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Post-Secondary Retention of the Non-Traditional Student at the Davenport College Career Center

by Sheryl Roslund

Masters Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Education Advanced Studies in Education for the Degree of Master of Education

Grand Valley State University December 1998
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ABSTRACT

In order to increase understanding regarding the factors contributing to student attrition at the Davenport College Career Center, a survey was undertaken to determine how those elements over which the school has control impacted its students' decisions to discontinue pursuing their educational goals. The survey of 600 non-returning students asked questions on the following attributes of the college: admissions, advising, academics, support services, and facilities. Survey recipients were divided into two categories: those students who had intended to take a full program of study and those students who had come to college to update their skills with only a few classes. This distinction was made to see if students' educational objectives had a significant impact on their decision to persist in school. The purpose of this study was to review the Career Center's current retention effort and to gather direct data concerning the school's role in its students' decisions to stay or to leave college in order to make recommendations for improvement based on current research in those areas where student survey responses suggested the Career Center was weak.
CHAPTER ONE: THESIS PROPOSAL

Problem Statement

Colleges and universities are losing students at an unprecedented rate, and the Davenport College Career Center, the school where I work, is no exception. This alarming retention trend is affecting schools everywhere. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics in its Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study conducted between 1989 and 1994, between 41-48% of traditional students who start a post-secondary curriculum never finish (Appendix Figure A). The variation in the percentages depends on the students’ degree objective: bachelor’s degree, associate’s degree or vocational certificate. This percentage increases dramatically to between 56-77% when the student population being surveyed is the non-traditional student (Appendix Figure A).

In addition to the low numbers of students completing their educational degrees, another factor in the increasing retention problem is a shift in the demographic make-up of the college student population; the traditional student population is decreasing as a percentage of the whole student community, and the non-traditional student population is increasing. Another survey completed by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics called the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study stated that almost 70% of the students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in 1992 met at least one of
the criteria defining a non-traditional student: delayed enrollment, part-time attendance, being independent, working full-time while enrolled, having children, being a single parent, or being a recipient of a GED or high school completion certificate. If the statistics indicate that non-traditional students are a higher retention risk and the collegiate population is changing to a more non-traditional student base, then the logical conclusion is that colleges will be facing an increasing attrition rate. As a result of this trend, post-secondary schools will need to pay increasing attention to the retention issues impeding non-traditional students from completing their programs. The reasons non-traditional students elect to leave school are varied; personal problems, monetary issues, inadequate academic preparation, the inability to function in a collegiate environment, difficulty choosing a course of study, and other roadblocks are a few of the issues that prevent students from completing their post-secondary studies. Therefore, it is important for each college or university to identify and address the problems concerning non-traditional student retention in order to determine how best to help their students to stay in school to complete a chosen course of study.

Importance and Rationale of the Study

The need to retain non-traditional students in their college/university curriculum is important for several reasons. Superficially, the most important
reason to the post-secondary institution is economic. The costs associated with advertising, recruiting, admitting and advising incoming students are enormous. If the institution only retains the student for a single term or semester, it is losing significant revenue. At the Davenport College Career Center, a school with 45-54 credit hour programs completed by the student within 12 to 18 months, a student who attends only one term and does not complete a course of study in a diploma program represents over $5000 in lost revenue; this figure represents only lost tuition and does not take into consideration any of the expenses associated with recruiting the student. At the Davenport College's Main Campus, a non-returning bachelor's degree candidate would represent over $30,000 of lost income. Clearly, the "disappearing" student strikes where it hurts: in the purse. It would behoove those of us who wish to have better facilities, greater technology and larger paychecks at our campuses to be aware of the costs of losing a single student.

Another reason to pay attention to the retention statistics at our schools is that the non-returning student's reasons for leaving the institution point out weaknesses in our educational system. If a student leaves due to dissatisfaction with classes, term schedules, faculty inaccessibility, problems with the equipment, or any number of other issues directly associated with the institution, we need to be aware of these barriers and address them. Some barriers cost little or nothing to fix and may contribute to large returns in the area of student
retention. While colleges and universities will not be able to solve each student's personal problems, our sensitivity to and creative thinking about their family and monetary concerns may encourage a student to stay, rather than to leave.

Finally and most importantly, retaining students leads to a more educated citizenry. Students who don't complete their educations don't reach their potential, and therefore contribute less than they might have to society. An educated community improves the living standard for each of us by decreasing the burden on the welfare system, increasing the knowledge base of the population, and contributing to the synergy of new ideas.

Background of the Study

Colleges and universities have found themselves unprepared to address the persistence problems of the non-traditional student due to the rapid changes in the demographic composition of the total post-secondary student population. Historically, higher education was reserved for the elite: primarily white males. For centuries, the only individuals who entered college were those men who had the time and the money it took to devote themselves to study. It wasn't until the last 130 years or so, after the Civil War and women's suffrage, that women and minorities began to be accepted on a large scale into the academic community.
Initially the women and minority students enrolling into colleges and universities still met a majority of the criteria that fulfilled the definition of the traditional student: the conventional completion of high school studies, immediate entry into a post-secondary institution, full-time student status, single and dependent on parental support. Colleges and universities were structured to accommodate this type of student; courses of study, class schedules, academic requirements, and even living arrangements were created and maintained to serve this kind of student. But as the student population grew, more post-secondary institutions were created to educate this population, and as more schools were opened, more openings were found for additional students.

Also, more and more a college education was viewed as necessary for success in life; families whose members had never attended a post-secondary school were encouraging their children to view college as mandatory for employment. This change in attitude meant that even more students were flooding into the post-secondary education market. Armed with the perception that a college diploma was a ticket to "the good life," increasing numbers of individuals who could not afford to go to school full-time, who needed to pay for their own educations, and who had to delay their educational starts in order to save the funds necessary to finance their college careers began knocking on higher education's door to ask for admittance, and colleges accepted them.
Why not? As long as these students met the academic conditions for post-secondary work and could find their own way through the current system, colleges felt these students could do little harm and could generate significant revenue: why not let them have access to academia?

What started as a trickle of non-traditional students has turned into a flood, and these students now represent a majority of the academic population. However, the traditional college/university structure does not accommodate the non-traditional student; class times are inconvenient, costs are high, and the living arrangements are unworkable. In order to satisfy the needs of the non-traditional student, post-secondary institutions have found themselves scrambling to change some academic structures to provide a feasible educational path for this scholar: night/Saturday classes, greater accessibility to faculty outside of class hours, flexible scheduling, and lengthening the acceptable time frame it would take to complete a degree. Yet these changes, while a good start, are merely cosmetic. Each college and university must take the time to seriously study the needs of its non-traditional students in order to determine how best to serve its own student population.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to review the Davenport College Career Center's current retention effort, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of
our present retention plan and to suggest additional strategies to increase our current retention statistics. To do this, it will be necessary to determine the demographic profile of our student population, to calculate our retention statistics for the past year, and to survey our students who have not continued their education at the Career Center to determine why they did not complete their educational program.

As a primary element of this study, a questionnaire will be developed and sent to non-returning students for the past two years. The questionnaire will ask students to rate their experience at the Career Center in the areas of admissions, advising, and curriculum (which will include attitudes regarding faculty, classes, tutoring assistance, scheduling, and curriculum relevance). The survey will also ask the students to indicate the reason(s) why they did not return to school. These questionnaires will be sent to former students based on two criteria: (1) those students who have attended the Career Center within the last eight terms and who are currently not enrolled, and (2) students who have either declared a program of study or who have only attended a class or two to update their skills. The completed and returned questionnaires will then be tabulated for information to determine areas of focus for our retention plan. With this information, it will then be possible to propose additional or different solutions to the issues hindering our students from completing their education at the Davenport College Career Center.
Goals and Objectives

There are several objectives to be met in order for the goals of this study to be accomplished:

1. Write and send a questionnaire to non-returning students. The Davenport College Career Center has frequently surveyed students to determine what their reasons are for not completing their course of study. We spend time tabulating results and pondering the information gathered, only to stop at this point and do nothing. The variety of responses regarding the reasons why our students are not returning is so diverse that we are overwhelmed. This survey will attempt to be more specific and more focused on the elements potentially responsible for student attrition over which the Career Center has control: admissions, advising, faculty and facility issues.

2. Compile and distribute the survey data, once it has been collected, to the management team of the Career Center for evaluation and discussion. In order for changes in our retention policy to take place, everyone has to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the current system and what additional action needs to occur.

3. To revise and enhance our retention effort, it will be necessary to know what our current retention plan is. To do this, I will need to
interview the head of our retention team to determine what the Career Center really does to retain its students.

4. To compile the statistics for the previous year regarding how many students are still in school pursuing their educational goals and how many have stopped attending in order to understand the Career Center's own demographic and retention statistical information. This requires that the list of new students starting classes in each of the following terms be compared to the list of students currently attending the Career Center in the Fall 1998 term: Fall 1997, Winter 1998, Spring 1998, and Summer 1998.

The accomplishment of these objectives should help the Career Center to concretely determine the type of student we have (traditional or non-traditional, and if non-traditional, how non-traditional), to accurately assess our present student attrition rates, to evaluate the effectiveness of our retention plan, to receive accurate information regarding why some students don't complete their educational studies, and to heighten the awareness of all staff and faculty to their roles in student retention.

