how to study while others confronted the problems of specialized populations such as first-year students at women's colleges or religious institutions, and yet another group of orientation courses taught what might be now called current events, citizenship, reflective thinking, and career counseling.

By 1928 the number of colleges and universities offering orientation courses increased (Fitz & Swift, 1928). It was not until the 1970s that institutions began to recognize the importance of such a course due to the influx of diverse groups of students whose needs were not being met by existing, piecemeal orientation initiatives (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993). During this time, Taufest (1961), Shaffer (1962), and Fitzgerald and Busch (1963) made strong arguments to intellectualize orientation which previously had always been generally informational.

Smith (1963) introduced the first research to scientifically test the relationship between orientation and retention. Another early study focusing on orientation, conducted by Fley

(1962), found that television forums were an effective way to present key people to a first-year student. The foundation of research on first-year college students was provided by these early studies resulting in today's orientation programs addressing three major outcomes consisting of retention, adjustment, and cognitive development (Sax Gilmartin, Keup, DiCrisi, & Bryant 2000).

Drake (1966) published research showing that orientation was shifting from the course format to an emphasis on the first-year student week. The data supporting this shift showed 95% of universities offered a week-long program for first-year students. During this same time period there was a general growth of orientation programs nationally. In their study of 86 Western junior colleges, Yoder and Beals (1966) found that 88% of the colleges did offer some format of orientation.

During the 1970s, colleges saw an influx of non-traditional students enroll in higher education (Felker, 1984; O'Banion, 1969). Colleges were challenged by these new students as they were older, less academically prepared, and, often the first in their family to attend college (Cross, 1971). To address the needs of these new, diverse students, programs were implemented to help first-year students learn about college (Dwyer, 1989).

Other programs such as the one created by the University of South Carolina in 1972, University 101, hoped to ease the first-year student transition for traditional students through a seminar course (Jewler, 1989). It is obvious that the changes that occurred to higher education in the 1970s had a dramatic impact on the evolution of first-year student orientation. The greatest growth of first-year student orientation occurred during the 1980s. Growth occurred in student participants but also in institutional programs and research studies. Shanley and Hearns (1991) point to the 1980s as the decade of reform and period of substantive research that had a ground

swell of interest in the first-year student year. As Barefoot (1993) points out, it was during this time that higher education began to see orientation as a standard part of the curriculum.

Orientation programs now hold a substantial position in higher education; approximately 70% of colleges and universities offer orientation to their first-year students (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot & Fidler, 1994; Fidler & Fidler, 1991). Research conducted during the 1990s reported studies that support the effectiveness of orientation in improving retention, degree completion, and academic performance (Cueso, 1997).

In their results that summarized how college programs and experiences affect student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) concluded that the weight of the evidence suggests that a first-semester freshman seminar is positively linked with both freshman-year persistence and degree completion this positive link persists even when academic aptitude and secondary school achievement are taken into account. Studies during this time period have not only reported positive effects of orientation programs at the university level but also at community colleges (Cuseo, 1997).

Mullendore and Banahan (2005) study showed new student orientation programs experienced transitions and trends developed through 1990s and into the new millennium. Mullendore and Banahan attribute the transitions of orientation programs as due in large part to the research and training activities sponsored by the National Orientation Directors Association. Further, recent trends in orientation programs are noted in the following areas:

1) Orientation programs have become more academic in nature and collaboration between faculty and student affairs personnel has increased (Strumpf & Wawrynski, 2000);
2) Technological advances have caused orientation leaders to examine delivery methods

and find a balance which still provides human connections between students and their institutions (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Newman & Miller, 2002);

3) College populations have changed and the number of non-traditional students attending colleges and orientation sessions has increased, causing orientation leaders to provide flexible and efficient orientation programs (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005);
4) Family attendance and involvement in new student orientation has increased (Hatch, 2000); and
5) Increasing diversity of students has provided opportunities for orientation professionals to examine program goals and objectives to ensure student needs are being met (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005).

Over the past decade, the number of first-year experience courses has increased and so has research conducted in this area. National data collected in 2005 indicated that the number of higher education institutions offering first-year seminar programs was reported as 85% (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Research conducted by Hensheid (2004) noted that the growing number of positive effects associated with first-year seminars had shifted the examination from "should they be offered?" to "what type should be offered?" (p. 1). Also, research conducted by Cavote and Kopera-Frye (2004) and Henscheid (2004) indicates that first-year seminars serve in helping students adjust to the intellectual and social demands of higher education.

Mullendore and Banahan (2005) stated that the new student orientations are frequently offered during the summer or immediately prior to the term. Perigo and Upcraft (1989) recommended four goals to be considered as foundational components of new student orientation programs as follows: (1) Orientation programs should help new students achieve academically; (2) Orientation programs should assist students in their adjustment to and involvement in college;

(3) Orientation programs should be designed to assist parents and family members in understanding the complexity and services of the college environment; and (4) Orientation programs should provide college personnel with an opportunity to learn about incoming students and connect with them through formal and informal means.

Further, Miller (1999) reinforced pathways for implementing these goals in his description of effective orientation programs: Orientation programs must

(1) Assist new students in understanding their responsibilities within the educational setting;

(2) Provide new students with information about academic policies, procedures, requirements, and programs sufficient to make well-reasoned and well-informed choices;

(3) Inform new students about the availability of services and programs… assist new students in becoming familiar with the campus and local environment ; and

(4) Provide intentional opportunities for new students to interact with faculty, staff, and continuing students. (Miller, 1999)

Over time, orientation programs have evolved in part to meet the needs of the changing landscape of higher education. Friedman and Marsh (2009) noted that as the needs of colleges and students change so do the types of first-year programs offered. In examining current-day programs and practices in community colleges, Mullendore and Banahan (2005) provided information related to student needs and indicated that new student orientation programs in two-year institutions tend to reflect the nature of the students they serve and, while they may vary from college to college, most are half-day programs offered at various times of day. Cook (2000) identified central components of effective two-year orientation programs as: pre-enrollment

assessment, developmental academic advising well beyond class scheduling, and class registration.

Current-day recommendations related to orientation programs provide support for program evaluation. Mullendore and Banahan (2005) recommended that student orientation providers conduct systematic qualitative and quantitative evaluations of programs to determine whether the stated mission and goals are being met.

Orientation programs are significant contributors to retention, degree completion and student success (Braxton, Hirschy, & McLendon 2004; Filder, 1991; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Karp, 2011; O'Gar et al., 2009; Schnell, Louis, & Doetkott, 2003; Tinto, 1975). Orientation studies in this literature focused on the impact of orientation programs and the outcomes were examined.

Orientation Programs' Missions

The primary goal of an orientation program is to help students adjust, promote academic success and graduation (Karp, 2011; Lang, 2007; Noble, 2007; Schnell, 2003), encourage use of help services (Braxton, 2004; Karp, 2008), and reduce costly administrative time (Barefoot & Gardener, 1993; Cohen & Jody, 1978). The majority of orientation courses taken by students are designed to facilitate adjustment to college (Sax, Gilmartin, Keup, DiCrisi, & Bryant 2000).

Although entering first-year students generally perceive themselves as being capable of attaining their desired academic goals, educators have long recognized the gap between first-year student optimism and the commitment needed to be successful academically (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Colleges often turn to orientation programs to integrate students into the institution and, hopefully, reduce attrition along the way (Colton, Connor, Shultz, & Easter,

1999; Gardner, Moore, & Roberts, 1999; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Martin, 1998; Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985; Reason, 2006; Schnell & Doetkott, 2003; Ting, 1997).

Many experts contend that helping students address non-academic deficiencies such as poor study habits and lack of clear goals for college and careers is just as essential as the assistance provided through remedial courses (Boylan, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Some researchers have supported the use of orientation programs to help students learn study skills (Braxton & McCLendon, 2002; Karp, 2011) and understand college expectations (Boylan, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), justifying that orientation sessions link students with student support services (Fidler & Godwin, 1994; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Jamelske, 2009; Mangold, 2003; Mayhew, 2011; O'Gara, 2009).

Orientation programs address students' preparedness, their identification, and influences to the academic and social cultures of the institution, and their academic goals and objectives (Erickson, Peters, & Strommer, 2006; Fidler, 1991; Tinto, 1993). According to Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, and Mugenda (2000), orientation courses can help emphasize to students that they matter to the institution and will be supported as they advance toward graduation. This validation connects the student to the institution and helps build institutional and goal commitment as well as social support networks.

Porter and Swing (2006) reported in their research that orientation courses benefit colleges in numerous ways, including (1) keeping tuition-paying students enrolled; (2) helping with recruitment and marketing to potential students, given that high retention rates have characteristically served as a measuring stick for quality; (3) improving rankings in annual college survey and reports such as in U.S. News and World Report, where retention rates are a factor; and (4) keeping with the institution's mission of graduating students and preparing them

for the workforce. These benefits all demonstrate intrinsic factors that serve to enhance and promote the institution.

Although most higher education institutions offer orientation programs, many students are not taking advantage of these offerings. Based on 2007 research conducted through the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) found that one out of five entering community college students were unaware of an orientation program. Slightly more than one-third of entering students (36%) say they have participated in a student success course. Only 38% of entering students report that they attended an on-campus orientation program prior to the beginning of classes while 11% indicate they participated in an online orientation prior to the beginning of classes.

Seventeen percent of the students enrolling in orientation reveal that they enrolled as part of their course schedule. Twenty percent of entering students revealed that they were not aware of an orientation program or course. Among entering students who took a success course, 46% reported that the course helped them to gain knowledge or skills important to their success.

Currently, few orientation programs are assessed to determine achievement of intended outcome or if they have produced unintended outcomes. The effectiveness of first-year student orientation is a long-lived debate (Barefoot, 2000; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007).

Orientation Studies

The first research-based study examining orientation was conducted in the late 1950s. Smith (1963) published a study comparing retention rates among African American males completing orientation to their counterparts not completing orientation. Since this initial study focusing on orientation and its value to higher education, numerous studies have followed in

examining the efficacy of orientation. Cuseo (1991, 1997) indicated there may be more empirical research related to orientation than any other single course in higher education, and for that reason American higher education curriculum will always include an orientation component.

There is a considerable body of literature on first-year student orientation at the four-year level including well-known studies conducted by Barefoot (1998), Banning (1989), Cuseo (1991, 1997), Fidler and Fidler (1991), and Gardner (1989); however, there is little evidence-based research that exists that has focused on orientation courses offered at the community college level (Cueso, 1997; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005; Perrine & Spain, 2008; Rhodes & Carifio, 1999; Zeidenberg 2007). Leading retention theories have made a clear case for orientation courses. Specifically, Astin's Student Involvement Theory reported that as students increase their physical and emotional investment to their college campus, their rate of retention increases (Astin, 1984).

Some researchers have attempted to evaluate the usefulness of orientation programs. In a Georgia study conducted by Farr, Jones, and Samprone (1986), the authors compared four-year college students taking orientation courses to those who did not. Students were randomly selected for the study, and the researchers accounted for Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in comparing the control group to the students who took the orientation course. Although the students who had not taken orientation had higher SAT scores, the results of the study concluded there was no difference in the grade point averages between both groups.

In a similar study, Davis (1992) used longitudinal data to examine the retention and academic performance of students taking first-year student orientation. In this study, students with lower SAT scores who participated in first-year student orientation were retained and had higher grade-point averages than those not participating in orientation.

A 1986 study found that first-year students who complete orientation courses were retained at a much higher rate than those who did not complete an orientation course (Gardener, 1986). In a study of students who enrolled in the first-year student seminar at a public four-year university, Schnell and Doetkott (2003) found significantly greater retention for students who enrolled in the course than those who did not.