Limitations of the Study

This study will focus on the retention issues facing the Davenport College Career Center, a small, diploma-granting school of approximately 450 students.
It will have limited or little usefulness to larger or degree-granting institutions. Also, any time a survey is done on a specific group of people, there is the risk that the results may not be universal, but characteristic to some particular element of the group. There is also the risk that the number of surveys returned may be of too small a number to be statistically valid. In addition, some of the data from the questionnaire which states why the student stopped coming to school may not be something the Career Center can address or fix; students’ personal problems, financial issues or health concerns, which would keep them from completing their educations, are not difficulties over which the Career Center has much control.

In conclusion, the retention information the Career Center is attempting to discover through this master’s thesis will help our school to better address the needs of our students. No college will ever attain a zero rate of attrition, but a college can increase its awareness of the barriers facing students in their efforts to complete their degrees and be more sensitive to the specialized needs of the non-traditional student. The days of the “one-size-fits-all” educational format are over, and colleges, which are generally not noted for their flexibility and responsiveness to market trends, will have to change the way they do business. In addition to the traditional focus on academic integrity, colleges will need to find alternative delivery methods, financing sources, and student services options to address the changing needs of the twenty-first century student.
These concerns are not new to colleges/universities throughout the country; the retention/persistence conversation has been ongoing for the last thirty years. In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, there is a sample of some of the work that has been done in an effort to solve the retention problem.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background:


This article summarizes the research on retention and attrition that has taken place in the early 1990s. It discusses the types of students who take early leave from their programs as compared with those who remain, the reasons why students leave, and it devotes special attention to intervention strategies that certain colleges offer in their attempts to encourage retention. The article enumerates the following characteristics of non-persisters in an effort to identify key traits that colleges can use to identify "at risk" students: part-time attendance, age, full-time employment, low grade-point average, ethnic minority status, family obligations, financial concerns and female gender. The article continues to list intervention strategies that have been the most successful in increasing retention statistics: orientation programs, mentoring programs, and a multiple-strategies approach which includes establishing women's centers, freshmen seminars, college-funded work-study programs, faculty development in this area, and creating additional student organizations. The statistical increases in retention when these intervention strategies are in place are impressive.
San Juan College, a small community college in New Mexico, was concerned with its persistence rates, so a project was developed to examine what factors influenced the retention decisions of its students. Moore does mention in her study that persistence may be defined in several different ways: re-enrolling from one semester to the next, re-enrolling from one year to the following year, or limiting the students in a retention study to those individuals who have an intention to persist as evidenced by full-time, degree-seeking status. She also mentions that there may be some positive reasons for non-persistence in students: the student may transfer to another institution, graduate, or have achieved a short-term educational goal. Moore also comments that if an institution is going to use student persistence as an indicator of institutional success that the measure must be controllable or at least affected by the actions of the institution, rather than by forces that are outside of the institution's control. Given these parameters, the retention statistics of San Juan College increase dramatically, but one wonders if everyone was allowed to hand pick the students to be tracked for retention purposes, wouldn't all of our persistence statistics look better? The important point to keep in mind regarding Moore's study is that students are not a homogeneous group; they have different academic goals,
change their minds regarding their course of study frequently, and have unexpected life experiences that alter their priorities.


Research indicates that approximately 75% of students who depart college without completing their degrees do so in the first two years, with the majority of those being in the first year, and nearly 85% of the departures are voluntary even though the students have maintained an acceptable level of academic performance. With these statistics in mind and as part of a presidential strategic planning process, McGrath and Braunstein initiated a study at Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, to determine the predictors of attrition among freshmen who withdrew voluntarily. They sought the answers to the following questions: What demographic, academic, financial and social factors influenced freshmen persistence? What were the freshmen's concerns regarding starting college? What impact did coping skills, support services and students' initial impressions of the college have on attrition and retention? Given all the variables the study was attempting to track, the results were rather surprising; only two factors played a significant role in predicting freshmen retention: first semester grade point average and the students' initial impressions of the other students. As the first semester's grade point average seemed to
play an overwhelming role in the persistence process, the study also looked at what predictors might be found to help determine what a student's GPA might be. High school academic performance and whether or not the student received any financial aid were the two best predictors of GPA performance, indicating that academic and financial security allowed the students more time to interact with their fellow students which promoted greater involvement with the college.


Huesman's study of 3,192 University of Iowa freshmen through their first year and into their second year was constructed to determine models of student persistence at two points: freshman year spring re-enrollment and sophomore year fall re-enrollment. The result of the study determined two fairly accurate predictors of student persistence with only a small margin of error in identifying non-persisters: GPA and course completion ratios. The only non-academic variable that appeared to have any influence on the data was the financial need factor. This study further supports McGrath and Braunstein's Iona College study and suggests that multiple variables are unnecessary when studying student persistence. However, both studies do suggest that each individual post-secondary institution needs to conduct its own study in order to determine what predictors are applicable to its own student population.

In this study, Patricia Windham tracked a set of predetermined factors with a cohort group of college freshman at a Florida public community college to see what affect each of these factors played in these students' ability to complete their educational goals. She found that the students most likely to remain in school were those considered to be traditional students: young, not working full-time, not enrolled in college preparatory classes, attending college full-time, and earning high grades. Students less likely to remain were older, part-time students who worked full-time and were attending college preparatory courses. Having a standard high school diploma as opposed to a GED certificate also seemed to be a factor in student persistence. Windham concluded that community colleges with their "open door" enrollment policy attract the type of student identified as non-persisting and that this influx of non-traditional students will have an impact on graduation rates. Community colleges need to keep their student demographic profile in mind when creating intervention strategies to boost their persistence and graduation rates.


This study by Vincent Tinto is not considered to be current research in the
persistence field, but the number of studies which base their research on this article and the number of times other researchers refer to this work leads me to believe this is a seminal study that needed to be included in this literature review. Tinto's study introduces the concept of academic and social integration as two leading factors in student persistence in college using a longitudinal model. He bases his theory of retention on Durkheim's theory of suicide: that the likelihood of suicide in society increases when moral (value) integration and collective (social) affiliation are lacking. Tinto perceives that suicide reflects the ultimate "dropout" attitude, and therefore Durkheim's model works, with modifications, for post-secondary lack of persistence. Tinto states that students come to college with family backgrounds, individual attributes and different educational experiences that all have an impact on their commitment to finishing college and their commitment to the institution they have chosen. While in school, these students then integrate to varying degrees with the academic environment, based on their grade performance and intellectual development, and with the social environment, based on their peer-group and faculty interactions. Students whose background and college successes are positive will maintain a high degree of integration and persist in school. Those students whose backgrounds or college experiences are less positive will have varying degrees of integration and therefore varying degrees of persistence. "The higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college systems, the
greater will be his/her commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion." Tinto also believes more attention in research should be paid to the type of student departure taken and the resulting decision. Students who are academically dismissed for poor grades but who have a high degree of commitment to the goal of college completion will transfer to a less rigorous institution. Does this result really qualify as a "dropout" situation? A student who voluntarily withdraws but also has a high commitment to obtaining a college degree will transfer to a similar or more challenging institution. A student who withdraws voluntarily or was academically dismissed and has a low commitment to completing a college degree will dropout of the post-secondary educational system altogether. Tinto believes more study is required in order to complete the persistence picture.


In response to Tinto's longitudinal model of student persistence, Brower believes that there is a piece missing. "Integration has been defined conceptually as a product of the interaction between students and their college environments. Yet many measurement tools define integration unidimensionally: as students' agreement with the university's goals and values."
Brower feels that this definition does not take into account the students’ abilities to shape their own environment based on their personal goals and expectations. Students shape and model their college environment based on the activities they choose to pursue, the time they divide between studies and socialization, the peer-group with which they surround themselves, and the tasks they select to do. Seven life task domains were studied to determine what affect these areas had on student persistence: academic achievement, social interaction, future goal development, autonomy, identity formation, time management, and physical maintenance/well-being. Depending upon whether students are achievement-oriented or affiliation-oriented, different tasks will have different impacts on persistence and attrition. Brower believes it is a matter of a student matching what they find to what they seek. Brower also makes some recommendations at the conclusion of his study as to what different student services efforts could be made based on the orientation of the student. Ultimately Brower feels that we have a responsibility to help students make the best use of their college education, and we need to create college environments that are the most conducive to the learning process of the largest number of students.