In Ryan and Glenn's 2004 study, findings indicate that students who were enrolled in an orientation course were retained and succeeded at a much higher rate than their counterparts who were not enrolled in an orientation course. Similarly, Boudreau and Kromrey (1994) found a positive relationship between completion of the course and retention and academic performance.

A 1988 study conducted by the Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives examined college student retention and enrollment patterns in that state. It tracked the progress of freshmen entering school in the fall of 1998 through 1990. Interviews focusing on students' plans, background, preparation for college, and freshman year experiences were conducted with a sample of retained students and dropouts of all entering students. The study revealed several key findings: By their second year of enrollment, 55 percent of entering freshmen had dropped out; 16 percent of entering freshmen transferred by the beginning of their fourth year of enrollment, with full-time students transferring at a higher rate than part-timers; 35 percent of the students interviewed were not enrolled in a degree program and did not intend to pursue a degree; by spring 1991, 25 percent of the fall 1988 degree-seeking students had transferred, 33 percent had dropped out, 30 percent were still enrolled, and 13 percent had graduated; the majority of community college students received some type of financial aid, most commonly a grant; 82 percent of all students were employed, with dropouts working the most

hours and four-year transfers working the fewest; 34 percent of all students enrolled in at least one remedial or basic skills course; and 29 percent of the students reported some problem in enrolling in desired courses.

For five years, Hoff, Cook and Price (1996) collected data on students enrolled in a first-year student seminar course at a two-year college. Students who took orientation were compared to students who did not take orientation while being matched on age, sex, standardized entrance exam scores, career objectives, and grade point average. Outcomes revealed that students who completed first-year student orientation were retained at a higher rate (69.5% versus 55.8% for non-participants), attempted more course hours (24.9 versus 22.2 for non-participants), and completed more hours (56 versus 44.6 for non-participants). Although significant results were found in these areas, there was no variance between the two groups related to grade point averages. Similarly, a longitudinal study conducted by Fidler and Moore (1996) at the University of South Carolina followed eight freshman cohorts that had enrolled in orientation. The authors concluded that students taking orientation courses persisted at a higher rate than those not taking orientation.

In a 1998 study, Weissman, Bulakowaski, and Jumisco found that many first-time freshmen have similar experiences, such as misunderstanding over the enrollment process, anxieties about finances, and the need to balance their lives in and away from college. They further explained that there can be striking differences in the transition process for White, Black, and Hispanic students which have implications when designing and developing strategies to facilitate students' transition to college and examining techniques to improve retention. Further, the researchers noted in their findings that orientation plays a crucial role in helping students learn about their new environment. Orientation programs should provide both

academic orientation as well as opportunities to help students feel validated. Students need to understand what it takes to be successful in college and the adjustments they may need to make to stay in college (Weissman, Bulakowaski, & Jumisco, 1998).

Erikson (1998) conducted a study focusing on first-year students who were deemed at-risk. The study focused on a week-long orientation that took place immediately before the beginning of the fall semester. The orientation provided cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills along with literacy training. Student retention and grade point averages were the measures of student success that were examined. Outcomes revealed that all 23 participants finished the fall semester. The following spring semester, 91% of the orientation participants registered for classes. The subsequent spring semester, 80% of the cohort group that did not take orientation registered for classes. In regards to grade points averages, the students participating in orientation had an average of 2.20 while the blind cohort group had a grade point average of 1.65.

A study conducted by Micceri and Wajeeh (1999) at the University of South Florida used a matched-group comparison. First-time-in-college students were compared based on those who participated in orientation versus those who did not. Students who took the first-year student seminar course scored consistently higher in all enrollment variables studied. Students enrolled in the first-year student seminar were retained at a higher rate the preceding spring to fall semesters. The students also enrolled in more semesters, completed more cumulative credit hours, and had higher spring to second fall semester grade point averages than the students who did not complete orientation.

Zimmerman (2000) conducted a study at a two year college where grades in orientation were shown to be a better predictor of success than high school rank. In this same study,

orientation grades proved a better predictor of academic success than American College Test (ACT) scores. Measures of success used in this study were timely graduation and grade point average; however, the results of this study contradict those of an earlier study conducted by Astin (1993). In this study, high school grades and SAT scores were found to be the best predictors of academic success.

Williford, Chapman, and Kahrig (2000–2001) studied 10 years of data of students participating in first-year student orientation. The study compared matched groups of participants and non-participants based on academic performance, student retention, and graduation. Findings for most of the years concluded that students participating in orientation had higher grade point averages, retention rates, and graduation rates.

In 2002, Franklin, Cranston, Peery, and Purtle found that students who completed an orientation course consistently scored higher than a control group in areas such as student development and integration to campus culture. These students also reported using academic support services at a higher rate than students who did not take orientation. According to Sax (2000), students do report greater satisfaction with overall adjustment to college and faculty contact after completing an orientation course.

In a study of students who enrolled in the first-year student seminar at a public four-year university, Schnell and Doetkott (2003) found significantly greater retention for students who enrolled in the course than those who did not. Similarly, in Ryan and Glenn's 2004 study, findings indicated that students who were enrolled in an orientation course were retained and succeeded at a much higher rate than their counterparts who were not enrolled in an orientation course.

A study conducted by Derby and Watson (2005) discovered a relationship between Hispanic student participation in an orientation course and degree completion in a community college environment. In a subsequent study in 2006, Derby and Watson did not find a relationship between attending an orientation course and African American degree completion, but relatively found associations between African American student participation in a new student orientation course and improved retention and persistence at the community college level.

Derby (2007) further studied the relations of degree completion and attendance in an orientation course in a community college over a four year period and reported that predicting the attendance of the course was a significant predictor of degree completion among White students but the predictors of degree completion for Hispanic and African American students were not significant. The findings between these studies were mixed and the researcher recommended further research in this area (Derby, 2007).

In 2005, the Florida Department of Education conducted an internal study on an earlier cohort of students comparing the success rates of those students who enrolled in the student success course to those who did not (Florida Department of Education, 2005). Fifty-eight percent of the student success course group was academically successful as compared to 41% of the group who did not enroll in the student success course. The students taking the student success course graduated, transferred, or persisted at a rate at least 5% more than the students not taking the course. The results held true when the analysis was disaggregated by those who were college-ready and those who need remediation.

The Florida Community College at Jacksonville conducted a study of the 2007 cohort comparing students who took their Student Life Skills course to those who did not (Community

College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008). Findings revealed that the students who took the Student Life Skills (SLS) course had a 77% pass rate in developmental courses compared to a 62% pass rate in developmental courses for the students not taking the SLS course. Students from this same cohort who took non developmental classes had pass rates of 78% for the students taking the SLS course versus a 58% pass rate for the students electing not to take the SLS course. The fall to spring retention rate was almost 20% higher for students who took the SLS course.

A qualitative study conducted through the Community College Research Center (Hughes, Karp, & O'Gara, 2009) examined student success courses in two urban community colleges to explore how institutional support services contribute to the support of degree completion. The researchers conducted interviews with community college students during their second semester of enrollment, and re-interviewed the students six months later during the fall semester, whether they remained enrolled or not. Students reported that student success courses were key in helping them obtain information about the college and courses, develop stronger study skills, and develop meaningful relationships. Students reported not only knowing about but also utilizing college services as a result of taking the student success course.

Findings indicated that the student success courses, providing information related to student support services produced positive results in helping students adjust to the community college and persist towards the completion of a degree. Research recommendations presented in this study support the need to further examine community college programs providing freshmen with information related to student support services and correlations of persistence and retention (O'Gara, Mechur-Karp & Hughes, 2009).

A study conducted by Hollins (2009) concluded that community college students who

participated in a pre-semester program providing information related to student orientation, advising, and registration had a higher retention rate than students who did not participate. The study further reported that students who participated in a pre-semester orientation program who also enrolled in a semester-long student success course exhibited higher retention rates than other groups. The researcher recommended that community colleges develop and provide pre-semester orientation programs that offer opportunities for students to become familiar with institutions, campus cultures, and services. Further recommendations for research were presented related to examining pre-semester and semester-long program formats and content in community college settings (Hollins, 2009).

As a result of conducting research designed to examine retention and baccalaureate attainment of Latina/o students, Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009) found that community colleges are often a critical component of student success and can influence students' decisions to complete a four-year degree. Through research and program evaluation, a number of elements were identified as critical for Hispanic student success which included: (1) implementing pre-college programs to identify and understand students' needs as early as possible, (2) mandating and sustaining orientation programs throughout the academic career for students and families, (3) providing both academic and nonacademic support, and (4) collecting data and conducting program evaluations for continuous improvement (Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009).

The Relationship between Orientation and Academic Performance

Considering that the goal of first-year student orientation courses is student success, a great deal of research has focused on the effect orientation has on academic performance. Measures of academic performance include retention, grade point average, and hours completed. One of the earliest studies to focus on the effects of completing an orientation course on

academic performance was conducted by Kopecek (1971). This study did find students taking orientation had higher mean grade point averages than students not taking orientation; however, the study showed that participation in orientation did not increase or decrease retention.

Maisto and Tammi (1991) studied a group of 150 students enrolled in first-year student orientation. Their findings concluded that students participating in first-year student orientation had higher grade point averages than a matched group of students not participating in orientation. This study also revealed that orientation participants had more faculty contacts than the first-year student not participating in orientation. Based on Involvement Theory (Astin, 1978), it could be predicted that these students would be more successful because they are more connected to the campus.

In a 1999 study conducted by Sidle and McReynolds, the relationship between orientation and retention, grade-point average, and hours taken was examined. This study had a sample of 862 first-year students and a positive relationship existed between students participating in first-year student orientation and student success, specifically in retention and grade point averages. Oriented students had higher cumulative grade-point averages (2.17) than non-oriented first-year students (1.99). In addition, oriented first- year students had a higher ratio of earned credit hours.

The oriented students were also retained at a higher rate than the non-oriented students. Those participating in orientation persisted to the fall semester of the second year at a rate of 63% while the non-oriented students persisted at a lower rate of 56%. In a similar study conducted by Odell (1996), a positive relationship was found between participation in first-year student orientation and the student success measures, retention and grade-point average. In addition to having higher grade-point averages, the oriented students also had a reduction in the

number of classes dropped or failed in comparison to the students who did not participate in orientation.

Findings from a study conducted at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte (Davis-Underwood & Lee, 1994) revealed that students participating in an orientation course were more integrated to the college and had higher grade point averages than non-oriented students. Similar finding were reported by Bolender (1994) in a study conducted at Mount Vernon Nazarene College in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Results from the sample — 254 first-year student students — revealed that students participating in first-year student orientation had higher grade point averages in comparison to the matched group of non-participants. In addition, this study found that the oriented students had more faculty contacts than non-participants.

Summary

Community colleges serve a diverse student population often not seen at four-year institutions. However, providing support services for these populations presents community colleges with complex challenges. The academic success of students attending community colleges is often hindered by external conditions unique to nontraditional students. Therefore, effective and intentional retention strategies are essential. Retention studies point to numerous factors that contribute to student retention and attrition. Therefore, effective and intentional retention strategies are essential.

Orientation programs have been a tool used by higher education institutions for over 128 years. Throughout history, the complexion of orientation has changed to meet the needs of students. However, the purpose of orientation, to integrate students into the institution, has remained a constant. In recent years, scholars have conducted numerous studies with results pointing to a positive relationship between participating in an orientation program and academic

integration. The majority of studies have evaluated orientation programs at four-year institutions. There remains a need to conduct research with community college orientation programs that focus on the first semester of a student's educational experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

Although most community colleges offer orientation courses, research has produced little information on their effectiveness (Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). A great deal of research has focused on orientation at the four-year level; however, a gap in the literature reveals that the literature lacks studies investigating student success courses at the community college level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of student success in a freshman orientation course at a two-year community college in Alabama. Specific student success indicators, grade point average and retention will act as measurements. These indicators will also be used to compare first-year students who participated in orientation their first semester with first-year students who did not participate in orientation their first semester. Although similar research has been conducted (Zeidenberg, Jenkins & Calgano, 2007), a gap exists examining the relationship between participation in orientation and retention and GPA at community colleges.

Zeidenberg, Jenkins and Calgano (2007) studied students at a Florida Community College and found a significant relationship between students enrolling in orientation and completing a credential. However, this study only examined the percentage of these students who returned in the following two semesters. Previous research has mainly focused on the

relationship between participation in orientation and student success without controlling certain confounding variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and placement test scores. Most of the research investigating the relationship between community college student success and orientation presents qualitative findings.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of freshman orientation on first semester college students' cumulative grade point average?

2. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their second semester?

3. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their third semester?

The Freshman Academy is a required orientation course for the incoming freshman enrolled at the two-year college in this study. Freshman Academy is designed to equip, engage and empower students and will provide students with an array of experimental learning opportunities geared towards seven specific student learning outcomes. Each expected outcome addresses a specific and targeted area that the college (faculty, staff, students and administrators), the community and other stakeholders, as well as strategic planning data have indicated as areas in need of improvement. The targeted areas include: technology skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills (oral, written and listening), social skills, time management skills, study skills, leadership skills and accepting personal responsibility.

The Freshman Academy mini-term (8 weeks) is a one credit-hour, two contact-hour course designed to introduce first-year students to the two-year public community college

experience. The course emphasizes student development in their commitment to academic success and focuses on the acceptance of individual responsibility in their academic, social and personal pursuits. It explains college services; examines college policies and procedures; explores educational goals and career plans; helps students identify their learning styles; provides seminars, workshops, guest speakers; and provides a variety of out-of-class experiences to impact the educational process and to improve student success skills.

Freshman Academy is designed to engage students in the learning process, to equip students with knowledge, skills, resources and experiences, and to empower students with a sense of intellectual curiosity about the learning process and its impact on their academic, social and personal choices. Freshmen Academy provides an opportunity for new students to interact with the college president, deans of academic and student affairs, division chairs, and numerous faculty and staff members. College representatives discuss various resources and departments within the college and encourage students to contact them with questions and concerns.

During class, new students participate in a campus tour of important places and resources for student success in which they received items necessary or helpful in attending college: (a) parking permits, (b) library cards, (c) email and Blackboard accounts, and (d) applications for student clubs and activities. Developing orientation programs like Freshmen Academy addressed new students' needs during the first critical semester. Also, Freshmen Academy may assist new students by providing a common bond on which to build. This research addresses the effect of a freshman orientation course (Freshman Academy) on academic performance, retention and attrition.

Chapter 3 describes the research process that was used in this study. It describes the design of the study and data collection, reliability and validity of the Freshman Academy a required orientation for all freshman students.

Design of the Study

This study was designed as a quantitative study to examine a student orientation program, Freshmen Academy, at a two-year public, community college. The sample for this study was selected at one community college. The results of academic performance, attrition, and retention of participants and non-participants were examined through student enrolling in the fall 2010 and fall 2011. This research design is described by Wiersma and Jurs (2009) as research that occurs after the fact. The variables examined include academic performance, retention and attrition.

Independent Variable

Participation in the orientation course. When examining students who completed the orientation course during the first semester of enrollment (fall 2010 and fall 2011), the variable is dichotomous; participation in the orientation course was coded 1 = Orientation, 0 = Non-orientation.

Dependent Variables

The study evaluated student success outcomes in the orientation course using three dependent variables: academic performance (GPA), retention, and attrition.

Grade point average. The first student success outcome evaluated is GPA. GPA is measured for this study utilizing the following quality point grading system: A = 4.0; B = 3.0; C = 2.0; and D = 1.0. GPA is a common measurement of academic performance.

Retention/Attrition. The second and third student success outcome evaluated is retention and attrition. This value was determined by the students' continuous enrollment each

semester coded as 1 = retention. The number of students not completing their current semester of enrollment. Students who are not retained for any subsequent semester are coded as 0 = attrition. Retention and attrition wer used as separate variables.

Reliability and Validity

The use of institutional data for this study provided some protection from threats to the validity of research findings. The research design for this study included the collection of data long after the intervention. Study participants experienced no interaction with the researcher, thus excluding concerns about interaction effects between the participants and the researcher (i.e. experimenter expectancy effects). Participants were not subjected to observation or data collection in a research setting, thus excluding concerns about demand characteristics or interaction effects from the research setting. Participants did not experience a pre-test and post-test design, nor did they have multiple treatments related to this study, thus excluding concerns about practice effect or carryover effects.

Internal validity could not be completely controlled in this study. Wiersma and Jurs (2009) defined internal validity as the extent to which the results of a research study can be interpreted accurately with no reasonable alternative explanations. The retention variable used in this study presented a threat to internal validity as the researcher cannot account for the exact departure date for students or the reason for the student's departure.

Reliability in research is important and refers to both the consistency of research and the extent to which studies can be replicated (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). This study met the expectancies of both internal and external reliability. Internal reliability describes the consistency of the collection of research data. Since one researcher collected the data in this study, there was no concern over consistency in collection procedures. External reliability refers

to the ability of other researchers to replicate the methods used. The straightforward process of data collection, analysis and evaluation utilized in the current study ensured that other researchers in the field could easily replicate the process.

Description of Sample Orientation Students and Non-Orientation Students

This study examined the differences in first-year students at a selected community college who participated in a new student orientation program (Freshmen Academy). The study compared GPA, attrition, and retention of new students who participated in Freshmen Academy to those who did not participate in the program. The comparison group was also composed of similar first-year students.

The sample for this study was identified through a computer search of the community colleges student academic database AS400. The sample consisted of all new students admitted and enrolled in Freshmen Academy classes for the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 semesters. During the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 there were a total of 684 students enrolled in the Freshman Academy course and 684 students who were not enrolled in the Freshman Academy course. To neutralize possible self-selection bias, the researcher purposefully selected the comparison group for the study by including students whose English and Math placement test scores were similar to students in the orientation group. Students at the college in this study must take one of the following assessments for placement purposes: Compass, Asset, ACT, or SAT. A student's placement in English and Math is a strong indicator of his/her college readiness.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data analysis methods were used in this study. Data were collected in Microsoft Excel and imported into SPSS for analysis. The participant group first-year orientation students and comparison group first-year non-orientation students were analyzed

using descriptive statistics. Data were entered for each student enrollment status as follows: 1 = Orientation, 2 = Non-orientation for second semester and third semester. Enrollment status for each semester was coded and entered as 1 = enrolled and 0 = not enrolled. Grade point averages for each student were entered in semesters in which they were enrolled.

The first research question was the preliminary analysis of the impact of freshman orientation and grade point averages. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for both the first and second semester grade point averages. This statistical analysis was selected because it allowed the researcher to see if there were a significant difference between the mean grade point averages of orientation students and none orientation students for the first and second semesters. The one-way ANOVA was a suitable statistic because of the nature of the variables associated with the research question. This portion of the study focused on one independent variable (student participation) and one dependent variable (grade point average), and the samples were independent. Significance level was set at the $p = 0.05$ level.

The second and third research questions were the preliminary analysis of the impact of freshman orientation on attrition and retention. A two-group independent samples chi-square test with a dichotomous response variable was used as the statistical measure. Each variable represented a dichotomy and created a classic 2 by 2 contingency table. The chi-square test was used to determine if there was an association between the two variables. A Cramer's V was used to determine the strength of the association between the two variables.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

Although most community colleges use orientation courses, there is little information on their effectiveness (Barefoot, 2000; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). Some research has focused on orientation at the four-year level (Astin, 1993; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Deil-Amen, 2011; Mohammadi, 1994; Tinto, 1987; Wild & Ebbers, 2002); however, there is a lack of studies investigating student success courses at the community college level.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of student success in a freshman orientation course at a two-year community college in Alabama. Specific student success indicators, grade point average and retention will act as measurements. These indicators will also be used to compare first-year students who participated in orientation their first semester with first-year who did not participating in orientation their first semester. Although similar research has been conducted (Zeidenberg, Jenkins & Calgano, 2007), a gap exists examining the relationship between participation in orientation and retention and GPA at community colleges.

Zeidenberg, Jenkins and Calgano (2007) studied students at a Florida Community College and found a significant relationship between students enrolling in orientation and completing a credential. However, this study only examined the percentage of these students who returned in the following two semesters. Previous research has mainly focused on the relationship between participation in orientation and student success without controlling certain

confounding variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and placement test scores. Most of the research investigating the relationship between community college student success and orientation presents qualitative findings.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of freshman orientation on first semester college students' cumulative grade point average?

2. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their second semester?

3. What is the effect of freshman orientation on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their third semester?

Descriptive Statistics

There were 684 freshman participants that attended the freshman orientation and 684 that did not attend the freshman orientation. Students in this study attend a community college, which in 2010 reported an annual attendance of 7,056 students (Institutional Research Office, 2013). Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the student population is male while 63% is female. Seventy-eight percent of the student body is African American, 13% is Caucasian, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% Two or More Races, 1% Hawaiian, and the remaining 2% Race/Ethnicity Unknown. In regards to age, 58% of the students enrolled are 24 years of age or younger and 42% of the students are 25 years of age or older.

The population of this study is 1,368 students that were first-time students in the fall semesters 2010 and 2011. The demographic characteristics of ethnicity, gender, and age were

similar in 2010 student bodies in comparison to the demographic characteristics of the students in this study.

Although a significant Cramer's V was found, the researcher sought to further explore the association between the variables in an effort to determine practical versus statistical significance. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r = .085) was employed for correlation analysis.

Research Question One: Does freshman orientation have any effect on first semester college students' cumulative grade point average?

An ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate the effect on first semester college students' academic success who took orientation and the students who did not take orientation. Table 1 is the examination of the grade point average for the study. This comparison revealed that orientation students had 684 records while non-orientation students had 684 records for a total of 1368 records. The grade point average analysis showed that orientation students had a mean grade point average of 2.35 (SD = 1.408) and non-orientation students had a mean grade point average of 1.99 (SD = 1.613).

Table 1

Freshmen First Semester College Students' Cumulative Grade Point Average

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
No Orientation	684	1.99	1.613
Orientation	684	2.35	1.408

Since the Levene's p-value (0.170) in Table 2 is greater than 0.05, the test of equal variances for the cumulative grade point average are statistically significant, F(1,1367)=19.623,

p=.000, partial η^2=.014. Therefore, the use of a parametric test such as the ANOVA can be used for further analysis.