Braxton used Tinto's study of the college expectations of entering
freshmen as a base from which to build his additional research. It is a multi-institutional study of 263 first-time college freshmen who entered four-year colleges. Braxton et al. contend that both student entry traits and initial levels of commitment affect the degree to which an individual becomes integrated into the institution's academic and social communities. They worked with six different sets of variables: student entry characteristics, initial commitments, expectations for college, academic and social integration, subsequent commitments, and intentions to return. There are some weaknesses in this study; all of the survey questions regarding faculty were reverse scored, the study only looked at intention to return for sophomore year, not the actual return rates, and persistence was based on only one year. As college is at least a four-year process, this seems self-defeating to the study. However, Braxton did make some interesting suggestions regarding enrollment management for institutions: accuracy of college characteristics needs to be portrayed in all college material in order for the student to make an honest attempt at "fitting in" to the college environment. Braxton also mentions that the retention data for two-year and commuter schools is different than four-year institutions and needs to be studied separately. Students at these colleges base their persistence decision more on academic quality than social integration.
While there is a substantial amount of research devoted to undergraduate student persistence, little has been done to follow the retention statistics regarding graduate students. The differences between these two student populations, ie. age, career stage, personal life circumstances, reasons for pursuing an education, and finances, make generalizations regarding undergraduate attrition information difficult to apply to graduate students. Cooke, Sims, and Peyrefitte's purpose with this research study was to identify a set of personal variables that would predict graduate student attrition and factors that would shed light on avoidable dropout issues. Interestingly enough, the researchers felt that individual demographic information, such as age, race, sex, and socioeconomic status, are variables that are not under the control of the university, and that there is very little administrators could do to influence these factors. By associating attrition with these variables, they contend universities may be overlooking opportunities to be proactive in handling the graduate student attrition problem. Ultimately, the study indicated that graduate students with high degrees of school satisfaction, a sense of belonging to the university, a high level of affective commitment and a high need for achievement were more likely to continue than those who did not possess these traits. I feel these same traits could easily be applied to undergraduate students.
as well, and additional research studies on the subject of persistence support this belief.


"In higher education, is the goal to enroll in college and attend classes, or, is the goal to graduate?" Braley and Ogden use this interesting point as their introduction to explain their belief that failing an entrance exam and being identified as deficient in an academic area may increase students' potential to graduate. Instead of struggling with academic material and suffering from low grades, low self-esteem and stress, the correct placement of students into courses that are challenging but attainable may keep them in school. Braley and Ogden also argue that the effective use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) when used in an educational setting to identify the personality types of entering students would help college administrators to develop appropriate retention strategies that work constructively with a student's MBTI personality profile. In addition to academic remediation, they believe some personality remediation would help students to understand what study skills and work habits operate best for them. Students who feel comfortable and effective in college have an increased persistence rate.

This book looks at the many different elements that have an impact on post-secondary student retention and provides contemporary solutions to these issues. Part One of the book presents an overview of the concepts and principles related to student attrition and retention and illustrates the practices that have an impact on student persistence. The emphasis in the second and third parts of the book is on providing guidelines for those college administrators interested in improving the quality of their programs, services, and student activities. Part Four delineates the processes for creating a campus wide change effort to impact those services provided to students. The authors have gathered a variety of authors from many perspectives to compile an overview of the post-secondary student attrition issue and have then followed up these articles with applicable case studies to illustrate their points.

Global Solutions:


Carl E. Parker believes that in order for minority students to stay in school and reach their educational goals, intervention must occur earlier in the educational process than at the college level. As so many minority students are
ill-prepared to enter college, colleges must consider establishing effective articulation plans with public schools and strengthening their relationships with organizations that deal extensively with minority students. He feels there are seven primary barriers affecting the retention of minority students: family and employment responsibilities; the location of post-secondary institutions outside of minority population concentrations; the minimal number of minority staff and faculty; the lack of funds for intervention programs; the inability of minority students to afford college; the lack of appropriate social and cultural activities for these students; and unsupportive surrounding communities. Parker goes on to enumerate the ten factors he believes most often affect the retention of minority students: positive faculty-student interaction; positive relationships between the college and community organizations that deal primarily with minorities; public support of the minority community’s role; leadership within the college; an organized, visible retention services department; special courses and support services for new and returning students; orientations for minority students; immediate identification of “at risk” students; supportive campus atmosphere; and the ability to overcome institutional racism.
Francine McNairy reviews the issues facing universities wishing to increase their retention rates among students of color. She examines the factors that contribute to the high attrition rates among these students, the unproductive strategies employed by primarily white institutions of higher education, and the retention traps that are used ineffectively to increase the persistence rates of non-white students. McNairy's concepts of retention traps are fascinating; she points out how perception can twist what might be seen as a positive idea into one that produces a negative result. She suggests that we stop treating students of color as a monolithic group; they have as many variables influencing their decisions as white students do: race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, subculture, family role, and the quality of the high school from which they graduated. All of these issues impact the students' abilities to achieve. McNairy believes that the retention strategies employed by colleges to "fix" the academic underpreparedness of many students of color (such academic support services as tutoring, counseling, and remedial classes) imply that there is something wrong with the student and place "blame" on the "victim" (the student). While academic support may be called for, McNairy feels that colleges should also look at their institutional policies, faculty, administrators, staff, the curriculum and campus environment to see what impact these
variables have on retaining and retraining students of color.


This study examined the characteristics of part-time students, noting that our definition of "part-time" may be simplistic in nature. Whether a student is pursuing a degree part-time as a first degree, an additional degree, as preparation for advanced study, or is unable to meet the normal educational requirements for university admission or is a non-degree seeking part-time student pursuing an education as part of a life-long learning goal, we as educational administrators tend to perceive these students as a homogeneous group. Yet their different personal educational agendas should force us to view them as disparate sub-sets with widely varying needs. Depending upon the extent of our desire to serve this part-time student population, we need to be aware of how changes in college policies may affect the needs of each of these sub-sets. In this study, Roche, Shale and Kelly mentioned how budget cuts at their university had different impacts on each of these part-time student sub-sets, in certain cases virtually eliminating the ability of some of these students to attend classes.

In this article, Dale and Zych review the HORIZONS Student Support Program at Purdue University which was established in 1978 for the purpose of supporting and retaining first generation, low-income, and/or physically disabled students. These students are less academically prepared, and in order to retain them, they need additional help in both the academic and affective domains of education. HORIZONS provides services and instruction which enables a student to understand and participate more fully in academic life. Commitment, perseverance, feelings of belonging, goal setting, and emotional maturity are all affective behaviors, and when nurtured in these students, these characteristics will increase their retention rate. These identified HORIZON students take a special freshman orientation course, have an additional computer lab reserved for their use, may obtain free tutoring, are evaluated for the effectiveness of their study skills, have peer counselors, and have a designated financial aid person to help them complete forms and meet approaching deadlines. The HORIZONS program has had a very positive impact on the persistence statistics for this student population.
This study looked at the factors involved in student attrition in a specific area of study (physics) and speculated that the reasons students drop-out of a specific discipline may be different than why students remove themselves from college completely. The research involved four steps: student interviews, faculty and staff interviews, and two separate questionnaires completed at different points in the students' physics program. Interestingly enough, students were asked to speculate on the reasons for the high drop-out rate and make recommendations for program improvement. Their ideas and comments were very pertinent. Students who felt a high degree of doubt regarding their ability to finish the physics program or those who had a foggy understanding of what someone could do with a completed physics degree were the best candidates for attrition. This input lead researchers to recommend that if a school wants to know who is in danger of dropping out, just ask the individual students. Non-attendance played a major role in retention as well. Those students who were not in class, even as early as week 2 of a semester, were the students who would not complete. The suggestion from Vazquez-Abad, Winer, and Derome is that waiting until mid-terms to determine who is in trouble is already several weeks too late to help to retain the student. The other interesting result from this study is the discrepancy between faculty expectations of the amount of work a
student should perform and student expectations of what is appropriate. The faculty felt that a 60-hour week should be the norm for a student (20 in-class hours and 40 study hours) and the students felt that 24 hours per week were sufficient. The significant difference in points of view will contribute to the retention problem in this area.

Individual Solutions:


Using Uri Treisman's study of the failure of African-American and Hispanic students in his freshman calculus classes from which he created the Mathematics Workshop at the University of California-Berkley as her primary example, Rose Asera discusses two key issues in student persistence: students' feelings of both social and academic isolation on campus. In order for students to succeed, there needs to be a fostering of a community of students around a shared academic and career goal and an intensifying of academic instruction. Asera also asserts that no program can be "cloned" from one campus to another. It is the responsibility of each college to determine a comprehensive plan, based on the analysis of its own data, to create a student attrition solution that builds on the college's strengths and addresses its own particular needs.
Ronald Roach contrasts the University of Virginia's policy regarding African-American enrollment from its exclusionary, segregationist, pre-1960 admissions attitude to its present trend of a 91.5% six-year graduation rate of its current African-American student enrollment. The institution of an Office of African American Affairs, a student mentoring program, a high rate of faculty involvement with Black students, a parental advisory association and regular correspondence between the University and its minority students have all contributed to this remarkable turnaround. The University of Virginia attributes its success in this area to its concerted efforts to create an academically and socially supportive environment for its Black students. The school has also made efforts to establish relationships with its students' families, realizing the importance of family support to college students.

Edward A. Wynne and Herbert J. Walberg discuss the effects of designing groups in educational settings with the concept of persistence in mind. They contend that small groups have a powerful emotional influence on their members, from nuclear families to military units. Americans tend to regard individualism as something good in and of itself, and therefore, we structure
school environments based on this premise—with our longest cohort group existing in elementary school where one teacher has a group of students for a single academic year. Yet other countries (Japan and Germany) have found enormous benefit in keeping students together with the same teacher(s) for several years; it produces increased stability, more cohesion, greater efficiency, higher-level interaction and increased tolerance. Wynne and Walberg contend that the concept of persisting groups has been overlooked as a possible solution to the retention of college students.