Table 2

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for Cumulative Grade Point Average

F	Degrees of Freedom 1	Degrees of Freedom 2	Significance
1.885	1	1366	.170

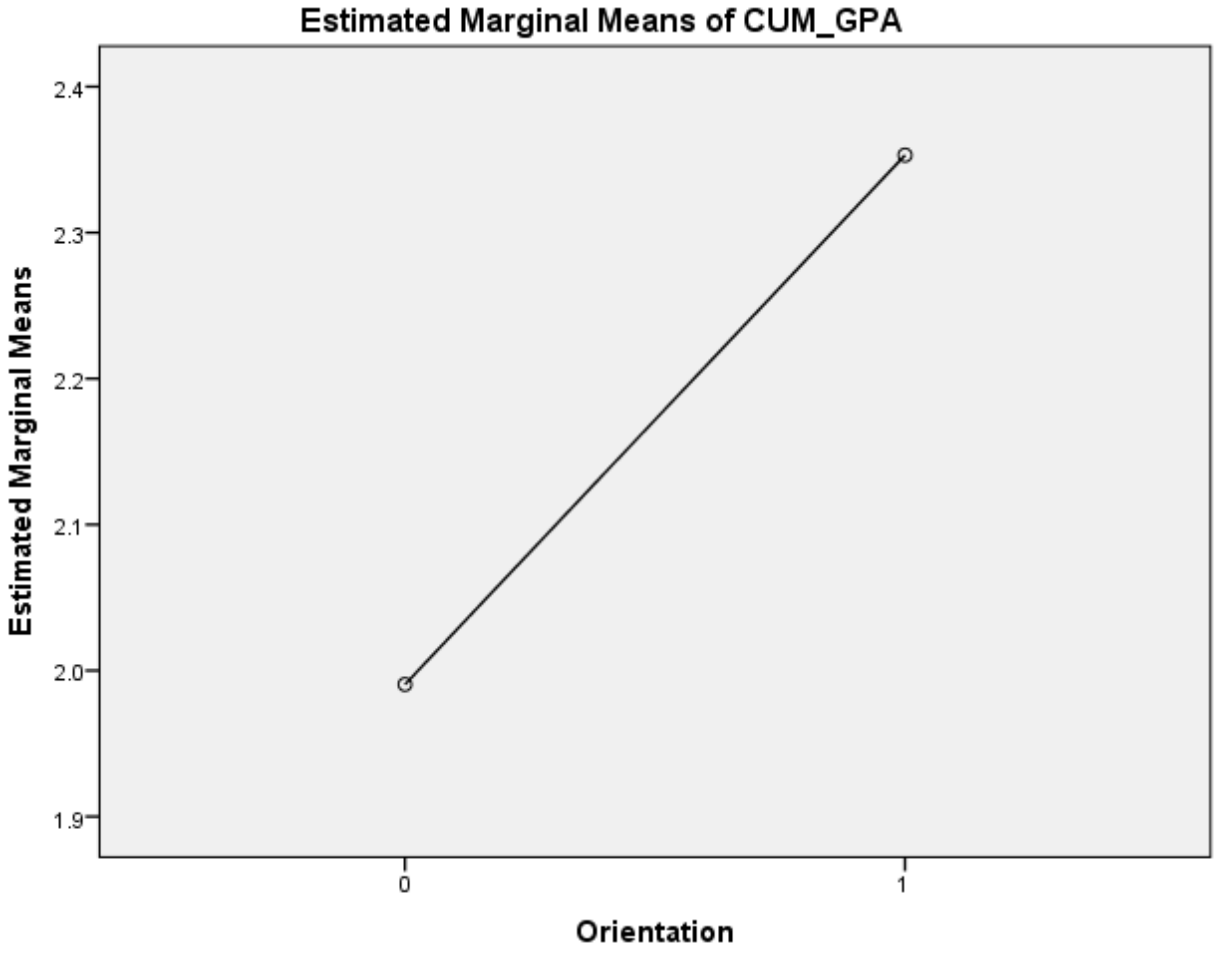


Figure 6. Marginal Means of Cumulative Grade Point Average

Research Question Two: Does freshman orientation have any effect on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their second semester?

A two-group independent-samples chi-square test with a dichotomous response variable was conducted. This test was chosen to determine if an association exists between the variable, retention/attrition and orientation.

Table 3 results show that out of the 288 freshmen who did not return, 157 of were not participants in orientation and 131 were participants in orientation. Out of the 684 freshmen who participated in freshmen orientation 80.8% of the students were retained and 77% of those who did not participated in orientation were also retained.

Table 3

Second Semester Orientation Crosstabulation

			Orientation		Total
			0	1	
Second Term, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	Attrition	Count	157	131	288
		% within Second Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
		% within Orientation	23.0%	19.2%	21.1%
		% of Total	11.5%	9.6%	21.1%
	Retention	Count	527	553	1080
		% within Second Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	48.8%	51.2%	100.0%

	% within Orientation	77.0%	80.8%	78.9%
	% of Total	38.5%	40.4%	78.9%
	Count	684	684	1368
	% within Second Semester,	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	0 = attrition, 1 = retention			
	% within Orientation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Second Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention

In Table 4, we can see that $x^2 = 2.973$, $p = 0.085$ is > than .05. This tells us that there is not an association between student attrition-retention and orientation. That is, student drop-out rates are equally distributed for students in second semester who participated in orientation during the first term. Although we did not reach statistical significance based on the research question, it was hoped that the orientation program would yield better retention rates.

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.973[a]	1	.085		
Continuity Correction[b]	2.749	1	.097		
Likelihood Ratio	2.976	1	.084		
Fisher's Exact Test				.097	.049

Linear-by-Linear Association	2.971	1	.085
N of Valid Cases	1368		

Phi and Cramer's V are both tests of the strength of association. The strength of association between the variables is weak but statistically significant.

Table 5

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.078	.004
Nominal	Cramer's V	.078	.004
N of Valid Cases		1368	

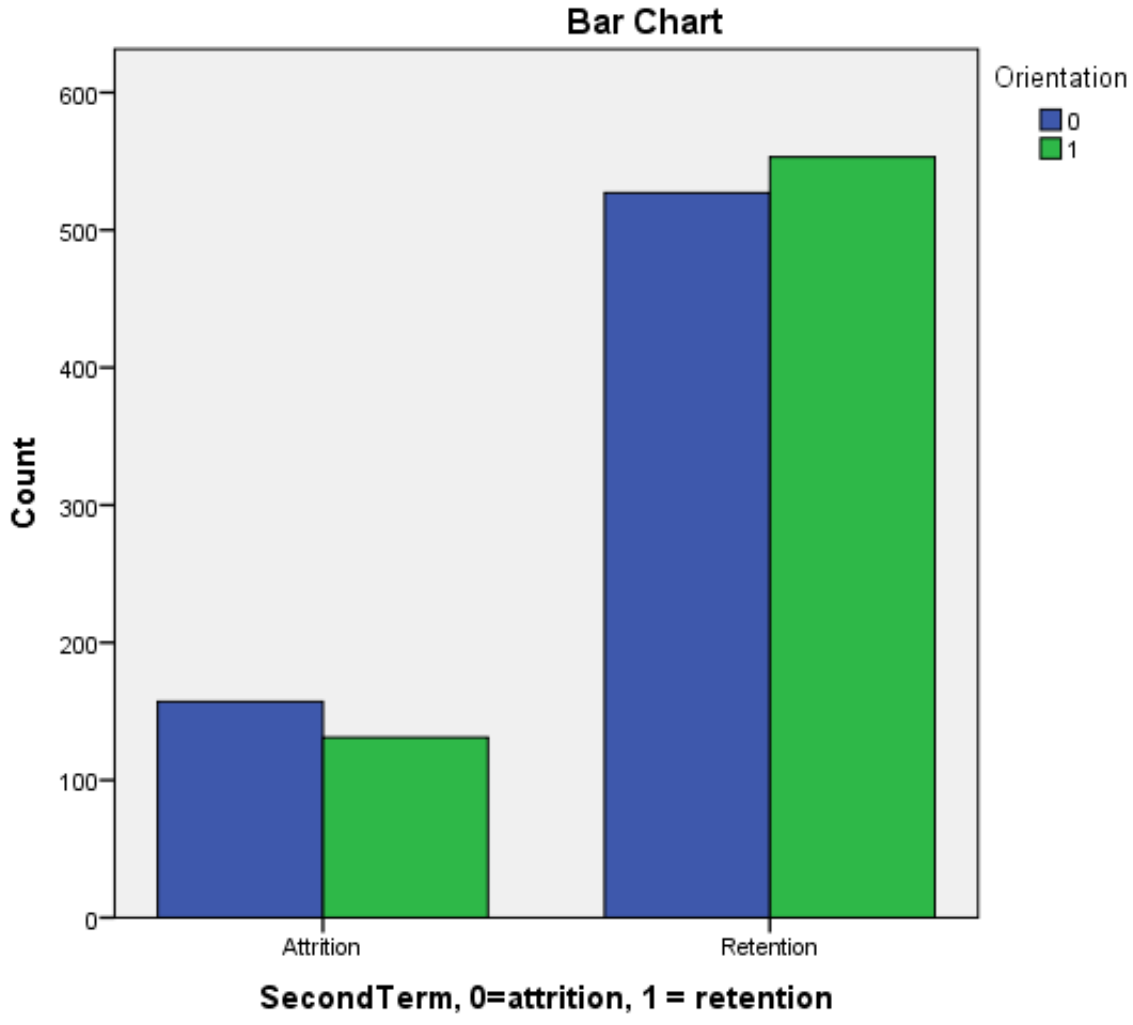


Figure 7. Second Term Student Attrition-Retention Rate

Research Question Three: Does freshman orientation have any effect on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their third semester?

A two-group independent-samples chi-square test with a dichotomous response variable was conducted. This test was chosen to determine if an association exists between the two variables, retention and attrition.

Table 6 results show, out of the 361 freshmen who did not return, 204 were not participants in orientation and 157 were participants in orientation. Out of the 684 freshmen who participated in freshmen orientation, 77% of the students were retained compared to 70% of those who did not participate in orientation.

Table 6

Third Semester Orientation Crosstabulation

			Orientation		Total
			0	1	
Third Term, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	Attrition	Count	204	157	361
		% within Third Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
		% within Orientation	29.8%	23.0%	26.4%
		% of Total	14.9%	11.5%	26.4%
	Retention	Count	480	527	1007
		% within Third Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	47.7%	52.3%	100.0%
		% within Orientation	70.2%	77.0%	73.6%
		% of Total	35.1%	38.5%	73.6%
Total		Count	684	684	1368
		% within Third Semester, 0 = attrition, 1 = retention	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Orientation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

In Table 7, we can see that $\chi^1 = 8.313$, $p = 0.004$. This tells us that there is a significance association between student attrition-retention and orientation. That is, student drop-out rates are not equally distributed for students in third term for students who participated in orientation during the first term. In Table 9, Phi and Cramer's V are both tests of the strength of association.

Table 7

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.313[a]	1	.004		
Continuity Correction[b]	7.963	1	.005		
Likelihood Ratio	8.331	1	.004		
Fisher's Exact Test				.005	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.307	1	.004		
N of Valid Cases	1368				

Table 8

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.078	.004
Nominal	Cramer's V	.078	.004
N of Valid Cases		1368	

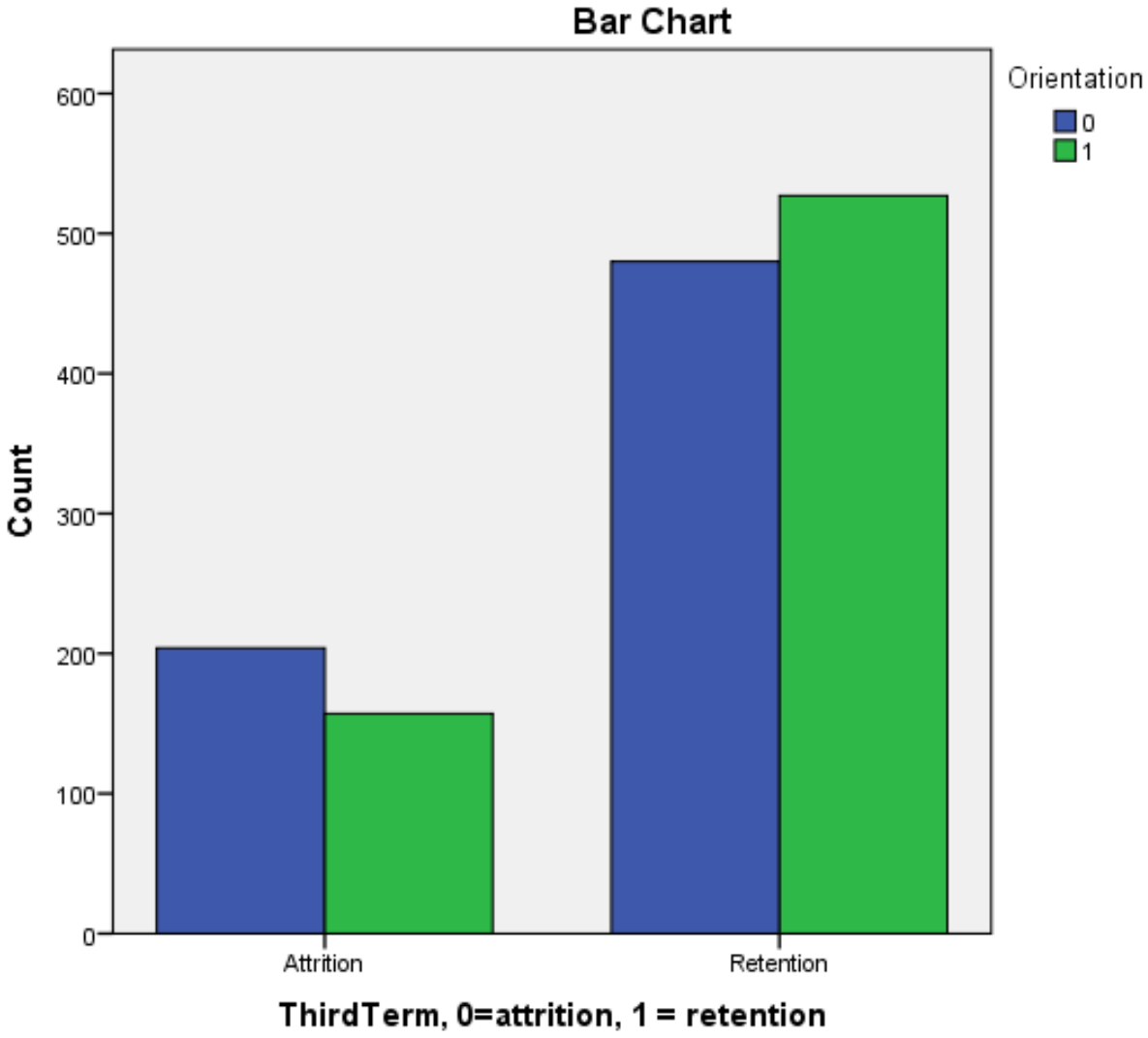


Figure 8. Third Term Student Attrition-Retention Rate

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of student success in a freshman orientation course at a two-year community college in Alabama. Specific student success indicators — grade point average and retention —acted as measurements. These indicators were used to compare first-year students who participated in orientation their first semester with first-year students who did not participating in orientation their first semester.

The goal of an orientation program is to help students adjust, promote academic success and graduation (Karp, 2011; Lang, 2007; Noble, 2007; Schnell, 2003), encourage use of help services (Braxton, 2004; Karp, 2008), and reduce costly administrative time (Barefoot & Gardener, 1993; Cohen & Jody, 1978). The majority of orientation courses taken by students are designed to facilitate adjustment to college (Sax, Gilmartin, Keup, DiCrisi, & Bryant 2000).

Community colleges has established itself to be the vehicle for redirecting the careers of seasoned workers, for offering general education to all types of students, and for providing workforce development and training by establishing relationships with the business sector and of course developmental education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Community colleges have an open door admissions policy; having an open door policy has allowed traditionally underserved populations and students who would not otherwise have attended college to attend college.

Recent initiatives such as the Lumina Foundation's "Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" initiative, which was the first significant effort to improve student community college completion called on community colleges, placing them at the forefront of addressing the nation's workforce needs and increasing degree attainment rates. Also the American Graduation Initiative, is starting to engage in discussions on student success rates. In the past few years, federal interest in community college performance has increased markedly. The Obama administration has established an ambitious access goal of matching global attainment rates, which means 60 percent of a young adult-aged cohort will have a college credential by 2025. Reaching this goal will fall disproportionately on the nation's community college sector (Ewell, 2011). Within the context of the past decade's economic downturn and the emphasized role of community colleges in advancing workforce initiatives, success must also be redefined to include overall persistence and certificate/associates degree attainment. Considering the national attention to two-year outcomes and community college leaders and stakeholders' efforts to establish better measures for assessment, higher education researchers must also respond by providing more empirical evidence to inform policy and practice.

Prior research and theoretical perspectives suggested that the exploration of student background, precollege experiences, undergraduate experiences, and particularly institutional contexts are important to providing a more complete understanding of persistence. Much of the empirical evidence pointing to the importance of institutional context has been examined at the university level with a focus on the general four-year student population (Astin, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Titus, 2004). Although much research has centered on four-year institutions, less emphasis has been given to two-year colleges as a whole. This study informs and adds to

emerging research exploring two-year institutional contexts and uniquely contributes to the literature by increasing understanding of student attrition and retention

State and federal agencies have heightened expectations with widely articulated goals for degree completion in this sector, while providing these institutions with substantially fewer financial resources (Mullin, 2010). Given these realities, institutions find themselves in a position of trying to abide by their democratic missions while also attempting to meet economic and societal demands for a well-educated workforce. Community colleges are influenced and constrained by the environments within which they operate and by the often competing expectations of their numerous constituents. The study's findings seek to inform programmatic and policy decisions to enhance the educational experiences of students and improve outcomes.

In conclusion it is important to comprehensively review the study, place it within the relevant national context, and discuss the findings and implications. This chapter provides a brief overview of the study including details on the guiding literature and theoretical perspectives, research design, and the methodological approach. The findings, related to each research question, are summarized in this concluding section. Lastly, the implications for research and future research will be discussed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of student success in a freshman orientation course at a two-year community college in Alabama. Specific student success indicators (grade point average retention and attrition) will act as measurements. These indicators will also be used to compare first-year students who participated in orientation their first semester with first-year students who did not participate in orientation their first semester. Although similar research has been conducted (Zeidenberg, Jenkins & Calgano, 2007), a gap

exists examining the relationship between participation in orientation and retention and GPA at community colleges. Zeidenberg, Jenkins and Calgano (2007) studied students at a Florida Community College and found a significant relationship between students enrolling in orientation and completing a credential. However, this study only examined the percentage of these students who completed a credential. Previous research has mainly focused on the relationship between participation in orientation and student success without controlling certain confounding variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and placement test scores. Most of the research investigating the relationship between community college student success and orientation presents qualitative findings.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. Does freshman orientation have any effect on first semester college students' cumulative grade point average?

2. Does freshman orientation have any effect on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their second semester?

3. Does freshman orientation have any effect on students' attrition-retention (dropout rate during the first semester) in their third semester?

Discussion of Findings

The review of literature revealed that the research on the retention theories and orientation programs were based primarily on traditional four-year colleges and universities. Therefore, there is a need to conduct research at the community college level to determine if participating in a freshman orientation has an impact on first year students' academic success,

attrition and retention. This chapter provides further discussion of the major findings of this study.

The first research question asked what effect of a freshman orientation have any effect on first semester college student's cumulative grade point average if community college students participating in freshman orientation their first semester had higher grade point averages (GPA) than the student who are not taking orientation their first semester. Research question one, which was related to grade point average (GPA), was explored through ANOVA testing. In examining the total group (research question one), results of the ANOVA suggest that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between attending freshman orientation and increased grade point averages. Based on the findings discussed in Chapter Four, the conclusion is that participation in orientation does significantly impact GPA.

The second research question addressed whether community college first-year students who participate in freshman orientation are retained in the second semester than those who are not taking orientation. Results of this study indicated that whether or not students enroll in orientation during their first semester of enrollment is a none significant predictor of attrition and retention into the second semester. Chi-square testing was utilized and data analysis results related to research question two (total group retention) suggest that attending a freshman orientation program in a two-year community college has no significant impact on second semester retention rates.

The third research question addressed whether more community college first-year students who participate in freshman orientation are retained in the third semester than those who are not taking orientation. Results of this study indicated that whether or not students enroll in orientation during their first semester of enrollment is a significant predictor of

attrition and retention into the third semester. Chi-square testing was utilized and data analysis results related to research question two (total group retention) suggest that attending a freshman orientation program in a two-year community college has no significant impact on third semester retention rates.

Implications

This study was conducted at one two-year community college within the Alabama two-year college system. This research provides an increased understanding of the impact a community college course can have on retention and grade point averages of first-semester students. In addition, replication utilizing a random sample rather than a convenience sample could also further strengthen research.

This study has practical implications for foundations, researchers, and state and federal leaders. These constituents can use the results presented when evaluating and determining which interventions are effective for community college students. Findings from the study support the positive impact an orientation course has on student success, especially first-to-second semester and second-to-third semester retention. Results indicated that participants in freshman orientation course are retained at a higher percentage and graduate within two years more than students who did not participate. The outcomes are consistent with Tinto's (1975, 1993) model that suggests students who are more integrated with their institution are more likely to persist. The results contribute to and support the growing body of research on freshman orientation and student success.

Community college leaders and administrators can use this research to evaluate policies, procedures, and programs. Community college stakeholders should encourage institutions to implement their commitment to their first year of college by providing the resources to promote

first-year student success. Institutions have a responsibility to encourage and equip students for success.

Community college leaders and administrators should require new students to enroll in the freshman orientation course during the first semester. Students at the two-year college for this study are not required to take freshman orientation their first semester; it is up to the student to take this course before they graduate. The study found the freshman orientation course to have a positive impact on student retention, consistent with research. Students enrolled in the course are more likely to be retained during their three semesters of college than students not enrolled in the course. Additionally, the course provides the opportunity for academic and social integration, encouraging students to establish a relationship with the institution. Therefore, campus leaders and administrators should consider the freshman orientation course as a cost-effective retention tool.

Finally, since data on the outcomes of first-year experience courses are still new, the present study should be replicated, examining more recent cohorts of students enrolling in the freshman orientation course. The two-year college in this study has not conducted a complete study analyzing the relationships between the freshman orientation course and the many student success variables. While the current study provides results specific to Alabama and the host college regarding first-year progression, other similar institutions may benefit from the study.

In addition to its benefits to community college leaders and administrators, the results of the current study could be of use to community college faculty and staff. Currently, at this two-year college and at most community colleges within the Alabama two-year college system, full-time and part-time faculty and staff teach the freshman orientation course. Research indicates full-time college representatives are more integrated with the institution and available to

students, thus providing a better chance for students to fit with the institution and improve their likelihood of success (Tinto 1975, 1993).

Students also are internal stakeholders who could benefit from this study. Students attending the two-year college in this study, and similar institutions, should be informed of the potential impact the first-year experience course has on their success. As paying customers for a product (education), students should be aware of success rates regarding initiatives and intervention programs. Also, in order to take advantage of interventions, students need to know which programs work and which programs do not work. Participation in a first-year experience course may lead to a higher probability of completion, which subsequently may lead to higher income.

Most importantly, this study will benefit future community college students by increasing opportunities for them to become more engaged in a supportive environment and achieve higher rates of success in obtaining their academic goals. Even for students who plan to transfer to a four-year university, the first year is critical.

Areas for Future Research

This study collected and analyzed the Freshman Academy at the study institution and therefore can only be generalized to that specific student population during the time period of the study. Replication of this study outside of the researched institution would provide more generalized results with different types of institutions particularly community colleges located in the same geographic region as the school in this study as well as other regions throughout the United States. Research such as this will allow a more diverse sample to be studied. Although most of the literature reports a strong relationship between the enrollment in an orientation

course and student success, this research focused on student success from one semester into the concurrent two semesters.

The researcher recommends that the two-year colleges explore other course delivery methods such as hybrid and online. This will help desired course length that will best fit the student population.