Vincent Tinto, who has done extensive research in the area of student persistence, in this article took a look at the role the classroom plays in student retention. He believes that the classroom and the faculty-student relationship has been understudied regarding their impact on student attrition. Until recently, retention has been perceived as an issue for student services with multiple strategies to increase student retention determined from this collegiate office. Tinto's theory is that the greater the student's involvement or integration in the life of the college, the greater the likelihood that the student will remain in school. With the increasing trend toward non-traditional students attending college with their multiple responsibilities outside of the college arena, the one secure place
where academic and social involvement can take place is within the classroom. Faculty members' behavior toward the students, the classroom environment, and the curriculum all need to build toward a supportive atmosphere where students are actively involved in their educational process. To date, the classroom has been a "passive" place where learning appears to be a "spectator sport." Tinto reviews the Coordinated Studies Program at Seattle Central Community College where students enroll together in several courses that are tied together with a unifying theme requiring them to share the experience of learning. The ultimate result of this program is an increased retention rate because students develop a network of support from a small community of their peers, learn from a variety of perspectives from the faculty and their peers, and are both academically and socially involved in the college. Tinto feels that academic and social isolation are the two biggest factors in student attrition.


Metropolitan universities are seeing a change in their campus environments due to the shifting nature of the students attending college. With the increasing diversity of the students on their campuses, a rise in the number of commuter students, the ethnic and racial variety, the broader range of age groups, and the part-time nature of the students attending, universities may no longer look to and base decisions on old paradigms of student profiles.
Universities are seeing an "in-and-out" enrollment pattern that reflects students needing to take additional time off in order to earn the money necessary to return to school; our old concept of "drop-outs" no longer applies as these students see themselves as merely "stop-outs" until their financial situation improves. This extended course of study also impacts graduation rates as students take significantly longer to complete their course of study. The need for classes offered outside of the work day, special orientation sessions, the requirement by students to perceive absolute and practical value of the curriculum being studied, and the desire to have a more equitable relationship with the faculty are all contributing factors to student persistence when the student is non-traditional. All of these factors have an impact on the university's operation: more working, non-traditional students mean fewer credit hours earned in a semester (indicating less revenue for the college), fewer participants in the traditional aspects of campus life (fewer fraternity/sorority/club participants), and a need for more academic support services geared to non-traditional students.


By the time students reach college, faculty expects that they already know how to study, and that those students who have ineffective study skills have
been magically transformed over the summer before their college start into academically successful students. We know that this is not the case; a student who has poor study strategies will not acquire good study skills on his/her own. Effective study skills in note-taking, test-taking, active reading strategies, and time management must be taught, and these skills are best taught when integrated with domain-specific content. Faculty at the college level must assume some of the responsibility for preparing students to be successful in their courses. Reminders of effective study skills, review of appropriate study skills materials and help identifying the support services available on the campus will go a long way toward increasing student success and ultimately the retention of those students.


Financial aid was developed to help students to stay in school, yet the research on the effect financial aid has on retention is limited. The impact of economic variables, particularly financial aid, remains unexamined. To increase the amount of research in this area, Somers conducted her study at an urban, public institution that relied primarily on federal programs for financial aid, and her purpose was to determine what influence, if any, financial aid had on persistence. Her results were surprising and led her to believe that additional
study is necessary. Somers hypothesized that the receipt of aid would have a positive association with persistence, but the opposite was true—the students who received aid were 23.5% less likely to persist. She discovered that while large scholarships may be useful to attract students, they did not insure that the scholarship recipient would remain. Her conclusions were that the scholarship money awarded may not be as important as the "fit" between student and institution, that instead of a small number of large scholarships, partial scholarships for a larger number of applicants may be more effective, and funds awarded might be more effectively used to promote persistence of "at-risk" students if put into supplemental need-based grants. To determine whether her information was an accurate portrayal of the connection between financial aid and persistence, additional studies at other colleges should be done.


"Although entering freshmen generally perceive themselves as being capable of attaining their desired academic goals, educators have long recognized the gap between freshman optimism and the commitment needed to be successful academically." In their research, Grunder and Hellmich have assessed the effectiveness of a three-credit freshmen academic intervention class entitled SLS1101-College Success at Santa Fe Community College. The
class provides incoming freshmen with an orientation to the campus and a refresher course on effective study skills. While the class was not mandatory, it was strongly encouraged, and students taking the class were given special incentives to take the course: one-stop assessment, academic advising, advanced registration, student identification cards, early textbook purchase, copies of the SFCC student guide and a calendar of events. Prior research had indicated that a student's most vulnerable time to voluntarily withdraw from school is the first semester of the student's first year; this is the student's most critical period of adjustment. The course was designed to provide essential academic and affective support to facilitate the adjustment process and to make students feel more connected to the college more quickly. As expected, there was a positive correlation between student participation in SFCC's College Success Program and their retention in school.


According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, between 1980 and 1990, the enrollment of students under the age of 25 rose by 3%, while the enrollment of students 25 years or older increased by 34%. The projection for these two populations from 1990 to the end of 1998 will be a 6% rise in those students under 25 and a 14% growth in students aged 25 or older. Clearly the
aging of the college student population will have an impact on how post-
secondary schools do business and support activities for students. Studies have
shown that a significant element in the persistence process is a student's
integration into the college environment. Yet with commuter students not living
on a college campus and most likely employed with limited time to be on
campus, Johnson asked what factors would contribute to student persistence.
Her study concluded that the factors that influence commuter college students'
retention decisions are not very different than those factors that impact a
traditional student's decision, but they may take a different form. Commuter
students who had closer contact with faculty, perceived a high degree of
opportunity for faculty interaction and felt their questions were answered easily
had a higher persistence rate than students whose needs were not met. The
study concluded that the nonclassroom interactions with faculty that are most
important to persistence are those that integrate the student's classroom and
non-classroom experiences. Based on Johnson's findings, it appears that
academic climate is the variable around which persistence efforts should be
made, with increased attention to providing a maximum number of opportunities
for faculty-student interaction.

Post-secondary education provides a crucial link between high school and a successful adult life for people with disabilities; this level of education fulfills personal goals, allows for effective competition in the job market, and contributes to independence and financial security. Approximately 7% of all incoming freshmen are students with disabilities; in addition to the normal anxiety all freshmen experience when about to start school, the SWD (student with disability) must also cope with physical and attitudinal barriers that make him/her feel excluded from the college community. Non-disabled people tend to view SWDs as a homogeneous group without regard for the enormous individual differences, preferences, abilities and interests that constitute this group. One of the major changes that can be effected that would make SWDs feel more included in campus life is to accord them the courtesy of looking at them as individuals. The success and persistence of these students depends on the quality, quantity, and consistency of the services they receive. Given the legislation surrounding the educational needs of SWDs, colleges may no longer ask if they will admit SWDs, but how they will accommodate and enhance the collegiate experiences of these students.

This article spends time looking at the relationship between student participation in class and the persistence of students in school. The study, conducted at a large, public university, triangulates data from observations of actual classroom behavior with self-report surveys of faculty and students and provides information regarding interaction in the college classroom. In the observational study of 40 classrooms presenting material on a variety of different subjects, it was found that professors talk nearly 80% of the time, with student participation occupying only 14% of the class period. The student participation that did occur was found to include only 10 students out of an average class of 40 with 5 students dominating the interaction. The largest number of questions asked by the faculty were at the lowest cognitive level—recall of facts—rather than critical thinking. The impact on retention is obvious; if 80% of a student's time is spent listening and the opportunity to speak is greatly limited, why stay?

Conclusions:

Given all of the resources read, the three most important authors in the area of retention that are most applicable to this particular research paper are Vincent Tinto, Florence B. Brawer, and Judith L. Johnson. All three authors noted the difference in retention statistics between traditional and non-traditional
students and the importance of knowing what population a college is dealing with prior to creating retention initiatives. They also observed the strong link between a student's persistence in school and that student's academic and social success. Furthermore Tinto, Brawer, and Johnson all mentioned the danger of treating traditional and non-traditional students as monolithic groups, that each of these groups have different sub-sets within them that might require different retention strategies to encourage these students to remain in school. The finally element that makes these three authors of particular value to this research effort is their discussion of specific intervention strategies that would be useful in combating the student attrition problem.

Tinto's, Brawer's, and Johnson's work will be further highlighted in the remaining chapters of this research thesis. Their influence regarding the need to determine the type of student population being worked with and the impact of both the academic and social aspects of the college student's experience can be noted in the following chapter: Chapter Three-Thesis Components.
CHAPTER THREE: THESIS COMPONENTS

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this research is to review the effectiveness of the Davenport College Career Center's present retention plan as it applies to our students, to evaluate the plan's strengths and weaknesses in light of current research, and to make recommendations for additions or changes to the existing plan. In order for this review to occur, the following steps need to be taken:

**Step One: Review Center Retention Program**

To review the Career Center's current retention program, I need to understand all of the elements of this plan. To accomplish this, it will be necessary to interview the chair of the Retention Team. This Team consists of a group of Career Center employees responsible for the oversight of our persistence effort. Created in response to a former director's perception that students were not returning to the Career Center for a second or third term, the Team has been in operation for four years. It has no written goals or objectives, but it works hard to respond to the Center's students' social needs. As the Career Center is a commuter school of older adult students with no clubs, sports teams, or student government around which to build a social core, this represents a challenge.
Step Two: Surveys

In order to understand the impact our retention plan has on our students, it is necessary to know who our students really are and how our staff and faculty’s perception of our students differs from reality. Frequently assumptions are made about what will be an effective remedy to a retention situation based on our perception of the students’ problems rather than on the reality of students’ needs. In an effort to gather demographic information on the Career Center’s students, two surveys will be used: the InterEd-Adult Student Goal Assessment (Appendix Figure F) which was given to all new Fall Term 1998 students, and an in-house questionnaire (Appendix Figure E) created specifically for this research which was sent to all former students who had attended the Career Center within the last eight terms but who had not returned to the school to finish their academic objectives. In addition to collecting data as to who our students really are, it was important to gather information from the staff and faculty on their perceptions of the composition of our student demographics. I interviewed three staff members (the placement coordinator and two advisors) and several faculty to determine what they thought a typical Career Center student was like.

Step Three: Retention Statistics

It was also necessary to compute accurate retention statistics from term to term and from the start of one fall term to the beginning of the next fall term
(Appendix Figure B). As the Career Center is a diploma-granting institution, students' programs traditionally last between 12 to 18 months, making retention information calculated from a students' school entrance to the start of his/her second year (and beyond) unavailable. Our current retention statistics tend to focus on a single term, determining how many students started a term as compared to how many students finished that same term. In order to get a broader perspective on the attrition of students, it is also important to know how many students return for subsequent terms.

Step Four: Retention Literature

A review of the current retention literature helped to establish a base from which to make a comparative analysis between our campus retention plan and what is being done on other college campuses to address the attrition problem. The literature review also highlighted different perspectives on persistence issues based on the demographic make-up of the student body, the length of the program of study and student expectations and goals.

Step Five: Strengths and Weaknesses

Once all of the data has been gathered, it will then be possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses in the present retention plan. To date we have created a retention plan based on anecdotal information and the perceptions of the faculty and staff regarding the student population with which we are working. This information may be correct and our approach to the attrition problem may
have great value, but we have no concrete information to support our conclusions and our effort. We have also not done any extensive reading of studies on the persistence problem. This research project should help us to more accurately assess our work in this area and help us to be more effective.

**Step Six: Areas for Improvement**

Finally, this project will point out areas for further improvement and will allow us to tailor our retention plan to more effectively fit our institution and our student population. It will also give us the tools necessary to continue to study our retention data and survey our students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the Career Center.

By taking these steps, I will be able to gather current, accurate information from which to evaluate the present retention plan and to determine what additional work needs to be done in order to have a more effective understanding of the persistence problems preventing our students from meeting their educational goals. In the following chapter, Chapter Four: Thesis Strategies and Methodologies, the my research methods are defined and explained.
CHAPTER FOUR: THESIS STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

As mentioned in Chapter Three, there are several distinct components to this research paper, and the methodologies for each of these elements are different depending on the objective of the individual component. The information gathered and the method used to collect this data are detailed in the following narrative:

The Current Retention Plan

In order to understand whether or not our current retention plan is effectively addressing the needs of our students, it was essential to know what the present plan entailed. To gather that information, I interviewed the chairman of our Retention Team, Stan VanKolken. The fact that the Career Center has a Retention Team is significant in that it shows we are aware there is a persistence problem, and we want to improve our retention efforts. The Team consists of four people: Stan VanKolken as the chairman of the Team and the General Education/Developmental Education Department Head; Patty Brechbiel, the Academic Coordinator/Registrar; Gloria Johnson, an Academic Advisor; and Sandy Veeder, a faculty member. This membership was chosen deliberately to give this group as broad a perspective as possible given the size of the school.
about 25-30 employees, many of the staff and faculty fulfill more than one role; while this does frequently concentrate the workload in too few hands, it does provide the Center with an added depth of knowledge shared by its employees as they each understand multiple perspectives of the task of educating adult students. The Retention Team meets five times a term and is responsible for all aspects of the retention process.

Stan felt the most important role of the Retention Team was to oversee the entire retention process for the Career Center, from the academic to the social perspectives. The Retention Team provides input to the Academic Team, the group responsible for the academic integrity of the courses and programs offered at the Career Center, regarding the development of new and existing classes and the modification of the term's course schedule to more closely meet the students' personal schedules. The Retention Team also spends time tracking student attendance from the start to the end of the term and encourages faculty and department heads to contact by phone or postcard those students who have missed more than two classes in succession. In addition to this work with currently enrolled students, the Team mounts a phone call and mail campaign each term to those students who have “stopped out” of the Center any time within the last four terms. These students, who once attended classes but who are no longer enrolled during the present term, are
contacted and encouraged to return to school. Furthermore, the Retention Team is responsible for student activities during the term; whether it is a raffle for pumpkins during Halloween, a T-shirt drawing for students whose birthdays fall within a term, or cookies and coffee made available during finals week, these activities are a part of the Team's commitment.

Stan believes that certain Career Center activities outside of the Retention Team's responsibilities also promote student persistence. We have made a concerted effort to increase inservice training for the faculty in adult education characteristics; we have tried to heighten the awareness of all instructors as to what adults look for in the classroom regarding instructional methods, faculty-student interaction, homework expectations, and testing/grading procedures. In response to our perception regarding why some students leave the Career Center before completing their educational objectives, we are encouraging and training faculty to change from the "authoritative/lecture" classroom environment to the "facilitator/whole brain theory" type of atmosphere. Current educational research has proven that there are many different learning styles that need to be accommodated in the classroom in order for all students to be successful, and the lecture approach focuses on only one type of learner. With the whole brain theory of information design and delivery, students who are analytical, logical thinkers, those who are
intuitive, holistic learners, those who need to connect information to their own lives, and those are detail-oriented are all included in the learning process. In the whole brain teaching approach, each type of learner has some portion of the educational material being taught reviewed for them in their preferred learning style. In addition to the faculty training, the Career Center has been working toward providing more flexible registration procedures, more availability in the Advising Department, increased access to the Placement Coordinator, and heightened sensitivity to adult student issues.

Career Center Student Demographics

The persistence of students in a post-secondary environment is largely dependent on the type of student being served: traditional or non-traditional. Traditional students persist in greater numbers when they are integrated into both the academic and social systems of their college, but non-traditional students remain in school if their academic expectations are met and need less social interaction in order to persist (Tinto, 1973). Therefore a retention plan is only good if it meets the needs of the students it is purported to serve. To meet these needs, it is essential that the Career Center be clear as to the nature of the students it is enrolling. I thought I had an accurate picture of the students we teach at the Career Center, yet I found that each person on the staff that I talked to has a slightly different impression of our student demographics based
on the students with which they work. We differ on what we think is the average age of our students, whether they are employed or not, how frequently they work, and other basic data that would determine whether or not our students are traditional or non-traditional. It made me realize that we should survey our students to get a more accurate idea of who they are.

The conversations I had with my colleagues pointed out another element to the persistence issue, and that was that the retention problem really has two elements: one component is that we wish to keep the students we currently have enrolled and attending, and the other element is that we wish to re-attract the students we have lost. In order to address these two different populations, I required two separate surveys, one survey for students actively attending school and another for those students who had not returned to the Career Center.

In order to collect demographic data on currently enrolled students, I reviewed the InterEd-Adult Student Goal Fulfillment Assessment given to all new Fall Term 1998 students. This survey has been used infrequently by the Davenport College system in the past, but was modified this year to be more effective in isolating the information the College wished to have to better understand its student population. In Figure F of the Appendix, the demographic results of this survey are illustrated in graphic form. Keeping in mind the definitions of a traditional and a non-traditional student, I gathered the 63
completed InterEd questionnaires out of the 107 surveys issued (a response rate of 59%) and compiled the results. The results indicate that we have an overwhelmingly female population who have delayed their enrollment into college, are independent of family support, and working. The InterEd questionnaire does not clearly address the issues of whether or not the student is attending college part-time, has a high school completion certificate/GED or a high school diploma, or if the student is a parent or not.

To collect the demographic data for the students who are no longer attending the Career Center, I needed a different survey, one that not only addressed demographic data to determine if these students are dissimilar to currently enrolled students, but one which also targeted the reasons for the students' absence from school. I created the questionnaire from suggestions supplied by the faculty and staff. Once the questionnaire had been created, reviewed and fine tuned, it was sent to over 600 students who are not attending the Career Center during the Fall Term 1998, but who have attended the school within the last eight terms. In addition, I wanted to know if there was a difference in the demographics and/or educational experience between those students who had initially enrolled in a 45- to 54-credit hour program and those who signed up for one or two courses to update their skills. Therefore I divided the 600 students based on their educational history between program students and
"course only" students, and while I sent them the same survey (Appendix Figure E), I used a different cover letter (Appendix Figures C & D) to introduce the questionnaire. The information collected from the returned surveys can be found in Appendix G.

Retention Statistics

To determine the extent of the Career Center's retention problem requires accurate and consistent statistics. As many of us on the Career Center's administrative staff also teach classes, we have a "gut instinct" that we are losing students, but no concrete numbers to work with regarding term-to-term persistence and year-to-year persistence. We have accurate data on the attrition rate experienced from the start of one term to the end of that same term, but need to develop additional tracking resources to determine the bigger picture. In order to calculate these additional statistics, I took the list of new students generated each term by the Admissions Department from each of the following terms and looked at their individual student histories to determine if the student was still attending in the Fall 1998 term or had stopped coming: Fall 1996, Fall 1997, Winter 1998, and Spring 1998. The results of this study appear in Appendix Figure B. For clarification of the terminology used on the appendix graphs, the term "course only" refers to those students whose intent is to take one to two courses to update their employability; they do not intend to attend
school for more than one to two terms. The title "program students" refers to those students who have declared a specific 45- to 54- credit hour program of study. The information gleaned from this survey of student histories indicates that between 13%-37% of a single term's new students from the prior year's starts are currently enrolled in classes during the present fall term.