It should be mandatory for the freshman students to take the orientation course in the first semester of their student enrollment. This study proved that the freshman orientation course had a positive impact on students GPA and retention. Students enrolled in the course are more likely to continue during their first two semesters of college than students not enrolled in the course.

Future research related to new student orientation programs should include age, race, gender, impact of the pre-college and environmental variables as well as longitudinal in nature. This study focused on persistence to the third semester, however, this is not representative of the ultimate goal of attainment of a credential or transfer to a four-year college or university. Researchers should also consider how other external variables such as family and work obligations impact longer-term student success. This study's variables were student rerolled in the freshman orientation and students who were not enrolled and what effect did this have on the sample GPA.

Lastly, analysis of the first-generation college student variable could better demonstrate the influence this characteristic has on persistence. By establishing an ordinal variable that categorizes students into multiple groups (parents attended no college, parents attended some college but have less than a bachelor's degree, and parents received a bachelor's degree) further data may be identified demonstrating the influence first-generation status has on student persistence.

In closing, Orientation courses provide many benefits that cannot be captured in a quantitative study such as this study. A qualitative study would also be appropriate to grasp the depth of what such courses do for students. It is strongly recommended that institutions explore orientation courses as options for enhancing college students' experiences, while enhancing those courses that already exist.

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APPENDIX 1

FRESHMAN ACADEMY SYLLABUS

Freshman Academy Syllabus
ORN101

"Master students move freely among us. In fact, there's one living inside of your skin."
--Dave Ellis

Facilitator Contact Information

Name:
Email: You can email your FAME instructor via Blackboard anytime
Office Hours:
Location of Office:
Appointments with facilitators must be pre-arranged.

What is the Key to Success in the Course?

It is simple. Attend class. This course is designed to be very engaging and has lots of embedded activities. **Students with poor attendance will not be successful**. So, one of the most important lessons one can learn as a new college student is the importance of attending, not just this class, but all of your classes.

Freshman Academy Description

The Freshman Academy is a one (1) credit hour two contact hour course meeting once a week for 120 minutes or twice a week for 240 minutes if you are taking this course during a mini-term. **Don't let the credit hours fool you. Failing the Freshman Academy (receiving less than a "C" in this course) can damage your GPA and could cause Financial Aid problems as well. In addition, if you fail this course, you will be required to retake the course.** The Freshman Academy is designed for first time students (seeking a degree or certificate) and students not transferring in more than 12 credit hours.

The Freshman Academy is designed to equip students during their first year college experience with critical thinking, communication, technology, social, time management, study skills and leadership skills. Through teambuilding, collaboration, inquiry, discussion and self reflection, students will develop skills to engage in academic inquiry, critical thinking, and develop their ability to articulate their short and long term goals as related to their own beliefs and values; and strengthen their capacity to appreciate diversity and effective interpersonal communication. Students will also learn that attending class is a vital component to learning and engaging.

Freshman Academy Goals:

The Freshman Academy centers around, **e³4life,** with four goals that will provide experiences that students will need for life by:

1. Empowering students to discover and construct knowledge that will impact their academic, social and personal choices.
2. Engaging students in the learning process to be responsible college students.
3. Equipping students with the skills and resources to be successful in and out of the classroom.
4. "I", focuses on the individual, integrity, intellect that students develop to be self-reliant, self-assured and ownership for individual decision

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students enrolled in the Freshman Academy will be empowered and equipped with the tools necessary to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

1. Ability to use of **online technologies** effectively in a collegiate environment.
2. Ability to employ **critical thinking skills** and logical thought process in problem solving and decision making.
3. Ability to **communicate** effectively and proficiently using written, oral and listening skills.
4. Ability to engage successfully in **social and team work activities** within a collegiate setting
5. Ability to identify and apply effective **time management skills**.
6. Ability to identify and apply effective **learning/study skills**.

Project Based Learning

The majority of activities within the Freshman Academy are project-based. Students will learn how to work in groups and effectively critically think and utilize appropriate time management skills in order to produce individual and group projects. This creative and innovative learning approach is designed to provide students with exploratory learning activities and allow them to become more resourceful and competent students. It will also emphasize the value of working in groups, a necessary skill that will prove useful for students as they pursue both their academic and career goals.

Materials Needed

Laptop: If you do not own a laptop, you are strongly encouraged to purchase a wireless laptop in the bookstore using your Pell Grant, if funds are available. Consider this an important

investment to make at the start of your college career. It will also make this course far more accessible and manageable.

If you do not have access to a personal computer, use the computers located in LSCC's multimedia library. Library hours run from 8:00 a.m.-8:30 p.m. (M-Th); Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Book: None. All materials are uploaded on Blackboard

Materials: Laptop (highly recommended. Purchase via the bookstore, if at all possible); 1 inch binder with folders; Pen (blue or black); Paper; and USB drive (flash drive).
Software: Powerpoint, Microsoft Word, Quicktime Player (free download), Flash Player software (free download), Adobe Reader (free download).

Grading

Online Blackboard Quizzes & Tests	50%
Group and Individual Projects and Final Exam	50%
	100%

Lawson State Community College's Grade Breakdown:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D (Must retake the course)
59% or below	F (Must retake the course)

Technology Component

The majority of assignments and projects will be generated through the use of computers. Faculty Academy students will be expected to demonstrate competency in the use of computers in order to not only produce assignments but to engage in the course itself. Students will be expected to take all quizzes and tests online and work within their groups face-to-face but also within an online environment. In essence, students will have to engage technically throughout the course. Thus, students should be encouraged to use class computers and computer labs throughout the campus for assistance, but personal laptops are preferred. The SPACE Center and the library serve as locations for students to conduct group work and gain access to computers as well.

Attendance and Participation are Linked

Because this class is project based and requires students to engage in class with other students to create projects, poor attendance can and often does lead to a failing grade in this course, particularly since projects are worth 50% of a student's grade. **Students are expected to attend all classes for which they are registered.** Students who are unable to attend

class regularly, regardless of the reason or circumstance, should withdraw from that class before poor attendance interferes with the student's ability to achieve the Student Learning Outcomes required in the course. Withdrawal from class can affect eligibility for federal financial aid. Withdrawal from class can prohibit progression in nursing and allied health programs as well. Thus, before withdrawing, see your advisor and Financial Aid Office, if applicable. **Again, poor attendance can lead to low participation (which is tracked online within your group Blackboard page) and could ultimately cause one to fail.**

a. **Make-up Work (Tests and Quizzes).**

Any missed quiz or test can be made up online prior to the end of the term (no later than Week 14). Students do not have to speak to their facilitators regarding making-up quizzes and tests. They just need to complete the assignment (which is watching an assigned tutorial or video) and take the quiz or test online. Quizzes and tests are graded within the Blackboard system. Failure to make-up late quizzes and tests before Final Exams will result in a zero being recorded for that assignment.

No Make Up for Missed Group Project Participation: There is no make up for missed group activities/projects. **Students who do not show up on the day their group/individual presentations will receive no credit for the assignment unless the following situation has occurred:**

- Student has been hospitalized (must be confirmed officially by the hospital);
- Child or spouse of a student has been hospitalized (must be confirmed officially by the hospital);
- Death of spouse, parent or child (must be confirmed by funeral authorities); and
- Court date (must be confirmed by court/hearing official via an order to appeal letter).

In such cases, the student **MUST** notify the instructor of the situation immediately so another remedy can be sought. Failure to notify the instructor (before the absence occurs or within 7 days following the absence) will cause the student to receive a zero, regardless of the circumstances. Student will also have to present the entire assignment on their own outside of class (time, date, etc...must be arranged by the facilitator).

c. **Lateness:**

The course is designed to teach freshman students keys to becoming successful college students. Excessive tardiness is not acceptable in a college course. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you are likely to lose participation points. Further, facilitators do have the right to refuse entrance into a FA course, if any student is more than 30 minutes late to class. If you are late and your group has presented, you will NOT receive any points for your group's presentation because you missed it due to lateness.

Additional Student Information

- Turn cell phones off while in class. Or, if you are expecting an important call, turn the phone on vibrate. If you have to accept an emergency call, step out of class to answer the call. Never answer a call in class. That is considered rude and interferes with the teaching

and learning environment. Thus, be polite and step out of class to accept your emergency call. Never text in class. Again, this is considered disrespectful.

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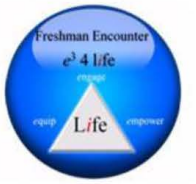
  Please use your assigned Lawson State Community College e-mail account. Contact instructor via e-mail to schedule conferences. Any e-mails sent after 3:00 pm during the week will be answered the next day. Any e-mails sent over the weekend will not be replied to until Monday. It is likely that non-Lawson emails will hit your facilitators SPAM box, so always use your LSCC email accounts. Some instructors do not respond to student email sent by non-Lawson State email accounts, so if you would like a response to your email, use the appropriate account.

- All course information and requirements for completing assignments are available in Blackboard and are the sole property of Lawson State Community College. All students are responsible for attending class and staying abreast of all weekly assignments (as outlined in the Weekly Materials section of Blackboard and presented within the Weekly Guide. Students who fail to retrieve and read these documents, and as a result, miss assignments, quizzes and tests, will be held accountable for the work and will receive zeros for missing assignments.

- Academic integrity is a fundamental value of teaching, learning, and scholarship; therefore, cheating and plagiarizing will not be accepted. Students who cheat and/or plagiarize will receive a grade of zero (0) on assignment and could be subject to further disciplinary action which could lead to suspension from school.

ADA Accommodations: If you are in need of ADA accommodations, please contact either Philana Suggs (psuggs@lawsonstate.edu) on the Birmingham campus or Renay Herndon (rherdon@lawsonstate.edu) on the Bessemer campus immediately. Then, once your ADA accommodations form has been completed, present your facilitator (and all other instructors) with the accommodations listing. This is very important.

For more information on ADA Accommodations, view the Tegrity video listed under Week 2/Session 2.



Freshman Academy

Quick Reference Curriculum Guide for Students

Week 1 /Session 1	Location	Check Off
Welcome		
1. **In Class:** View QEP Welcome Video (10 mins.)	Freshman Academy Videos	
2. **In Class:** View Syllabus Tegrity Session or go over the syllabus (15 minutes). Emphasize the importance of keeping up with Homework assignments (Quizzes and Tests)	Tegrity Videos	
3. **In Class:** View President's Welcome (3 mins.)	Freshman Academy Videos	
4. **In Class:** View Dr. Crawford's Welcome (3 mins.)	Freshman Academy Videos	
5. **In Class:** View VP Crew's Welcome (2 mins)	Freshman Academy Videos	
Team Building Activities		
6. **In Class:** Participate in the Blind Tower Building Activity (30 mins.)	In Class	
7. **In Class:** Participate in the Spoon Race Activity (15-20 mins.)	In Class	
8. In Class: Contribute to the debriefing exercise	In Class	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Students need to follow the download directions for setting up their computers to receive Blackboard tests and quizzes and download. Students need to also download the following: Quicktime player, Adobe Reader and Windows Media	See Week 1/Session 1 Materials in Blackboard for directions and free downloads	
HOMEWORK: Students need to take 4 Quizzes on the In-Class videos they just viewed. Point Value: 200 points, 50 points each. If a student missed class, they need to view all videos presented in class.	Students need to click on the Quizzes and Tests menu button in Blackboard	X Automatically Graded
Week 1/ Session 2	**Location**	**Check Off**
Pre-Skills Assessment (Must Do!!!)		
1. **In Class:** Take the Online Pre-Skills Assessment Survey (10 mins.) **(A Must Do!!!)**	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 1/ Session 2 See embedded link	
Conduct, Complaints, Security and Cougar Alert Videos		
2. **In Class:** View Code of Conduct & Due Process Tegrity Session (12:55 mins.)	Tegrity Videos	