Given these surveys and the different methods used to collect the data described, the conclusions that may be drawn from this information will prove valuable to the Career Center.
CHAPTER FIVE: THESIS DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to review the Career Center’s current retention plan, to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and to suggest additional strategies to improve our current retention statistics. To accomplish this, I needed to determine the demographic profile of the Career Center’s students, calculate our current retention statistics, examine and understand the present retention plan, survey both current and former students regarding their attitudes about the Career Center, and read some of the existing literature on the attrition of post-secondary students. Once these tasks were accomplished, it would then be possible to accurately assess the strengths and areas for improvement in the Career Center’s retention plan. Now that the data has been collected, the results may be analyzed and conclusions drawn.

Demographic Data

The demographic data gathered from both the current students, through the InterEd Adult Student Goal Fulfillment Survey, and the former students, using an in-house survey instrument, indicate that our students are overwhelmingly female (over 90%), older (many over 35 years of age), with little college experience, and self-supporting (Appendix Figures F and G). This information supports our own conclusion that our students are non-traditional,
impact on our retention and implications for our retention plan. Florence Brawer in her article entitled "Retention-Attrition in the Nineties" identifies several key characteristics that fit our student population and categorizes those characteristics as "high risk" demographic markers: female gender, part-time college attendance, age and financial concern (Brawer, 1996). Patricia Windham, too, notes the same information in her paper titled "The Relative Importance of Selected Factors to Attrition at Public Community Colleges;" she also mentions that community colleges with their "open door" enrollment policy attract more of these types of students who fit this high-risk, non-traditional profile, and that situation, in turn, increases the community colleges' vulnerability to attrition problems. The Davenport College Career Center, like the community colleges, maintains an open enrollment policy. In addition, the Career Center is a commuter school; we do not provide living facilities, student government activities, club experiences, or sports teams. So our student population is very similar to a community college student's profile.

The increasing trend in post-secondary education toward more non-traditional students means that students' academic experiences outweigh their social experiences as the deciding factor regarding whether the student persists in college or not (Johnson, 1997). The projected trend for the 1990s is a 6% rise in the traditional student population and a 14% growth in the non-traditional
student population. Colleges, and the Career Center in particular, will need to be more sensitive to the needs of the non-traditional student in order to keep them attending and the school's academic climate is the variable around which persistence efforts should be focused.

Retention Statistics

When comparing the Career Center's retention statistics to the national norms, it is important to remember that the Career Center offers 12- to 18-month diploma programs, so it is inappropriate to compare our statistics to associate- or bachelor-degree granting campuses (Appendix A and B). However, even with that caveat, our retention statistics are weak. In Appendix A, the non-traditional students pursuing a vocational certificate objective persist at a rate of 44% nationally. On Appendix B, those Career Center students who started their programs in the Fall Term 1997 are currently enrolled in the Fall Term 1998 at a rate of only 35%. This persistence rate seems fairly stable as I review the data for Winter Term 1998 and Spring Term 1998; the students who started in those terms are staying at the Career Center at a rate of 37% and 36% respectively. These statistics appear to be rather discouraging when you consider that only one out of every three students recruited, admitted, advised and taught in each term comes back for additional terms. That is a great deal of work for a limited return. Nelle Moore in her article entitled "Persistence and Attrition at San Juan
College* tries to put a more positive spin on the attrition issue by suggesting that there are positive reasons for students' decisions to leave a particular college: their short-term educational goals have been met, they have transferred to another institution, or they are not permanently gone, but just "stopping out" (Moore, 1995). While any of these reasons may be true, student attrition, no matter how understandable, still does not improve a college's bottom line. Lost students equal lost revenue.

Moore's comments do point out a weakness in our tracking system, however. While we can identify who has not returned to school, we cannot easily identify the reasons why they have not returned. In order to address those issues that prompted the student to leave over which the Career Center may have control, we need to gather more specific information. One possible solution may be to give an exit survey to all students who have attended one term but have not registered for the next term. Another idea may be to revamp the faculty evaluation tool used each term to reflect more retention-related, student-satisfaction information. Whatever the approach, the retention numbers in and of themselves give only a bare-bones picture of the attrition problem.

**In-House Student Survey**

When students leave college without attaining their educational goals, there are always multiple reasons for their decision; some of those reasons are
personal, but others are related to the academic and social experiences they had at the school. The in-house survey was developed and sent to 600 students who had left the Career Center within the last eight terms; it asked questions regarding student attitudes on the admissions process, advising procedures, academics, support services, and facilities—those elements of a student's education over which the Career Center has some control. The return rate for these surveys was disappointing; of the 600 surveys sent, only 33 (5.5%) were returned, so the conclusions to be drawn from the information received need to be tempered with the knowledge that there was a very small response. The positive side to this limited response is that those students who bothered to complete and return the survey felt very strongly about the information they were providing. Appendix Figure G contains the data compiled from the completed surveys; the information has been divided into three categories: information from those students who came to the Career Center to take a course or two (course only students), those students who attended with the intention of completing a full program (program students), and a summary of all the student responses (all students). As an overall impression, most students were pleased with their experiences at the Career Center; 26 (90%) of them graded the school with an A or B rating. Yet their individual responses to the elements in the survey do point out areas for concern.
Admissions: Students overall impression of the admissions process was positive. They felt it was very easy to get an appointment and that the admissions material they were given was helpful. Even orientation, an experience we as administrators have debated the value of, was found to be beneficial. This information was encouraging because the Career Center spends a significant amount of time and money working to interest potential students in our programs and location.

However, the financial aid component of the admissions process was seen as the weak link. The "course only" students were the least happy with the financial aid situation, but that may be due to the federal guideline which states that in order for a student to be eligible for financial aid, he/she must take at least two to three classes in a single term, and the student who is attending just to brush up his/her skills is probably taking too few classes to qualify for financial aid. However the program students saw financial aid as a weak area as well. One of the most frequently cited reasons for dropping out of school is financial difficulties, and financial aid was created to address that problem. Yet financial aid doesn't appear to be helping those students it is purported to serve.

Patricia Somers conducted a study in which she examined the impact of financial aid on retention, and her results were surprising (Somers, 1996). She felt that the receipt of financial aid should facilitate students persistence in
college, and yet her findings indicated an inverse relationship. She found that students who received aid were approximately 23% less likely to persist than those who didn't receive aid. It is possible that the students who most need financial aid are the ones who are more likely to have financial difficulties, have fewer monetary resources available to them when money is tight, and/or are more likely to need to work while attending school and therefore are at higher risk for attrition. It is also possible that the students who are awarded student loans and are aware of the amount of money they will need to repay at the end of their education, tie the grades they receive to the amount of money they owe and question the value of the education they are getting. A final possibility is that those students who receive large financial aid grants are not economically invested in their education and therefore value its results less, making it easier to leave school. Because students often make the choice to enroll in school based on cost, it is important that the Financial Aid Department make a personal connection with the students it serves; the Department should be proactive, communicative, high profile and show immediate concern for the students' welfare in order to retain these students.

Advising: As a small campus, we have a small Advising Department; our two advisors are familiar with every student that we have and every program that we offer, and our students appreciate this. However, because of our size, we
have the attendant small campus problems: not every class is offered every term, classes may be canceled due to low enrollment, and there are a limited number of rooms in which certain classes may be taught. These issues create difficulties for both the students and the advisors. Also, as our student population is non-traditional and collegially unsophisticated, they have a hard time understanding course prerequisites, class sequencing, and academic planning, and these were the areas in which the survey respondents felt the Advising Department was weak.

Communication appears to be the key to increasing the effectiveness of the advisor-student link. With a student population that has little time to devote to anything at the school but their immediate classes and that has a limited knowledge of how a post-secondary institution operates, the student’s advisor becomes the source for academic planning information and is entrusted with the task of seeing the student through his/her academic program. The advisor works to evaluate the student’s past educational history, current entrance test scores and the student’s educational goals to place them in classes that are challenging, but not too difficult. Woe be to the advisor that gets this remarkable balancing act wrong. Additional communication between the student and the advisor needs to occur in order to clarify and/or modify the student’s educational goals to something appropriate and to educate the student in the intricacies of
the college's academic standards and policies. This additional communication
could help the students to feel more in control of their educational destiny and
more aware of the benefits to staying in school.

Academics: By and large, the surveyed students felt the academic
offerings at the Career Center were good; the faculty was academically
prepared, the classes taught them what they wanted/needed to know and the
textbooks were appropriate and helpful. The students' concerns centered on the
area of faculty accessibility. Of the 24 faculty members teaching this fall at the
Career Center, 22 (92%) of them are adjunct. While we encourage adjunct
faculty to set aside some time each week outside of the class period to talk to
students, there are no consistent, required hours or established locations in
which to accomplish this. Because non-traditional students view their academic
experience as more important than their social experience at school, this
frustration regarding faculty availability is significant. In an effort to address this
need, the Career Center has provided voice mail and e-mail to each of its faculty
and strongly encourages students to access their instructors electronically.
Faculty is then asked to check their e-mail and voice mail daily and to return
student messages promptly. Unfortunately the non-traditional student
population tends to be transitory, and disconnected phones and changed
addresses are an issue. Also, electronic communication is still not as effective
as face-to-face conversation. A student who is contemplating leaving college is not going to contact the school but will just drift away. It is up to the faculty, who are on the front line with the latest direct communication with the student, to contact the student.

Vincent Tinto in his article titled "Classrooms as Communities: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence" argues that the faculty-student relationship is overlooked in statistics reviewing student attrition (Tinto, 1997). If students persist at higher rates when they are more involved in the college academic community, then where is this involvement more easily facilitated than in the classroom with their instructors? Yet the classroom to date has been a primarily passive place with the student role being comparable to a spectator at a sporting event. The cliche of the faculty member reading from "yellowed notes" is still the norm in many college classrooms today. The two worst habits for faculty to break and which hinder more students from learning are the over-reliance on lecture as the preferred educational delivery format and the instructors' perception of themselves as all-knowing experts. Non-traditional students thrive in a learning atmosphere where they are active participants in a class that values their personal experiences and that allows them to work with their instructor as a partner in the learning process. Judith Johnson's study of commuter college students also found that those students who had closer
contact with faculty, more opportunities for interaction with their instructors, and felt their questions were answered easily were retained at a significantly higher rate (Johnson, 1997). Clearly faculty-student interaction is a primary retention tool.

Support Services: Support services tend to be ignored when considering retention because colleges are focused on the academic quality of their programs or the social activities provided to their students; however, the computer labs, the bookstore, the placement services, the administrative staff, and the business office can all work together to make a student's life easy or miserable. It is frustrating for a student to ask questions, only to be told to that someone else has the answer. It is discouraging to find the personal time to get into the computer lab, only to have no one available to help you with your problems. If enough unsuccessful encounters with a college's support services are accumulated by a student, it makes it easy for a student to get disgusted and walk away.

The students surveyed by the Career Center seemed to feel positively about the school's support services except for the computer lab assistance. The Career Center has three rooms dedicated to computers with students given access to these rooms whenever the Center is open and there are no classes operating in these labs. However, computer classes are popular and plentiful,
which does significantly cut into the amount of time the computer labs may be available for student use. The number of hours of lab assistance provided by paid instructors is also less than the students would like; students want to have lab tutors available all day, every day, yet our budget constrains us to considerably fewer hours. In an effort to accommodate students in this area, Davenport allows any student to access the computer labs on any of its eleven college sites, yet the software used is not always consistent, it is difficult for a student to find what they are looking for on another campus’s system, and it can be hard to ask for help in a strange environment. Additional thought needs to be given to this problem as computer knowledge and accessability are elemental to the Career Center’s programs and classes.

Facilities (Other): The facilities section of the survey pointed out that students do feel safe at the Career Center, that the site is clean and parking is adequate. Another question on this section of the survey asks for input on the college’s Learning Center. The Learning Center is an area within the Career Center designated to help students with any developmental education deficiencies they may have in reading, English and math. The Career Center attempts to test each program student that enters to determine their educational skills in these three areas so that students are placed in the appropriate classes; this placement assures that the students have a challenging course of study but
are not wasting money for classes in which they are already skilled. The efforts made on behalf of our students in the developmental area to test, place and teach these basic skills are part of our retention plan as well. Students who feel academically inadequate will consider dropping out of school more quickly than those who feel competent to master their course work.

Overall 90% of the survey respondents felt the Career Center merited an A or a B rating which leads me to believe that the Career Center is providing its students with educational value. Yet, I have some concerns about the validity of this particular question and the emotional investment people give to the concept of “grades.” Given some of the comments made in the open portion of the questionnaire regarding individual problems the responding students had, I wonder if there isn’t some imbalance between their remarks and the overall grade assigned to the Career Center. In subsequent surveys, it would be best to reword this question to eliminate the tie to the concept of grades.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Career Center's major strength in the area of student persistence is that it has a multi-faceted retention plan in place and has had for four years. The plan has been modified over the years to include more of the strategies that do work, such as the phone call/mail campaign to student “stop-outs”, the student social activities, and the communication with the Academic Team
student social activities, and the communication with the Academic Team regarding student needs, and has eliminated those activities that are inadequate measures of retention or that don't address student concerns. As a faculty and staff, we have a fairly accurate understanding of the type of student enrolled here at the Center, and we do care about student attrition, are aware of the students who are leaving, and make an effort to contact those students.

The weakness in our student retention program lies in our perception that non-traditional, commuter students need more social connection to their peers. Our focus is on social interaction strategies rather than on the academic integration model suggested by Tinto and Johnson. The Literature Review suggests that for non-traditional students academic interaction with faculty is significantly more important to them than social interaction with other students. Therefore, the Career Center needs to continue to work with its adjunct faculty to help them to be more accessible to their students both inside and outside of the classroom. We also need to increase the amount of assistance our students receive in our computer labs; minimizing frustration in both classes and labs will have a positive impact on student persistence.

**Additional Strategies**

The Career Center students have two factors that make their educational goals more difficult to attain: they are non-traditional, and they are
traditional students, they do not have a lot of time to spend at the Career Center getting the help they need or learning "the ropes" regarding the nuances that make operating in a post-secondary educational environment easier. Currently the Career Center has a class that is required in all of its programs for incoming students: IDS 185-Transitions. This class introduces the incoming student to the expectations and resources of the College, and it helps the student to take a more active role in their career and educational choices. The Career Center could use this class more effectively to enhance the students' understanding of the academic processes that would make their educational life easier, which would in turn make them feel more empowered and increase their desire to persist. I believe that all administrative departments should be involved in creating the course content for IDS 185 and should have representatives visiting the class on a regular basis. The Advising Department could talk about prerequisites, course sequencing, and programs. The Placement Department could delineate the placement services available, internship/externship opportunities, and explain the benefits to the capstone career development class. The Registrar could explain the procedure for sending transcripts to other institutions and the graduation process. The Business Office staff could describe the college's payment procedures and finalization process. The Department Heads could divide the class into small groups, based on the
students' program choices, so that they could ask questions regarding the classes they would take in future terms. Information concerning financial aid, tutoring availability, computer lab procedures and other pertinent knowledge could be given to students within the context of this class so that the students would be more informed and feel more in control.

After all, the least expensive student to recruit and maintain is the one that is already sitting in the classroom. Therefore, if a little additional communication would help the students to persist, it is well worth the effort, and the cost of implementing this change is minimal.
CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

Recommendations

Given the conclusions reached in Chapter Five of this research paper, the following recommendations appear to be in order. First, from a global perspective, additional research needs to be conducted on non-traditional students in short-term, post-secondary programs. The amount of literature available on this student population, both from the non-traditional perspective and the short-term component, is sparse at best, yet this type of student and this type of educational delivery are the “wave of the future.” Because of the strong economy, the low unemployment rate making work an attractive option after high school, and the increasingly technical needs of the work force, there will continue to be a rising number of non-traditional students, with all of their attendant difficulties, entering colleges to gain a solid education and update their employability, and colleges will need to work toward discovering equitable, effective ways to accommodate these students’ needs. With the non-traditional students’ delayed enrollment and “in-and-out” attendance patterns, colleges need to further study the connections between the colleges’ academic and social structures that tie non-traditional students to their schools of choice in order for post-secondary institutions to help these students persist toward their educational goals. After all, this trend toward a more non-traditional student
base will be mutually beneficial to both colleges and students if only the proper balance can be found between academics and socialization.

Specifically for the Davenport College Career Center, two primary recommendations will be to continue to study the demographic identity of the Career Center students by using both the InterEd Adult Survey and the in-house survey and to continue to calculate retention statistics on a term-by-term and annual basis. Both surveys need to be modified to gather more specific data regarding the timing of the students' entry into the college system, their work history, average age, and family circumstances. Depending on the data collected, some very different retention initiatives could be suggested: an on-site day care facility might be apropos, additional weekend classes could be appropriate, and on-line classes are a possible option for our students. There are a variety of different retention programs that could be pursued to help our students feel successful in school if we have a clear understanding of their needs. The in-house survey will also need to be modified to be more specific in its questions regarding admissions, advising, and faculty/classroom issues and to clarify some of the ambiguous questions.

In conclusion, all colleges must heighten their awareness of the distinct differences to be found between traditional and non-traditional students and possibly make some decisions regarding the type of student population, as an
institution, they would prefer to serve. It is very difficult to attempt to be all things to all people, and while diversity has great value, it can, in this instance, prevent certain needs from being met and hinder some students' educational goals. To support the persistence of students toward the completion of their education is a positive step for both colleges, students, and the world at large.