3. **In Class:** ViewComplaint Process Video	See Week 1/Session 2 Materials Embedded Link (on Blackboard Page)	
4. **In Class:** View Campus Police & Security Video (6 mins.)	Freshman Academy Videos	
5. **In Class:** View Cougar Alert Tegrity Session (4.28 mins.)	Tegrity Videos	
Email, Blackboard Videos & Assignment		
6. **In Class:** View the How to Use Blackboard Video (7:22)	Tegrity Videos	
7. **In Class:** View How to Use Student Email: (10:50)	Tegrity Videos	
8. **In Class:** Students will explore all course components within Blackboard.	Blackboard Freshman Academy Course Page and Links	
9. **In Class:** After students are comfortable with Blackboard, students (as a trio or pair) will log onto their student email accounts and send each other email. Announcement: Students facing log-in difficulties need to email the Help Desk at **helpdesk@lawsonstate.edu**	www.lawsonstate.edu Website, Student email	
10. **In Class:** Students should complete their online test and quiz on Blackboard and Email (200 points). Student pairs/trios can help each other while testing.	Freshman Academy Quizzes & Tests menu bar option in Blackboard	X Automatically Graded
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Complete 4 tests—one on (1) Student Code of Conduct & Due Process; one on the Complaint Process, and the other (2) on Cougar Alert and Campus Safety and Security; the videos played in class. Again, there are a total of four tests.	Click on the Quizzes and Tests menu button option	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If a student missed class, they need to complete the Blackboard and Email tests (after watching each Tegrity video, as listed above).	Click on the Quizzes and Tests menu button option	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If you are student in need of **ADA** (American with Disabilities Services) accommodations, watch the ADA Video (within Tegrity). **This video will provide students with information on ADA services and procedures here at Lawson State.**	Tegrity Session	
HOMEWORK: If absent last week, students need to follow the download directions for setting up their computers to receive Blackboard tests and quizzes and download. Students need to also download the following: Quicktime Player, Adobe Reader and Windows Media	See Week 1/Session 2 Materials in Blackboard for directions and free downloads	X Automatically Graded

Week 2 / Session 3	Location	Check Off
Library Orienation ANNOUNCEMENT		
In Class ANNOUNCEMENT: Review the Library Orientation Announcement and registration directions that appear under the Week 2/ Session 3 & 4 main page. Scroll down the page to view the specifics. Students will have to email the library at library101@lawsonstate.edu to register. Session dates and registration requirements have been spelled out for students. Students will turn in their Orientation certificates with their Final Exams.	Week 2/ Session 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Skills Assessment Survey		
1. **In Class:** Students should complete the Skills Assessment Survey (in class, by hand).	Pre Print out Handouts for your class. Week 2/Session 3 Materials	
How to Use Group Online Tools		
2. **In Class:** View the *How to Sign-up for Your Online Group* video in Tegrity (while you are figuring out group assignments)—7 mins.	Tegrity Videos	
3. **In Class:** View the *How to Use Online Group Tools* in Tegrity (while you are figuring out group assignments)—2.55 mins.	Tegrity Videos	
Teamwork Videos		
4. **In Class:** View Teamwork video (3:35 mins)	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on embedded video directly on page	
5. **In Class:** View Lessons from Geese video (3:17 mins.)	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on embedded video directly on page	
6. **In Class:** View The Power of Teamwork video (3:32 mins.)	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on embedded video directly on page	
7. **Optional Videos:** There are two optional videos (if you would like to include view them): A Lesson from Penguins (32 seconds), and The Meaning of Team (3:49 mins.)	**OPTIONAL VIDEOS ONLY** Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on embedded video directly on page	
Project #1 and Activities		

8. **In Class:** After watching the team videos, students were placed in Groups. If you missed class, see your instructor immediately for placement.	In Class Announcement	
9. **In Class:** Once groups have been assigned, students will complete the Team Guideline Activity (30 minutes). To begin this activity, pull up the PowerPoint slide that lists the activity directions and questions that each team has to respond to.	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on Team Guidelines Activity **PowerPoint** Template	
10. **In Class:** Following the Team Guidelines Activity, review the first team project in detail. **Project #1** is the *Getting to Know LSCC* project. **Be sure to review the rubric and PowerPoint template you need to use for the presentation.**	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on Getting Project #1 Directions (Attachment), PPT Template and Rubric	
11. Students will spend the rest of the class (50-60 minutes) planning out their projects and getting more comfortable in their online group platforms (within Blkbd.)	Online Group Pages in Blackboard; In Class Discussion	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Week 2/ Session 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
HOMEWORK: The Pre-Skills Assessment was completed during the last class period. If you were absent, take this assessment for homework or at the end of class, depending on your preference.	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3; Scroll down to the bottom of the page to access	
HOMEWORK: Groups need to work on their "Getting to Know LSCC" group projects. Projects are due during Week 3/Session 5.	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 3 Click on "Getting to Know LSCC" Team Project Directions	
Week 2 / Session 4	**Location**	**Check Off**
Responsibility Videos		
1. View the Responsibility Videos as listed on the Week 2/Session 4 Weekly Materials page and participate in debriefing/discussions. • Strangers on an Elevator • Responsibility of Strangers • Battered Woman • Cougar Tutor • Stranger Abduction • Interracial Couple	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 4; play embedded videos on the page. If videos do not play, Click on Additional Content in Tegrity	

Homework		
HOMEWORK: View the "Choosing to Succeed" video and complete the "Choosing to Succeed by Attending Your Classes" quiz.	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 2/ Session 4; Quizzes & Test Menu Option	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: Complete your "Getting to Know LSCC" Projects as a team. Presentations take place during the next class meeting.	Online Group Page (Blackboard); Project & Rubrics link or Week 2 /Session 4 Weekly Materials	
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 3 / Session 5	**Location**	**Check Off**
Project #1 Group Presentations		
1. Groups will present their first group projects, "Getting to Know LSCC" to the extended class.	In Class	
2. Complete the "Assessing Our Group Performance" activity with groups, following the presentations. See Curriculum for specifics	Week 3 / Session 5 Weekly Materials	
Homework & Grades		
3. **HOMEWORK:** Watch several Tegrity videos, one on *Understanding the General Studies or Career Technical Degree Plan* and one on any other video of your choosing (depending on your degree plan). There are several individual degree plans that are highlighted. Following that video, students should view the *Admissions Online Forms* video and complete the corresponding quiz and test on each. Point Value: 150 points.	Videos: Tegrity Videos; Quizzes & Tests: Click the Quizzes & Tests menu option button	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 3 / Session 6	**Location**	**Check Off**
Juggling Activity		
1. Participate in the interactive In-Class Juggling Name Activity (20 mins.) and debriefing.	Freshman Academy Curriculum Binder	

Important Testing ALERT for ALL Students.		
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!!!!! Final Exam.  **IMPORTANT TESTING ALERT:** You will have a **"Live Action Exam"** during your next class session (which is Week 4/ Session 7). You will be asked to log-in Email, Student Suite and Blackboard and perform certain tasks (on-demand) directly in front of your instructor. This is not a typical exam; it is weighted as part of your Final Exam, so it is very important that you are in attendance for the test and prepare for the test. Thus, be sure you are comfortable with all domains being tested in order to pass the test. Again, you will be tested on Email, Student Suite and Blackboard. The test is worth 100 points (but is heavily weighted as part of the Final Exam). This test cannot be made-up, regardless of the excuse. You must be present in class.	**Upcoming Alert for Week 4/Session 7!!** In Class Testing Activity Performed by Facilitators in Unit 7— This goes towards the first component of the students **Final Exam** in this course.	
2. **Registration 411:** Students will watch a series of tutorial videos in class and work in pairs to complete each corresponding tests following the viewing of each video section **Directions to Students: Watch each video below then take the quiz:** • View the **Student Suite Tutorials (there are 3 short ones).** They are as follows: **(1)** Logging on to Student Suite (Length: 2:19 mins.); **(2)** Viewing Your Student Records in Student Suite (Length: 4:13 mins.); and **(3)** A Quick Overview of Student Suite (Length: 2:40 mins.). Once done viewing the three short videos, complete the 100 pt. online test on Student Suite. • Next, view the " **How to Complete a STARS Report** "video. (Length: 11:23 minutes) • View **How to Register Online--Step by Step** (Length: 9:38 minutes) • View **How to Check for Cancelled, Closed and Open Classes** video • (Length: 6:16 minutes) • View **How to Complete an eWithdrawal Online** video (Length: 11:11) minutes) • View the **How to Check Your Financial Aid Status** video (Length: 5:42) **Remind students to complete each test following each video.** (NOTE: Encourage Veteran students to view the video on Veterans Services & Financial Aid as well. Non-veterans do NOT have to view this video.	Tegrity Videos; Quizzes and Tests Menu Option button	X Automatically Graded
Homework		
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshmen must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 4 / Session 7	**Location**	**Check Off**
Library Orientation Reminder		
REMIND STUDENTS: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page;See Announcement on Landing Page	

Live Action Test on Email, Student Suite and Blackboard		
1. **Mid-TERM:** Students will take a **"Live Action Performance Exam"** during class. Students will be asked to log-in Email, Student Suite and Blackboard and perform certain tasks (on-demand) directly in front of your instructor. This is not a typically exam; it is weighted as part of your Final Exam, so it is very important that you are in attendance for the test and prepare for the test. Thus, be sure you are comfortable with all domains being tested in order to pass the test. Again, you will be tested on Email, Student Suite and Blackboard. The test is worth 225 points (and is heavily weighted as part of the Final Exam). This test cannot be made-up, regardless of the excuse. You must be present in class.	In Class "live" performance exam Mid-term (weighted as par to the FINAL exam)	
Snowball Fight (Team Building Social Activity)		
2. Students will participate in a Snowball fight activity designed to improve class communication and socialization and improve familiarity with each other (as a class unit).	Weekly Materials, Week 4/ Session 7; See embedded link	
Project #2 Introduction & Project Development		
3. Project #2: Group topics will be assigned • **Presentation #1:** The Online Catalog & Understanding Degree Plans (by Areas). Locating Degree Plans in Student Suite. • **Presentation #2:** How to Complete a STARS Guide Report & What is It and How to Read It? Be sure to discuss the five areas of a STARS Report and how it connects back to one's Degree Plan. • **Presentation #3:** How to Logon Student Suite and What are the Components Within Student Suite (i.e., Student Records, Unofficial Transcripts, Degree Plans, Grades, Registration Access, Schedule, Financial Aid Status, etc...) • **Presentation #4:** The Registration Website (Key Components). Online Registration Steps, Completing Registration Online (Final Steps/Cashing Out!!!)—Completing the Process • **Presentation #5:** Checking for Cancelled, Closed or Open Classes • **Presentation #6:** Checking Your Financial Status Online (Review all components under Student Suite related to Financial Aid • **Presentation #7:** How to Withdraw from a Class Online (eWithdrawal)	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 4/ Session 7 or Click on the Project & Rubrics menu option button for Project Directions and presentation breakdown	
4. Review the Project #2 Description (Exploring LSCC—What Every Student Know) and remind students to review and discuss what "went right" or what "went wrong" within their group (during Project #1). Discuss your observations of what you think teams need to do to perform better as a team.	Click on Weekly Materials, Week 4/ Session 7 or Click on the Project & Rubrics menu option button	
5. Students will spend the remainder of the class period planning out and working on Project #2, as a team.	In Class	
Homework & Grades		
HOMEWORK: Work on Project #2 as a team	Online Group Page	
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	