**Plans for Dissemination**

In addition to leaving a copy of this master's thesis at Grand Valley State University, I plan to distribute copies to both the Davenport College Career Center's Retention Team and the Management Team. These are the individuals who would most benefit from the information presented herein. Further, this document will be available in most of the Michigan college libraries and could be requested via interlibrary loans.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

To the best of my knowledge, no information from other authors has been used or have any copyright laws been violated. The current appendixes have been the creation of the author of this document.
Persistence of Post-Secondary Students Five Years after Enrollment
Freshman Year: 1989-1990
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Vocational Certificate Objective

Traditional Students: 52%

Non-Traditional Students: 44%

Associate's Degree Objective

Traditional Students: 53%

Non-Traditional Students: 23%

Bachelor's Degree Objective

Traditional Students: 59%

Non-Traditional Students: 43%

Appendix Figure A
Retention Statistics
Davenport College Career Center
Percentage of Students Enrolled/Not Enrolled in Fall 1998
Fall 1996, Fall 1997-Spring 1998

Fall Term 1997
- Not attending: 36%
- Graduates: 1%
- Still attending: 35%

Fall Term 1996
- Not attending: 45%
- Graduates: 18%
- Still attending: 13%

Winter Term 1998
- Not attending: 22%
- Course only: 41%
- Still attending: 37%

Spring Term 1998
- Not attending: 23%
- Course only: 41%
- Still attending: 36%

Appendix Figure B
November 5, 1998

"Learning is our first priority" is more than just a sentence on the bottom of our stationery; it's a commitment we make to every student who attends the Davenport College Career Center. You started a program of study here that you have not completed, and we would like to know what happened to interrupt your finishing this goal. Personal issues can sometimes interfere with your desire to complete your studies, but if there was something we could have done to help you graduate, we would like to know.

Your feedback is valuable to us, and in an effort to improve, we want you to "grade" us. Please take a moment to complete the attached survey so that we have the chance to become better at serving our students.

Please return the enclosed survey to the Career Center by Wednesday, November 18. Thank you for your time and your comments, and we look forward to seeing you back at the Career Center very soon.

Sincerely,

Kate Noone
Executive Director
Davenport College Career Center

Appendix Figure C
November 5, 1998

"Learning is our first priority" is more than just a sentence on the bottom of our stationery; it's a commitment we make to every student who attends the Davenport College Career Center. However, learning goes both ways, and we want to learn more about how well we are serving our students. You attended class(es) at the college recently to update your skills, and we want to know if your experience here was a positive one.

Your feedback is valuable to us, and in an effort to improve, we want you to "grade" us. Please take a moment to complete the attached survey and return it to us in the enclosed envelope. Your comments will help us to become a better educational institution.

Please return the enclosed survey to the Career Center by Wednesday, November 18. Thank you for your time and your opinions, and we look forward to seeing you back at the Career Center in the near future.

Sincerely,

Kate Noone
Executive Director
Davenport College Career Center

Appendix Figure D
Please complete the following information by checking the appropriate line:

1. **Admissions Department:**
   - It was easy to get an appointment
   - My questions were answered accurately
   - The information material was helpful
   - Financial aid help was available
   - Orientation was beneficial

   Comments: __________________________

2. **Advising Department:**
   - It was easy to get an appointment
   - My questions were answered accurately
   - Classes were offered at the times I needed
   - An advisor planned each term for me
   - Course prerequisites and sequencing were defined

   Comments: __________________________

3. **Academics:**
   - The faculty were available to talk to
   - The faculty were academically prepared
   - Classes contained the right material
   - I got the information I wanted
   - Textbooks were useful in my classes

   Comments: __________________________

4. **Support Services:**
   - Computer lab assistance was available
   - The computer lab assistants were helpful
   - The technology was current
   - The computers were operational
   - The bookstore met my needs
   - I was well-informed about what was happening
   - The front desk staff were helpful

79
Comments: ______________________________________________________

Appendix Figure #5

5. **Other:**

I would return to the Career Center for classes  ____ Yes  ____ No
My Learning Center experience was positive  ____ Yes  ____ No  ____ NA
Parking was adequate  ____ Yes  ____ No
I felt safe at the Career Center  ____ Yes  ____ No
The Career Center was clean  ____ Yes  ____ No
The vending machines provided the food I needed  ____ Yes  ____ No

6. If the above questions do not reflect the reasons for your not continuing your classes at the Career Center, please take this space to let us know of any additional concerns or problems you may have.

7. My overall grade for the Career Center would be:  A  B  C  D  F

Demographic and Educational Background Information:

8. Sex:  ____ Male  ____ Female
10. Employment:  ____ Full-time  ____ Part-time  ____ Not currently employed
11. Number of college credits earned at the Career Center:
    ____ 0-7  ____ 8-12  ____ 13-20  ____ 21-25  ____ 26-35  ____ Over 35
12. The highest degree I currently hold is:
    ____ high school diploma  ____ GED  ____ certificate  ____ associate degree
    ____ bachelor degree  ____ post-graduate degree
13. Which of the following was true for you at the time you first entered the Career Center:
    ____ entered directly from high school  ____ entered after working for a period of time
    ____ transferred from a 2-year college  ____ transferred from a 4-year college
    ____ entered after military service  ____ other (explain) ____________________

**OPTIONAL:**

Name:  ____________________________________________________________
Address:  __________________________________________________________

Phone number:  ____________________________________________________  Program

Appendix Figure E 80
Survey Results: Demographic Questions
InterEd-Adult Student Goal Fulfillment Assessment
Davenport College Career Center

1. How many college credits have you earned prior to enrolling in this program?

2. Sex

3. What is the highest degree you currently hold?
4. Which of the following was true for you at the time you first entered this college?

- Entered from high school: 8%
- Entered after working: 62%
- Transferred from 2-year school: 2%
- Other: 28%

5. Rank the primary source of funding for your present education.

- Student loans/grants: 77%
- Family support: 9%
- Personal income: 5%
- Employer reimbursement: 3%
- Other: 6%

6. How many years of full-time employment have you completed since your 18th birthday?

- 0-5: 50%
- 6-10: 21%
- 11-15: 17%
- 16-20: 10%
- 21 or more: 2%
7. What is your current employment status?

Unemployed: 22%
Part-time: 29%
Full-time: 49%

Unemployed: 22%
Career-oriented position: 31%
Non-career-oriented position: 47%
## Survey Results

**In-House Student Survey: Course Only Students**

**Davenport College Career Center**

### ADMISSIONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was easy to get an appointment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions were answered accurately</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information material was helpful</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid was available</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation was beneficial</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADVISING:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was easy to get an appointment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions were answered accurately</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes were offered at the times I needed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An advisor planned each term for me</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course prerequisites and sequencing were defined</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ACADEMICS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The faculty were available to talk to</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The faculty were academically prepared</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes contained the right material</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got the information I wanted</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks were useful in my classes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SUPPORT SERVICES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer lab assistance was available</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The computer lab assistants were helpful</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technology was current</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The computers were operational</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bookstore met my needs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was well-informed about what was happening</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The front desk staff were helpful</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### OTHER:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would return to the Career Center for classes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Learning Center experience was positive</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking was adequate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt safe at the Career Center</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Career Center was clean</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vending machines provided the food I needed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### My overall grade for the Career Center would be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure G
### Survey Results

**In-House Student Survey: Program Students**

**Davenport College Career Center**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADMISSIONS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was easy to get an appointment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions were answered accurately</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information material was helpful</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid was available</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation was beneficial</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions were answered accurately</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>An advisor planned each term for me</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The faculty were available to talk to</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Textbooks were useful in my classes</td>
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<td><strong>SUPPORT SERVICES:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer lab assistance was available</td>
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<td>83%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>The technology was current</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>The computers were operational</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was well-informed about what was happening</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The front desk staff were helpful</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td><strong>OTHER:</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking was adequate</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt safe at the Career Center</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Career Center was clean</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>The vending machines provided the food I needed</td>
<td>13</td>
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Appendix Figure G 85
### Survey Results
#### In-House Student Survey: All Students
Davenport College Career Center

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<td>It was easy to get an appointment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>My questions were answered accurately</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>The information material was helpful</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<td>91%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>An advisor planned each term for me</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course prerequisites and sequencing were defined</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td><strong>ACADEMICS:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The faculty were available to talk to</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The faculty were academically prepared</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classes contained the right material</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>Textbooks were useful in my classes</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td><strong>SUPPORT SERVICES:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer lab assistance was available</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>The computer lab assistants were helpful</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>The technology was current</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>The computers were operational</td>
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<tr>
<td>The bookstore met my needs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was well-informed about what was happening</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>The front desk staff were helpful</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>My Learning Center experience was positive</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking was adequate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt safe at the Career Center</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Career Center was clean</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>The vending machines provided the food I needed</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>My overall grade for the Career Center would be:</td>
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<td>B</td>
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Appendix Figure G 86
Survey Results: Demographic Questions
In-House Student Survey: Course Only Students
Davenport College Career Center

1. Number of college credits earned at the Career Center?

![Bar chart showing the number of students with different credit ranges.]

2. Sex

![Bar chart showing the number of students by sex.]

3. What is the highest degree you currently hold?

![Bar chart showing the number of students with different degrees.]

Appendix Figure H
4. **Age**

![Age Distribution](image)

5. **Employment Status**

![Employment Status Distribution](image)
1. Number of college credits earned at the Career Center?

2. Sex

3. What is the highest degree you currently hold?
4. Age

5. Employment Status
KEY TERMS

The **non-traditional student** is defined as an individual who meets one or more of the following characteristics:

* Delayed enrollment
* Part-time attendance
* Independent of parental support
* A recipient of a GED or high school completion certificate
* Working full-time while enrolled
* A single parent

The **traditional student** is defined as an individual who meets the following characteristics:

* Immediate enrollment from high school to college
* Full-time attendance
* Dependent on parental support
* A recipient of a traditional high school diploma
* Single with no dependents

Appendix Figure I