Week 4 / Session 8	Location	Check Off
Project #2 Development		
1. Students will spend the entire class period working on Project #2, Exploring LSCC • **Presentation #1:** The Online Catalog & Understanding Degree Plans (by Areas). Locating Degree Plans in Student Suite. • **Presentation #2:** How to Complete a STARS Guide Report & What is It and How to Read It? Be sure to discuss the five areas of a STARS Report and how it connects back to one's Degree Plan. • **Presentation #3:** How to Logon Student Suite and What are the Components Within Student Suite (i.e., Student Records, Unofficial Transcripts, Degree Plans, Grades, Registration Access, Schedule, Financial Aid Status, etc…) • **Presentation #4:** The Registration Website (Key Components). Online Registration Steps, Completing Registration Online (Final Steps/Cashing Out!!!)—Completing the Process • **Presentation #5:** Checking for Cancelled, Closed or Open Classes • **Presentation #6:** Checking Your Financial Status Online (Review all components under Student Suite related to Financial Aid **Presentation #7:** How to Withdraw from a Class Online (eWithdrawal)	In Class Activity	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Finalize Project #2 as a team. Project presentations will take place during the next Freshman Academy class.	Online Group Page	
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 5 / Session 9	**Location**	**Check Off**
Library Orientation Reminder		
FINAL REMINDER TO STUDENTS: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101. Facilitators: Remind students of how to register and let them know that time is running out.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Group Presentations: Project #2		
2. Students will present Project #2 in class • **Presentation #1:** The Online Catalog & Understanding Degree Plans (by Areas). Locating Degree Plans in Student Suite. • **Presentation #2:** How to Complete a STARS Guide Report & What is It and How to Read It? Be sure to discuss the five areas of a STARS Report and how it connects back to one's Degree Plan. • **Presentation #3:** How to Logon Student Suite and What are the Components Within Student Suite (i.e., Student Records, Unofficial Transcripts, Degree Plans, Grades, Registration Access, Schedule, Financial Aid Status, etc…) • **Presentation #4:** The Registration Website (Key Components). Online Registration Steps, Completing Registration Online (Final Steps/Cashing Out!!!)—Completing the Process • **Presentation #5:** Checking for Cancelled, Closed or Open Classes • **Presentation #6:** Checking Your Financial Status Online (Review all components under Student Suite related to Financial Aid **Presentation #7:** How to Withdraw from a Class Online (eWithdrawal)	In Class	

Homework & Grading		
HOMEWORK: Watch the library video under Freshman Academy Videos and take the 100 point test.	Freshman Academy Videos; Quizzes & Tests button under menu options	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101. For registration directions, Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
HOMEWORK: Complete any missing tests and/or quizzes that are linked to tutorials that have not been viewed. All late quizzes and tests are due no later than Week 7/Session 14.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	X Automatically Graded
Week 5/ Session 10	**Location**	**Check Off**
Viewing the "Facing the Giants" Film		
1. Read the "Facing the Giants" disclaimer	Week 5/Session 10 Weekly Materials	
2. Students will view the "Facing the Giants" film	In Class DVD film	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Complete any missing tests and/or quizzes that are linked to tutorials that have not been viewed. All late quizzes and tests are due no later than Week 7/Session 14.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 6/ Session 11	**Location**	**Check Off**
Facing the Giants--Motivational Videos (Pair/Trio Sharing Activity) (Final Film Debriefing—Putting it All Together)		
1. We will use three videos to debrief the lessons taught in the film, "Facing the Giants". 2. View three important motivational videos and join in the discussion related to the overall message of each. Discussion should follow after the viewing of each brief video clip. The first video is about conquering adversity; the second video is about pursuing excellence; and the third (AND most important video) is a conversation with **Dr. Ben Carson**, famed Gifted Hands neurosurgeon.	Week 6/Session 11 Weekly Materials; Embedded Video Clips play directly on the page	
Facing the Giants & Dr. Ben Carson Exam		
3. Following the discussion of the videos and the film (in general), students will take the Facing the Giants / Dr. Ben Carson (message) Test. This in an in-class exam. Students need to click on the Tests and Quizzes button in Blackboard to access.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	

Learning Styles Inventory Assessment		
4. After students take their Facing the Giants/ Dr. Ben Carson exam, students will complete a Learning Styles Inventory Assessment to determine what their Learning Style is. The test will show students their dominant tendency. http://ttc.coe.uga.edu/surveys/LearningStyleInv.html As a facilitator, it is essential to explain to students why this activity is important.	Week 6/Session 11 Weekly Materials; Embedded Hyperlink on Page	
Student Activity: Shared Learning Styles Activity		
5. After students take their learning styles inventory, they will be divided up in groups of 4 and 5 (based on their shared learning styles). Then, each group will watch a short video clip that has been uploaded in Blackboard that gives each team specific tips on their specific learning Style. After each team views the video clip, groups need to discuss the tips presented and then compare those tips to the handout on Learning Style that has been uploaded in the materials section for this week as well. Then, each group will present their finding.	Week 6/Session 11 Weekly Materials; Embedded Hyperlink	
IMPORTANT NOTE: Final Exam Connection		
6. **NOTE:** This assignment links to a Final Project activity. All students must select at least two learning style strategies that they will use over the next few weeks and be prepared to report back within their Final Exam. See Final Exam directions for more information.	Final Exam tab under the menu options	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Reminder: Any student who was absent last session to go by the library and check out the "Facing the Giants" DVD. Also, remind ALL students to take the 200-point "Facing the Giants" and Dr. Ben Carson essay exam, if they have not done so already.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button	
HOMEWORK: Remind students to begin working on the Final Exam assignment. It is due by Week 7/Session 14.	Final Exam tab under the menu options	
HOMEWORK: Complete any missing tests and/or quizzes that are linked to tutorials that have not been viewed. All late quizzes and tests are due no later than Week 7/Session 14.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	X Automatically Graded
HOMEWORK: If you have not done so already, register for Library Orientation. This is a 300 pt. Assignment that all Freshman must participate in prior to exiting ORI101.	Click on Week 2/ Sessions 3 & 4 Main Page; See Announcement on Landing Page (at the bottom)	
Week 6 / Session 12	**Activity**	**Check Off**
Career Assessment Inventory		
1. Students will take an online Career Assessment Inventory New Site: http://similarminds.com/career.html/	Week 6/Session 12 Weekly Materials; Embedded Link	
2. Students will explore the Occupational Handbook to learn	Week 6/Session 12	

more about their career and other career options (following their assessment)	Weekly Materials; Embedded Link	
Introduction to the Career Fair Project & Project Development		
3. Review the Career Fair Project directions and go over the rubric for the assignment.	Week 6/Session 12 Weekly Materials	
4. Students will spend the remainder of the class working on their Career Fair Projects.	In Class, Computer Search	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Students need to watch the Career Services video under Freshman Academy Videos and complete the Career Services exam	Week 6/Session 12 Weekly Materials; Quizzes & Tests	
HOMEWORK: Students should purchase their Career Fair Project materials and begin working on your Career Fair project (if building a website). Students should bring their Career Fair Project materials or website link to class, next session.	At Home	
HOMEWORK: Work on the Final Exam Assignment (outside of class).	At Home	
HOMEWORK: Complete any missing tests and/or quizzes that are linked to tutorials that have not been viewed. All late quizzes and tests are due no later than Week 7/Session 14.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	X Automatically Graded
Week 7 / Session 13	**Activity**	**Check Off**
End of Course Assessment (A Must Do!!!)		
1. Students will complete the End of the Course Assessment Survey. **(A Must Do!)**	Week 7/Session 13 Weekly Materials; Embedded Link	
Career Fair Project Development		
2. Students will spend the remainder of the class working on their Career Fair Projects (in class).	In Class, Computer Search	
Homework		
HOMEWORK: Students need to finalize their Career Fair Projects. They are due next class period.	At Home, At School	
HOMEWORK: Work on completing your Final Exam Assignment	At Home	
HOMEWORK: Complete any missing tests and/or quizzes that are linked to tutorials that have not been viewed. All late quizzes and tests are due no later than Week 7/Session 14.	Quizzes & Tests menu option button; See Quizzes & Test Listing	X Automatically Graded
Week 7/ Session 14	**Activity**	**Check Off**
End of Course Assessments (A Must Do!!!)		
1. Any student who was absent last week should take the *End of the Course Assessment Survey*. **(This is a Must Do!)**	Week 7/Session 14 Weekly Materials; Embedded Link	
Career Fair Project Presentations		

2. The CAREER FAIR. Students will present their boards or their career choice websites and conduct their oral reports on their career choice. NOTE: For students who have created a career choice website, see your facilitator about either access to the LCD projector or a computer to showcase your project.	In Class	
Grading of Career Projects		
HOMEWORK: Finalize your Final Exam Assignment. Reminder: Final Exams are due when they enter class, next session.	At Home	
Week 8 / Session 15	**Activity**	**Check Off**
FINAL EXAMS DUE!!!		
1. Students need to submit their completed FINAL EXAM Packets are due when students enter class.	In Class	
2. Once all Exam packets have been collected, divide students in their permanent groups and have them complete an in-class PowerPoint activity on what they learned the most from the course and how to improve the course in the future. Give students 45 minutes to complete this task.	Final Exam Menu Option Button for Directions	
Students present their group PowerPoints findings.		
END OF COURSE!!!		

APPENDIX 2

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Lawson State
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
3060 Wilson Road Southwest
Birmingham, Alabama 35221

August 30, 2013

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Human Subjects Research
307 Samford Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear IRB Members:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Lawson State Community College gave Kesha James, an AU graduate student, permission to conduct the research titled "The Influence of a New Student Orientation Program on Freshman Student Academic Performance and Retention at a Comprehension Two Year College" at Lawson State Community College. This also serves as assurance that this college complies with requirements of The Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT (FERPA) and the Protections of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

If the IRB has any concerns about the permission being granted by this letter, please contact me at the phone number listed below.

Sincerely,

Randy Glaze

Randy Glaze, Ph.D.
Dean of Educational Support Services and
Director of The Office of Institutional Research

Office Phone: 205-929-6445
E-mail: rglaze@lawsonstate.edu

APPENDIX 3

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INVESTIGATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

READ, PRINT AND RETAIN THIS DOCUMENT

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board
Office of Research Compliance – Human Subjects
307 Samford Hall
334-844-5966, fax 334-844-4391, hsubjec@auburn.edu

Investigators: By accepting this IRB approval for this protocol, you agree to the following:

1. No participants may be recruited or involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date. (PIs and sponsors are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings via a renewal request or submission of a final report.)

2. ***All protocol modifications*** will be approved in advance by submitting a modification request to the IRB unless they are intended to reduce immediate risk. Modifications that must be approved include adding/changing sites for data collection, adding key personnel, and altering any method of participant recruitment or data collection. Any change in your research purpose or research objectives should also be approved and noted in your IRB file. The use of any unauthorized procedures may result in notification to your sponsoring agency, suspension of your study, and/or destruction of data.

3. ***Adverse events or unexpected problems*** involving participants will be *reported within 5 days* to the IRB.

4. A ***renewal*** request, if needed, will be submitted three to four weeks before your protocol expires.

5. A ***final report*** will be submitted when you complete your study, and before expiration. Failure to submit your final report may result in delays in review and approval of subsequent protocols.

6. ***Expiration*** – If the protocol expires without contacting the IRB, the protocol will be administratively closed. The project will be *suspended* and you will need to submit a new protocol to resume your research.

7. ***Only the stamped, IRB-approved consent document or information letter will be used*** when consenting participants. Signed consent forms will be retained at least three years after completion of the study. Copies of consents without participant signatures andinformation letters will be kept to submit with the final report.

8. You will not receive a formal approval letter unless you request one. ***The e-mailed notification of approval to which this is attached serves as official notice***.

All forms can be found at http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/protocol.htm